



September 21, 2023

To: Members of Congress
From: The League of Women Voters of the United States
Re: Support the *John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act*

It is time to pass HR14, the *John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act*, to ensure the freedom to vote for all Americans, no matter the color of their skin, political party affiliation, or zip code.

Every day, the rights of Americans to vote are under attack at the state and local levels. Since the Supreme Court decision of *Shelby County v. Holder* that gutted the “preclearance” protections in the *Voting Rights Act* (VRA), at least 29 states have passed 94 laws that make it harder to vote. Eleven of those states were covered, either fully or in part, by the VRA’s preclearance protection – meaning some of the most restrictive state laws that make it harder to vote may have been blocked, had the full protections of the VRA been in place.

Furthermore, the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee* damaged another key provision in the *Voting Rights Act*- Section 2. In this decision, the Court stacked the deck by rewriting Section 2 to make it harder to win in court against voter restrictions.

For millions of Americans, it is now harder to register, vote, and have their voices heard equally. This stands in stark opposition to the promise and values of American democracy. Access to the vote is not a partisan issue. Our democracy needs legislation that prevents discrimination at the ballot box so that all voters have an equal right to make their voices heard.

The VRA was landmark civil rights legislation that responded to barriers at the state and local levels that prevented Black voters from exercising their rights to vote and it remains necessary to this day to prevent voter discrimination for all voters, no matter what language they speak, the color of their skin, or the zip code they live in. In the decades since it was passed into law, it has been reauthorized every time with bipartisan support and signed by Presidents of both political parties.

For nearly 50 years, the VRA was an unparalleled tool for protecting voters. The JRLVRAA can help renew its protections, advance a multiracial, inclusive democracy, and give us back the power to determine the future of our communities and families. We need a fully restored *Voting Rights Act* to defend our democracy and protect the freedom to vote.

The JRLVRAA will restore essential components of the *Voting Rights Act* (VRA) and protect Black and brown communities against anti-voter tactics that have risen across the country in the last decade. It is time to pass the *John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act*, to ensure the franchise for all citizens and create a democracy that is representative of, and responsive to, our increasingly diverse nation.