

NOTICE: This is an archived press release. Information contained on this page may be outdated. Please refer to our [latest press releases](#) for up-to-date information.

Post date: October 29 2015

[Español](#)

A.G. Schneiderman Secures Agreement With Orange County Board Of Elections To Ensure Equal Access To The Ballot Box For Minority And Student Voters

Agreement Resolves Attorney General's Inquiry Into Allegations of Voter Discrimination and Intimidation Faced by Asian-American Voters in Deerpark, New York

Attorney General's Office to Monitor Upcoming Elections in Deerpark to Ensure Access Regardless of Race or National Origin

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced an agreement with the Orange County Board of Elections that will protect the right of minority and student voters in Deerpark, New York to vote in the upcoming elections and ensure equal access to the ballot box for all eligible voters in Orange County. As part of the agreement, the Board of Elections will restore voting eligibility for thirty Chinese-Americans—many of them students—whose registrations had been challenged. The Board will also adopt new policies and procedures to ensure compliance with state and federal voting laws and train poll workers to address voter intimidation and harassment. In addition, the Attorney General's Office will monitor the November 3, 2015 election in Deerpark to ensure that no voter faces intimidation on the basis of race or national origin.

“My Office is committed to ensuring equal access to the ballot box for all voters regardless of race or national origin status, and regardless of whether or not they are students seeking to register from their college campuses. Today's agreement will ensure that voters in Orange County are able to vote without fear of discrimination or harassment,” said **Attorney General Schneiderman**. “No voter should be subject to onerous voter-registration requirements based on their national origin or other spurious challenges.”

The agreement with the Orange County Board of Elections resolves the Attorney General's inquiry into allegations of voter discrimination and intimidation against Chinese-American voters residing in Deerpark and the Board's handling of voter-registration challenges. In August, 2015, the Board received

challenges to the voter registration forms of thirty Chinese-Americans, most of whom are students at Fei Tian College in Deerpark. The challenger questioned both the citizenship and place of residence of the voters. Under New York election law, a challenger must state whether the reasons for his challenge are based on personal knowledge or information provided by another person. Here, the challenger did not supply any reason to question the students' citizenship. In addition, the challenger alleged that the students resided in a single-family home but did not disclose to the Board that the students' address actually refers to numerous facilities associated with Fei Tian College, including a residential dormitory.

Although the challenger provided no basis for questioning the students' citizenship, the Board nevertheless referred the matter to the Orange County Sheriff's Office for investigation. The Board then cancelled the registrations of two students, after the Sheriff's Office erroneously reported that they were not citizens. In cancelling the registrations, the Board failed to provide the students with notice and opportunity for hearing, as required by New York election law. The Board also placed undue burdens on a number of the other students, advising them to bring their passports to the polls on Election Day to demonstrate their eligibility to vote, even though the law does not permit the Board to require passports as proof of identity or eligibility.

The Attorney General's agreement with the Orange County Board of Elections requires the Board to:

- comply with federal and state laws that prohibit voting discrimination on the basis of race or national origin;
- reject the challenges as defective and issue confirmation to the students that they are eligible to vote;
- adopt new policies and procedures for addressing voter challenges to ensure compliance with state and federal voting laws; and
- train poll workers to identify voter intimidation and harassment at the polls.

To ensure compliance with civil rights requirements that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race or national origin and to defend the rights of students and minority voters, the Attorney General's Civil Rights Bureau will monitor Deerpark elections during the November 3, general election. In addition, the Attorney General will operate a statewide Election Day hotline to help ensure that all eligible voters are able to cast an effective ballot during the general election on Tuesday, November 3. The Attorney General encourages voters to report issues or problems at polls by calling the office's hotline at 800-771-7755 or emailing civil.rights@ag.ny.gov at any time between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. on Election Day.

"Voting rights and access to the ballot box is a critical concern for the Asian American community. Strong enforcement of voting rights laws is necessary to ensure that Asian Americans are able to exercise the

rights to vote,” said **Mee Moua, president and executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC**. “Asian Americans have often been questioned about their citizenship and this has stood as a barrier to the ballot box for many. We thank the Attorney General's Office for working to lift those barriers.”

Han Ye, Student at Fie Tian College: “I am a twenty-one year old college student. This was my first time voting in an election. I was shocked and confused when my voter registration was challenged, because I am an American citizen. Like some of the other students whose voter registrations were challenged, my family came to America to escape discrimination and persecution in China. Some of our family and friends were put in jail or killed because they practiced the Falun Dafa religion. I did not expect to see discrimination like this in America. The whole experience was really hurtful. I am relieved that the Office of the Attorney General is working on this and that the voter challenges are resolved. I do not want this to happen again to anyone like me who just wants to vote.”

This matter is being handled by Assistant Attorney General Diane Lucas, Volunteer Assistant Attorney General Joseph Abboud, and Special Counsel Jessica Attie, led by Civil Rights Bureau Chief Kristen Clarke. Executive Deputy for Social Justice is Alvin Bragg.

Translate This Page

Select Language 

Powered by  Google Translate

[Translation Disclaimer](#)

Press Release Archive for indexing

- [> December 2018](#)
- [> November 2018](#)
- [> October 2018](#)
- [> September 2018](#)
- [> August 2018](#)
- [> July 2018](#)
- [> June 2018](#)
- [> May 2018](#)
- [> April 2018](#)