



**John Bonifaz**  
for Secretary of State

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## **Bonifaz Issues Statement on Katrina Survivors in Massachusetts**

### **SECRETARY OF STATE CANDIDATE SAYS THAT MASSACHUSETTS SHOULD LEAD THE WAY IN PROTECTING THEIR VOTING RIGHTS**

**BOSTON** – Voting rights leader **John Bonifaz**, Democratic candidate for Secretary of State, issued the following statement today on the voting rights of Hurricane Katrina survivors currently residing in Massachusetts. Municipal elections in New Orleans are scheduled for April 22.

“As elections in New Orleans move forward without many of its residents, Massachusetts needs take a leadership role in protecting the voting rights of the displaced New Orleanians now living in the Commonwealth.

“For starters, we should widely publicize the availability of absentee ballots through paid media advertising and community outreach to the groups working with these voters. Massachusetts should open up all city and town clerk offices in the state to provide Katrina victims easy access to the absentee ballot process, allowing them to receive applications, submit them by fax to the Secretary of State office in Louisiana, and receive absentee ballots following the approval of their applications.

“With respect to those Katrina survivors who are ineligible to cast absentee ballots, civil rights organizations, including the NAACP-National Office and ACORN, are coordinating an effort to provide transportation back to New Orleans in order to vote. Massachusetts should join this effort and help provide such transportation to Katrina victims in our state.

“In addition, we should be leading a coalition of Secretaries of State to take the same measures to ensure as full participation by Katrina victims displaced throughout the country.

“Hurricane Katrina exposed to the nation and the world the sad reality that too many of our citizens are locked out of the political process and their voices, therefore, go unheard. In the midst of the ongoing struggle Katrina victims face to rebuild their lives, we ought to ensure that we are doing everything possible to protect their right to vote. Massachusetts can and should be leading the way.

“The clock is ticking on this hotly-contested mayoral election. Where is our Secretary of State on these specific matters—advertising, easier access to the absentee ballot process, and transportation where necessary? If I were Secretary of State today, I would have long ago been leading the charge among secretaries of state around the nation to address these exact issues.”