

The right to vote is increasingly under attack in America.

Here's what I'm talking about:

- The landmark *Voting Rights Act* of 1965 contained a provision requiring states with histories of voter suppression to get federal approval (or “preclearance”) for any changes to their voting laws.
- Congress reauthorized the *Voting Rights Act*, including the preclearance provision, in 1982 and again in 2006 with overwhelmingly bipartisan support. Indeed, not a single senator — Democrat or Republican — voted against reauthorization in 2006.
- But in 2013 — in a case known as *Shelby County* — the Supreme Court struck down the preclearance provision of the *Voting Rights Act*.
- The court's majority based its ruling on the farcical premise that racism was essentially a thing of the past.
- The impact of the Supreme Court's misguided *Shelby County* ruling has proved to be every bit as cynical, discriminatory, and anti-democratic as many of us predicted it would be.
- In the decade since, Republican legislators across the country have imposed barriers to voting, barely concealing their intent to deter people of color from voting.
- Nearly 100 laws have already been passed, in more than half of the states, that make it harder for people of color to vote. Hundreds of other voter suppression bills have been introduced in virtually every state in America.
- And — as revealed in a massive new study by the Brennan Center for Justice — after *Shelby County*, the gap between higher voting rates among white people and lower voting rates among people of color has increased the most in places that had been subject to the preclearance provision.

Legislation to restore and strengthen the original *Voting Rights Act*, including its preclearance requirement, has just been reintroduced in Congress.

This critical legislation — the *John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act* — is named in honor of the late Rep. John Lewis.

On March 7, 1965 — in what is known as Bloody Sunday — Lewis was savagely beaten by racist state troopers as he led peaceful civil rights activists in a historic march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. The *Voting Rights Act*, with its critical preclearance requirement, was passed just five months later.

A few years ago, I had the honor to be at the House of Representatives when John Lewis spoke about legislation to protect voting rights:

“You have heard me say on occasion that the right to vote is precious — almost sacred. In a democratic society, it is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have. In my heart of hearts, I believe we have a moral responsibility to restore access for all citizens, who desire to participate in the democratic process. Many people marched and protested for the right to vote. Some gave a little blood, and others gave their very

lives.”

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would fortify the original Voting Rights Act of 1965, including by restoring the requirement that jurisdictions with histories of voter suppression get federal approval for any changes to their voting laws.

[Tell Congress:](#)

[The fundamental right to vote is under assault. We call on Congress to protect and expand voting rights by passing the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.](#)

[Click to add your name now.](#)

Thanks for taking action.

For democracy,

- Robert Weissman, President of Public Citizen

Public Citizen | 1600 20th Street NW | Washington DC 20009 | [Unsubscribe](#)