



For Immediate Release
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Pennsylvania County Finally Settles Voter Disenfranchisement Lawsuit Ahead of 2024 Election

(Arlington, Va.) – Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, has finally settled a critical case regarding election integrity brought following the 2022 election by two disenfranchised voters and supported by the Center for Election Confidence, Inc. (CEC).

In the settlement agreement for *French, et al. v. Luzerne County*, Luzerne County admitted that the plaintiffs, William French and Melynda Anne Reese, along with other voters, were disenfranchised “because of the County’s failures to supply adequate ballot paper, failure to adopt proper policies and procedures, and failure to train election personnel.”

“Although rather late to the table, we are thankful Luzerne County officials finally came to an agreement to ensure they provide a fair voting process for all lawfully eligible American citizens in their voting population,” said CEC Executive Director Lisa Dixon.

According to the 2023 Luzerne County District Attorney’s Report on the conduct of the elections, County officials were responsible for ordering paper, loading them into the machines distributed to precincts, and ensuring the machines could produce sufficient ballots for the registered voter population. The Report cited a combination of a lack of training and high employee turnover leading to the County’s difficulties administering elections. The District Attorney found that the election work “is accumulated among the fewer remaining workers or new workers making the tasks on each person more voluminous [and] the job more stressful.”

Throughout the discovery process and leading up to the settlement, Mr. French, Ms. Reese, and CEC sought changes in Luzerne County’s election administration in order to avoid repeating the errors that led to voter disenfranchisement in 2022.

Therefore, as part of the settlement and to avoid future voting irregularities, the County agreed, in addition to paying \$30,000 in legal fees, to:

- **Adopt written election related policies and procedures.** These policies will include detailed legal requirements regarding the procuring of election-related supplies and resupplying voting precincts with supplies during an election;
- **Order ballot paper after each completed election cycle.** The County will maintain an adequate supply for both elections themselves and logic and accuracy testing of machines prior to Election Day by ordering paper well in advance of each election;



- **Retain election counsel.** The County has retained an experienced election law attorney to revise its election administration policies and procedures, design training for County election personnel and maintain the professional relationship for the foreseeable future;
- **Train County employees.** The County will provide training to all election officials. The training will be designed to, among other things, ensure that employees remain current on Bureau of Elections procedures and equipment, state and national trends in election administration, and state and federal election law; and
- **Orient newly hired employees of the Bureau of Elections.** All new County Bureau of Elections hires will attend a specialized training and orientation that includes training on state and federal election laws, policies and procedures for the County, and more.

As part of the settlement agreement, the District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania will retain jurisdiction to enforce the terms agreed to by the County.

Wally Zimolong, counsel to the plaintiffs, emphasized the importance of this lawsuit: “The settlement of the litigation against Luzerne County is a momentous victory for election integrity. Under the settlement agreement, the County is required to implement concrete and specific election integrity measures including, adopting written policies and procedures, providing regular training to election administrators, and hiring experienced election law counsel. None of this would have happened without our litigation, the courage of our clients, and the unwavering support from the Center for Election Confidence. Although it was clear that voters were disenfranchised in the wake of the 2022 ballot paper shortage, CEC was the only organization that stepped forward to assist the plaintiffs in vindicating their constitutional rights and to assure that fundamental changes were made to the election administration process in the County.”

“This settlement represents multiple meaningful steps forward for election integrity in Luzerne County,” added Dixon. “Through the litigation and settlement process, the County has agreed to create policies and procedures that we hope will serve as a model for the rest of the Commonwealth and perhaps even the entire country. CEC is proud to have supported Mr. French and Ms. Reese in their efforts to ensure the disenfranchisement they experienced never happens again in Luzerne.”

To view the settlement agreement or for more information, including background on the case, please visit <https://electionconfidence.org/litigation/luzerne/>.

Center for Election Confidence is a non-profit organization with a long history of advancing the role of ethics, integrity, and legal professionalism in the electoral process, including safeguarding the right of eligible voters to vote. Until January 2024, CEC was known as Lawyers Democracy Fund. For more information, please visit www.electionconfidence.org.

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