



June 24, 2020

TO: Members of the U.S. Senate

FROM: Chris Carson, President

RE: Restoring the Voting Rights Act (VRA)

The League of Women Voters strongly urges you to cosponsor and support passage of legislation like the Voting Rights Advancement Act (S. 561), a bill that would modernize and repair the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) outlawed racial discrimination in voting and established procedures to protect equal access to the vote for every American citizen. But in 2013, the Supreme Court overturned the key provision of the VRA that triggered careful review of voting changes in political jurisdictions with a history of racial discrimination in voting before they could take effect. Since that decision, politicians in states, counties, cities, and towns across the country have passed laws and adopted practices that discriminate against voters of color and language minorities -- making it harder for them to register and more difficult to vote.

Passage of the original VRA, and subsequent reauthorizations in 1970, 1975, 1982, 1992, and 2006, was always accomplished with bipartisan support in Congress, but led by stalwart members of the Republican caucus who were committed to doing right by voters. In fact, every reauthorization of the legislation was signed into law by a Republican President, who refused the notion that voting is a partisan issue. With thousands of members across the country we know the importance of your service and the impact your tenure will have on your state's legacy now and for future generations.

The League of Women Voters supports the Voting Rights Advancement Act as the main vehicle for restoring the preclearance process and modernizing the coverage formula for covered jurisdictions. Legislation from Representative James Sensenbrenner in the U.S. House also addresses the modernization of the coverage formula, but it does not have a Senate companion. The League is interested in working with you to find common ground on a path toward restoring the Voting Rights Act. As a dedicated member of the Senate, we know that it is your priority to protect your constituents, especially those that face discrimination when it comes to their most basic right: the right to vote.

It is an unfortunate fact that discrimination in voting against racial, ethnic, and language minorities continues in America. This should be unacceptable in the greatest democracy in the world. The League of Women Voters urges you to support legislation like the Voting Rights Advancement Act to restore the protections of the VRA. We look forward to working with you directly to address any concerns you have and find common ground as we move this historical legislation forward and restore the rights and protections of voters across the country.