



June 27, 2014

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- LaKimba B. DeSadier**
NBCSL Executive Director

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chair
U.S. House Committee on the
Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on the
Judiciary
2426 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Goodlatte and Ranking Member Conyers:

The National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) is calling on the United States House of Representatives to take swift action on H.R.3899, the Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 (VRAA). When the Supreme Court ruled Section 4 unconstitutional in *Shelby County v. Holder*, it delivered a debilitating blow to voting rights. Congress is now positioned to heal the damage done by restoring the Voting Rights Act to its full power with VRAA.

NBCSL comprises nearly 665 Black state legislators representing over 65 million constituents. As policymakers, it is incumbent upon us to ensure unobstructed access to the ballot box. NBCSL has several resolutions supporting federal voting protections, including LJE-14-11 *Urging the Abolishment of Voter Suppression Tactics* and LJE-14-13 *Calling on Congress to Restore the Voting Rights Act*. These and other resolutions provide NBCSL a clear mandate to call upon members of Congress to act in the best interests of those most impacted by voting laws.

NBCSL supports the coverage formula for Section 4 currently proposed in VRAA, which requires at least five violations to occur within a state during the past 15 years in order to qualify for preclearance. NBCSL also supports a strengthened bail-in provision, which allows a jurisdiction to be bailed in with not only a showing of intentional discrimination but also from showing a discriminatory result. Additionally, an increased opportunity for citizens to file their own preliminary injunctions helps combat potentially discriminatory laws. NBCSL supports a public notice mandate that will empower individuals through advance knowledge of proposed election changes. These provisions are indeed steps in the right direction for securing and maintaining voting rights.

NBCSL urges the United States House of Representatives, to schedule a hearing and markup of VRAA prior to the scheduled August recess to give the bill a fair chance to be debated and voted on before Congress adjourns for the year. We also ask the House Judiciary Committee to carefully consider the input of organizations who are providing testimony, have provided testimony, and continue to advocate for all of those impacted by this bill.

Democracy is the cornerstone of our nation, and it is the duty of every public servant to ensure that democracy is upheld. The responsibility now falls to Congress to pass a bill that will keep suppressive voting tactics from robbing the voices of individuals. The right to vote is sacred—with countless Americans having fought and died to protect it. We are calling on Congress to ensure these costly battles to the ballot were not waged in vain and that every voice and every vote is counted in the democratic process.

Respectfully submitted,



Representative Joe Armstrong (TN)
President, National Black Caucus of State Legislators

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