

1 THOMAS E. PEREZ  
Assistant Attorney General  
2 Civil Rights Division

3 DANIEL G. BOGDEN  
4 United States Attorney

5 GREG ADDINGTON  
Assistant United States Attorney

6 T. CHRISTIAN HERREN, JR.  
7 MEREDITH BELL-PLATTS  
8 ELIZABETH S. WESTFALL (D.C. Bar # 458792)  
Attorneys, Voting Section  
Civil Rights Division  
9 U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
10 NWB 7202  
Washington, D.C. 20530  
11 Telephone: (202) 305-7766  
Facsimile: (202) 307-3961

12 Attorneys for the United States

13  
14 **IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
15 **DISTRICT OF NEVADA**

16  
17 NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA, LAS  
18 VEGAS BRANCH OF THE NAACP  
(BRANCH 1111), and RENO-SPARKS  
19 BRANCH OF THE NAACP (BRACH 1112)

20 Plaintiffs,

21 v.

22 ROSS MILLER, in his official capacity as  
Secretary of State of the State of Nevada; and  
23 MICHAEL WILLDEN, in his official capacity  
as Director of the Department of Health &  
24 Human Services of the State of Nevada,

25 Defendants.

Case No. 3:12-cv-00316-RCJ-VPC

**STATEMENT OF INTEREST  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

26 **INTRODUCTION**

27 The United States files this Statement of Interest pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 517 because this case  
28 presents an important question regarding the proper construction of the National Voter Registration Act of

1 1993 (“NVRA”), 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg *et seq.*

2 The NVRA, *inter alia*, expands the opportunity for voter registration at certain offices that provide  
3 public assistance or services to persons with disabilities, which are designated as voter registration  
4 agencies (“VRAs”). The Attorney General has enforcement responsibility for the NVRA, 42 U.S.C.  
5 § 1973gg-9(a). Resolution of this issue may affect the Department of Justice’s enforcement  
6 responsibilities, states’ obligations under the NVRA, and opportunities for citizens to receive voter  
7 registration forms.

8  
9 Plaintiffs National Council of La Raza, Las Vegas Branch of the NAACP (Branch 1111), and  
10 Reno-Sparks Branch of the NAACP (Branch 1112) (“Plaintiffs”) have moved for a preliminary injunction  
11 (ECF 25), in part, on the ground that a policy of Nevada’s Department of Health & Human Services  
12 (DHHS) regarding distribution of voter registration forms on its face violates Section 7 of the NVRA, 42  
13 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5 (“Section 7”). Under the policy, a DHHS office need not provide a voter registration  
14 form to an applicant, unless the applicant has affirmatively requested one.

15  
16 As explained below, this policy violates the requirement of Section 7 that VRAs distribute a voter  
17 registration form to each applicant at a qualifying event unless the applicant “in writing, declines to  
18 register to vote.” 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(A). The Tenth Circuit in *Valdez v. Squier* recently held that  
19 the very same policy employed by New Mexico’s Human Services Department violated Section 7. 676  
20 F.3d 935, 943-47 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2012), *aff’g Valdez v. Herrera*, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 142209 (D.N.M. Dec.  
21 21, 2010). In opposing the motion for preliminary injunction, Defendants argue that *Valdez* was wrongly  
22 decided and that DHHS’s policy complies with Section 7. (ECF 32) (“Opp.”). The interpretation of  
23 Section 7 advanced by Defendants, however, ignores and nullifies statutory text in Section 7 and runs  
24 contrary to the statute’s goal of providing and maximizing new opportunities for voter registration.  
25 Therefore, a preliminary injunction enjoining DHHS’s policy limiting distribution of voter registration  
26 forms to applicants who affirmatively request a form should issue.  
27  
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## STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

1  
2 In 1993, Congress enacted the NVRA to expand the voter registration opportunities of United  
3 States citizens. Pursuant to the NVRA, citizens now may register to vote at the time they obtain a driver's  
4 license, by mail, or in interactions with certain offices that provide public assistance or disability services,  
5 which are designated voter registration agencies (VRAs). 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973gg-3-1973gg-5. Mandatory  
6 VRAs include "all offices in the State that provide public assistance." 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a).

