

June 20, 2007

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Philadelphia Law Department  
1515 Arch Street, 17th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dennis Kelly, Supervisor  
County Board of Elections  
City Hall, Room 142  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

RE: Observation of Philadelphia Primary Elections on May 15, 2007

Dear Misters Diaz and Kelly:

As we have done in past years, we are writing to review the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund's (AALDEF) findings from observing the Philadelphia Primary Elections on Tuesday, May 15, 2007.

AALDEF is a non-partisan civil rights organization that protects and promotes the voting rights of Asian Americans. We observed the elections for compliance with the Voting Rights Act, the Help America Vote Act, Asian language assistance, and the settlement reached in U.S. v. Philadelphia, entered into the U.S. District Court for the District of Pennsylvania on April 26, 2007.

On Election Day, we inspected poll sites and observed the vote at sixteen (16) poll sites and twenty-seven (27) divisions in Chinatown, South Philadelphia, Olney, West Oaklane, and Nicetown. Sites monitored are listed in Attachment A.

We appreciate your cooperation in allowing us to conduct these observations. We commend the City in going above and beyond the settlement reached with the U.S. Department of Justice by voluntarily providing Asian language interpreters on Election Day as well as providing voter education to Asian Americans prior to the election. These provisions were even more significant in light of our nonpartisan exit poll in 2006 and 2004, which found high percentages of Asian Americans were limited English proficient and needed language assistance to exercise their right to vote.

We thank you for providing us with a timeline of the City's overall Asian language assistance plan and a chart of poll sites and election divisions targeted for Asian language assistance. Although there were errors on this chart, we were still able to observe a number of problems that Asian American voters encountered while exercising their right to vote. Throughout the Election Day we called your office to report these incidents to you.

We observed a number of problems in providing Asian language assistance including interpreter shortages, insufficient interpreter trainings, a perpetually busy language line, and lack of translated voting materials in Asian languages. Poll workers were hostile towards interpreters, limited English proficient Asian American voters, and our own observers. Lastly, we observed other technical and administrative problems, including voters who never received mailed confirmations of their registrations and voter whose names were missing from voting lists located at poll sites. Below we highlight the most significant problems. Detailed narratives of all observations including poll worker and interpreter names and divisions at each poll site are listed in Attachment B.

**A. Problems in Language Assistance**

**1. Missing Interpreters**

Out of twelve poll sites we observed that were assigned to have Asian language interpreters, half of the interpreters did not show up or had arrived and left. There were shortages of interpreters, one interpreter covered two poll sites, or additional interpreters were needed to assist the large number of limited English proficient voters. Our observations of interpreters were as follows:

<u>Poll Site</u>	<u>Ward-Division</u>	<u>Interpreter</u>
<u>Olney</u>		
St. Helena's School	61-18	No Vietnamese interpreter
Finletter School	61-14, 61-15, 61-20	No Khmer interpreter, but one on call
Olney High School	42-16	No Khmer interpreter
Olney Recreation Center	None assigned	No Khmer interpreter, but one on call
<u>Nicetown</u>		
Hunting Park Senior Center	13-18	No Korean interpreter
<u>South Philadelphia</u>		
Tagget School	39-17	No Vietnamese interpreter (arrived and left)
Santore Southwark	2-11	No Vietnamese interpreter
<u>Chinatown</u>		
Firehouse	5-13	Needed additional Chinese interpreters
Franklin House	5-12	No Chinese interpreter (2 arrived and left)
Pennsylvania Hospital	5-5	No Chinese interpreter

There were a few errors in the chart that we were provided. For example, Ward-Division 61-13 was supposed to be at Finletter School in Olney, but when we arrived, only 61-14, 61-15, 61-20 were present. At the Olney High School, division 42-16 was mistyped and as listed as 42-6.

