

## **ACORN: A Repeat-Offender**

By: Congressman Tom Cole

Much is being made in the news lately of the uncovering of massive, multi-state, multi-election cycle voter fraud, perpetrated by the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, also known as ACORN. In just the past year and a half ACORN claims to have registered 1.3 million new voters. Normally this would be a good thing - we should encourage greater participation in our political system. Unfortunately, it is becoming clear that ACORN was operating a massive scam by registering tens of thousands of phony voters.

In Nevada it has been revealed that ACORN hired inmates in the state penitentiary to register new voters. They registered the Dallas Cowboys to vote in Nevada. Another Nevada canvasser was caught filling out voter registration forms using names and addresses copied out of the telephone book. Needless to say, this scandal is not confined to Nevada. Election officials in Ohio, Missouri, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and New Mexico have all uncovered similar instances of fraud. A state prosecutor in Washington State put it very well when he described the activities of ACORN as "an act of vandalism against our voter rolls."

Voting in free and fair elections is the very foundation of our system of self governance. Who can ever forget the remarkable election of 2000 when the candidate who actually received fewer popular votes won the election? This was after an extended recount - in the state his bother served as Governor - and a 5-4 Supreme Court decision. Yet at no time did we see tanks rolling through the streets. There was no martial law. Americans tuned into the Tonight Show every night to see Jay Leno cracking jokes about hanging chads. This was possible because Americans had faith that despite the problems we had in that election, the process was fundamentally honest and fair. Organizations like ACORN undermine that trust and as a result they undermine the very political stability of the United States.

And as if this treachery weren't enough, ACORN does this with millions of dollars of taxpayer money. You see, ACORN played another role in the dominant news item of the past several weeks - the collapse of the sub-prime mortgage industry. For years ACORN has used intimidation tactics to force banks to make loans to people who couldn't afford to pay them back. And they extorted millions of dollars from Congress under the auspices of the Community Redevelopment Act by arranging to have Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac buy up the risky mortgages on the secondary market.

Remarkably, in the recently passed Economic Recovery Act, the liberals in Congress attempted to put even more money into the pockets of their cronies at ACORN. Fortunately, the Republicans put their foot down and all additional funding for ACORN was stripped from the bill. I'd call that a good start, but now we need to get to work making sure the rest of their taxpayer funding is stripped away.

Unfortunately, it does not appear to be just a few bad apples at ACORN. The entire organization has a considerable record of manipulation and fraud. In June the Consumers Rights League published a series of internal documents from the organization that reveal ACORN has comingled political money and taxpayer funds. In order to prevent future taxpayer rip-offs and blatant voter fraud, the Community Reinvestment Act needs to be overhauled, and ACORN should never again receive a penny of taxpayer money. Furthermore, those responsible for the fraudulent registrations must be thoroughly investigated, and if found guilty, punished to the full extent of the law.

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