7  
8 Section 7 of the NVRA sets forth the duties of a VRA. 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(4)-(6) and (d).  
9 When an applicant seeks services or assistance from a VRA, including an application for benefits, a  
10 renewal or recertification of benefits, or a notice of a change of address (*i.e.* a "qualifying event"),<sup>1</sup> the  
11 VRA must (1) provide the applicant a voter registration form unless the applicant declines, in writing, the  
12 opportunity to register to vote; (2) provide the applicant a voter information form; (3) provide the  
13 applicant assistance in completing the voter registration form to the same extent the agency provides  
14 assistance in completing all other forms, unless the applicant declines such assistance; and (4) submit all  
15 completed registration applications received to the appropriate election official. 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-  
16 5(a)(6), (d). VRA staff are prohibited from engaging in activity that has the "purpose or effect of \* \* \*  
17 discourag[ing] the applicant from registering to vote." 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(5)(C); *see* 42 U.S.C.  
18 § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(B)(v) (notice of an applicant's right to file a complaint based on certain actions of a  
19 VRA official); § 1973gg-10(1) (criminal penalties for interference with attempting to register to vote or  
20 exercising any right under the NVRA).  
21

22 The voter registration form is distinct from the voter information form; each form has different  
23 content and serves different purposes.<sup>2</sup> *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(A) and (B). A voter registration  
24

25  
26 <sup>1</sup> We use the term "applicant" to refer to any person who engages in a qualifying event with a VRA as set forth in  
27 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(A), including applicants, persons who are renewing or recertifying benefits or services,  
and persons who submit a change of address relating to such service or assistance.

28 <sup>2</sup> While the Tenth Circuit in *Valdez* refers to a "declination form," we refer to this document as a "voter information form."

1 form, as its name reflects, is required for a citizen to register to vote.<sup>3</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-7.

2 Significantly, a VRA must provide a voter registration form to each applicant during a qualifying event  
3 “*unless the applicant, in writing, declines to register to vote.*” 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(A) (emphasis  
4 added). In other words, subparagraph 5(a)(6)(A) requires the systematic distribution of a voter  
5 registration form, absent an applicant’s affirmative declination of voter registration “in writing.”

6 Separate from the requirements of subparagraph 5(a)(6)(A), subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B) requires  
7 VRAs to provide a voter information form to each applicant during a qualifying event. 42 U.S.C.  
8 § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(B). Subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B), 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(B), identifies the requisite  
9 contents and instructions regarding this form. The voter information form must include:  
10

11 (i) the question, “If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to  
12 register to vote *here today?*”; [and]

13 \* \* \*

14 (iii) boxes for the applicant to check to indicate whether the applicant would like to register or  
15 declines to register to vote (failure to check either box being deemed to constitute a declination to  
16 register *for purposes of subparagraph (C)*), together with the statement (in close proximity to the  
17 boxes and in prominent type), “IF YOU DO NOT CHECK EITHER BOX, YOU WILL BE  
18 CONSIDERED TO HAVE DECIDED NOT TO REGISTER TO VOTE *AT THIS TIME.*”

19 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(B) (emphasis added by italics).

20 Subparagraph (C), 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(C), states that a VRA must “provide to each  
21 applicant who does not decline to register to vote the same degree of assistance with regard to the  
22 completion of the registration application form as is provided by the office with regard to the completion  
23 of its own forms, unless the applicant refuses such assistance.”

24 The voter information form also advises the applicant that she may receive assistance in  
25 completing the form or she may complete the form “in private.” 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(B)(iv). The  
26 form further informs the applicant that she may file with a designated point of contact a complaint

27  
28 <sup>3</sup> A VRA may use a national voter registration form that is developed by the Election Assistance Commission or its own version that requires the equivalent information. 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(A)(i) and (ii); see 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-7 (mail registration form).

