

Voting Rights Advancement Act (VRAA)

Some History: In 1965 Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, which protected a citizen's right to vote. If certain states attempted to suppress the vote of certain groups or made voting difficult through general incompetence of those overseeing the voting process, such a state would fall under a preclearance process for any changes that were made going forward to improve the voting experience.

In 2013, the Supreme Court of the United States struck down the preclearance requirement in the *Shelby County vs Holder* decision. SCOTUS declared the original preclearance process to be outdated, but left the door open for Congress to modernize this process. In 2019 the House passed a bill that would modernize the preclearance process. This bill, the VRAA--S. 561, is waiting in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Those who say that the VRAA is not needed overlook the following. Since the *Shelby vs Holder* decision, states have tried to discourage voting by the following:

1. Strict voter id requirements that may involve expense for the voter
2. Polling place consolidations or changes without proper voter notification
3. Polling place consolidations resulting in long lines of waiting voters
4. Attempts to require documentary proof of citizenship, a difficult requirement for some elderly rural folks who may not have birth certificates.
5. Restricted voter registration drives, making the act of registration more difficult
6. Reduction of early voting times, making it difficult for working moms and dads to vote.
7. Increased residency requirements for registration.
8. Aggressive voter purges
9. Inadequate number of polling places and/or equipment in minority communities.

Under the VRAA, states showing a history of these types of voter suppression would be placed under a preclearance umbrella until they restored the right to equal access to the voting process for all the state's citizens.

Senator Lisa Murkowski has co-sponsored this bill with Senator Patrick Leahy, the bill's sponsor.

Read more here: <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/policy-solutions/all-about-hr-4>
(In the House, the bill was number H.4.)

And here: <https://civilrights.org/resource/support-h-r-4-voting-rights-advancement-act/>

And here: <https://www.lwv.org/fighting-voter-suppression/league-urges-congress-vote-yes-hr-4-voting-rights-advancement-act>