



Latino Policy & Politics Initiative

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 7, 2022

MEDIA CONTACT

Lys Mendez

e: lpipress@luskin.ucla.edu

STATEMENT ON VICTORY IN FRANKLIN COUNTY CASE THAT PROTECTS THE WASHINGTON STATE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

A [Franklin County Superior Court](#) judge found on Jan. 3 that the Washington Voting Rights Act was constitutional in a case argued by the [UCLA Voting Rights Project](#) (UCLA VRP) due to concerns that the county's at-large elections dilute the Latino vote.

UCLA VRP served as counsel for the plaintiffs against a Franklin County voter who challenged the constitutionality of voting rights law passed in Washington in 2018 to protect votes in communities of color, therefore arguing that changes to the at-large voting system were unnecessary. UCLA VRP attorneys Sonni Waknin and Chad Dunn defended the constitutionality of the Washington Voting Rights Act on Dec. 13. Below is a statement from Waknin, a lead attorney for the case:

"The fight to defend democracy and ensure the voting rights of all Americans is taking place through battles in county and state courthouses all across the nation. We are proud of our victory in Franklin County, which means that the growing Latino electorate will have a fair chance to have their vote matter and to elect their candidates of choice in future elections.

"We hope that the victory in Washington state sends a clear message to local officials across the nation who are working to undermine the rights of voters from communities of color that attacks on our democracy and voting rights will not go down without a fight. We are encouraged that Washington's model to protect the rights of all voters was validated by this case.

"We thank our local partners and the dedicated voting rights advocates who made this legal victory possible."

###

ABOUT THE UCLA LATINO POLICY AND POLITICS INITIATIVE

The UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative addresses the most critical domestic policy challenges facing Latinos and other communities of color through research, advocacy, mobilization, and leadership development to expand genuine opportunity for all Americans.

ABOUT THE UCLA VOTING RIGHTS PROJECT

The UCLA Voting Rights Project (VRP) is the marquee advocacy project of the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative (LPPI) at the University of California, Los Angeles and is focused on voting rights litigation, research, policy, and training. The UCLA Voting Rights Project addresses monumental and overlooked gaps in the field of voting rights: how to train young lawyers and researchers, support the development of new legal and methodological theories for voting rights cases, and how to advance policy work to ensure that there is a new generation of leaders who are pursuing efforts to guarantee all citizens have equal and fair access to our democracy. The project was founded by Chad W. Dunn, J.D. and Matt Barreto, Ph.D. The UCLA Voting Rights Project is located within the Luskin School of Public Affairs.

To learn more about the UCLA Voting Rights Project, please visit <https://latino.ucla.edu/votingrights>.