

opinions

## column LEFT

### Make Sure Your Vote Counts

BY VICTOR MANALO, PH.D.,  
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**S**ince the 2000 presidential elections, people have seen the problems with our system of voting in the United States. Unfortunately, the history of voting in this country is filled with accounts of fraud and manipulation that make the 2000 election just one more sordid story from our country's past. This fact makes it all the more important that we, as individuals, ensure that our votes count and that we hold our elected officials accountable for electoral reform.

After the federal government expanded the right to vote to blacks, southern states enacted poll taxes and literacy tests to prevent blacks from voting. In the 1960s, when Richard J. Daley ruled the city of Chicago as mayor, his political machine manipulated precinct voting to the point where dead people were voting and others were voting more than once. Here in Orange County, California, Bob "B-1" Dornan, fearing that he would lose his congressional race due to "illegal" voting by immigrants, posted uniformed security guards in front of polling places that discouraged many legally registered voters from voting.

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Unfortunately, these manipulations can occur and have the potential to occur in our local school board and city council elections, as well. I recall the story of a neighbor who told me that, years ago, he had been approached by an incumbent member of the Artesia City Council to vote for his reelection. When my neighbor told him that he was in the process of getting his citizenship and that he could not vote, the council member told him, "We have ways around that."

During my last campaign for Artesia City Council, I heard various reports on election day of registered voters being turned away from the polls to go to another polling place, only to be turned away again -- this is very discouraging and disappointing -- not only because registered voters could not vote, but because I lost that election by a mere 21 votes! As I accompanied a couple to one polling place, I found the poll workers to be unaware of voters' legal rights to cast a ballot and some workers who were hostile and impatient with voters who clearly spoke English as their second language. I began to see that, in many cases, our system of voting actually discourages people to vote.

Everyone should know that if, for any reason, your name is not on the voter registration list at your polling place, you have the right to complete a "provisional" ballot. Only when your registration has been verified by the registrar will that provisional ballot be recorded. We can ensure that our votes count when we know the voting process, know the law regarding our voting rights, and can influence our elected officials to reform our voting system.

## **Text of Article**

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Victor Manalo, PhD.

President, Hubert H. Humphrey Democratic Club

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