



UPDATE: October 6, 2006

Arizona wins voting-rights victory!

On October 5, a federal judge blocked a 2004 Arizona law that would have required all voters to submit proof of citizenship when registering to vote. The decision means the law will not apply to the 2006 election.

The requirements were ostensibly created to reduce voter fraud by undocumented immigrants, but there is scant evidence of such a problem. As **Arizona Advocacy Network** Executive Director Linda Brown told the [Arizona Republic](#), the immigration-related claim is a ruse, and the law's real intent is to suppress the vote among historically underrepresented groups: "This is the new poll tax. This is the new literacy test."

AAN and other groups, including the Arizona Civil Liberties Union and the League of Women Voters, are suing to strike the law entirely. The injunction will stay in effect until a court hears the case after the election.

Missouri Citizen Education Fund is a litigant in a federal suit against a similar state law.

NM PACE wins new school funding

Albuquerque voters recently approved a property-tax increase that will generate more funds for the city's public schools. **New Mexico PACE** helped turn more voters out than expected by holding public events to educate the public about the need for the increase, which won 57 percent of the vote, as the [Albuquerque Journal](#) reported.

CO & FL champion the environment

Colorado Progressive Coalition continues to pursue justice for residents of Pueblo's East Side, where floods and raw-sewage spills in Fountain Creek have damaged homes and threatened public health. According to a [Pueblo Chieftain](#) report, the sewage spills have spurred activism among concerned residents.

Florida Consumer Action Network joined with a number of environmental-protection groups in September to oppose a proposal from Tampa Bay Water officials to take water out of the Hillsborough River and replace it with treated wastewater. TBW unveiled an alternative plan in response to concerns about river-dwelling wildlife.

USActioners lead progressive charge

Progressive Maryland Executive Director Tom Hucker won his September 12 primary and is one step closer to securing a seat in the Maryland House of Delegates.

In late July, Robin Stelly, a field organizer with USAction partner **PA Action**, was honored as the Philadelphia Inquirer's "Woman of the Week." Columnist Marilyn Russell wrote that Robin "works hard to create awareness and enact change."

NJ Citizen Action blocks corporate merger; FL & MI fight for consumers

Since late 2004, **New Jersey Citizen Action** has led the voices of resistance against a power-utility merger that would further enrich a few corporate shareholders at the expense of hundreds of thousands of consumers. The proposed buyout of Public Service Enterprise Group by Exelon Corp. (which would create the nation's largest utility) was already approved by New York, Pennsylvania and Connecticut regulators, as well as by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the federal Department of Justice, and needed only the consent of New Jersey's Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to proceed. But, as [Newsday](#) reported, a coalition of community groups led by NJCA never gave up the fight. In September, rather than agree to rate cuts mandated by the BPU, Exelon dropped its plans for the takeover.

In what has – fortunately – been a relatively light hurricane season, the [Sarasota Herald Tribune](#) reported that insurance premiums in Florida are still on the rise. **Florida Consumer Action Network's** Bill Newton asked, "now the risk is lower, why aren't our premiums lower?"

Michigan Citizen Action endorsed a bill in the state legislature to protect choices, keep rates in check, and ensure access for digital-video consumers. The [Battle Creek Enquirer](#) editorial board also supports the plan.

CO Progressive Coalition, MO ProVote and OR Action demand a living wage

In early August, **Colorado Progressive Coalition** and its partners submitted 130,017 signatures to get a minimum-wage increase initiative on the November ballot. On August 15, CPC partnered with ProgressNowAction to host house parties across the state, during which activists wrote letters to fellow voters urging support for the initiative. Sen. John Edwards joined the party-goers on a conference call to encourage those helping to give working Americans the justice they deserve.

Earlier this year, **Missouri Progressive Vote Coalition** succeeded in getting a similar minimum-wage hike on the November ballot. Pro Vote continues to work with its allies in the Give Missourians a Raise coalition to register voters and build support for the initiative.

In September, the **Northwest Federation of Community Organizations** released a report detailing the need for a serious minimum-wage increase in Oregon and other Northwest states. Beverly DeLeonardis, of **Oregon Action**, told the [Mail Tribune](#) that the gap between actual salaries and a realistic living wage means we're "excluding families from the American dream."