Interpreters did not show up at five poll sites. At Hunting Park Senior Center in Nicetown, there were no interpreters but there were several Korean American voters in the residence. At Santore Southwark in South Philadelphia, the interpreter did not show up and by mid-afternoon at least four Vietnamese voters needed language assistance to vote. Likewise there were no interpreters

at Franklin House and Pennsylvania Hospital in Chinatown, and poll workers commented about the high number of limited English proficient Chinese voters at these poll sites.

At two poll sites, interpreters came to work and then they left. This occurred at Franklin House, with two Chinese interpreters who came at two different times during the day. They may have left because there were no voters needing assistance at the time they were there, and so they thought their services were not needed. At the Tagget School in South Philadelphia, the assigned interpreter showed up in the morning. But he was not allowed to sign the payroll book and so he left. We urge the City to investigate these situations and to instruct interpreters to stay at their assigned poll sites all day long.

Sometimes interpreters were overextended. In Olney, one interpreter was covering two poll sites, Finletter School and Olney Recreation Center. This might be sufficient during off-peak voting times and for low turnout elections. But we are concerned about the morning and evening rush and high turnout elections, during which there should be one full-time interpreter serving each poll site. At the Firehouse in Chinatown, although two of the four poll workers were bilingual in Chinese, by the evening the site became very busy. The two bilingual poll workers did almost nothing while the two other poll workers did all the work. This site only had one Chinese interpreter and could have benefited from additional interpreters.

## **2. Poll Workers Uninformed of Interpreters and Blocked Interpreters from Signing Payroll**

Poll workers were not informed about interpreters. At the Philip Murray House in West Oaklane, when the interpreter first arrived in the morning, the poll workers did not know who he was. They demanded that he present some form of identification or other credentials confirming his assignment to the poll site and allowance to assist voters.

At the Olney Recreation Center, when the Khmer interpreter arrived, the poll workers did not take her seriously. She had to present her letter from the Voter Registration Administrator stating that she was an official interpreter. The poll workers said that they still had to call the Administrator, because they already had a Spanish speaking interpreter. Cambodian American voters do not speak Spanish.

Poll workers also blocked interpreters from signing payroll sheets. This not only occurred at the Tagget School, as described above, but also at the Lowell School in Olney. When the Spanish interpreters arrived at the Lowell School in the morning, they were not allowed to sign the payroll sheet as the other poll workers had done and were initially turned away.

Poll workers should be informed about the assignment of interpreters at their poll sites. They should also be instructed to be accommodating of interpreters and to treat them as full poll workers who are also entitled to sign the payroll sheet.

## **3. Interpreter Training**

The training given to interpreters, as well as all poll workers, needed improvement. The interpreter at Philip Murray House said he needed more information about basic elections procedures, particularly the rules regarding provisional ballots. Indeed, at Franklin House,

interpreters had to assist voters with provisional ballots but they did not understand the procedures causing some confusion.

The interpreter at Philip Murray House also commented that some instructions given during the training were peculiar. The trainer stressed that everything said by poll workers must be translated. But in so doing, the trainer commented that if poll workers “yelled curses at voters” then the interpreter must translate those expletives. The instructor’s directions were unnecessary and raised a concern as to why poll workers would ever be cursing at voters. We suggest that the interpreter training comprise more proper issues in election administration.

In fact, the training for all poll workers should better cover provisional ballots. The Judge of Elections at Franklin House commented about this. A voter at the Firehouse came to vote, but his name did not appear on the list of voters, and he was turned away without being offered a provisional ballot. He came back with identification to insist that he vote, at least by provisional ballot. He was again turned away and told to “wait until November to vote.” Poll workers should never turn away voters when they cannot find voters’ names, especially when those voters believe they are registered to vote. Instead, poll workers should administer provisional ballots, as is required under Help America Vote Act.

#### **4. Language Interpreter Telephone Line**

The language line was supposed to provide assistance when interpreters were unavailable, but callers could not get through. At Santore Southwark, the Vietnamese interpreters did not show up. The Judge of Elections called the language line for two different Vietnamese voters who needed language assistance, at two different times in the afternoon; both times the line was busy. This was especially disconcerting since she had called during typically low-volume times for calls. We recommend that more lines and operators be assigned to staff the language line.

