

## Hip-Hop Vote or Die Campaign Called A Joke

Written by Robert ID2076

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The National Legal and Policy Center (NLPC), has announced that the group is filing a formal Complaint with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) against Sean Combs, the hip-hop / rap promoter and entrepreneur also known as P. Diddy or Puff Daddy, or just plain Diddy.

They also named as a Respondent, 'Citizen Change', an organization founded by the hip-hop and rap record mogul (Combs), that sponsored the hip-hop based Vote or Die Campaign during last year's presidential election.

Combs received a "special award" Thursday evening from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund at its National Equal Justice Award Dinner in New York City at the Hilton New York and Towers.

NLPC alleges that Combs and Citizen Change appear to have violated the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) and the Internal Revenue Service Code by promoting the election of John Kerry and the defeat of George Bush. Citizen Change purported to promote voter mobilization, consistent with the activities of a nonprofit organization, but engaged in prohibited electioneering activities,

The Complaint cites Citizen Change rallies where speakers called for the election of Kerry and the defeat of Bush, including an event on October 26, 2004 at Wayne State University where actor Leonardo DiCaprio urged the crowd to vote for Kerry, as did Detroit mayor Kwame Kilpatrick.

The Complaint notes that Citizen Change is at the same address as Combs' businesses, raising the possibility that corporate funds were illegally used in support of Citizen Change's activities. The Complaint also points to the campaign's emphasis on fashion, style and conspicuous consumption, and asks the FEC to investigate whether the real purpose of the Vote or Die campaign was to advance a commercial activity, namely Combs' line of clothing and/or his clothing company.

Of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund Award, Flaherty said, "Honoring Combs shows how badly the civil rights movement has lost its way. I think of the courage and decency of Rosa Parks, and then I think of what Combs represents."

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Flaherty continued, **"The Vote or Die Campaign was little more than a way for Combs to call attention to himself. In terms of effectiveness, it was a joke."**

A pdf version of a copy of the Complaint is available at <http://www.nlpc.org> .

NLPC has a track record of success before the FEC. On March 26, 2004, the FEC fined two leadership PACs associated with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) a total of \$21,000 in response to an NLPC Complaint. On Jan. 13, 2004, the FEC ruled in response to another NLPC Complaint that Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) illegally failed to disclose large loans to her campaign just prior to her 2000 Senate election.

An FEC Complaint filed by NLPC on April 18, 2003 resulted in a Conciliation Agreement under which Al Sharpton had to pay a \$5,500 fine for late filing of disclosure documents. Another Complaint, filed on Feb. 2, 2004 and extensively amended on Feb. 5, 2004, asked the FEC to deny Sharpton taxpayer matching funds.

On May 13, 2004, the FEC ruled that Sharpton must return \$100,000 that he has received in federal matching funds. This followed the FEC's April 29, 2004 ruling that payment on an additional \$79,709, for which Sharpton had purportedly qualified, would not be made.

NLPC promotes ethics in public life, and sponsors the Government Integrity Project.

Visit the NLPC web site for more information - <http://www.nlpc.org>