

# Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated

A Public Service Sorority Founded in 1913

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## CHAPTER ACTION PLAN FOR VOTER ENGAGEMENT (First in a series of monthly messages leading to Election Day—November 6, 2012)

TO: Chapters & Members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

FROM: Cynthia M. A. Butler-McIntyre, National President and The National Social Action Commission

DATE: July 6, 2012

RE: Monthly Message - Chapter Action Plan for Voter Engagement

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This November 6 is a very important Election Day, nationally and on state and local levels. It is imperative that every chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. be engaged in voter education, registration and Election Day mobilization efforts in their local communities. As you may be aware, there are legislative efforts underfoot in states across the nation that will alter the electoral landscape as it relates to voter engagement. These changes will likely have a detrimental effect on the rights of voting participation in our nation, particularly in communities of color, when the polls open on November 6.

Sorors, the efforts to suppress voting rights are real. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, there is an alarming increase in the number of state governments across the country enacting new laws to make it harder to register or to vote. More states are requiring voters to show government-issued photo identification, often of a type that as many as one in ten voters do not have. Some states have cut back on early voting, a hugely popular innovation used by millions of Americans, most notably in the 2008 election. All in all, these and many other new restrictions in states across the country have the most impact on communities of color, elderly, young and low-income voters, as well as voters with disabilities.

**To date, fifteen states** have passed restrictive voting laws that have the potential to impact the 2012 election (Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin, and West Virginia). These states account for **210 electoral votes**, or nearly **78 percent** of the total needed to win the presidency. Of these, **12 laws and executive actions** are currently in effect in **8 states** (Florida, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and West Virginia).

Delta Chapters need to begin **right now** to develop an **Action Plan** on voter engagement that is designed to ensure that people are registered, have the proper photo identification and go to the polls and vote on Election Day. To get started, here are some key components that every chapter's Action Plan should have:

### **Voter Identification- "Your ID: Don't Go to the Polls Without It !"**

1. Know the voter Identification laws in your state, including any costs associated with obtaining identification.
2. Go to [www.thisismyvote.org](http://www.thisismyvote.org) (a project of the NAACP) to find out the acceptable forms of ID that will be required in your state.
3. Develop a plan for providing assistance to members of your community to obtain the required forms of voter ID.
  - a. Partner with other organizations with similar agendas and develop and engage a diverse coalition (for example, NAACP chapter, other fraternal organizations, social services organizations, service providers, legal services, local bar associations)
  - b. Identify voters who may possibly be impacted by these laws (community outreach using schools, faith communities, labor unions, community organizations, media, social networking, etc.)

- c. Facilitate transportation for community members to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offices or wherever transportation is needed to acquire voter identification (possible resources include, faith organizations, other community organizations, black and women-owned transportation companies, etc.)
- d. Utilize the internet to access local departments of vital records (or vital statistics) to obtain information that may be helpful in securing identification (for example, birth certificate information)
- e. Seek out potential funding sources to offset costs
- f. Follow up with voters to make sure they have the required identification needed to cast their vote on Election Day

### **Early voting/Absentee ballots/Registration - “ Know when and where you can vote!”**

1. Find out the laws in your state for the following processes:
  - a. Early voting: Does your state or locality allow early voting? What is the cutoff date? Who is eligible for early voting?
  - b. Absentee ballots: What date must ballots be returned to the Board of Elections? Who is eligible to complete an absentee ballot? Other requirements?
  - c. Registration date: does your state or locality allow for same-day registrations? Who/what organizations are permitted to conduct voter registration activities and are there any restrictions for conducting registration activities? What is the deadline that the board of elections will receive registration materials? What specific forms of identification will an individual need to register? Where can individuals go to register to vote?
2. Partner with your local Board of Elections to ensure you have the most reliable and up-to-date information.

### **Chapter registration – “Soror, are YOU registered to vote?”**

1. We cannot begin to engage members in our community until we are registered, first! Schedule a voter registration activity specifically for members of your chapter and their families who may not be registered to vote in the upcoming election (partner with your local board of elections)
2. Each soror should check their voting status and ensure that their names are on the voter rolls and they are eligible to vote on November 6<sup>th</sup>. In light of the recent redistricting in the states and efforts in some communities to purge voter rolls, names may be purged from voter rolls.

### **Voter Engagement – “What are other ways Individuals can participate?”**

1. Individuals can participate in voter engagement activities by signing up to be poll workers or poll watchers (see your local board of elections for requirements and deadlines). Chapters should encourage members to participate.

### **Resources**

Chapters and sorors should regularly check the *Social Action Center* on our website that will be updated with vital information on voter engagement news and activities.

There are many other resources that are available that provide pertinent and timely information on voter engagement issues. Below are examples of key resources that may provide guidance and assistance in your endeavors.

- The Advancement Project ([www.advancementproject.org](http://www.advancementproject.org))
- American Civil Liberties Union ([www.aclu.org/voting-rights](http://www.aclu.org/voting-rights))
- The Brennan Center for Justice ([www.brennancenter.org](http://www.brennancenter.org))
- Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law ([www.lawyerscommittee.org](http://www.lawyerscommittee.org))
- Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights ([www.civilrights.org](http://www.civilrights.org))
- League of Women Voters ([www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org))
- Local Board of Elections
- NAACP - 1-866-MYVOTE1
- National Coalition on Black Civic Participation ([www.ncbcp.org](http://www.ncbcp.org))
- National Council of La Raza ([www.nclr.org](http://www.nclr.org))