



VOTING RIGHTS ACT

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) is a law that prohibits discriminatory voting practices that have been responsible for the denial and prevention of the voting rights of racial, ethnic and language minority voters. Since the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Supreme Court has acknowledged that racial discrimination in voting had been more prevalent in certain areas of the country.

Voting Rights matter greatly to Latino voters and the Latino community. In order to ensure that we continue to progress toward a more inclusive government and country, it is critical that Congress stand behind its steadfast commitment to strong protection of the equal right to vote for every eligible citizen in the country.

THE RISING LATINO COMMUNITY IN RELATION TO THE VRA

As the demographics of voters continue to shift across the country, it is important to highlight that the American electorate is increasingly Latino. It is critical that these voters and all Americans be fully able to participate in the political process. Citizenry participation is at the core of our history and democracy. When a significant segment of the population does not have access to the polls due to ethnic background, social economic status, and language barriers, it impedes participation from all eligible citizens and is a direct attack on our democracy.

The U.S. citizen Latino population is rapidly expanding:

- ❖ 53 million Latinos comprise 17% of the total U.S. population.
- ❖ We are 8.4% of all voters and 10.8% of all eligible voters.
- ❖ 11.2 million Latinos voted in the 2012 elections.
- ❖ Only 48% of Latino eligible voters turned out to vote in 2012 (down from almost 50% in 2008).
- ❖ More than 52,000 Latinos turn 18 every month and 9 out of 10 are eligible to register to vote.

CONGRESSIONAL VOTING RIGHTS LEGISLATION THAT IS INTRODUCED AND MOVES FORWARD MUST INCLUDE AND PROTECT EQUAL ACCESS TO THE POLLS FOR LATINOS:

- ❖ In jurisdictions not subject to preclearance, the Latino community needs an effective way to stop discriminatory voting changes from going unchallenged and from being implemented while legal challenges are pending. Congress could streamline the process for obtaining a temporary block on the most problematic voting policies, and require simple public notice of any such changes.
- ❖ Some jurisdictions should continue to submit all proposed changes to voting procedures for preclearance. Triggers should include:
 - repeated recent violations of laws that prohibit discrimination in voting;
 - enactment of a particular voting change highly likely to be discriminatory;
 - a court order in any voting rights case (not only intentional discrimination cases); and/or
 - a cause of action seeking coverage on the strength of cumulative, recent evidence of discrimination in elections.
- ❖ Jurisdictions with sizeable populations of racial or language minority voters – including those jurisdictions where Latino voters are moving to and places where young Latino eligible voters are aging into their vote for the first time – should be required to submit for preclearance those changes that are identified as being the most linked to discrimination on a one-time basis. These “Known Practices” would include certain changes to:
 - the method of election;
 - voting locations;
 - jurisdiction boundaries;
 - redistricting; and/or
 - multilingual voting materials.