1 alleging interference with her rights to register or not register to vote, her right to privacy in making this  
2 decision, or her right to choose a political party. 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(B)(v).

3 Subsection (d), 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(d), requires transmittal of “a completed registration  
4 application accepted at a voter registration agency” to the appropriate election official within a certain  
5 time period. Subsection (d) does not require applicants to submit completed voter registration forms to a  
6 VRA, nor does it require VRAs to collect completed registration forms from applicants. *See id.*

### 7 8 ARGUMENT

9 Under DHHS’s policy, when an applicant leaves a voter information form blank, it is treated as a  
10 declination of voter registration, and thus, the agency need not provide the applicant with a voter  
11 registration form. Defendants’ contention that this policy complies with the NVRA finds no support in  
12 the statute’s text or structure. Section 7 does not make distribution of a voter registration form contingent  
13 upon an applicant’s affirmative request. Instead, the plain language of Section 7 mandates that VRAs  
14 provide applicants with a voter registration form when they engage in a qualifying event “unless the  
15 applicant, in writing, declines to register to vote.” 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(A). Moreover,  
16 Defendants’ position if adopted would undermine the NVRA’s statutory objectives and congressional  
17 intent.  
18

19 The only courts that have decided this question have held that an applicant’s failure to complete a  
20 voter information form does not constitute a declination “in writing” of voter registration or otherwise  
21 relieve a VRA of providing a voter registration form to the applicant. *Valdez v. Squier*, 676 F.3d 935,  
22 943-47 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2012), *aff’g Valdez v. Herrera*, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 142209 (D.N.M. Dec. 21, 2010);  
23 *see also Ga. State Conference of the NAACP v. Kemp*, 841 F. Supp. 2d 1320, 1332-33 (N.D. Ga. 2012) (if  
24 Georgia interprets a blank response on a voter information form as declining voter registration and does  
25 not provide the applicant a voter registration form, that policy would “likely run[] afoul of Section 7”).  
26 This Court should likewise conclude that DHHS’s policy violates the NVRA because DHHS does not  
27 provide a voter registration form to all persons who should receive it.  
28

1 *A. Principles of Statutory Interpretation*

2 The starting point for statutory interpretation is the statute itself. *See Dodd v. United States*, 545  
3 U.S. 353, 357 (2005). The Court “must presume that [the] legislature says in a statute what it means and  
4 means in a statute what it says there.” *Id.* (quoting *Connecticut Nat’l Bank v. Germain*, 503 U.S. 249,  
5 253-54 (1992)). When not defined by the statute, terms should be “accorded their plain and ordinary  
6 meaning, which can be deduced through reference sources such as general usage dictionaries.” *UMG*  
7 *Recordings, Inc. v. Shelter Capital Partners*, 667 F.3d 1022, 1041 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2011). Dictionaries provide  
8 courts guidance on the meaning of words considered plain and obvious, in addition to those that are  
9 ambiguous. *See, e.g., Dodd*, 545 U.S. at 358 (dictionary meaning of “if” considered).

10 In addition, a statute should be interpreted “such that all its language is given effect, and none of it  
11 is rendered superfluous.” *UMG Recordings, Inc.*, 667 F.3d at 1041; *see Lyon v. Chase Bank USA*, 656  
12 F.3d 877, 890 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2011) (effect should be given to every word Congress used); *TRW, Inc. v.*  
13 *Andrews*, 534 U.S. 19, 31 (2001) (text should be construed so that no word or phrase is rendered  
14 superfluous). Further, courts “start with the premise that ‘the words of a statute must read in their context  
15 and with a view to their place in the overall statutory scheme.’” *Lyon*, 656 F.3d at 890 (quoting *Am.*  
16 *Bankers Ass’n v. Gould*, 412 F.3d 1081, 1086 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2005)). The “goal in interpreting a statute is to  
17 understand the statute ‘as a symmetrical and coherent regulatory scheme’ and to ‘fit, if possible, all parts  
18 into a . . . harmonious whole.’” *Lyon*, 656 F.3d at 890 (quoting *Am. Bankers Ass’n*, 412 F.3d at 1086).

