

Dear Editors:

I write regarding Prof. Rick Hasen's quote in the last paragraph of "The mysterious oppo researcher working in the White House lawyer's office," published on February 11, 2018. Prof. Hasen dismisses the evidence of voter intimidation by members of the New Black Panther Party in Philadelphia in 2008, saying it was used to "create this false impression of voter intimidation and fraud being a major problem," implying that voter intimidation and fraud are not major problems.

On the contrary, fraud and intimidation are a problem whenever they occur. They undermine citizens' confidence in the election process and election outcomes and disenfranchise voters.

The men standing outside a polling place wearing black and carrying a nightstick in 2008 are only the most striking example of the entrenched fraud and intimidation in Philadelphia. Take just two examples from the last two years. In the 2016 presidential election, Republican poll watchers with proper credentials, including a minority woman in her own precinct, were expelled from polling places and threatened simply for being Republicans. In a March 2017 special election for a state house seat, the voter intimidation and illegal methods to tamper with the vote used by the Democrats were so outrageous that both the Green Party and the Republican candidates jointly sued and the Democratic state attorney general charged four Democratic poll workers with committing fraud, intimidating voters and tampering with public records. This all occurred in a race that the Democratic candidate was certain to win.

While hardworking election officials around the country generally run smooth and clean elections, any concerns about fraud or intimidation should be taken very seriously, not dismissed. This is particularly true in places like Philadelphia where non-Democratic voters are routinely harassed and intimidated by Democratic poll workers and fraud is frequently suspected.

Sincerely,

Harvey Tettlebaum
President, Lawyers Democracy Fund