



Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

1629 K Street, NW
10th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20006

Phone: 202-466-3311
Fax: 202-466-3435
www.civilrights.org

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September 20, 2007

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chair
Committee on Rules and Administration
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

On behalf of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the nation's oldest, largest and most diverse civil and human rights coalition, I write today to urge you to oppose the confirmation of Hans von Spakovsky to the Federal Election Commission (FEC). His record of partisan enforcement of the voting rights laws while an official at the United States Department of Justice (DOJ), and his pursuit of policies that systematically block access to the franchise for poor and minority voters make him unqualified to serve in such an important capacity.

Mr. von Spakovsky is one of the architects of the Bush Administration's voter suppression efforts targeting minority voters. From 2001 to 2005, as an official at the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, von Spakovsky helped steer the federal government toward voting rights policies not seen before, imposing sweeping restrictions that would make it harder for poor and minority voters to cast ballots. For example, in 2005, while Georgia's voter ID law was under review for compliance with the Voting Rights Act by the office he supervised at DOJ, von Spakovsky anonymously published an article in the *Texas Review of Law & Politics* that endorsed voter ID laws like Georgia's, arguing that every voter should be required to produce a photo-identification card and that there was "no evidence" that such restrictions burden minority voters disproportionately." By all accounts, von Spakovsky drove the Department's decision to approve the Georgia law, later struck down by a federal judge as akin to a Jim Crow-era poll tax.

According to a recent article in the *Los Angeles Times*, in the weeks leading up to the November 2004 general election, von Spakovsky prevented the Civil Rights Division from investigating serious allegations of voter discrimination against Native Americans in Minnesota. And according to recent reporting from McClatchy newspapers, von Spakovsky attempted to pressure Paul DeGregorio, former Republican Vice Chairman of the Election Assistance Commission, to drop objections to Arizona's voter ID law. He also tried to put pressure on DeGregorio to cancel a research contract that sought to document whether voter ID laws disenfranchise eligible voters – research that could undermine a vote-suppression agenda.



Based on his record at the Civil Rights Division, if confirmed to a six-year term on the FEC, von Spakovsky would use this position – through 3 election cycles – to interpret and enforce the campaign finance and elections laws to the detriment of minority, low income and rural voters. We therefore urge you to oppose his confirmation.

If you have any questions, or need more information, please contact Julie Fernandes, LCCR Senior Counsel, at (202) 263-2856.

Sincerely,

Wade Henderson
President & CEO

Nancy Zirkin
Vice President / Director of Public Policy