**Voting Rights Advancement Act, H.R. 4 and S. 561**

**Talking Points**

* The VRAA restores and modernizes the original protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA). The goal of the legislation is to combat the influx of discriminatory voting requirements that states have enacted that disproportionately prevent minorities, the elderly, and youth from voting.
* The VRAA would:
  + establish a targeted process for reviewing voting changes based on measures that have historically been used to discriminate against voters. The process for reviewing changes in voting is limited to a certain set of circumstances, such as establishing photo ID laws or reducing multilingual voting materials, which have been shown to have a discriminatory impact,
  + increase transparency by requiring reasonable public notice for voting changes, and
  + allow the Attorney General authority to request federal observers to be present anywhere in the country where a serious threat to voter access and fair elections exists.

**History of the VRAA**

The Supreme Court decision,[*Shelby County v. Holder*](https://www.lwv.org/blog/one-year-after-shelby-decision-fight-continues-protect-equal-access-vote) (2013) invalidated the section of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that required certain states and local governments to obtain federal approval before implementing any changes to their voting laws or practices if the states had a history of voting discrimination against racial, ethnic, and language minorities. The Court said the formula that determined which jurisdictions fall under federal oversight was out of date and instructed that it was on Congress to come up with a modern-day formula that protects voting rights. The Voting Rights Advancement Act accomplishes this by enacting voter protections for states with a record of suppressive voting practices over the last 25 years.

House of Representative member Terri Sewell of Alabama introduced this bill and similar versions in every session of Congress since the *Shelby County v. Holder* decision.

**History of the League of Women Voters**

Rooted in the movement that secured the right to vote for women, the League has worked to foster civic engagement and enhance access to the vote since our organization was founded in 1920. Over time our work has evolved from efforts to gain and foster women’s suffrage to ensuring that all eligible voters – particularly those from traditionally underrepresented or underserved communities, including first-time voters, non-college youth, new citizens, minorities and low-income Americans – have the opportunity and the information they need to exercise their right to vote.

The League’s mission – Making Democracy Work – includes ensuring a free, fair and accessible electoral system for all eligible voters. The League works year-round to combat voter suppression through advocacy, grassroots organizing, legal action and public education. Our efforts have resulted in the protection of voting rights and ballot access for over 5 million of Americans this biennium.

We seek to protect and expand voting rights through advocating for proactive reforms such as expanded early voting and online voter registration, ensuring existing pro-voter laws are being followed and challenging all efforts that limit the ability of voters to exercise this basic right.