#### **5. Lack of Translated Voting Materials in Asian languages**

We observed a number of signs that were available in English and Spanish, but none were available in any Asian language. Among the bilingual signs we reviewed were:

- “Sample Ballot” (pink),
- “General Information & Instructions, Notice of Prohibitions, Voters’ Rights” (blue),
- “Language Interpreter Services for Voters” (yellow), and
- “Information Statement for the Disabled” (white).

Translated signs will help voters understand voting procedures and their rights, especially when no interpreters are available or interpreters are busy assisting other voters. We hope the City will work with the Secretary of State to translate signs into Chinese, Vietnamese, Khmer, and Korean, and to target them at poll sites where they are needed.

#### **B. Poll Worker Hostility**

We received a number of complaints where poll workers were hostile towards interpreters and made them feel unwelcome, made disparaging comments about Asian American voters, and were uncooperative with and tried to intimidate observers.

### **1. Poll Worker Hostility Towards Interpreters and Voters**

At the Olney Recreation Center, one poll worker sarcastically said to the Khmer interpreter when she arrived at the poll site that there should be “an English interpreter” too. This remark, along with the other poll workers who said that a Khmer interpreter was not needed since there was already a Spanish interpreter, made the interpreter feel uncomfortable

At the Lowell School, a Majority Inspector accused the Spanish-speaking interpreters of defrauding the Board of Elections by signing time sheets multiple times for each division. We found that the Inspector’s allegations were unsupported but we believed that the Inspector was actually complaining of interpreters being paid for their services. Indeed, when the interpreters first arrived, they were not allowed to sign the payroll sheet like the other poll workers at the poll site had already done. Moreover, this Inspector caused other problems for the interpreters and talked badly about them. This caused both interpreters, assigned to separate divisions, to sit together at the same division because of the unwelcoming environment that the Inspector created.

Poll workers made disparaging remarks about Asian American voters. At the Hunting Park Senior Center, the Minority Inspector said that Asian Americans “are not from here” and complained that “they don’t speak English [and therefore] should not be allowed to vote.” Korean interpreters did not show up for work but there were several Korean American voters in the residential building. Other poll workers commented that the Korean Americans did not vote. We believe this may be due to the racial animus by poll workers who created an unreceptive voting environment.

### **2. Poll Worker Hostility Toward Observers and Non-Cooperation**

At the Hunting Park Senior Center, after our observer overheard the Inspector’s disparaging remarks, the Judge of Election quickly tried to hush her and frustrated our monitoring. He forbade the Minority Inspector from talking with our observer. He directed our observer to only speak with him. We then asked about poll worker names and titles. The Judge of Election said he “would call the committee.” He could not get through and so he called the Law Department. He said that our observer was “interrogating him” and that we were demanding proof of identification from poll workers. We never made such demands, and a few simple questions hardly constituted an interrogation. Nevertheless, after the call and notwithstanding the Law Department’s instructions for cooperation, the Judge of Election would not provide any names or titles of poll workers.

At the Philip Murray House, we asked a poll worker about the display of partisan campaign literature interspersed with official City election materials. The Committeewoman complained to other Committeepersons and she tried to thwart our observations. She said we were asking “ninety-nine questions” and then said that our observer said that “there were too many black people in the area.” The Committeewoman fabricated inflammatory comments to rally poll workers against our observer and to intimidate him.

We recommend that poll workers be informed about and instructed to cooperate with nonpartisan observers. We also urge the Law Department to investigate the poll workers at these sites who were hostile towards interpreters, observers, and voters.

## **C. Other Problems**

### **1. Improper Partisan Influence over Elections**

We were disturbed to find incidents of improper partisan influence over the elections. Though partly described above, we provide more detail here. First, at the Hunting Park Senior Center, the Judge of Election was uncomfortable with our observer was monitoring the poll site and said he “would call the committee.” We presumed this meant the political party committee. If so, we are concerned about poll workers taking direction from partisan leaders about election matters.

