

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
MCALLEN DIVISION**

AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS UNION,)
in its individual and corporate capacities,)
)
 Plaintiff)

v.)

Civil Action No. 7:16-cv-00103

ELECTION ADMINISTRATOR)
JOHN RODRIGUEZ,)
in his official capacity, and)
TEXAS SECRETARY OF STATE)
ROLANDO PABLOS, in his official)
capacity,)
 Defendants)

_____)

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT AND RELEASE

This Settlement Agreement and Release (the “Agreement”) is made by and between Plaintiff American Civil Rights Union (“Plaintiff” or “ACRU”), Defendant John Rodriguez, in his official capacity as Starr County Election Administrator (“Defendant Rodriguez”), and Defendant Rolando Pablos, in his official capacity as Texas Secretary of State (“Defendant Secretary of State”). In the remainder of this Agreement, Plaintiff, Defendant Rodriguez, and Defendant Secretary of State are collectively referred to as the “Parties.”

RECITALS

A. On March 4, 2016, Plaintiff filed this action against the Starr County Election Administrator, pursuant to Section 8 of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (“NVRA”), 52 U.S.C. § 20507, to enforce obligations concerning voter registration list maintenance efforts in elections for federal offices (the “Litigation”).

B. On October 5, 2016, Plaintiff amended its suit to add the Texas Secretary of State as a named defendant.

C. The United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas has jurisdiction over this matter, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 52 U.S.C. § 20510.

D. Defendant Rodriguez and Defendant Secretary of State deny that any violations of state or federal law have occurred with respect to Plaintiff's allegations in the Litigation.

E. Bona fide disputes and controversies exist among the Parties regarding matters at issue in the Litigation.

F. The Parties, through their respective counsel, have conferred and agreed this action should be settled without further delay and further expense. The Parties negotiated in good faith, and hereby agree this Agreement is an appropriate resolution of the claims alleged in Plaintiff's complaint.

G. Nothing in this Agreement, or any action taken under this Agreement, is an admission of liability—nor should it be interpreted as an admission of liability—by Defendant Rodriguez or Defendant Secretary of State, or by any current or former employee, agent, or representative of Defendant Rodriguez or Defendant Secretary of State.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

In consideration of the recitals set forth above, the mutual promises, agreements, covenants, and provisions herein contained, and for other good and valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, the Parties agree that the Litigation shall be settled and compromised in full upon the following terms and conditions:

1. Removal of Deceased Registrants and Report

A. Removal Procedures. Annually, Defendant Rodriguez shall use reasonable diligence to search for deceased registrants, and initiate an investigation, pursuant to Section 16.033 of the Texas Election Code. Such reasonable diligence shall include initiating independent analyses, including sending letters of examination to persons allegedly who have died. Reasonable

diligence shall also include regularly reviewing obituaries in the local newspaper. Upon receipt of such information, Defendant Rodriguez shall either cancel the registration, pursuant to Section 16.031(b) of the Texas Election Code, or initiate an investigation, pursuant to Section 16.033 of the Texas Election Code, to ascertain the true status of each suspected deceased registrant. Plaintiff shall provide reasonable assistance to Defendant Rodriguez regarding database sorting tools upon request and without cost.

B. Report. For a period of two years, to begin on January 1, 2019, Defendant Rodriguez shall inform counsel for the Plaintiff in writing as to the total number of registrants removed as a result of the above actions. This data shall be provided in summary form and shall be provided even if the number of registrants identified or removed is zero.

2. Removal of Duplicate Registrants and Report

A. Removal Procedures. Defendant Rodriguez shall diligently and promptly act upon any information received from the Secretary of State regarding “weak match” duplicates. To the extent such information is sent by the Secretary of State, Defendant Rodriguez shall undertake to determine whether the potential duplicate registrations are, indeed, duplicates from the same person. Within 60 days of receiving information from the Secretary of State, Defendant Rodriguez shall act to resolve each “weak match” duplicate received from the Secretary of State.