19 When statutory text is ambiguous, legislative history may provide guidance on Congress’s  
20 intended meaning of the challenged phrase. *See Tides v. Boeing Co.*, 644 F.3d 809, 814 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2011).

21 *B. Section 7 Requires VRAs to Provide Applicants a Voter Registration Form Unless the*  
22 *Applicant Declines Voter Registration “In Writing.”*

23 Subparagraph 5(a)(6)(A) of the NVRA governs the circumstances under which DHHS must  
24 distribute voter registration forms. Under its plain language, subparagraph 5(a)(6)(A) mandates that  
25 DHHS “shall” provide a voter registration form to an applicant during a qualifying event “unless the  
26 applicant, in writing, declines to register to vote.” 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(A). While the NVRA  
27  
28

1 does not define the phrase “in writing,” the plain or ordinary meaning of that phrase is “[t]he state or  
2 condition of having been written or penned; written form.” Oxford English Dictionary, Online Edition,  
3 2012,  
4 <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/230775?rskey=uSqrIW&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid14009491> (last  
5 visited September 4, 2012). A failure to record any word or notation is therefore not a response “in  
6 writing” under the dictionary definition. The *absence* of a written notation on a voter information form is  
7 not a declination in writing, any more than it is an acceptance in writing.

8  
9 As the Tenth Circuit noted, Congress nowhere indicated that it intended the phrase “in writing” as  
10 used in subparagraph 5(a)(6)(A) to mean anything other than its ordinary definition. *Valdez*, 676 F.3d at  
11 945-46. Thus, unless an applicant has affirmatively opted out of voter registration in written form, DHHS  
12 must provide the applicant a voter registration form and its policy to the contrary violates subparagraph  
13 5(a)(6)(A).

14 *C. An Applicant’s Failure to Complete a Voter Information Form Does Not Constitute a*  
15 *Declination “In Writing” of a Voter Registration Form Under Section 7.*

16 Congress used specific, different language in 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(A), (B), and (C) to  
17 address the distinct content of the voter registration form and the voter information form, and a VRA’s  
18 obligations regarding these forms. Subparagraph 5(a)(6)(A) states that a VRA “shall” distribute a voter  
19 registration form to an applicant during a qualifying event unless the applicant, “in writing, declines to  
20 register to vote.” 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(A). Subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B) specifies the text of a voter  
21 information form and explains to applicants the consequences that apply at that moment, when applicants  
22 are engaged in a qualifying event with the VRA. Giving meaning to all statutory text, an applicant’s  
23 failure to complete a voter information form does not constitute a declination, in writing, to register to  
24 vote for purposes of subparagraph 5(a)(6)(A). *Valdez*, 676 F.3d at 947.

25  
26 The voter information form includes the query, “[i]f you are not registered to vote where you live  
27 now, would you like to apply to register to vote *here today*?” and boxes to check “yes” or “no.” 42  
28 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(B)(i) and (iii) (emphasis added). Subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B)(iii) explains that

1 “failure to check either box [is] deemed to constitute a declination to register for purposes of  
2 subparagraph (C),” under which a VRA must assist an applicant in completing a voter registration form,  
3 “unless the applicant refuses such assistance.” 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(B)(iii) and (a)(6)(C). That  
4 assistance is available when the applicant has contact with the VRA. The capitalized sentence of  
5 subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B)(iii) states that an applicant who does not indicate a preference on the voter  
6 information form has declined to register to vote *at this time*. The phrases “at this time” and “here today”  
7 focus on the applicant’s opportunity to register to vote at the moment she has contact with the VRA, just  
8 as the opportunity to receive a VRA’s assistance occurs when the applicant interacts with the VRA. Thus,  
9 failure to indicate a response on the voter information form is a declination to register “at this time” and a  
10 declination of a VRA’s assistance, at that time.

