

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES.

Designating September 2023 as “National Voting Rights Month”.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. CARPER, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. MARKEY, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. KAINE, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. CASEY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. SMITH, Mr. LUJÁN, Mr. COONS, Mr. WELCH, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. KING, Mr. FETTERMAN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. REED, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. WARNER, Mr. BROWN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, and Mr. CARDIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on

RESOLUTION

Designating September 2023 as “National Voting Rights Month”.

Whereas voting is 1 of the single most important rights that can be exercised in a democracy;

Whereas, over the course of history, various voter suppression laws in the United States have hindered, and even prohibited, certain individuals and groups from exercising the right to vote;

Whereas, during the 19th and early 20th centuries, Native Americans and people who were born to United States citizens abroad, people who spoke a language other than

English, and people who were formerly subjected to slavery were denied full citizenship and prevented from voting by English literacy tests;

Whereas, since the 1870s, minority groups such as Black Americans in the South have suffered from the oppressive effects of Jim Crow laws that were designed to prevent political, economic, and social mobility;

Whereas Black Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other underrepresented voters were subject to violence, poll taxes, literacy tests, all-White primaries, property ownership tests, and grandfather clauses that were designed to suppress the right of those underrepresented individuals to vote;

Whereas 5,800,000 people in the United States are currently banned from voting because of a felony conviction, including 1 in 16 Black adults, due to the shameful entanglement of racial injustice in the criminal legal system and voting access in the United States;

Whereas members of the aforementioned groups and others are currently, in some cases, subject to intimidation, voter roll purges, and financial barriers that act effectively as modern-day poll taxes;

Whereas, in 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. 10301 et seq.) to protect the right of Black Americans and other traditionally disenfranchised groups to vote, among other reasons;

Whereas, in 2013, in the landmark case of *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 529 (2013), the Supreme Court of the United States invalidated section 4 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. 10303), dismantling the preclearance formula provision in that Act that protected

voters in States and localities that historically have suppressed the right of minorities to vote;

Whereas, since the invalidation of the preclearance formula provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. 10301 et seq.), gerrymandered districts in many States have gone unchallenged and have become less likely to be invalidated by the courts;

Whereas gerrymandered districts in many States have been found to have a discriminatory impact on traditionally disenfranchised minorities through tactics that include “cracking”, diluting the voting power of minorities across many districts, and “packing”, concentrating the power of minority voters into 1 district to reduce their voting power in other districts;

Whereas the courts have found the congressional and, in some cases, State legislative district maps, in Texas, North Carolina, Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, Alabama, and Louisiana to be gerrymandered districts that were created to favor some groups over others;

Whereas these restrictive voting laws encompass cutbacks in early voting, voter roll purges, placement of faulty equipment in minority communities, requirement of photo identification, and the elimination of same-day registration;

Whereas these policies could outright disenfranchise or make voting much more difficult for more than 80,000,000 minority, elderly, poor, and disabled voters, among other groups;

Whereas, in 2016, discriminatory laws in North Carolina, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and Texas were ruled to vio-

late the rights of voters and were overturned by the courts;

Whereas the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 529 (2013), calls on Congress to update the formula in the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. 10301 et seq.);

Whereas addressing the challenges of administering future elections requires increasing the accessibility of vote-by-mail and other limited-contact options to ensure access to the ballot and the protection of the health and safety of voters, and access to the ballot amid a global pandemic like the Coronavirus Disease 2019 public health emergency;

Whereas Congress must work to combat any attempts to dismantle or underfund the United States Postal Service or obstruct the passage of the mail as blatant tactics of voter suppression and election interference;

Whereas following the 2020 elections there has been a relentless attack on the right to vote with more than 400 bills having been introduced to roll back the right to vote, including such bills being introduced in almost every State and at least 44 of such bills having been signed into law in 18 States;

Whereas there is much more work to be done to ensure all citizens of the United States have the right to vote through free, fair, and accessible elections, and Congress must exercise its constitutional authority to protect the right to vote;

Whereas National Voter Registration Day in 2023 is Tuesday, September 19; and

Whereas September 2023 would be an appropriate month—

(1) to designate as “National Voting Rights Month”;
and

(2) to ensure that, through the registration of voters and awareness of elections, the democracy of the United States includes all citizens of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) designates September 2023 as “National
3 Voting Rights Month”;

4 (2) encourages all people in the United States
5 to uphold the right of every citizen to exercise the
6 sacred and fundamental right to vote;

7 (3) encourages Congress to pass—

8 (A) the Freedom to Vote Act (S. 1, 118th
9 Congress), to set basic national standards to
10 make sure all people in the United States can
11 cast their ballots in the way that works best for
12 them, regardless of what ZIP code they live in,
13 improve access to the ballot for people in the
14 United States, advance commonsense election
15 integrity reforms, and protect the democracy of
16 the United States from relentless attacks;

17 (B) the Democracy Restoration Act of
18 2023 (S. 1677, 118th Congress), to restore
19 Federal voting rights to citizens after release
20 from imprisonment, honoring the responsibil-
21 ities of citizenship and civic engagement nec-

1 essary for building healthy and safe commu-
2 nities, while welcoming the contributions of peo-
3 ple returning home after imprisonment; and

4 (C) other voting rights legislation that
5 seeks to advance voting rights and protect elec-
6 tions in the United States;

7 (4) recommends that public schools and univer-
8 sities in the United States develop an academic cur-
9 riculum that educates students about—

10 (A) the importance of voting, how to reg-
11 ister to vote, where to vote, and the different
12 forms of voting;

13 (B) the history of voter suppression in the
14 United States before and after passage of the
15 Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. 10301 et
16 seq.); and

17 (C) current measures that have been taken
18 to restrict the vote;

19 (5) expresses appreciation for the United States
20 Postal Service having issued a special Representative
21 John R. Lewis stamp—

22 (A) to honor the life and legacy of Rep-
23 resentative John R. Lewis in supporting voting
24 rights; and

1 (B) to remind people in the United States
2 that ordinary citizens risked their lives,
3 marched, and participated in the great democ-
4 racy of the United States so that all citizens
5 would have the fundamental right to vote; and

6 (6) invites Congress to allocate the requisite
7 funds for public service announcements on television,
8 radio, newspapers, magazines, social media, bill-
9 boards, buses, and other forms of media—

10 (A) to remind people in the United States
11 when elections are being held;

12 (B) to share important registration dead-
13 lines; and

14 (C) to urge people to get out and vote.