



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 2, 2007**

**CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
HERBERT HADAD, YUSILL SCRIBNER,
REBEKAH CARMICHAEL
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(914) 993-1900, (212) 637-2600**

U.S. COURT HALTS ELECTION IN VILLAGE OF PORT CHESTER

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that a federal judge in White Plains, N.Y., granted a government motion today to enjoin the upcoming March 2007 elections for the Village of Port Chester, N.Y.

The United States filed a Complaint on Dec. 15, 2006, alleging that Port Chester's at-large system of electing its governing Board of Trustees diluted the voting strength of the Village's Hispanic citizens, in violation of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The same day, the United States filed a motion to enjoin Port Chester from using its at-large election system on March 20, 2007, to elect two new trustees.

According to papers filed by the United States, the 2000 census shows that almost half of Port Chester's residents, and 22% of Port Chester's citizens of voting age, were Hispanic. By July 2006, the number of Hispanic citizens of voting age had increased to about 28%. Despite these figures, no Hispanic has ever been elected to Port Chester's municipal legislature, the six-member Board of Trustees. Indeed, no Hispanic has ever been elected to any public office in Port Chester, despite the fact that Hispanic candidates have run for office 6 times - twice for the Board of Trustees, and four times for the Port Chester Board of Education, which manages a school system that is overwhelmingly Hispanic.

Following a two-week hearing, United States District Judge STEPHEN C. ROBINSON ruled that the United States was likely to prevail at trial on its claim that Port Chester's at-large system of electing members of the board of trustees dilutes the voting strength of Hispanic citizens, in violation of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Judge ROBINSON also set April 16 through April 20, 2007 for a trial in the matter.

Mr. GARCIA stated: "In bringing this suit, the Justice Department sought to vindicate the voting rights of minority citizens in the Village of Port Chester. I am pleased that Judge Robinson, in granting the preliminary injunction, found that the United States is 'likely to succeed on the merits of its claim that the Village of Port Chester's system for electing its Board of Trustees violates Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.'"

"We are extremely pleased with today's Court ruling enjoining the use of Port Chester's election system in the upcoming municipal elections," said WAN K. KIM, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "It is an important victory for all of Port Chester's voters, and especially for its Hispanic voters who have not been able to participate on an equal basis in the electoral process. The Civil Rights Division will continue to aggressively enforce the protections of the Voting Rights Act across the country."

Assistant United States DAVID J. KENNEDY of the Southern District of New York and Department of Justice Trial Attorneys AVNER SHAPIRO and TIMOTHY F. MELLETT are handling the case.

Additional information about the Voting Rights Act and other federal voting laws is available on the Department of Justice website at www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/index.htm.

07-050

#