

## June 25, 2007: Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act

The Honorable Loretta Sanchez

### DECEPTIVE PRACTICES AND VOTER INTIMIDATION PREVENTION ACT OF 2007

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Mr. Speaker, I rise today as an original cosponsor and strong supporter of H.R. 1281, the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Act of 2007.

This is an issue that is close to my heart. I am grateful to my colleagues Mr. EMANUEL, for introducing this legislation, and Chairman CONYERS, for his consideration of H.R. 1281 in the Judiciary Committee.

The great promise of America is that every citizen has a vote, a voice in how our government is run. And we've seen in recent years where 100 or 50 or 5 or even 1 vote has changed the outcome of an election. So making sure that every U.S. citizen is able to vote is one of our most fundamental responsibilities.

When most people think of Voting Rights Act violations they think of the 1960s, when African Americans were prevented from voting because of the color of their skin. Many do not realize that voter suppression still occurs today.

The targets of intimidation remain the same. This last election, minority and naturalized immigrant communities were the targets of deception, misinformation and voter intimidation designed to abridge their right to vote.

In the district I represent, California's 47th, concerns were raised when about 14,000 registered Hispanic voters received a written letter, in Spanish, from the "California Coalition for Immigration Reform" informing voters that immigrants voting in a federal election were committing a crime "that could result in incarceration and possible deportation....."

It also went on to advise voters that "the U.S. government is installing a new computerized system to verify names of all the newly registered voters who participate in the elections in October and November. Organizations against immigration will be able to request information from this new computerized system."

The intent of the letter was to intimidate. Families were afraid that their personal information would be shared with anti-immigration groups if they voted. They were afraid of retaliation for exercising their right to vote.

Revisiting and reforming the voting rights laws will send a clear message to potential violators that deceptive practices are unacceptable and will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

H.R. 1281 will strengthen the prohibition and punishment of deceptive practices that aim to keep voters away from the polls on Election Day.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, which will go a long way in preventing future acts of voter intimidation.