Pursuant to Section 18.0681(a) of the Texas Election Code, the Secretary of State shall periodically compare the information regarding voters maintained as part of the statewide computerized voter registration list to determine whether any voters have more than one voter registration record on file. If the Secretary of State determines that a voter on the registration list has more than one registration record on file based on a strong match, the Secretary of State shall, if applicable, send notice to Defendant Rodriguez pursuant to Section 18.0681(d) of the Texas Election Code. Upon receipt of strong match duplicate-registrant information from the Secretary

of State, Defendant Rodriguez shall take action consistent with the procedures identified in Section 18.0681(d) of the Texas Election Code. Plaintiff shall provide reasonable assistance to Defendant Rodriguez regarding database sorting tools upon request and without cost.

B. Report. For a period of two years, to begin on January 1, 2019, Defendant Rodriguez shall inform counsel for the Plaintiff in writing as to (1) the total number of registrants removed as a result of the above actions; (2) the total number of registrants placed in suspense as a result of the above actions. This data shall be provided in summary form and shall be provided even if the number of identified or removed registrants is zero.

3. Jury Disqualification Information

Defendant Rodriguez shall seek to obtain jury excusal and/or disqualification information from the Clerk of the Court regarding both state and federal court cases for residents of Starr County. Defendant Rodriguez shall review such information and identify all individuals who have been excused or disqualified from jury duty because they are deceased or are not a U.S. citizen, as required under Texas law. Defendant Rodriguez shall initiate an investigation, including mailing a notice letter to the respective individual, pursuant to Sections 16.033 and 16.0332 of the Texas Election Code of any individual so identified, and act to correct or cancel the registration records of any individual who is determined to be ineligible to vote.

Defendant Rodriguez shall also review jury excusal and/or disqualification information from the Clerk of the Court to identify individuals who have moved from Starr County. Such review shall be based, at minimum, on address information reported by the individual to the Clerk of the Court, and on information provided by the United States Postal Service on jury summonses that were returned to the Clerk of the Court as undeliverable, to the extent that such information is provided to Defendant Rodriguez. As appropriate, for any individual identified as potentially having moved outside Starr County, Defendant Rodriguez shall follow the procedures provided

by Section 62.114(d) of the Texas Government Code, or promptly send a written notice requesting confirmation of the registrant's current address, pursuant to Section 15.051 of the Texas Election Code. Defendant Rodriguez shall promptly take action on any responses to such confirmation notices pursuant to Section 15.053 of the Texas Election Code, or shall place the registrant on the suspense list pursuant to Section 15.081(a) of the Texas Election Code, if applicable.

Defendant Rodriguez shall work with the Clerk of the Court to ensure prompt receipt of jury excusal and/or disqualification information in the future.

4. National Change of Address Database

As part of the biennial mass mailing of voter registration cards required by Section 14.001 of the Texas Election Code, Defendant Rodriguez shall obtain access to the United States Postal Service National Change of Address Database (NCOA Database) on or before June 1 of each odd-numbered year. Pursuant to 52 U.S.C. § 20507(c)(1)(A), Defendant Rodriguez shall obtain change of address information supplied by the Postal Service in the NCOA Database, and then compare that data to the Starr County voter registration list to identify registrants whose addresses may have changed. These comparisons may be conducted by retaining the services of a commercial vendor that has access to the NCOA Database. If it appears from this information that the registrant has moved to an address within Starr County, Defendant Rodriguez shall promptly send a written notice requesting confirmation of the registrant's current address, pursuant to Section 15.051 of the Texas Election Code. Defendant Rodriguez shall promptly take action on any responses to such confirmation notices pursuant to Section 15.053 of the Texas Election Code.

5. Prompt Resolution of Ineligible or Potentially Ineligible Registrants

Defendant Rodriguez shall promptly respond to list maintenance directives from the Texas Secretary of State to take action regarding potentially ineligible registrants. Defendant Rodriguez shall remove registrants who either do not respond within the time permitted by law to a notice of

investigation, pursuant to Section 16.033 of the Texas Election Code, or who respond to such a notice confirming their ineligibility to vote in Starr County.

