

FOR THE PEOPLE ACT AND THE JOHN LEWIS VOTING RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT ACT: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



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#RestoretheVRA

Two landmark pieces of legislation — the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act — would create national standards for voting and help to prevent racial discrimination in voting to ensure all of us have a say in key decisions about our lives and communities. Each bill covers different ground; that's why we need both to pass this year.

H.R. 1/S. 1 — The For the People Act

The For The People Act is the most comprehensive legislation to address our democracy ever proposed. The bill would create national standards for voting and elections, campaign finance, and ethical conduct of our elected officials by:

- Requiring states to modernize voter registration—including by instituting automatic and same-day registration and protecting against discriminatory purges;
- Requiring every state to offer early and no-excuse mail voting;
- Restoring voting rights to citizens with past criminal convictions once they complete any term of incarceration;
- Cracking down on voter deception and intimidation; and
- Banning partisan gerrymandering and taking other steps to protect racial and language minorities in the redistricting process, among other reforms.



The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) prohibits racial discrimination in voting. The legislation was designed to enforce the voting rights granted the U.S. Constitution and secured the right to vote for people of color throughout the country. The VRA is the most effective piece of civil rights legislation ever passed by Congress.

In its 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the Section 5 preclearance provision of the VRA, which was the most powerful provision of the bill. This provision required states and localities with a history of discrimination to get any voting changes they wanted to make federally reviewed and approved to ensure those changes do not infringe on people of color's freedom to vote. Under this provision, the federal government had the power to block proposed voting changes that were racially discriminatory. It also ensured that state and local changes to voting rules were made public and transparent.

The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would restore the full strength of the VRA by:

Establishes a forward-looking preclearance formula

- Establishing new review and approval criteria for preventing racial discrimination in voting;
- Mandating greater nationwide transparency of voting law and policy changes;
- Requiring federal review of specific voting practices known to have been used to discriminate against voters of color;
- Expanding the federal observer program; and
- Pausing discriminatory voting changes during judicial review.

Conclusion

In setting national standards for elections across the country, the For The People Act would stop most of the worst anti-voter policies that states across the country are proposing and passing right now. By requiring certain states and localities to have their voting changes federally reviewed to ensure those changes are not racially discriminatory, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would play a pivotal role in preventing future racially discriminatory laws from being implemented. Together, these two laws would help to make the promise of democracy real for us all.

