

Complaint Exposes Leftist-Led Vote Drives On College Campuses

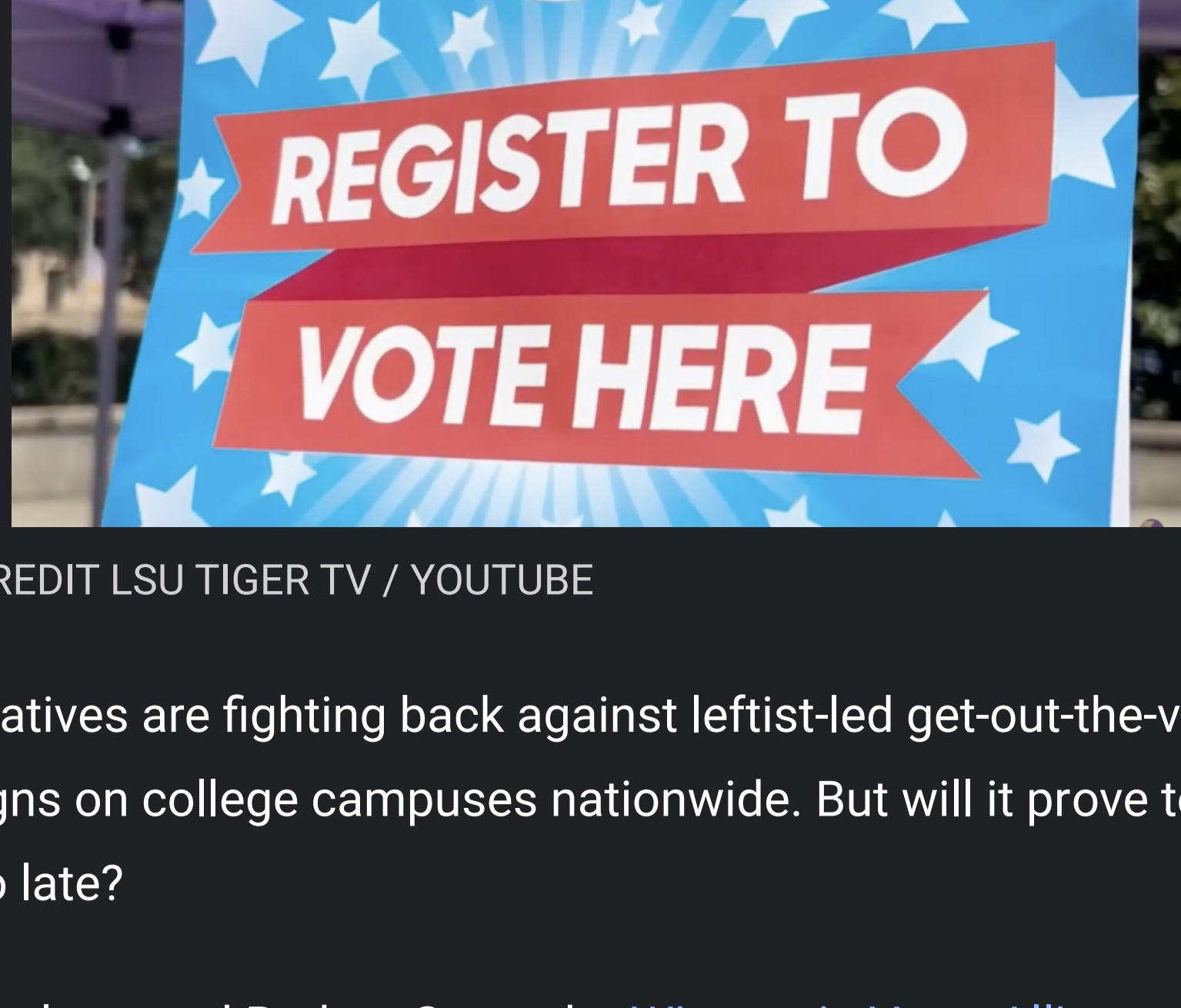


IMAGE CREDIT LSU TIGER TV / YOUTUBE

Conservatives are fighting back against leftist-led get-out-the-vote campaigns on college campuses nationwide. But will it prove to be too little, too late?

In the battleground Badger State, the [Wisconsin Voter Alliance](#) has filed a [complaint](#) alleging the University of Wisconsin-Parkside is violating the [Help America Vote Act \(HAVA\)](#) “by engaging in university-sponsored student get-out-the-vote and voter registration drives.”