Second, at the Philip Murray House the partisan campaign literature interspersed with official City election materials seemed improper. These were just outside of one of the entrances to the voting area. Official election signage, such as sample ballots, “Voter Information and Statement of Voter’s Rights,” and “Notice of Prohibited Activities,” were present next to a series of partisan campaign literature that was laid out on the table next to the signs.

We urge for an investigation of the poll workers at these poll sites and steps to ensure that elections are free from improper partisan influence.

### **2. Lack of Registration Confirmation and Names Missing from Voter Lists at Poll Sites**

Voters complained about the lack of notice confirming their registrations and that their names were missing from lists of voters located at poll sites. We note that this was a complaint from voters during the November 2006 elections as well.

About two dozen voters registered as part of a community event by the City and the Chinese American Women’s Sisterhood Society in March 2007. One elderly man originally thought that he could not vote because he did not speak English. The election official educated him about his right to vote and he registered with three other members of his family, which his daughter helped them to do. The last day to register to vote for the May Primary Elections was April 16 and so these registrations were timely. But these voters never received their voter registration cards in the mail. The daughter called the City Election Commission the day before Election Day. The operator confirmed the voters’ registrations and informed her that the Firehouse was their assigned poll site.

At the Firehouse, the daughter’s father was turned away because his name did not appear on the list of voters. He first came to vote in the late morning, and he was turned away. He returned in the early afternoon with identification. He was again turned away and told to “wait until November to vote.”

We urge for an investigation into this situation. Voters must be better informed of their confirmed registration. Mailed registration cards are especially important since they qualify as identification for first time voters who need to show ID under the Help America Vote Act.

### **3. Other Problems: Technical and Administrative**

At Santore Southwark, both of the voting machines did not work in the morning, and a replacement needed to be sent to the poll site. About fifteen people were turned away during this time.

There were numerous errors on the chart of the poll sites and election divisions targeted for Asian language assistance. We received this chart via email on Tuesday, May 8, 2007. Certain election divisions were not located at the poll sites represented on the chart. Ward-Division 61-13 was supposed to be at the Finletter School poll site, but it was not there. Division numbers were mistyped, for example 42-16 was written as 42-6. Some descriptions and names of poll sites were wrong. For instance, elementary schools were identified as high schools. Recreation centers were not listed as such. No exact addresses or locations of entrances to the poll sites were listed. In the future, we hope we can be provided with a more accurate and error-free list.

#### **D. Summary of Recommendations**

We make the following recommendations to the City to resolve the problems detailed herein.

- Improve interpreter assignments.  
Interpreters must show up at their assigned poll sites and remain all day long. Over-recruiting to staff a back-up pool of interpreters who can be dispatched to poll sites on Election Day will help alleviate shortages.  
  
Poll workers should be informed about the assignment of interpreters at their poll sites. They should also be accommodating of interpreters and to treat them equally as all other poll workers.
- Investigate, discipline, and retrain poll workers.  
The City should investigate poll workers who were hostile towards interpreters, made disparaging remarks about Asian American and limited English proficient voters, and made voters and interpreters feel unwelcome, as well as those who were uncooperative, belligerent, and hostile toward observers. Poll workers may need to be retrained, reprimanded or removed from their posts. The City should also investigate why interpreters did not come to work on Election Day, or came and left.
- Improve poll worker and interpreter trainings.  
Trainings for all poll workers, as well as interpreters, should better cover provisional ballots. Trainings for interpreters should also cover basic elections procedures.
- Ensure transparency and nonpartisan election observing.  
Poll workers should also be informed about and instructed to cooperate with nonpartisan election observers. The City should also develop a more accurate and error-free list of poll sites and election divisions targeted for Asian language assistance. The list should include exact addresses and the entrances to poll sites.
- Increase lines and operators on the City Telephone Language Line to assist callers.
- Guard against improper partisan influence over the elections.  
Poll workers must not to take direction from political partisan leaders about election matters. Partisan campaign literature should be removed from poll sites that appear alongside official City election materials.

