

NAACP Virginia State Conference • League of Women Voters of Virginia  
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy • Virginia Poverty Law Center  
Northern Virginia Coalition • STEP-UP, Incorporated • Virginia CURE  
Virginia Organizing Project • ACLU of Virginia • The Rutherford Institute

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## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

January 15, 2010

### Groups Express Profound Disappointment in Governor's Refusal to Restore Voting Rights to Persons with Felony Convictions

*Organizations promise to continue efforts to reform state's voter disenfranchisement law*

Richmond, VA – Civil rights and faith-based groups that have been actively lobbying Governor Tim Kaine to restore voting rights to 300,000 Virginians disenfranchised by the state's last vestige of Jim Crow today expressed extreme disappointment in the Governor's decision not to act before leaving office. Virginia is one of only two states -- Kentucky is the other -- that permanently disenfranchises all felons, requiring an act of the Governor for rights to be restored.

The law is a carryover from the 1901 Constitutional Convention, which was convened primarily for the purpose of perpetuating or instituting polices that would prevent racial minorities from voting and holding elected office in the state.

Although the legislature has failed to act to change the felon disenfranchisement law, the Governor has the power to issue a blanket executive order restoring voting rights to all persons with felony convictions. Advocates for reform have asked the Governor to take action since he took office, but stepped up their efforts in recent weeks as Kaine's term was coming to an end. Over the last two months, the Governor and his staff met frequently with representatives of statewide and community organizations, and thousands of voters inundated the Governor's office with emails and phone calls asking him to take action.

Among the groups that joined forces to seek reform of Virginia's disenfranchisement law are the NAACP Virginia State Conference, Virginia League of Women Voters, Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, Virginia Poverty Law Center, Virginia Organizing Project, STEP-UP, Incorporated, Virginia CURE, The Northern Virginia Coalition, American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia, The Rutherford Institute, and the Virginia Conference United Methodist Church. The Virginia Catholic Conference and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. State Social Action Task Force and the Old Dominion Bar Association have also called for reform of Virginia's felon disenfranchisement law.

Spokespersons for the groups vowed to continue the fight to reform the Virginia law, indicating that they would immediately begin to work with Governor-elect Bob McDonnell and his staff, and that they would renew efforts to amend the Virginia Constitution through legislative action.

In a letter released earlier today, Mark Rubin, Counsel to the Governor, indicated that the Governor opposes Virginia's felon disenfranchisement law and would be willing to work to

change it after leaving office. The letter can be found online at <http://www.restoreourvote.org/RubinLetterJan2010.pdf>.

To learn more about felon disfranchisement in Virginia, go to [www.restoreourvote.org](http://www.restoreourvote.org).

### **Contacts**

King Salim Khalfani, Executive Director, Virginia State Conference NAACP, 804-321-5678

Kent Willis, Executive Director, ACLU of Virginia, 804-399-4191 (cell), 804-644-8080 (office)

Janice “Jay” Johnson, Chairperson, Virginia Organizing Project, 757-380-1242.

Nisha Mohammed, The Rutherford Institute, 434- 466-6168

Lavern J. Chatman, Co-Convener, Northern Virginia Coalition, 703-836-2858.

Ty Jones, Staff Attorney, Virginia Poverty Law Center, 804-782-9430, ext. 17

Carla Peterson, Director, Virginia C.U.R.E, 703-272-3624