



September 15, 2022

To: Members of the US House of Representatives

From: Virginia Kase Solomón, CEO

Re: Cosponsor and Support *Expanding the VOTE Act*

The League of Women Voters of the United States urges you to cosponsor and support the passage of HR8770, the *Expanding the Voluntary Opportunities for Translations in Elections (VOTE) Act*, to benefit our democracy by supporting equal access to the ballot. Our democracy is strongest when every voice is heard, including voters with limited English proficiency. The League strongly supports this legislation to make voting more accessible for *all* voters by breaking down obstacles around the accessibility of translated voting resources when registering to vote or casting a ballot. We must equip voters with the resources to participate fully in our democratic process.

Specifically, the bill will work through three main channels: grants to jurisdictions to implement translations; proactive communication of the legal requirements under this law to states; and a study to evaluate potential future reforms to translated voting materials. The proposed grants would incentivize and support jurisdictions going beyond the requirements of the *Voting Rights Act (VRA)* to cover languages that do not trigger section 203 coverage of the VRA. This further expands the accessibility of voting materials including voter registration notices, forms, instructions, assistance, and ballots. The Attorney General's communication with states would reaffirm requirements under the *Voting Rights Act* and the *Expanding the VOTE Act* to provide translated voting materials in covered jurisdictions. Additionally, the bill would create a multi-agency study to evaluate the impacts of reducing the threshold required to provide translated materials and assess the expansion of language minorities to include additional languages.

Eligible voters deserve equal access to register and vote under the law. Increasing the language accessibility of voting materials allows voters to feel confident in voting and become educated and informed as they vote on high-priority issues in their communities. In our interconnected, digital world, it is easier than ever before to provide translated voting materials to voters. A failure to provide those materials creates a barrier to participation for communities with limited English proficiency.

The accessibility of voting materials for voters of diverse language backgrounds has long been a priority for the League. In 1975, the League was part of a successful coalition effort to expand the *Voting Rights Act* to cover language minorities. And in 1996 and 1998, LWVUS defended these minority language provisions of the VRA by working against congressional "English-only" legislation that would have effectively repealed them. Through this work, the League seeks to enact its vision of protecting and expanding voting rights and ensuring that *everyone* is represented in our democracy.

Voters with limited English proficiency face unique challenges registering to vote and accessing the ballot box. These barriers must be removed to extend the freedom to vote equally to all eligible voters regardless of the language with which they are most comfortable. The *Expanding the VOTE Act* supports this purpose. The League of Women Voters strongly urges you to cosponsor and move this bill to final passage.