The complaint initially hit a bureaucratic brick wall at the impotent Wisconsin Elections Commission but recently was referred to an administrative law judge. It presents an interesting test of the targeted use of the state’s voter registration database and whether Parkside’s GOTV efforts are discriminatory.

Should the challenge prove successful, Wisconsin Voter Alliance attorney Erick Kaardal believes it could sink similar partisan-tinged campaigns throughout the University of Wisconsin system and at more than 1,000 college campuses engaged in similar left-led GOTV efforts nationwide.

“This is what fighting back looks like,” the election integrity attorney said.

‘Government-Sponsored GOTV’

The complaint argues that even if the Kenosha university is authorized to engage in student get-out-the-vote and voter registration drives, such efforts have failed to comply with HAVA’s legal requirements. For one, the complaint notes, the voter act “preempts” government-sponsored GOTV and voter registration drives, affirmed by [opinions](#) from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.

“Neither Section 101 nor 251 funds may be used to conduct voter registration drives or get out the vote efforts; including advertising for the event, setting up booths, and paying salaries of employees who register new voters,” one EAC [guidance memo](#) states.

The Office of the Inspector General in 2022 [warned](#) the EAC that HAVA sections “do[] not mention support for voter registration activities,” and the federal funds are limited to “educating voters concerning voting procedures, voting rights, and voting technology.” It’s the [law](#).

The university denies the charges. UW-Parkside claims it has done nothing wrong, that it did not engage in any improper voter registration drives or GOTV campaigns, because it didn’t use HAVA funds for the efforts.

“UW-Parkside’s involvement with these activities used private funds,” wrote Dixon R. Gahnz, the university’s attorney in a [response](#) to the complaint. “UW-Parkside did not receive any HAVA funding.”

Nonpartisan in Name Only

An [affidavit](#) submitted by Scott Menke, the university’s interim associate chancellor, insists that to his knowledge, the institution did not directly or indirectly receive HAVA funds. Instead, the university farms out GOTV efforts to the Andrew Goodman Foundation’s Goodman Ambassadors, who supposedly “engage in non-partisan voter education.”

“These ambassadors use private funding for their activities. They teach other students about the importance of voting,” UW-Parkside declares in its response to the complaint. The university says the work includes “directing students to voter registration websites, such as WEC, where students can register themselves, if they choose to do so.”

Who are the Goodman Ambassadors? They are a leftist nonprofit army that works to “register voters, bring down voting barriers, and tackle important social justice issues within the campus,” according to a 2023 university [press release](#).

The ambassadors are part of the Andrew Goodman Foundation, which, according to [InfluenceWatch](#), “runs the Vote Everywhere program, which promotes student voting on university campuses by training a network of students (known as ambassadors) who register voters.”

The foundation’s advisory board, according to InfluenceWatch, includes a cavalcade of liberal stars, from actor Danny Glover and Craigslist founder Craig Newmark to former Secretary of Labor [Robert Reich](#) and Institute for Democracy and Higher Education director Nancy Thomas. The Andrew Goodman Foundation is nonpartisan in name only.

‘Picking and Choosing’

UW-Parkside’s claims that no HAVA funds are involved in the GOTV campaigns are beside the point, according to the complaint. While it may sound noble and civically minded, turning out voters is not the job of state-funded institutions of higher education.

The complaint charges that, as part of the state government, “The University of Wisconsin-Parkside’s targeting of students for its get-out-the-vote and voter registration drives discriminates against non-students.” Picking and choosing “among groups of similarly situated voters to dole out special voting privileges” equals illegal voting discrimination, according to a 2012 [lawsuit](#) brought by Obama for America and the Democratic National Committee.

These self-proclaiming defenders of democracy and unfettered access to the polls successfully argued in the U.S. Court of Appeals that military voters should not receive the special treatment of casting in-person early ballots during the three days before the 2012 presidential election. A district court had blocked Ohio’s secretary of state and attorney general from enforcing state law preventing nonmilitary Ohio voters from enjoying the same privilege.

The military vote has tended to skew Republican, if only [slightly](#), according to [surveys and anecdotal evidence](#). So it behooved Democrats to block any special treatment for voters in the military.

The 6th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed Team Obama’s position. The majority decision opined: “Equally worrisome would be the result if states were permitted to pick and choose among groups of similarly situated voters to dole out special voting privileges. Partisan state legislatures could give extra early voting time to groups that traditionally support the party in power and impose corresponding burdens on the other party’s core constituents. ([P]articularly where [voting restrictions] have discriminatory effects, there is increasing cause for concern that those in power may be using electoral rules to erect barriers to electoral competition.)”

