

# ADA

## AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION

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Anyone who has been around government for a while knows that without the potential threat of political power, government rarely responds to even organized groups. ACORN has the laudable goal of empowering these constituencies so they can get what they haven't gotten before: equal access to governmental services and benefits.

When ACORN has money to hire employees to do this kind of organizing, they have the beneficent if naive notion that they should hire from the target community. In these poorest of the poor communities, there are a bunch of unemployed and under-employed people who are too desperate with activities of daily survival to take a job, too poorly educated and acculturated to keep a job and a whole bunch who are accustomed to "cutting corners" and ignoring the niceties of ethics and legality in their desperation to get by from day to day. Thus ACORN frequently hires people to conduct voter registration and some of those people are more interested in getting the money than doing the job right. Thus, ACORN voter registrars sometimes cheat ACORN out of the salary money and turn in phony registrations.

ACORN has been burned by this problem numerous times and has instituted a number of quality control safeguards. They carefully scrutinize voter registrations for genuineness and segregate the ones with problems, in effect, first firing the cheaters and then turning them in. They no longer pay on a piecework basis but pay by the hour so as not to encourage bad behavior.

I hasten to point out that the phony voter registrations which get through to the voter registrars rarely result in impostor voting fraud. The first thing that happens when a voter is registered is the election authority sends a non-forwardable confirmation in the mail and if the letter carrier can't find the addressee, the mail bounces back to the election authority and that registration is flagged to prevent anyone from voting under that name without good identification. Thus the problems may be registration fraud but they rarely result in the kind of vote fraud which dilutes honest votes.

The reasons you are hearing so much about ACORN and vote fraud is:

1. the people they register usually vote Democratic and
2. Barack Obama once served as a lawyer for ACORN in some legal matter.

I received the following question: "I heard that ACORN has to turn in all registrations they receive, but that they pointed out the incorrect forms."

That is correct.

There are 2 ways that people can register voters:

1. as trained, supervised and paid deputy registrars appointed by the local election authorities
2. as volunteer precinct workers who assist voters in filling out a postcard registration form and then put a stamp on it and put it in the mailbox.

Since it became legal to do so in 1993, I have advocated that my clients use the second method because it is faster, easier and requires much less paperwork. There is really no training and no supervision but since the precinct workers are not being paid, there is no monetary incentive for misbehavior and the campaigns have no accountability. There is one risk and that is that in the process of assisting in the registration, the precinct worker gets the idea that, once registered, the voter will likely vote for opponents and maybe it would be better to put the registration in the trash instead of the mailbox. For this reason, we carefully caution them to mail in EVERY registration no matter how they think the voter will vote. Other than an imperative of honesty, the political science studies show that if a campaign registers someone, the voter is more likely than not to reward the campaign for that service.

In most states, postcard registrants need to bring their identification to the polling place the first time they vote. People registered with deputies do not. This most seriously burdens the poor who are less likely to have driving licenses and or more transient so their identification is less likely to show their current address. ACORN fully understands that and wants their registrants to avoid that hassle. However ACORN clings to the first methodology more because they are in the business of organizing the new registrants for purposes other than voting (and thus need their names and contact info) and because they need to check the work of the people they are paying. ACORN staff tries to correct mistakes on the forms and segregate those which look fishy. Since ACORN organizes only in areas likely to vote Democratic (and because the laws in the various states require it) they turn in every form but they fire the bad registrars, flag their work as suspect, and, in effect, turn in the cheaters.

It is because ACORN uses the deputy registrar system that the mistaken and fraudulent registrations they procure are discovered and the blame focused on them. It is a fully predictable result of how they do business and they know it.

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