

The Voter Empowerment Act

On January 23, 2013, more than 160 House Democrats joined Congressman John Lewis (D-GA), Senator Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY), Assistant Leader Jim Clyburn (D-SC), Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD), House Administration Committee Ranking Member Robert Brady (D-PA), and House Judiciary Committee Ranking Member John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI) in reintroducing the **Voter Empowerment Act** of 2013.

The 2012 election reiterated the continued need for improving our nation’s voting processes and standards. The Voter Empowerment Act (VEA) is the most comprehensive proposal to update our nation’s voting systems. This legislation will restore **access, integrity, and accountability** to the U.S. election process.

The VEA: Protecting the right to vote in the 21st Century

Election observers and civil rights organizations identified major 2012 Election Day logistical problems. The VEA responds to these challenges with specific, common-sense solutions.

Protecting the right to vote requires continued vigilance and review. January 23, 2013 marks the 49th anniversary of the 24th Amendment. This amendment ended the poll tax in federal elections. These and other discriminatory practices were often used to prevent African Americans from exercising their right to vote. Two years later, the Supreme Court officially extended the prohibition on poll taxes to state elections.

Unfortunately, the realities of Election Day 2012 reminded all Americans that although much progress was made in ensuring equal access to exercise the right to vote, much work remains. Across the country, Americans waited in line for hours as they attempted to vote. Many were forced to cast provisional ballots, while others were victims of false information scams, or subjected to draconian early voting rules.

This is an unacceptable standard for a leading global democracy. We can and should do better.

How does the VEA respond to the call to action?

The Voter Empowerment Act addresses the major delays and obstacles which voters – regardless of political party or region -- experienced during the 2012 election.

GOAL	THE VOTER EMPOWERMENT ACT (VEA) SOLUTION	
Ensuring Access to the Ballot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernizes the voter registration system • Ensures access to online voter registration • Ensures military and overseas Americans’ ballots are counted • Allows same day registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures online voter registration access • Notifies voters when changes are made • Encourages youth to become voters • Assists voters with disabilities • Restores rehabilitated citizens’ right to vote
Preserving Integrity in Voting Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restores trust in elections officials • Provides informed and reliable poll workers • Counts all provisional ballots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibits voter caging • Protects voters from deceptive practices and intimidation
Demanding Accountability in Election Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a national voter hotline • Ensures votes are counted correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reauthorizes the Election Assistance Commission