- Address problems of incomplete voter lists, and ensure notice to voters.  
The City should explore complaints of voters' names missing from lists of voters located at poll sites. The City should also investigate incidents of voters who registered as part of the City's outreach efforts in March 2007 but never received confirmations of their registrations. Voters should be adequately informed of their confirmed registration and assigned poll sites.

We hope the City will fully consider these recommendations and all of our observations, which we hope will help improve the voting process for Philadelphia's diverse electorate. Again, we commend the City's efforts to provide language assistance to Asian American voters. We look forward to continuing to work with the Philadelphia Law Department and County Board of Elections. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at 212-966-5932, ext. 206 or [gmagpantay@aaldef.org](mailto:gmagpantay@aaldef.org).

Sincerely,

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cc:  
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**Attachment A: Sites Monitored by AALDEF, May 15, 2007**

<b>Poll Site</b>	<b>Ward-Division</b>	<b>Language(s)</b>
<b>Olney</b>		
Lowell School	61-2, 61-3, 61-4, 61-7, 61-8	Khmer Korean Vietnamese
St. Helena's School	61-18	Vietnamese
Finletter School	61-14, 61-15, 61-20	Khmer
Olney Recreation Center	61-10, 61-12	Khmer
Olney High School	42-12, 42-16	Khmer
<b>West Oaklane</b>		
Philip Murray House	17-4, 17-12	Korean
<b>Nicetown</b>		
Hunting Park Senior Center	13-18	Korean
Simon Gratz High School	13-16, 13-17, 13-22	Not targeted
<b>South Philadelphia</b>		
Tagget School	39-17, 39-22	Vietnamese
South Philadelphia HS	39-35, 39-37	Vietnamese
Santore Southwark	2-11	Vietnamese
<b>Chinatown</b>		
Firehouse	5-13	Chinese (Mandarin/ Cantonese)
Franklin House	5-12	Chinese (Mandarin/ Cantonese)
Pennsylvania Hospital	5-5	Chinese (Mandarin/ Cantonese)

**Attachment B: Observations at Each Poll Site**

**Olney**

**Lowell School**

Ward 61

Divisions 2, 3, 4, 7, 8

The Majority Inspector at 61-7, **Mary Bastic**, accused the Spanish-speaking interpreters of defrauding the Board of Elections by signing time sheets multiple times. She claimed that they signed sheets for each of the divisions at the poll site. When we inquired how she knew about this, she replied, "I just knew it." We interviewed the interpreters, **Inez Reyes** at 61-4 and **Carlos Reyes** at 61-7, as well as one of the Machinists and found Inspector Bastic's allegations to be unsupported. We suspected that Ms. Bastic was actually complaining of interpreters being compensated for their services.

Interpreter Reyes complained that when he had first arrived at the poll site, at 7:00 AM, he was not allowed to sign the payroll sheet. In fact, the poll workers initially turned him away. It was not until 10:30 AM that the local Ward Leader came to the poll site and directed poll workers to allow the interpreters to sign the payroll sheet.

We found that Inspector Bastic caused problems for the interpreters. She talked badly about them to other poll workers and made them feel unwelcome. This caused both Spanish interpreters, who were assigned to separate divisions to sit together at the same division because of the unreceptive environment that Inspector Bastic had created.

Inspector Bastic commented to our observer, at least three times, that she did not want to be a poll worker in future elections nor did she want to be appointed. We suggest that you honor her request.

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**Finletter School**

Ward 61

Divisions 14, 15, 20

The chart provided to us via email on May 8 that listed poll sites and election divisions targeted for Asian language assistance had errors. The chart identified that Ward 61, Division 13 was at this poll site, but it was not there.

