



AMERICA'S JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE

Legislative Advocacy Day

September 16, 2015

ALABAMA
GEORGIA
SOUTH CAROLINA
NORTH CAROLINA
VIRGINIA
WASHINGTON, DC

Support the *Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2015*

(S. 1659 / H.R. 2867)

- As a result of the 2013 Supreme Court decision in *Shelby v. Holder*, there are currently no states or jurisdictions which are required to comply with the “preclearance” directive under Section 5 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. This means that states or jurisdictions with a proven history of discrimination are able to make changes to their election laws and policies without proving to the U.S. Department of Justice or the District Court in D.C. in advance that the proposed changes will not disenfranchise racial or ethnic minority voters.
- Only Congress can pass a law to replace the criteria for which states or jurisdictions must comply with Section 5 “preclearance.”
- The Voting Rights Advancement Act would modernize the preclearance formula to cover states with a pattern of discrimination that puts voters at risk; ensure that last-minute voting changes won’t adversely affect voters; protect voters from the types of voting changes most likely to discriminate against people of color and language minorities; enhance the ability to apply a preclearance review when needed; expand the effective Federal Observer Program; and improve voting Rights protections for Native Americans and Alaska Natives.
- This legislation includes all of the priorities necessary for a strong VRA restoration as established by the NAACP National Board of Directors.

As your constituents, we urge you in the strongest terms possible to work toward the repair, restoration, and strengthening of the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA). Congress must act as soon as possible, so we hope that you will contact your leadership and demand immediate action. It is vital that we address this crucial issue. Specifically, we support the comprehensive provisions in S. 1659 / H.R. 2867, and we urge you to work toward maximum coverage, ensuring the right to vote of as many Americans as possible is protected.

As you know, as a result of the 2013 Supreme Court decision in *Shelby v. Holder*, there are currently no states or jurisdictions which are required to comply with the “preclearance” directive under Section 5 of the VRA. This means that states or jurisdictions with a proven history of discrimination are able to make changes to their election laws and policies without proving to the U.S. Department of Justice or the District Court in D.C. in advance that the proposed changes will not disenfranchise racial or ethnic minority voters.

In *Shelby v. Holder* the Supreme Court also explicitly said that Congress could and should update Section 4(b) of the VRA, which it struck, which establishes the formula to determine which states and jurisdictions must obtain preclearance before making any changes to the time, place, or manner in which its elections are conducted. Thus, it is now up to Congress to do the work which must be done to repair, restore and strengthen the 1965 VRA and allow it continue to protect all American voters, so we are ensured that we are able to cast a free and unfettered vote and we can be assured that our vote has been counted.

As we as a nation commemorate the 50th Anniversary of “Bloody Sunday” in Selma, Alabama and the historic enactment of the 1965 VRA, we cannot allow Congressional inaction to dismantle 50 years of progress towards a more perfect union. Thus, we urge you again to contact your leadership and demand immediate action on the repair, restoration, and strengthening of the 1965 Voting Rights Act in light of the Supreme Court’s devastating decision in *Shelby v. Holder*.

We look forward to hearing from you soon to know what you are doing to move this issue along, and to also receiving your thoughts on what more we can do to precipitate action.

Sincerely,

(name #1)

(address #1)

(name #2)

(address #2)

(name #3)

(address #3)

(name #4)

(address #4)

(name #5)

(address #5)

(name #6)

(address #6)

AMERICA'S JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE

Legislative Advocacy Day

September 16, 2015

ALABAMA
GEORGIA
SOUTH CAROLINA
NORTH CAROLINA
VIRGINIA
WASHINGTON, DC

Support the *Voter Empowerment Act* (H.R. 12)

- This important legislation would expand and protect voters' access to the polls and would increase accountability and integrity among election officials and poll workers.
- The number of eligible voters who participated in the 2012 Presidential election was 49%; this number was significantly lower in the 2010 midterm election, when only 42% of eligible voters actually cast a ballot.
- The Voter Empowerment Act would expand access to the polls to eligible voters by:
 - guaranteeing early voting – require that every state establish early voting sites that are open at least 15 days prior to a general election day;
 - requiring automatic registration – the bill would use modern technology to automatically and permanently register all eligible voters;
 - allowing same-day registration throughout the country – H.R. 12 would ensure allow voters to register to vote on election day at their polling place;
 - ensuring on-line voter registration – the *Voter Empowerment Act* would ensure that on-line voter registration is a viable option nationally;
 - outlawing “voter caging” – makes illegal a practice by which mail is sent to a registered voter's address and, if the mail is returned as "undeliverable" or if it is delivered and the voter does not respond, his or her registration is challenged;
 - clarifying and strengthening the use of provisional ballots and ensuring that provisional ballots are counted;
 - making voter intimidation and deception punishable by law – with strong and tough penalties so that people who commit these crimes suffer more than just a slap on the wrist, and establishing a process for reaching out to misinformed voters with accurate information so they can cast accurate votes in time;
 - re-enfranchising ex-offenders – H.R. 12 incorporates the provisions of the NAACP-supported “Democracy Restoration Act” by allowing ex-offenders, once they are out of prison, the opportunity to register and vote in federal elections without challenges or complication;
 - encouraging youth voters – the Voter Empowerment Act requires colleges and universities to offer and encourage voter registration to all students;
 - assuring voting by overseas residents – H.R. 12 increases assurances that Americans who may be living overseas, especially those serving our country in the armed services, can cast a valid vote and be assured that their vote was counted.

