



June 24, 2015

## CO-SPONSOR THE VOTING RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT ACT

Dear Representative:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we write to urge you to co-sponsor and support the Voting Rights Advancement Act (Advancement Act).

The introduction of the bill by Representatives John Lewis, Judy Chu, Linda Sanchez, and Terri Sewell coincides with the second anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, a decision that invalidated the key enforcement provision of the Voting Rights Act (VRA). In its decision, the Court recognized that racial discrimination in voting continues to plague our electoral system, and called on Congress to revisit the enforcement scheme in the Act to ensure that it responds to current conditions.

We believe that the Advancement Act responds to the Court's directive and provides key protections against voting discrimination to compensate for the loss of Section 4 of the VRA, the provision that sets out the formula under which states are covered by the preclearance requirement.

The Advancement Act has received broad and vocal support from the civil rights community because it responds to the unique, modern-day challenges of voting discrimination that have evolved in the 50 years since the VRA was first passed. The Advancement Act recognizes that changing demographics require tools that protect voters nationwide. It also requires that jurisdictions make voting changes public and transparent.

The VRA is the most successful civil rights statute ever enacted by Congress. For the last 50 years, the work to protect citizens from racial discrimination in voting has been bipartisan work. The statute was passed with leadership from both the Republican and Democratic parties, and the reauthorizations of the enforcement provisions were signed into law each time by Republican presidents – Nixon in 1970; Ford in 1975; Reagan in 1982; and George W. Bush in 2006.

The VRA made it possible for racial minority voters across the country to participate equally in the electoral process. Because of the VRA, literacy tests, poll taxes, and other discriminatory mechanisms were invalidated. In recent years, the VRA has worked to block voting practices, such as redistricting plans, registration requirements, polling place changes, and voter ID laws that were found to be racially discriminatory.

Yet since the Supreme Court invalidated the key enforcement provision of the VRA in 2013, voting discrimination has become harder to stop. In states, counties, and cities across the country, legislators have pushed through laws designed to make it harder for minorities to vote. In the lead-up to the

Officers  
Chair  
Judith L. Lichtman  
National Partnership for  
Women & Families  
**Vice Chairs**  
Jacqueline Pata  
National Congress of American Indians  
Thomas A. Saenz  
Mexican American Legal  
Defense and Educational Fund  
Hilary Shelton  
NAACP  
**Treasurer**  
Lee A. Saunders  
American Federation of State,  
County & Municipal Employees

Board of Directors  
Barbara Amwine  
Lawyers' Committee for  
Civil Rights Under Law  
Helena Berger  
American Association of  
People with Disabilities  
Cornell William Brooks  
NAACP  
Lily Eskelsen Garcia  
National Education Association  
Marcia D. Greenberger  
National Women's Law Center  
Chad Griffin  
Human Rights Campaign  
Linda D. Hallman  
AAUW  
Mary Kay Henry  
Service Employees International Union  
Sherrilyn Ifill  
NAACP Legal Defense and  
Educational Fund, Inc.  
Jo Ann Jenkins  
AARP  
Michael B. Keegan  
People for the American Way  
Samer E. Khalaf, Esq.  
American-Arab  
Anti-Discrimination Committee  
Elisabeth MacNamara  
League of Women Voters of the  
United States  
Marc Morial  
National Urban League  
Mee Moua  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice |  
AAJC  
Janet Murguia  
National Council of La Raza  
Debra Ness  
National Partnership for  
Women & Families  
Terry O'Neill  
National Organization for Women  
Priscilla Ouchida  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Rabbi Jonah Pesner  
Religious Action Center  
Of Reform Judaism  
Anthony Romero  
American Civil Liberties Union  
Shanna Smith  
National Fair Housing Alliance  
Richard L. Trumka  
AFL-CIO  
Randi Weingarten  
American Federation of Teachers  
Dennis Williams  
International Union, UAW

Policy and Enforcement  
Committee Chair  
Michael Lieberman  
Anti-Defamation League  
President & CEO  
Wade J. Henderson  
Executive Vice President & COO  
Karen McGill Lawson



2014 election, a resurgence of laws to increase barriers to voting, and dilute minority voting strength, have put the right to vote in more danger than at any time in the past 50 years.

Unless Congress acts, voters in 2016 will face the first presidential election in 50 years where they will lack strong protections in federal law to combat racial discrimination in voting. Congress can no longer continue to ignore the problem of modern voting discrimination. Congress must act to restore the VRA.

Recent polling from The Leadership Conference found that 81 percent of voters support the VRA and 69 percent of voters want Congress to restore it. This support is widespread among voters of all races, parties, and regions of the country.

Today, Congress must fulfill its obligations under the Constitution to eradicate voting discrimination by restoring the strength and effectiveness of the VRA. Fifty years after brave Americans gave their lives for the right to vote, we cannot allow their legacy and the protections they fought for to continue to unravel. We urge you to co-sponsor and support this important bill.

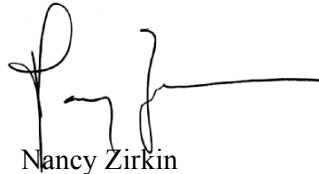
To sign on as a co-sponsor, please contact Representative Sewell's Legislative Director Cachavious English at [cachavious.english@mail.house.gov](mailto:cachavious.english@mail.house.gov).

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Legal Director Lisa Bornstein at [bornstein@civilrights.org](mailto:bornstein@civilrights.org) or (202) 466-3311.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson  
President & CEO



Nancy Zirkin  
Executive Vice President