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### Adult Learners Deliver a Landslide Victory to Obama, Ban Dog Racing and Keep the Income Tax

BOSTON, October 30, 2008: Income taxes will prevail, dog races will be banned, and Barack Obama will win by a landslide if the votes of adult education students are any indicator of how the rest of the Commonwealth will vote on November 4. In October, **thousands of adult learners from adult education centers** across the state participated in a mock election that simulates the three Massachusetts referendum questions and the presidential candidates.

Organized by the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE), the mock election is part of a New England wide, non-partisan Voter Education, Registration and Action (VERA) campaign that reaches out to adult literacy programs to make a commitment to teach about voting and why it matters. The fact that 6,857 adult learners are participating in this campaign in Massachusetts alone breaks the stereotype that people who have not completed high school or are learning English are the least likely to vote.

The mock election is a way to both motivate and prepare adult learners to vote in the real elections. For some adults, the mechanics of voting are intimidating. Leorid Mejia, a U.S. citizen originally from the Dominican Republic and student at El Centro del Cardenal of the Catholic Charities, says that it was not until he learned in his English class how to fill in a sample ballot that he felt confident to go into a voting booth in November.

Being registered to vote is no guarantee that people know much about the referendum questions or candidates or have taken time to consider the pros and cons of various issues. This changed for GED student Darlene Holleman when she participated in the classes and mock elections at Julie's Family Learning Center. Holleman, 25, a single mom of a 3-year-old son, born and raised in South Boston says that "Before when I voted I'd just pick someone randomly. Coming here to Julie's helped me understand the difference between the two candidates. Honestly, I don't like politics but when I study here it's different. We even hold our own elections. My top issues are gun control and safety and the economy."

Like Darlene, Felicia, a student at Brockton Public Schools Adult Learning Center says she "thought that voting in the mock election was a good idea because now I really know how I want to vote on the questions. Before, I would vote but I didn't really know what I was voting for."

The mock elections also provided an opportunity for hundreds of immigrants who cannot vote to feel part of the elections. When they do obtain citizenship they will be that much better prepared for the real thing. If they are anything like Nicole Brown, 31, from Trinidad, they too are having an impact on the voter turn-out. Nicole has made it her mission to motivate her friends and family to vote ever since she participated in classes and mock elections in her

GED class. "So far, I've gotten six people to vote, many of them for the first time. I tell them if you want change you got to vote."