11  
12 The temporal limitations “here today” and “at this time” are included in subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B)  
13 and the information form, yet are not included in subparagraph 5(a)(6)(A)’s command that an applicant  
14 must receive a registration form “unless the applicant, in writing, declines to register to vote.” Thus, as  
15 the Tenth Circuit concluded, “If an applicant is passive, i.e. does not check either the “YES” or “NO” box  
16 on the [information form] and thereby indicate his or her intent in writing, [the VRA] must, in accordance  
17 with the mandate of subsection (A), still provide him or her with a voter registration form, but is relieved  
18 from providing the applicant with assistance in completing that form.” *Valdez*, 676 F.3d at 947.

19  
20 *D. Defendants’ Arguments In Support of Their Policy Misconstrue and Ignore the Statutory Text*  
21 *of Section 7.*

22 Defendants argue that under subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B)(iii), failure to complete a voter information  
23 form constitutes a declination of both a voter registration form and assistance in completing the form.  
24 Opp. at 19-20. This interpretation, however, would render superfluous the text in subparagraph  
25 5(a)(6)(B)(iii) stating that “failure to check either box [is] deemed to constitute a declination to register  
26 for purposes of subparagraph (C),” under which VRAs must provide assistance in completing a voter  
27 registration form “unless the applicant refuses such assistance.” 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(B)(iii) and  
28 (C). If an applicant, by leaving a voter information form blank, is deemed to have declined a voter

1 registration form, the applicant plainly has no need for assistance in completing the form. Hence,  
2 Defendants' interpretation would obviate any basis for the text in subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B)(iii) indicating  
3 that failure to complete a voter information form constitutes a declination of a VRA's assistance in  
4 completing a registration form.

5 Further, nothing in subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B)(iii) qualifies the requirement of subparagraph  
6 5(a)(6)(A) that a VRA distribute a voter registration form during each qualifying event, unless the  
7 applicant declines voter registration "in writing." Congress expressly stated in subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B)  
8 that failure to check either box is deemed a declination of a VRA's assistance in completing a voter  
9 registration form. 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(B)(iii). Had Congress likewise intended a blank form to  
10 constitute a declination "in writing" for purposes of subparagraph 5(a)(6)(A), it would have so indicated.  
11 *Valdez*, 676 F.3d at 946.

12  
13 Defendants also argue that their interpretation of subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B)(iii) does not render the  
14 phrases "at this time" and "here today" superfluous because an applicant who declines a voter registration  
15 form by leaving a voter information form blank may choose to register to vote when returning to the  
16 VRA's office to renew or recertify benefits. Opp. at 18. This interpretation should be rejected out of  
17 hand as it assumes, erroneously, that applicants will necessarily engage in a subsequent qualifying event  
18 and receive an additional voter registration opportunity at that time. In addition, by implying that  
19 applicants may only register to vote during a qualifying event, Defendants' argument ignores language in  
20 Section 7 indicating that applicants may receive a voter registration form and complete it in private  
21 without a VRA's assistance. Voter information forms must state that applicants "may fill out the  
22 application form in private," thus contemplating that some applicants may complete a voter registration  
23 application outside of the qualifying event. 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(B)(iv); see *Valdez*, 676 F.3d at  
24 947 ("[A]n applicant who chooses not to register to vote 'at that time' might still be interested in receiving  
25 a mail voter registration form and completing it at another time and/or location."). Likewise, the forms  
26 must apprise applicants that they may file a complaint based on any perceived interference of their "right  
27  
28

1 to privacy in deciding whether to register or in applying to register to vote.” 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-  
2 5(a)(6)(B)(v).