**Rorng Sorng** was apparently assigned as the Khmer-speaking interpreter at this poll site. But she was floating between this poll site and Olney Recreation Center. Poll workers understood that she was on call and available to assist Khmer-speaking voters when they arrived at the poll site. While this might work during off-peak voting times and low turnout elections, we are concerned about the morning and evening rush and high turnout elections. There should be one full-time interpreter serving each poll site all day long.

## **Olney**

### **Olney Recreation Center**

Ward 61  
Divisions 10, 12

The interpreter, **Rorng Sorng**, reported a small confrontation with the poll workers at this site. When she showed up for work in the morning, she complained that poll workers did not take her seriously. She presented her letter from **Bob Lee**, the Voter Registration Administrator to prove that she was assigned as an interpreter at this poll site. They said that they had to “call the Administrator,” because they already had a Spanish speaking interpreter.

At this instance, one poll worker, a white man, made a sarcastic comment that there should be “an English interpreter” too. This insensitive comment made the interpreter feel uncomfortable.

In addition, the interpreter was floating between this poll site and the Finletter School. Like the other site, poll workers knew of the interpreter and there were no problems during this time and type of elections. But we maintain that there should be one full-time interpreter serving each poll site, especially during the morning and evening and high turnout elections.

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## **West Oaklane**

### **Philip Murray House**

Ward 17  
Divisions 4, 12

The Korean interpreter at this site, **Bernard Chae**, was very good. We observed that he was helpful toward Korean voters. Poll workers generally allowed him to enter voting booths with voters to render assistance and did not interfere with the assistance he provided. We note that **Gloria Waddell**, the Judge of Election at 17-12 was especially helpful.

The interpreter reported a problem, however, in the morning when he first arrived. Poll workers did not know who he was. They were not informed that an interpreter would be assigned to their poll site to assist voters. They demanded that he present some form of identification or other credentials confirming his assignment to the poll site and allowance to assist voters. This problem was resolved later in the day, but again, poll workers should be trained about the presence of interpreters.

Mr. Chae commented that the training given to interpreters was somewhat helpful but could have been improved. He first said that more information was needed about basic elections procedures, and in particular, the rules regarding the use of provisional ballots.

He then mentioned that the instructions given during the training were somewhat peculiar. He said that the trainer stressed that everything must be translated. But in so doing, said that if poll workers “yelled curses at voters” then the interpreter must translate those expletives. The instructor’s directions were unnecessary and raised a concern as to why poll workers would ever be cursing at voters to begin with. We suggest that the interpreter training comprise more proper issues.

We observed the improper display of partisan campaign literature interspersed with official City election materials. The voting area has two entrances, one of which is closer to 17-4 and comes in from the building main lobby. Just outside this entrance in the lobby is voting signage, such as sample ballots, “Voter Information and Statement of Voter’s Rights,” and “Notice of Prohibited Activities.” We observed that a series of candidates’ partisan campaign materials was laid out on the table next to the signs. We note that there was also an area just outside of the poll site where most campaigners and partisan materials were being distributed. It could be argued that the campaign literature was legitimately outside of the immediate voting area. However, because it was interspersed in an area with the City’s election materials, especially sample ballots, it created an uncomfortable partisan atmosphere. We suggest that these materials be removed.

Upon observing these partisan materials interspersed with official election materials, an incident erupted with a poll worker. **Mary Ross**, a Committeewoman for 17-4, was sitting at the table and commented that our observer made her feel uncomfortable after asking her about the placement of the campaign literature. She complained to another Committeewoman for 17-4 that we were not allowed to ask “ninety-nine questions.” We had only asked one or two questions, observed signs and materials, and taken notes. The other Committeewoman intervened and she said that we could not interfere with Ms. Ross’ activities. Ms. Ross was sitting at the table literally doing nothing. When she was active, she was distributing campaign literature. We withdrew, asked no more questions, and simply read the posted elections signs and sample ballots.

But then, another Committeeman approached our observer and asked if there were any problems. At his invitation, we expressed our concern about the presence of so many partisan materials directing voters to vote for particular candidates next to the sample ballot. He discounted our concerns and said that he was told that our observer said “that there were too many black people in the area.” This was a lie. We explained to him that no such comment was ever made. It was clear that the inflammatory comment was fabricated to rally support against our observer and to intimidate and eventually eject our observer from the poll site.

