



## **CIVIL RIGHTS GROUPS URGE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT TO BLOCK SOUTH CAROLINA PHOTO ID LAW**

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**CHARLESTON, SC --** A coalition of civil rights and advocacy groups today urged the Department of Justice to block implementation of a South Carolina law that would suppress the minority vote.

**“We need to empower people to exercise their constitutionally protected right to vote, not make it more difficult to cast a ballot,”** said Victoria Middleton, executive director of the ACLU of South Carolina. **“Voting is a fundamental democratic right, not a privilege.”**

**South Carolina wants to impose a new voter identification law. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, which marks its 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary this Saturday, requires states with a history of voter suppression, including South Carolina, to get approval for changes in their voting laws. The Department of Justice has the power to block these changes.**

**In a 15-page letter sent August 5, 2011 to the Department of Justice, a coalition of six groups cites recent census data showing that African-Americans are less likely than whites to possess a driver’s license or other DMV-issued identification, one of the approved forms of identification. They also face social and economic barriers to obtaining acceptable forms of identification required by the new law.**

**“The Voting Rights Act places the burden of proof on South Carolina officials to show that this law is not discriminatory,”** said Nancy Abudu, a senior staff attorney with the ACLU’s Voting Rights Project. **“It is clear that the state has failed that test and that this law should not go into effect.”**

**In the letter, the groups argue that the primary justification for South Carolina’s new photo identification requirements – to deter voter impersonation – is flawed and unfounded, and that the law will dilute minority voting strength.**

**[8/5/2011 Letter to the Department of Justice](#)**