Within sixty (60) days of this Agreement being fully signed by all Parties, Defendant Rodriguez shall ensure the resolution of all pending action items received from the Secretary of State regarding potential ineligible registrants. For all future list maintenance directives from the Secretary of State, Defendant Rodriguez shall resolve them within sixty (60) days after receipt from the Secretary.

6. Written Procedures

Defendant Rodriguez shall create and implement written procedures, with assistance from the Texas Secretary of State upon request by Defendant Rodriguez, regarding standard list maintenance procedures for the Office of the Election Administrator. Such written procedures shall be provided to all staff in the Office of the Election Administrator and shall be made available for inspection upon request from members of the public. Such written procedures shall include the following important points:

- A. Staff shall ensure that original registrations are complete, including that the citizenship checkbox has been checked affirmatively and a residential address has been provided;
- B. Staff shall ensure that proper record keeping requirements under the Texas Election Code are followed; and
- C. Staff shall ensure that action items from the Secretary of State are addressed within sixty days of receipt from the Secretary.

7. Retention and Availability of List Maintenance Records

Defendant Rodriguez shall retain voter registration and list maintenance records related to the items set forth in this Agreement for the time periods required by Texas and federal law. The records retained shall include all materials and documents necessary to the list maintenance obligations under the NVRA and state law. Defendant Rodriguez shall provide Plaintiff access to

list maintenance records, subject to availability, pursuant to the NVRA and Texas law, upon reasonable notice.

8. Secretary of State Training

For a period of three (3) years, to begin on January 1, 2019, the Texas Secretary of State shall provide annual classroom training regarding voter registration list maintenance to appropriate personnel of Defendant Rodriguez's office. The Secretary of State's training for Defendant Rodriguez's staff will be held in Austin, Texas, in conjunction with—but separate from—the Secretary of State's annual Election Law Seminar for County Election Officials. The Secretary of State's training for Defendant Rodriguez's staff shall include a review of the manual or handbook created for the appropriate election personnel in Defendant Rodriguez's office.

9. Right to Cure

If there is cause to believe that a breach of this Agreement has occurred, Plaintiff shall give written notice of the specific alleged breach to Defendant Rodriguez and Defendant Secretary of State, and permit the breaching party sixty (60) calendar days to remedy the breach before Plaintiff takes any action, subject to any Texas or federal law, including but not limited to any law that may prevent cancellation of a voter prior to an election.

10. Fees and Costs

Defendant Rodriguez shall pay Plaintiff \$55,000 for Plaintiff's fees and costs incurred in the litigation of this case. Plaintiff shall provide Defendant Rodriguez with its IRS Form 1099, and Defendant Rodriguez shall make payment within sixty (60) calendar days of the date of this Agreement being fully signed by all Parties. Defendant Rodriguez's payment of \$55,000 to Plaintiff is inclusive of and offsets any and all photocopying and related charges incurred by Plaintiff in connection with this Litigation. The Parties agree that other than Defendant

Rodriguez's payment of \$55,000 to Plaintiff, each party will bear its own fees and costs incurred in this Litigation.

11. Dismissal of Claims

The Parties understand and agree that the enforceability and validity of this Agreement are expressly conditioned upon entry of an order by the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, McAllen Division, dismissing Plaintiff's claims in their entirety with prejudice.

12. Necessary Approvals

The terms of this Agreement are subject to approval by the Office of the Attorney General of Texas. The Parties understand and agree that the Agreement is not final until such approval has been obtained.

13. Releases

Plaintiff hereby knowingly and voluntarily agrees to fully, finally, and forever unconditionally release, acquit, and discharge Defendant Rodriguez and Defendant Secretary of State, their agents and employees, including their attorneys and former employees (the "Releasees"), from any and all debts, demands, actions, causes of action, suits, accounts, covenants, contracts, agreements, damages, losses, debts, expenses (including attorneys' fees and costs incurred), claims or rights under any and all federal and state laws, and any and all claims, demands and liabilities whatsoever of every name and nature, both in law and in equity, whether known or not, which Plaintiff now has or ever has had against Defendant Rodriguez, Defendant Secretary of State, and Releasees related to the claims asserted in this Litigation, up to and including the date the Parties sign the Agreement. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Plaintiff may bring an action to enforce the provisions of this Agreement.