We suggest that you retrain the poll workers at 17-12 about the proper placement of election materials, the presence of nonpartisan observers, and the legal implications of making false accusations designed to intimidate. Such behaviors by poll workers is unacceptable.

## **Nicetown**

### **Hunting Park Senior Center**

Ward 13

Division 18

The assigned interpreter at this poll site did not show up. We observed, and local community residents commented, that there were several Korean American voters in the residence. They also commented that the residents did not vote. Upon arriving at the poll site, we discovered that the reason why the Korean Americans may not have been voting was because poll workers created an unreceptive voting environment.

When our observer arrived, a Minority Inspector made disparaging remarks about Asian American voters under her breath. She said that Asian Americans “are not from here” and complained that “they don’t speak English [and therefore] should not be allowed to vote.”

Our observer overheard these comments and the Judge of Election quickly tried to hush her in front of our observer. The Judge of Election then tried to frustrate our monitoring. He forbade the Minority Inspector from talking with our observer. He directed our observer to only speak with him. We asked about Asian American and Korean American voters and the need for language assistance. He said that there were no Korean American voters and that interpreters were not needed. We note, however, that our observer had just come from the building lobby a few moments earlier and saw a number of Korean Americans.

As a routine matter, we then asked for the Judge of Election’s name and title. He then became uncomfortable and said he “would call the committee.” We presumed this meant the political party committee. If so, we are concerned about poll workers taking direction from political partisan leaders about election matters.

He was not able to get through to “the committee” and so he called the Law Department through the phone number listed on our monitoring authorization letter. He said that our observer was “interrogating him” and that we were demanding proof of identification and ID cards from poll workers. We never made such explicit demands and a few simple questions hardly constitute an interrogation. Nevertheless, after the call, the Judge of Election would not provide names or titles of poll workers.

Instead, he told our observer to come back to the poll site in the evening once the voting closed to view the signed payroll sheet. He also recommended that in order to get names, we should recommend to the City that the City provide name tags to poll workers. He clearly did not want to comply with the Law Department’s instructions for cooperation, nor did he want to provide his or other poll workers’ names.

We recommend that poll workers be informed about and instructed to cooperate with nonpartisan, independent observers. We also urge the Law Department to investigate the poll workers at this site and to assign two Korean-speaking interpreters to this poll site. We suggest two because we are concerned about future harassment of interpreters.

## **South Philadelphia**

### **Tagget School**

Ward 39  
Divisions 17, 22

The interpreter assigned to this poll site showed up for work in the morning. He was not allowed to sign the payroll book when he arrived. The Judge of Elections reported that the interpreter only stayed for five minutes and then left.

We are unsure of whether this was because the poll workers had turned the interpreter away and were unwelcoming of him or if the interpreter left because there was no one to assist at the time he arrived and he believed that he would not be paid for working that day.

We note that this problem of interpreters not being allowed to sign the payroll book also occurred at the Lowell School and so it might be a more systemic problem. We urge you to train poll workers to be accommodating of interpreters and to treat them as full poll workers who are also entitled to sign the payroll sheet and should be compensated for their services.

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### **Santore Southwark**

Ward 2  
Division 11

The interpreter at this poll site did not show up for work. Upon arriving at this poll site, the Judge of Elections, **Angela C. Donoflio**, commented to our observer about the great need for Vietnamese interpreters. She said that last November her site was assigned an interpreter but that at this election there was no interpreter. By mid-afternoon she had at least four Vietnamese voters who needed language assistance. She tried to call the City Language Telephone Line and both times that she tried, she was not able to get through, even though the calls were made at a typically low-volume time of day.

Since there was no interpreter and the language line was busy, she, reluctantly, turned to partisan campaigners outside of the poll site to find someone to assist the voters, which turned out to be fruitless since the campaigners did not speak Vietnamese either.

