

LAWYERS DEMOCRACY FUND

For Immediate Release
December 5, 2023

Contact: Lisa Dixon
(202) 441-5487

Federal Court Rules in Favor of Disenfranchised Voters in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania

(Arlington, Va.) – On Monday, December 4, a federal court [ruled](#) in favor of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, voters William French and Melynda Anne Reese on their voter disenfranchisement claim arising from Luzerne County’s failure to supply a sufficient number of paper ballots at polling locations in the 2022 general election. As a result of Luzerne County’s chaotic administration of the election, hundreds or potentially thousands of Luzerne County residents were turned away from voting locations on Election Day.

Mr. French and Ms. Reese sued to vindicate their and other Luzerne citizens’ right to vote. Yesterday, the court denied Luzerne County officials’ attempts to avoid responsibility for the County’s mistakes through asking the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania to dismiss the case.

“Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, totally failed its voters on Election Day in 2022,” said Lisa Dixon, Executive Director of Lawyers Democracy Fund. “But in over a year since then, the county has ducked responsibility, has not apologized to its voters, and sought to have Mr. French and Ms. Reese’s lawsuit thrown out. We are happy that the court is allowing this case to move forward.”

Discovery is ongoing, and a trial is scheduled for next year. Counsel for the Plaintiffs are Wally Zimolong and James Fitzpatrick of the law firm Zimolong Law in Villanova, Pennsylvania.

“The Court issued a strong opinion in favor of plaintiffs’ claims brought to vindicate their sacred right to vote,” said Zimolong. “Luzerne County continues to give short shrift to plaintiffs’ claims and has chalked up the County’s embarrassing maladministration of the 2022 general election as a big mistake with promises that it will not happen again. The Court made clear that the consequences of the County’s failure to take proper steps to administer the election were patently obvious. Moreover, the Court made note that the 2022 general election issues were part of ‘a deeply concerning pattern of voting rights violations’ in the County.”

French and Reese attempted to vote at their assigned polling places on Election Day but were turned away due to a catastrophic paper shortage caused by the County’s failure to train its election workers, noncompliance with the clear requirements of the Pennsylvania Election Code for the minimum number of paper ballots each polling place must have, and the failure to have effective backup procedures. Mr. French, a disabled Army veteran, and Ms. Reese, a caregiver to her dependent husband, both unsuccessfully tried multiple times to vote on Election Day. The events of Election Day 2022 amounted to clear violations of Plaintiffs’ constitutional right to vote as well as rights afforded to them under the First and Fourteenth Amendments.

LAWYERS DEMOCRACY FUND

Lawyers Democracy Fund is proud to support Mr. French and Ms. Reese in their efforts to ensure that future voters' rights are not violated as theirs were.

Lawyers Democracy Fund is a non-profit organization with a long history of advancing the role of ethics, integrity, and legal professionalism in the electoral process, including safeguarding the right of eligible voters to vote. For more information, please visit <https://lawyersdemocracyfund.org>.

###