14. Authority

The individuals whose signatures are affixed to this Agreement in a representative capacity represent and warrant that they are authorized to execute the Agreement on behalf of, and to bind, the entity on whose behalf the signature is affixed.

15. Other Acknowledgments

The Parties acknowledge they have had the right to consult with an attorney before signing this Agreement. The Parties represent and warrant they have read this Agreement and reviewed it with their counsel, and further represent and warrant that they have executed this Agreement of their own free will and accord without further representation of any kind or character not expressly set forth herein.

This Agreement shall be construed as if all Parties jointly prepared it, and any uncertainty or ambiguity in the Agreement shall not be interpreted against any one Party.

16. Severability

The provisions of this Agreement are severable. If any part of this Agreement is held to be illegal, invalid or unenforceable, the remainder of this Agreement shall not be affected thereby, and shall remain in effect and continue to be binding upon the Parties.

17. Notice

All notices required by this Agreement shall be sent by certified or registered mail, return receipt requested, or by hand delivery, as follows:

If to Plaintiff ACRU:

J. Christian Adams
Public Interest Legal Foundation
32 E. Washington, Suite 1675
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

If to Defendant Rodriguez:

Philip B. Arnold
Allison, Bass & Magee, L.L.P.
A.O. Watson House
402 W. 12th Street

Austin, Texas 78701

If to Defendant Secretary of State: Adam N. Bitter
Assistant Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General
General Litigation Division
P.O. Box 12548
Austin, Texas 78711-2548

18. Final Agreement

This Agreement contains the entire understanding of the Parties hereto, supersedes any and all prior agreements or understandings, statements, promises, or inducements contrary to the terms of this Agreement, and shall not be amended except by written instrument expressly referring to this Agreement and signed by all of the Parties hereto.

19. Binding Nature of Agreement

This Agreement is binding on Plaintiff, Defendant Rodriguez, and Defendant Secretary of State, their successors in office, employees, representatives, delegates, agents, assigns, and all persons acting on their behalf, to the extent permitted by law or required by this Agreement.

[Remainder of page left intentionally blank. Signature page follows.]

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, having represented and warranted their authority to enter into and execute this Agreement, have executed this Agreement effective as of the last date written below.

American Civil Rights Union
Plaintiff

DATE

J. Christian Adams
Counsel for Plaintiff American Civil Rights Union

DATE

Election Administrator John L. Rodriguez
Defendant

8-13-18
DATE

Philip B. Arnold
*Counsel for Defendant Election Administrator
John L. Rodriguez*

August 14, 2018
DATE


[Signatory for Texas Secretary of State]
[Title]
Texas Secretary of State
Defendant

DATE

Adam N. Bitter
Counsel for Defendant Texas Secretary of State

DATE

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American Civil Rights Union

Plaintiff

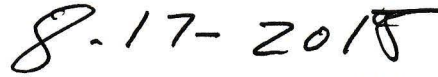


J. Christian Adams

Counsel for Plaintiff American Civil Rights Union



DATE



DATE

Election Administrator John L. Rodriguez

Defendant

DATE

Philip B. Arnold

Counsel for Defendant Election Administrator

John L. Rodriguez

DATE

[Signatory for Texas Secretary of State]

[Title]

Texas Secretary of State

Defendant

DATE

Adam N. Bitter

Counsel for Defendant Texas Secretary of State

DATE

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American Civil Rights Union
Plaintiff

DATE

J. Christian Adams
Counsel for Plaintiff American Civil Rights Union

DATE

Election Administrator John L. Rodriguez
Defendant

DATE

Philip B. Arnold
*Counsel for Defendant Election Administrator
John L. Rodriguez*

DATE

[Signatory for Texas Secretary of State]
[Title] *Secretary of State*
Texas Secretary of State *ROLANDO R. PABLOS*
Defendant

DATE

Adam N. Bitter
Counsel for Defendant Texas Secretary of State

Sept. 4, 2018
DATE

Sept. 4, 2018