We strongly urge you to co-sponsor and support, H.R. 12 the *Voter Empowerment Act*. The right of all eligible citizens to vote and to have their vote count is the cornerstone of our democracy, and it is a fundamental civil right guaranteed by our Constitution. Furthermore, it is the obligation of Congress to ensure that everything that can be done will be done to ensure that every eligible American is allowed to vote and to be sure that his or her vote has been counted.

HR. 12 the *Voter Empowerment Act*, mandates many of the very issues that the NAACP has determined as being vital to increasing voter participation throughout our nation. In addition to guaranteed early voting throughout the country with no excuse required, H.R. 12 would use modern technology to automatically and permanently register all eligible voters; allow same-day registration nationally; ensure secure on-line voter registration; outlaw "voter caging"; clarify and strengthen the use of provisional ballots; make voter intimidation and deception punishable by law, with strong and tough penalties so that people who commit these crimes suffer more than just a slap on the wrist, and establish a process for reaching out to misinformed voters with accurate information so they can cast their votes in time; allow ex-offenders, once they are out of prison, the opportunity to register and vote in federal elections without challenges or complication; encourage youth voters; and increase assurances that Americans who may be living overseas, especially those serving our country in the armed services, can cast a valid vote and be assured that their vote was counted.

We would again urge you, in the strongest terms possible, to co-sponsor and support H.R. 12, the *Voter Empowerment Act*. We look forward to working with you to see that every eligible voter is registered and votes, and that eligibility is opened to all Americans age 18 or over, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, age, economic status, geographic location, disability or other quality which may place them in a minority. Please contact us in the near future to let us know what you are doing to promote the important goal of increased voter participation and what we can do to help.

Sincerely,

(name #1)

(address #1)

(name #2)

(address #2)

(name #3)

(address #3)

(name #4)

(address #4)

(name #5)

(address #5)

(name #6))

(address #6)



AMERICA'S JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE

Legislative Advocacy Day

September 16, 2015

ALABAMA
GEORGIA
SOUTH CAROLINA
NORTH CAROLINA
VIRGINIA
WASHINGTON, DC

**Support comprehensive, sound campaign finance reform:
Support the *Government by the People Act* (H.R. 20) and the
Fair Elections Now Act (S. 1538)**

- It is no secret that the corrupting role of money in politics is ever increasing, impacting who stands for office, who wins, and, most critically, the eventual public policy Congress enacts. Big money is the main reason Congress is increasingly out of step with the interests of everyday Americans, particularly on issues of economic insecurity, and particularly with racial and ethnic minorities and low-income Americans.
- The *Government By the People Act* and the *Fair Elections Now Act* are comprehensive reform packages designed to combat the corrupting influence of big money politics, raise civic engagement and amplify the voices of everyday Americans.
- Candidates for the US Senate and U.S. House of Representatives currently spend too much time courting big-money lobbyists and special interests; federal campaigns have become too expensive. Public financing would allow candidates to stop having to spend so much time talking to special interests and allow them more time for listening to their potential constituents.

We strongly encourage you to support and co-sponsor legislation which would provide public funds to viable candidates and thus remove the corrupting role and influence of big donors. This important legislation, specifically the *Government by the People Act*, H.R. 20 introduced by Congressman John Sarbanes (MD) and the *Fair Elections Now Act*, sponsored by Senator Durbin (IL) will restore public confidence in the election process and allow candidates for the US House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate to focus their campaigns on the voters, rather than on raising money from special interests. Furthermore, if enacted, this legislation will encourage well qualified candidates for federal office who might otherwise be discouraged from running by the need to court money from special interests.

It is no secret the corrupting role of money in politics is ever increasing, informing who stands for office, who wins, and, most critically, the eventual public policy Congress enacts. Big money is the main reason Congress is increasingly out of step with the interests of everyday Americans, particularly on issues of economic insecurity, and particularly with racial and ethnic minorities and low-income Americans. It is becoming increasingly clear that income and wealth inequality is rooted in political inequality. Until we break this dependence on big money special interests in our campaign system, the policy agenda for everyday Americans will be thwarted – whether it be improving Americans’ economic security, fighting for workers’ rights, improving stewardship of environment, you name it. The two basic imperatives of a healthy democracy— the right to vote and the right to have your voice be heard, for your vote to *mean something*—desperately need to be strengthened

We need to encourage public financing of campaigns to restore the confidence of the voters that their federally elected officials were responsive to them. It would also allow candidates to spend less time talking to special interests and more time listening to their potential constituents. Thus we hope you will support this important legislation, and that you will contact us soon to let me know what we can do to help promote this idea.

Sincerely,

(name #1)

(address #1)

(name #2)

(address #2)

(name #3)

(address #3)

(name #4)

(address #4)

(name #5)

(address #5)

(name #6))

(address #6)