

## People with the Power

Several Federal and State Officials Have the Power to Restore Voting Rights More Quickly.



Loretta Lynch is the Attorney General of the United States. As such she manages the United States Department of Justice. It was under her supervision that the DOJ opened an investigation into alleged voting rights violations by the state judiciary against people with disabilities in conservatorship proceedings. For more than a year, attorneys with the DOJ have been gathering information and communicating with the Secretary of State and the Chief Justice in her role as Chairperson of the California Judicial Council. The Attorney General, the head of the Civil Rights Division, and the head of the Disability Rights Section can lean on California to restore voting rights more quickly.



Tani Cantile-Sayakue is the Chief Justice of California. She is also the Chairperson of the California Judicial Council – the rule making body of the Judicial Branch. In both capacities, Justice Cantile-Sayakue holds considerable influence over the superior courts in each county of the state. By directly communicating with the presiding judge in each county, or by reaching out to them through the Judicial Council and its advisory bodies, the Chief Justice can indicate that a passive approach to voting rights restoration for people in conservatorships is not acceptable. She can stimulate a more pro-active and timely approach to this problem.



Alex Padilla is the California Secretary of State. He is the highest elected official in California with authority to manage the voting process. His office supported the passage of SB 589. His office monitors the registrars of voters in counties throughout the state. Alex Padilla should be aware of this problem because the DOJ included the Secretary of State's office in its investigation into the allegations of the complaint we filed in 2014. Mr. Padilla can use the influence of his office, by communicating with the Chief Justice and with the county registrars of voters, about the need to expedite the process of restoring the voting rights of all conservatees who are able to express a desire to vote. He should use his "bully pulpit" for this purpose.



Michael Vu is the Registrar of Voters for San Diego County. His office receives voter disqualification notices from the superior court, based on which people with disabilities under an order of conservatorship are removed from the list of eligible voters. All 58 counties in California have a registrar of voters. Mr. Vu, and the other local registrars throughout the state can inquire of their superior courts about what plan they have to restore voting rights to those who were previously disqualified. They can also work with regional centers and other disability groups to encourage people to ask for their rights to be restored.