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**The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law Wins  
Landmark Case Upholding Constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act  
*Court Rebuffs Challenge to Congress's 2006 Extension of  
Key Protections Against Racial Discrimination in Voting***

**WASHINGTON, D.C., May 30, 2008** – A special three-judge panel in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia today issued a landmark ruling upholding the reauthorization of a key provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In a unanimous decision written by Judge David Tatel, the panel squarely rejected a challenge to the constitutionality of the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006, which extended for 25 years the preclearance requirement contained in Section 5 as well as other important provisions of the Voting Rights Act.

In the lawsuit, titled *Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District Number One v. Mukasey*, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and co-counsel from the firm of Wilmer Hale represented the defendant-intervenor Texas NAACP. In its opinion, the Court prominently cited the work of the National Commission on the Voting Rights Act, organized by the Lawyers' Committee, which made the largest contribution to the unprecedented legislative record created by Congress in passing the Act.

“The argument that Section 5 is no longer needed is without basis,” said Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law Executive Director Barbara Arnwine. “We applaud the Court for validating the critically important decision of Congress to reauthorize Section 5. This multi-year effort was a top priority for the Lawyers' Committee and for the civil rights community as a whole and we could not be more pleased with the outcome.”

The 2006 reauthorization was passed with overwhelming support in Congress and was signed by President Bush in July 2006. The Utility District's lawsuit was filed shortly thereafter. Although the Court also found that the Utility District was not entitled to “bail out” from coverage under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, the main significance of the case rests upon the Court's unqualified rejection of the Utility District's argument that Section 5 had outlived its usefulness because the problem of racial discrimination in voting was no longer a sufficient problem to justify its requirements.

Conducting its own review of the extensive legislative record, and crediting the findings of the House Judiciary Committee, the Court concluded that “findings of continued efforts to discriminate against minority citizens in voting demonstrate that despite substantial improvements, there is a demonstrated and continuing need to reauthorize [Section 5]” and found that it was supported by Constitutional protections.

“Today’s ruling caps years of tireless work across the civil rights community to ensure that the irreplaceable protections of the Voting Rights Act remain in place so long as the scourge of racial discrimination threatens our democratic process” said Jon Greenbaum, director of the Voting Rights Project for the Lawyers’ Committee. “The Court’s careful findings and review of the law show in detail that Congress’s decisions were fully justified.”

The Lawyers’ Committee litigated the case with other civil rights organizations including ACLU, MALDEF, NAACP LDF, PFAW and Texas RioGrande Legal Aid.

*The Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (LCCRUL), a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, was formed in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to involve the private bar in providing legal services to address racial discrimination. The principal mission of the Lawyers’ Committee is to secure, through the rule of law, equal justice under law, particularly in the areas of housing, community development, employment, voting, education and environmental justice. For more information about the LCCRUL, visit [www.lawyerscommittee.org](http://www.lawyerscommittee.org).*

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