

Dutchess college students win voting rights suit with federal court settlement (With court consent order)

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POUGHKEEPSIE, N.Y. — Dutchess County's Republican elections commissioner has agreed to stop demanding college students provide the name of their dorms and their room number in order to register to vote. That agreement, approved on May 13 by U.S. District Judge Kenneth Karas, settles a class action suit brought by four students attending colleges in Dutchess County who claimed they were illegally denied the right to vote in the 2012 election. Dutchess County Democratic Elections Commissioner Fran Knapp called the agreement "a great victory for student voting rights here in Dutchess County." Republican Elections Commissioner Erik Haight said it puts to end to what he said was inconsistency in the elections board's policies. In October 2012, Haight barred roughly 100 students at Bard College, Marist College and the Culinary Institute of America from registering to vote because although the students had listed the street address of their dormitory on their applications they did not list the name of the dorm in which they resided. Haight, who was appointed to the Board of Elections in 2011, claimed his action was in keeping with a 2003 board policy. Knapp, who opposed Haight's action, said no such requirement existed except for students at Vassar College in the town of Poughkeepsie, where the dorms are divided between two election districts. The move prompted the state Board of Elections to take the unusual step of issuing a written advisory opinion in which it stated that a street address was all that was required unless there was a specific reason, such as exists at Vassar College, for additional information in order to identify the election district where a voter lives. On the day before the 2012 election, Karas issued an order directing the Dutchess County Board of Elections to register those students. The May 13 agreement permanently prohibits the Dutchess County Board of Elections from rejecting any student application solely because dorm name and room number information is lacking.

[Federal Court Order-DC College Students2013](#) by [Daily Freeman](#) As part of the agreement, the county will have to pay the \$37,237 in legal fees incurred by the attorneys who represented the students in the lawsuit as well as \$18,000 in legal fees for Haight's attorney and \$2,797.50 for Knapp's attorney.

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