

Clergy and community leaders celebrate defeat of voter restriction

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Clergy and community leaders with ISAIAH celebrated the defeat of the voter restriction amendment last night after months of talking with religious voters in their congregations and neighborhoods.

The effort to defeat the photo ID amendment started months ago. More than 350 volunteers attempted over 200,000 phone calls and reached 23,000 religious voters. In addition, ISAIAH organized a thriving online petition signing effort reaching more than 14,000 people, eventually having conversations with over 37,000 voters about the harmful effects photo ID would have on the elderly, young adults, people of color and the poor. This initiative, called the Faith in Democracy Campaign, was a statewide effort of Prophetic Voices.

The campaign included an intentional and robust education and outreach effort across Minnesota. Congregations held petition-signing events, hosted phone bank programs and organized forums to raise awareness about harmful affects of the voter restriction amendment. Many individual faith leaders proclaimed their vision of a more just and inclusive democracy in sermons, two press conferences, and community events.

The civic engagement effort was ISAIAH's first effort to mobilize people of faith to raise their combined voices – as voters – on behalf of racial, economic and social justice issues. As a member of PICO National Network, the country's largest faith-based organizing network, ISAIAH joined similar efforts happening in ten states. Nationally, PICO and its federations spoke to more than half a million religious voters on a range of economic and social justice issues that went before voters on Election Day.

"We started this movement with the courage of our convictions and our belief that every voice should be heard. Against what looked like overwhelming odds, we threw everything we had into this fight to defeat this amendment. Driven by the power of thousands of grassroots people making a decision that everyone matters in Minnesota, we defeated this cynical attempt to restrict the vote in Minnesota." – Doran Schrantz, ISAIAH Executive Director.

For ISAIAH, the last few months of campaigning on photo ID also meant new volunteers, new technology and new insights about how to reach and activate people of faith. ISAIAH volunteers, mostly from congregations, learned how to integrate new technology and social media with grassroots organizing to reach thousands of new constituents.

Those new constituents will be critical to ISAIAH as it takes on its next big fight. ISAIAH will not take a long post-election break. Planning is already underway for organizing religious voters to get ready for the next challenge.

"There is still much more to be done. We successfully defended our electoral system. Now we must take the movement and the values at the center of that movement to the Legislature. There is so much to do to ensure that the decisions the Legislature makes reflects our vision of a state where everybody matters. Inclusion, love and a place at the table for all God's people are all at stake as we move into determining the future direction of our state." – Pastor Paul Slack, Pastor at New Creation Church in North Minneapolis, President of ISAIAH.

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[ISAIAH](#) is a multi-ethnic, congregation-based community organization in the Twin City and St. Cloud regions. Its mission is to promote racial and economic equity by working to ensure that all people, regardless of class, race, ethnicity or religion, are involved in creating the region's future. ISAIAH is a member of the [PICO National Network](#), the largest grassroots, faith-based organizing network in the United States. PICO works with 1,000 religious congregations in more than 200 cities and towns through its 60 local and state federations.

ISAIAH and PICO are non-partisan and do not endorse or support candidates for office. ISAIAH and PICO urge people of faith to consult their faith traditions for guidance on specific policies and legislation. Learn more at isaiahmn.org and www.piconetwork.org.

[Prophetic Voices](#) is a faith-based initiative that seeks to create a statewide network of clergy and their congregants from various faith traditions who act from a common set of values to create a more just and abundant Minnesota.