3 Subparagraph 5(a)(4)(A)(iii) and subsection 5(d), which require VRAs to accept completed  
4 registration forms and transmit them to the appropriate election official within a certain time period,  
5 further undermine Defendants’ position. These provisions require VRAs to make themselves available to  
6 collect completed voter registration forms but do not mandate the collection of all such forms or require  
7 applicants to submit completed registration forms to VRAs. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(4)(A)(iii) and  
8 (d). Instead, Section 7 assumes that some applicants, subsequent to the qualifying event and receipt of a  
9 voter registration form, will complete the registration form in private and independently transmit it to an  
10 election official.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, the phrases “at this time” and “here today” in subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B)(iii)  
11 should be interpreted to mean that an applicant’s failure to complete a voter information form declines  
12 voter registration and assistance while the applicant is present in the VRA’s office, but does not release  
13 the VRA from its obligation under subparagraph 5(a)(6)(A) to provide the applicant a voter registration  
14 form.  
15

16  
17 Finally, Defendants argue that if a blank voter information form is not deemed a declination of a  
18 voter registration form under subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B)(iii) on the ground that the applicant has only  
19 declined to register “at that time,” it would lead to the absurd result of requiring VRAs to provide all  
20 applicants with a voter registration form, including those who check “no” on a voter information form.  
21 *Opp.* at 18-19. This argument, however, ignores the plain language of subparagraph 5(a)(6)(A), which  
22 provides that VRAs need not distribute a voter registration form when an applicant declines, in a written  
23 form, to register to vote. 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(6)(B); *see Valdez*, 676 F.3d at 947 (“if an applicant  
24 checks the “NO” box on the information form, he or she would be deemed to have declined, in writing,  
25 the opportunity to receive a voter registration form and [VRAs] would thus be relieved, under the  
26

27  
28 <sup>4</sup> The legislative history explains that an applicant may transmit a completed voter registration application directly to the appropriate county or state election official, rather than returning it to the agency for transmittal. H. R. Rep. No. 103-9, at 13 (1993).

1 language of subsection (A), from providing the application with a voter registration form”).

2 *E. The NVRA’s Objectives and Legislative History Support the Conclusion That DHHS’s Policy*  
3 *Violates Section 7.*

4 Even if the text or statutory structure of Section 7 were ambiguous or inconsistent, this Court may  
5 consider the NVRA’s legislative history to see if it provides guidance on the intended interpretation. *See*  
6 *Tides*, 644 F.3d at 814. In fact, the NVRA’s purposes and its legislative history further demonstrate that  
7 DHHS’s policy is contrary to the terms and objectives of the NVRA.

8 Two primary objectives of the NVRA are to “establish procedures that will increase the number of  
9 eligible citizens who register to vote” and “enhance[] the participation” of eligible voters by expanding  
10 the opportunities for voter registration. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg(b)(1)-(2), 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973gg-3-  
11 1973gg-5; H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 103-66, at 15-16 (1993) (H. Conf. Rep. 66). The Conference Committee  
12 resolved the House and Senate’s disagreement on whether state agencies that provide public assistance  
13 should be designated mandatory or voluntary VRAs in favor of mandatory designation. *See* H. Conf.  
14 Rep. 66 at 18-19. The Conference Committee concluded that a primary purpose of expanding voter  
15 registration opportunities would be unmet if these agencies were not mandatory VRAs. *See* H. Conf.  
16 Rep. 66 at 19. A substantial percentage of eligible voters seek and receive public services, do not drive,  
17 and often have no other contact with public agencies; thus, these agencies are a primary avenue for voter  
18 registration for many citizens. *See id.*