The Judge of Elections also commented that in the morning, both of her voting machines did not work and a replacement needed to be sent to the poll site. She said that about fifteen people were turned away in the morning.

Obviously, this site must be staffed with Vietnamese interpreters in future elections.

## **Chinatown**

### **Firehouse**

Ward 5

Division 13

One limited English proficient voter, **Mr. Yu Yeung Wu**, was turned away from this poll site when he came to vote and was not offered a provisional ballot. He first came to vote around 11:00 AM, but his name did not appear on the list of voters and he was turned away, without being given a provisional ballot. He went home and informed his daughter who had originally assisted him in registering to vote several weeks ago. His daughter urged him to go back to the poll site and insist that he vote, at least by provisional ballot. He returned to the poll site around 12:30 PM and brought identification. He was again turned away and told to “wait until November to vote.” For the second time, he was not given a provisional ballot. After much encouragement from his daughter, he returned to the poll site a third time late in the afternoon and a Committeeman, **Glenn King**, intervened and directed poll workers to allow the voter to vote on the machine.

Mr. Wu originally thought that because he did not speak English, he could not vote. He attended an event by the Chinese American Women’s Sisterhood Society and officials from the City in March 2007. He learned that he was allowed to vote and registered to vote at that event.

His daughter, **Grace Kong**, recalled that about 25 new voter registration forms were collected and “were give to a Committee Leader.” Ms. Kong helped four members of her family to register to vote at that event, her father Mr. Wu, who had encountered the problem, her mother **So King Kong**, her brother **Jack Yee Louie**, and her sister-in-law **Yuang Ha Louie**. This event was well more than 30 days before the elections and so the registrations were certainly timely.

However, none of them received voter registration cards or other confirmations of their registrations in the mail. His daughter called the City Election Commission at 215-686-1509 on the Monday before Election Day to inquire about their registrations. The operator confirmed the registrations for all four voters and said they were assigned to vote at the Firehouse in Chinatown. Had Ms. Kong not called, the voters would not know whether they could vote nor would they have known their voting location.

We urge the City to investigate these situations and to improve the process in informing voters of their confirmed registration. We also urge for better training of poll workers in the use of provisional ballots. HAVA requires that voters who believe they are registered to vote but do not appear on voter lists at poll sites be allowed to vote by provisional ballots. Poll workers should not turn away voters.

We also observed that the poll site had four poll workers at the table check-in for voters. Two of the poll workers were bilingual in Chinese. By the evening, the site became very busy with a long line for check-in and at both voting machines. However, the two bilingual Chinese poll workers sat at the table doing almost nothing while the two other poll workers processed all the voters.

This site only had one Chinese interpreter but could have benefited from additional interpreters, especially given that the other bilingual poll workers were inactive

**Franklin House**

Ward 5

Division 12

No interpreters were at this poll site and the Judge of Elections, **Joseph Bonfiglio**, reported that earlier in the day, two Chinese interpreters came to the poll site and had left. They did not sign the payroll sheet. One of the interpreters, **Harrison Tao**, arrived in the morning, stayed for three hours and then left. Another interpreter came for an hour and then left. It was unclear why these interpreters did not stay at the poll site.

Mr. Bonfiglio commented that this poll site had a number of limited English proficient Chinese voters and that an interpreter was needed. He estimated that about a third of all voters was Asian American. This poll site must be staffed with interpreters in future elections.

Additionally, Mr. Bonfiglio commented that there was a need to train poll workers and interpreters on the rules regarding provisional ballots. The interpreters had to assist voters with provisional ballots but did not understand the procedures. This caused some confusion. We recommend that interpreters and all poll workers be given training in basic election procedures.

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**Pennsylvania Hospital**

Ward 5

Division 5

The interpreter at this poll site never showed up. The Judge of Elections, **Peter Dunn**, commented that there were a number of Asian American voters at this poll site who needed language assistance. This poll site must be staffed with interpreters in future elections.