

## FAIR ELECTIONS LEGAL NETWORK 2015 PROGRAM

The **Fair Elections Legal Network (FELN)** is a national, nonpartisan voting rights, legal support and election reform organization whose mission is to remove barriers to registration and voting for traditionally underrepresented constituencies. Since its founding in 2006, FELN has furthered positive electoral reform across the country through strategic partnerships, legislation, and litigation to defeat obstacles to voter participation.

FELN collaborates with, and provides assistance to, state and local groups that implement voter registration and GOTV efforts with an emphasis on those that mobilize minority, student, and youth voters. FELN participates with State Voices 501-c-3 coalitions, America Votes 501-c-4 coalitions and their member organizations across the country providing election policy expertise. With our partners, including civic engagement groups, election reform organizations and unions, FELN has been heavily involved in countering legislative and administrative efforts to suppress the vote, and in promoting voter reforms and administrative practices that facilitate registration and voting. These efforts include:

- Creating state-specific guides for voter registration and GOTV;
- Creating state-specific voter guides for colleges and their students;
- Working with college administrators and faculty to promote student registration and voting;
- Reviewing organizations' mobilization and registration plans for legal compliance;
- Drafting state-specific legislation and municipal policies for positive voting reforms;
- Providing research, talking points and analysis for proposed or new legislation;
- Participating in administrative and legal proceedings;
- Working with election officials, directly and indirectly, to create voter-friendly procedures; and
- Providing advice to civic engagement groups on how to best work with election officials.

In 2012, FELN created [Campus Vote Project](#) (CVP) as a vehicle to institutionalize our traditional work around student voting issues. CVP is aimed at promoting best practices in voter registration and voter education at higher education institutions to ensure students have the information they need to register and vote.

### **PROGRAM FOR 2015**

2015 will provide an opportunity for legislatures across the country to manipulate election laws without facing the scrutiny usually present during election years. Emboldened by sweeping victories in the 2014 midterm elections, legislatures and governors across the country may attempt to restrict the vote in advance of the 2016 presidential election. Taking the 2015 legislative, legal and political landscape into account, FELN is focusing its work in six important areas:

- 1) **Championing Proactive Voter Reforms at the State and Local Level and Fighting Suppressive Legislation –**  
*State Pro-Voter Reforms:* FELN will work to further gains toward a national standard of voting rights legislation across the country to improve election administration, reduce lines, and increase participation including: preregistration for 16- and 17-year-olds, no-excuse absentee voting, meaningful in-person early voting, online voter registration, and same day or Election Day registration. *Municipal Reforms:* FELN will work with local partner organizations and coalitions of elected officials to push for strategic local initiatives where there is greater chance of positive reform. FELN developed a toolkit for local elected officials to identify options that can be implemented in their communities. *Voter Suppression Efforts:* In 2015, there will be more attempts to pass restrictive voting laws before a preclearance system is reestablished under the Voting Rights Act. This could include requirements proof of citizenship to register to vote in Texas and Florida, passage of strict photo ID standards in Florida, Nevada, and New Mexico, changes to residency requirements in New Hampshire, and a final outcome for Wisconsin's voter ID litigation.

- 2) **Protecting Voters across the Country for Municipal Elections** – FELN will continue the work it has been doing in support of voter mobilization groups representing traditionally under-represented communities in 2015. FELN will update our voter guides through the 2015 municipal elections, which include key elections in large urban areas across the country in states where we will focus in 2016, and will create voter information palm cards for our allies to use in their election programming. FELN will continue working with State Voices and America Votes tables across the country and with other allies to develop election protection plans and to monitor state and local election administration decisions that can impact voters.
- 3) **Promoting Electoral Participation among Students and Non-Student Youth, and Institutionalizing Voter Registration, Voter Education and GOTV Efforts** – FELN will expand CVP in 2015, building upon past successes. CVP will capitalize on the lull between election years to approach more universities and community colleges to implement changes on their campuses. At the same time, CVP will be working with the U.S. Department of Education to promote the Higher Education Act’s mandate that colleges and universities widely distribute voter registration information and forms to their students. FELN will expand CVP by establishing more partnerships with four-year universities and continuing specific outreach to community colleges, HBCUs, Hispanic serving colleges and some high schools. CVP will focus in Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin. If funding permits, CVP will expand to California, Kentucky, Illinois, and Iowa.
- 4) **Electoral Support to Communities of Color and Mobilization Organizations** – FELN will continue to serve as a source of information and technical assistance for groups such as Black Youth Vote, NAACP Youth and College division, LULAC, National Council of La Raza, Mi Familia Vota, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, and APIAVote, among others. As a partner we will continue providing materials like guides for voter registration drives, student voting and GOTV, and palm cards that can be translated into Spanish, Hmong, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, and Bhutanese as needed.
- 5) **Expand Partnership with Community Health Centers through Community Health Vote** – FELN helped design and will continue to provide technical assistance and training for Community Health Vote, a project of the NACHC, aimed at unregistered Hispanic, Asian-American and African-American patients at health centers across the country. The health centers are a trusted community institution for 23 million patients a year. Working with NACHC and Nonprofit VOTE, FELN will ensure compliance with third-party registration, privacy and election laws. FELN will continue efforts to train health center staff and volunteers while developing voter registration and voter education programs during advocacy work supporting health center funding, Medicaid expansion and enrollment under the Affordable Care Act. FELN has worked with Community Health Vote to develop a website for health centers to access training materials as well as guidance documents for the voter registration and voter education efforts. Finally, FELN will help community health centers educate patients in states with new ID laws on how to comply with the requirement.
- 6) **Poll Worker Recruitment and Training** – There is no practical solution that can make a more significant and immediate impact on the voting experience of Americans than improving poll worker recruitment and training. FELN will launch a new initiative in 2015 to develop best practices for the recruitment, training, and retention of poll workers. Partnering with the University of Minnesota, Humphrey School of Public Affairs Election Academy, FELN will launch the nation’s first poll worker research program to build upon findings of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration. We will work with local election officials to identify poll worker needs that can be filled by local partner organizations representing communities of color, in particular community colleges and high schools whose students represent those communities and language minority communities. The goal is to have more poll workers reflect the makeup of the voters they serve. This effort will also work with the Hispanic and API state and national organizations to promote poll worker recruitment.

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