

Broad Coalition of Groups Agree:

Voter Empowerment Act Will Modernize Voter Registration, Ensure Equal Access to the Ballot Box

This week, House Democrats introduced the Voter Empowerment Act, comprehensive voting rights legislation that will modernize voter registration, ensure equal access to the ballot box for all Americans, and prohibit deceptive practices and voter fraud that keep people from exercising their constitutional right to vote.

Since the bill was introduced, a diverse group of advocates representing the civil rights, disability and young voter communities have already come out in strong support:

American Association of People with Disabilities – Mark Perriello, President and CEO: “We support the goals of the Voter Empowerment Act, which is intended to protect millions of Americans from disenfranchisement. AAPD looks forward to working with members of Congress to safeguard the right to vote.”

Asian American Justice Center-- Mee Moua, President and Executive Director: “The Voter Empowerment Act is a strong starting point for our discussion on moving our country forward and re-establishing the United States as a model for other democracies around the world.”

Brennan Center for Justice – Wendy Weiser, Democracy Program Director: “Our nation’s ramshackle voter registration system does not work for 21st century America. No matter your political party, we can all agree that every eligible American should have the opportunity to vote. Modernizing voter registration is something everyone can get behind. It is an innovative reform that could add more than 50 million eligible citizens to the rolls, permanently. We are pleased that House members included this vital proposal in their new voting bill.”

Brennan Center for Justice – Nicole Austin-Hillery, Director and Counsel: “We are delighted so many members of Congress came together to support important voting reforms. We need to strengthen our democracy by making our voting system work better for all Americans.”

Common Cause – Bob Edgar, President: “Common Cause applauds the introduction of the Voter Empowerment Act. This critical legislation advances reforms to ensure that eligible voters can register and cast ballots without undue burden, regardless of race, age, economic class or disability. The Voter Empowerment Act installs necessary protections to ensure that all ballots are counted as cast. It provides for a needed response when partisan groups threaten the vote through misleading efforts that lie to voters about where, when and how to vote... Nothing is more precious in our democracy than our right to vote. Our history proves that. The Voter Empowerment Act will help safeguard that right.”

Demos – Brenda Wright, Vice President of Legal Strategies: “Demos salutes the introduction of legislation today that aims to ensure that all eligible citizens can register and vote. The Voter Empowerment Act seeks to provide more access to the ballot, more efficiency in our election systems, and more accountability in our elections. Demos particularly supports the goal of modernizing our voter registration system, including by ensuring that voters can correct any problems with their registration on Election Day itself – a reform already adopted by eleven states and the District of Columbia that is proven to increase voter turnout. Modernizing our voter registration process has the potential to bring millions of eligible, unregistered persons into the process.”

FairVote-- Rob Richie, Executive Director: “The Voter Empowerment Act has common-sense provisions that

represent international norms and should not be the subject of political calculation. It seeks to modernize voter registration and allow eligible voters who are not registered before Election Day a fair chance to participate. It reestablishes the value of the Election Assistance Commission, which remains without commissioners, and twisting in the political winds, despite ongoing evidence of the need for national standards and performance measures....Moreover, we hope that HR 5799 represents a turning point where Congress once again recognizes its obligation to uphold voting rights for all American citizens and for both major parties to come together to accept the right to vote as fundamental.”

Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law: “The Lawyers’ Committee applauds the House Democratic Leadership for taking responsibility and introducing legislation that makes voting free, fair and accessible for all, as the President has urged. Such reform is critical to ensuring no American is improperly turned away at the polling place.”

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights – Wade Henderson, President and CEO: “The Voter Empowerment Act is a comprehensive plan to strengthen elections, combat voter exclusion, and expand voter participation. We applaud the bill’s sponsors and urge the House to give it serious consideration as soon as possible.”

League of Women Voters – Elisabeth MacNamara, National President: “The Voter Empowerment Act takes important steps to protect voters, including a new system for online voter registration and improvements in the provisional balloting system to ensure that all eligible citizens have their votes counted.”

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People—Hilary O. Shelton, Director of the NAACP Washington Bureau and the Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Policy: “Since our inception in 1909, the NAACP has fought for equality in voting rights. We believe that voting is the most fundamental civil right, and should be readily available to all Americans, regardless of their age, income, race, ethnicity, gender, employment status, physical disability, where they live, or other differences. For that reason, we strongly support the Voter Empowerment Act.”

The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund: “The right to vote is one of the most precious rights afforded to Americans by the United States Constitution. We applaud the introduction of a congressional proposal to uphold and protect this cornerstone of our democracy. The Voter Empowerment Act of 2013 is an important step towards ensuring broad access to the ballot and robust voter engagement among eligible Latino voters and all Americans.”

Project Vote – Michael Slater, Executive Director: “The goals of the Voter Empowerment Act are to provide more access to the ballot, to protect the integrity of voting systems, and to ensure accountability in elections. Project Vote supports measures that make voting more accessible and convenient, and which bring down barriers to voting for eligible Americans.”

Rock the Vote – Heather Smith, President: The Voter Empowerment Act is a positive step toward ensuring that every person who is eligible to cast a ballot is able to do so... If the strength of our democracy can be measured by the participation of our citizens, then barriers being placed on young people pose a serious threat to the long-term future of our democratic system. The Voter Empowerment Act is a great step toward a more modern election system that meets the needs of today's voters.”