19  
20  
21 At the same time, Congress was concerned about the potential for intimidation by public officials,  
22 whether real or perceived by applicants for public benefits. *See* H. Conf. Rep. 66 at 19. Thus, the  
23 Conference Committee added a provision to address the prohibition on intimidation by VRA officials.  
24 *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5(a)(5)(D); H. Conf. Rep. 66 at 19. Significantly, Congress also modified  
25 subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B), which originally referred to a VRA’s voluntary obligation to provide a form that  
26 would accompany the voter registration form, to require distribution of the voter information form and to  
27 specify its content. *See* H. Conf. Rep. 66 at 19-20. In recognition of the applicant’s potential fear and  
28 discomfort, Congress explained:

1 the [information form] is intended to deal with concerns raised about the inclusion of certain  
2 agencies in an agency-based registration program and the possibility of intimidation or coercion.  
3 Concern was expressed that in agencies that provide benefits, staff might suggest that registering  
4 to vote could have some bearing on the availability of services or benefits provided by that  
5 agency. In addition to the provisions in the House bill relating to coercion and intimidation,  
6 [subparagraph B] includes specific provisions to address that situation.

7 *Id.*

8 An applicant for services may be embarrassed or have other reasons that would inhibit her interest  
9 in registering to vote at a VRA, or receiving assistance from a VRA representative. That same applicant,  
10 however, may feel comfortable completing a voter registration form at a later time, in her home, or  
11 somewhere away from the perceived, conspicuous eye of an agency that is determining her eligibility for  
12 public benefits. Thus, there is a significant purpose underlying the voter information form and  
13 subparagraph 5(a)(6)(B)'s focus on an offer of assistance at the time the applicant is in contact with the  
14 VRA, and its notice to the applicant that the opportunity to register extends beyond that moment should  
15 she wish to complete the voter registration form "in private," and at another time. 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-  
16 5(a)(6)(B)(iv). Because there is no time limit on completing the registration form, an individual may well  
17 decide she does not want to register at the VRA "today," but still wants the voter registration form to take  
18 home or elsewhere to complete. Allowing an applicant's failure to respond on the voter information form,  
19 which may be due to ambivalence, confusion or other concerns, to constitute a declination of a  
20 registration form is contrary to the statutory goals of expanding and maximizing opportunities for voter  
21 registration.

22 In sum, Congress made clear that designated VRAs must provide applicants who engage in a  
23 qualifying event a voter registration form, except when the applicant affirmatively, in writing, states she  
24 does not want to register to vote. The statutory mandate that expands opportunities for voter registration  
25 is unduly and unlawfully restricted in Nevada if an individual will only receive a voter registration form  
26 by affirmatively requesting the same.  
27  
28

**CONCLUSION**

For the foregoing reasons, the United States respectfully requests that this Court find the Nevada Department of Health & Human Services' policy of treating an applicant's blank voter information form as a declination of a voter registration form to be in violation of Section 7 of the NVRA.

Date: September 4, 2012

THOMAS E. PEREZ  
Assistant Attorney General  
Civil Rights Division

DANIEL G. BOGDEN  
United States Attorney  
District of Nevada

/s/ Elizabeth S. Westfall  
T. CHRISTIAN HERREN, JR.  
MEREDITH BELL-PLATTS  
ELIZABETH S. WESTFALL (D.C. Bar # 458792)  
Attorneys, Voting Section  
Civil Rights Division  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
NWB 7202  
Washington, D.C. 20530  
Telephone: (202) 305-7766  
Facsimile: (202) 307-3961

GREG ADDINGTON  
Assistant United States Attorney  
(Bar No. 6875)  
United States Attorney's Office  
100 West Liberty  
Suite 600  
Reno, NV 89501  
Telephone: (775) 784-5438

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

This is to certify that I have on this day electronically filed the foregoing STATEMENT OF INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES with the Clerk of Court using the CM/ECF system, which will send notification of such filing to all parties in this matter via electronic notification or otherwise.

This 4<sup>th</sup> day of September 2012.

/s/ Greg Addington  
GREG ADDINGTON  
Assistant United States Attorney

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