Wisconsin Voter Alliance’s complaint argues UW-Parkside’s get-out-the-vote campaign on campus targets a group of voters much more likely to vote for left-leaning candidates. They are being led in that effort by left-wing activist groups.

Data Diving

Also discriminatory, the complaint alleges, is the way the state’s voter information system is being used to assist in the campus GOTV effort – at UW-Parkside and elsewhere. As the complaint states, the university has worked with Tufts University’s [National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement](#) (NSLVE) “in a public-private exchange of student private data” to support Parkside’s “engagement in government-sponsored student get-out-the-vote and voter registration drives.”

[NSLVE reports](#) on student voting rates at UW-Parkside note the university provides the federal government student data that goes into the NSLVE study. The reports also use publicly available voting files collected by the [Catalist National Database](#), which draws “from Election Officials in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.”

The university’s [2022 “Action Plan”](#) stated that one of its [goals](#) was to “increase the number of students who register and vote in the 2022 Midterm Election by 15% over the previous midterms.”

Mining student voting data from the Wisconsin Elections Commission’s statewide voter registration database in a targeted GOTV campaign violates HAVA law, the complaint alleges. WEC is the only uniform, centralized, and interactive statewide voter registration list allowed to operate under law, although myriad Wisconsin campaigns and organizations [pay for voter data](#) at a top price of \$12,500.

So, the complaint charges, as part of the state, the university is using voter data (or allowing such data to be used) in discriminatory and illegal fashion. UW-Parkside is doing what Ohio attempted to do in 2012 before Obama for America and the DNC successfully challenged special voting privileges for military voters. University officials contend the data from past elections is being used to help build student voting participation rates.

‘This Is Huge’

The Wisconsin Voter Alliance asks that an administrative law judge declare the UW-Parkside violated HAVA “in its engagement in government-sponsored student voter registration drives and in government-sponsored student get-out-the-vote drives.” WVA also seeks an injunction declaring the university must comply with HAVA’s legal requirements.

The Wisconsin Elections Commission has declined to hear past Voter Alliance HAVA allegations against the elections regulator. Instead, WEC “responded with a letter stating it would not administratively consider or dismiss HAVA complaints against WEC, and that plaintiffs would have to take their grievances to court,” according to [WVA](#).

On Friday, Wisconsin Administrative Law Judge Eric D. Defort informed the parties he has been assigned to preside over the case.

“This is a huge,” Kaardal, WVA’s attorney, said. “When you bring a HAVA complaint, you have a better chance against the state with an administrative law judge.”

Campus GOTV Drive Built by Team Obama

The complaint could have far-reaching implications. Hundreds of colleges and universities across the country are, like UW-Parkside, working with left-leaning 501(c)(3) organizations to boost voter registration and turnout of college students.

[Civic Nation’s ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge](#) is embedded in institutions of higher education [across Wisconsin](#). The community organizers [bill the initiative](#) as a drive to “improve nonpartisan civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation on campuses nationwide.” It’s a far-left effort to tap into [millions](#) of left-leaning voters, indoctrinated by the leftist institutions they attend.

One need only look at the highly partisan company they keep. Valerie Jarrett, former senior adviser to President Barack Obama, is chairwoman of Civic Nation’s board. According to [InfluenceWatch](#), the organization’s board consists “entirely of former high-ranking staff of the Obama administration.”

The flagship UW-Madison, Wisconsin’s largest university, is all-in on the ALL IN challenge. In noting the success of the leftist-led GOTV campaign, the complaint shows Madison campus voting wards reported surges in 2022 Election Day voter registrations.

In one ward, the number of registered voters reported on Nov. 1, 2022, eight days before the election, was 791. The final ballot count in that campus ward was 1,147. The vast majority, nearly 86 percent, voted for incumbent Gov. Tony Evers, a Democrat. Other UW-Madison campus wards saw surges in voter registration on Election Day, with between 83 percent and 91 percent of votes going to Democrat candidates.

“It is not government entities’ place to be running voting registration and GOTV activities. That is the job of the political parties and candidates,” said Ron Heuer, president of the Wisconsin Voter Alliance.

Expect more of the same, as the Biden administration ramps up its effort to launder [“Bidenbucks”](#) through federal agencies and leftist allies to push get-out-the-vote efforts, particularly in swing states like Wisconsin.

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