

Business Letter to Congress in Support of the VRAA

In the 2020 election, Americans came together to work the polls, get out the vote, and cast their ballots in spite of the pandemic, achieving historic levels of voter participation. The business community is proud of our role in encouraging our employees, customers, and communities to exercise their right to vote and have a say in our government. Widespread civic engagement is essential to a stable society and robust economy. Our democracy is strongest when we all can vote.

At the same time, the election highlighted deep inequities in how our elections are run. Despite decades of progress, impediments to exercising the right to vote persist in many states, especially for communities of color. We need federal protections to safeguard this fundamental right for all Americans.

To this end, the undersigned group of U.S. employers supports passage by Congress of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (VRAA).

The 1965 Voting Rights Act contained provisions that prevented the adoption of discriminatory rules that limited access to voting in states with histories of voting discrimination. Those provisions were reauthorized four times by bipartisan majorities in the U.S. Congress, and signed into law by both Republican and Democratic presidents.

In 2013, the Supreme Court in *Shelby County v. Holder* struck down those provisions in a 5-to-4 decision as unconstitutional. The effects were immediate. Within days, states formerly covered by the law began passing legislation to make voting more difficult with burdensome voter ID requirements, polling place closures, reductions in earlier voting, the elimination of same-day voter registration, and purging voter rolls, all of which disproportionately affected communities of color. In handing down its ruling, the Supreme Court invited Congress to update the coverage formula to ensure the law is responsive to current voting conditions. Congressional action on that invitation is long overdue.

The VRAA would restore necessary safeguards by updating the Voting Rights Act's coverage formula to prevent voting discrimination, as well as establish a more transparent and accountable system for states to report election law changes. The VRAA will help ensure that voters of color who remain the targets of voter suppression have equal and unfettered access to the democratic process.

Representative Lewis called the right to vote “the most powerful non-violent tool we have in our democratic society.” He was a fierce advocate of the VRAA because our country is in an “ongoing struggle to redeem the soul of America, and we’re not there yet.”

While each of our companies is unique, we are united in the belief that every American deserves a voice in our democracy. It is our government's role to ensure voting is accessible to all. We urge Congress to pass the VRAA to assure that every voice is heard.

Respectfully,

[Signatories]