

Durbin, Warnock, Schumer Reintroduce John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, U.S. Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock (D-GA), and U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), along with U.S. Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Laphonza Butler (D-CA), today reintroduced the John R. Lewis Voting Advancement Act, legislation that would update and restore critical safeguards of the original Voting Rights Act.

Durbin also announced that the Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a full committee hearing on the ongoing need for the John R. Lewis Voting Advancement Act amidst continued voter suppression efforts in Republican-led states on Tuesday, March 12.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's damaging Shelby County decision in 2013—which crippled the federal government's ability under the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to prevent discriminatory changes to voting laws and procedures—states across the country have unleashed a torrent of voter suppression schemes that have systematically disenfranchised tens of thousands of American voters. The Supreme Court's decision in Brnovich delivered yet another blow to the Voting Rights Act, by making it significantly harder for plaintiffs to win lawsuits under the landmark law against discriminatory voting laws or procedures.

“In our nation, there's no freedom more fundamental than the right to vote,” Durbin said. “But over the past several years, there has been a sustained effort to chip away at the protections guaranteed to every American under the Voting Rights Act. That's why we've joined together today to reintroduce a bill that would not only restore the protections of the Voting Rights Act, but strengthen it—the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.”

“I was Congressman Lewis' pastor, but he was my mentor and hero because he believed voting is a sacred undertaking that's about more than a person's voice, it's about their humanity. That's why this legislation is more important than ever, because the fight to protect voting rights and voting access for every eligible American remains unfinished, and even worse, so much of the progress Congressman Lewis fought for is being rolled back,” said Warnock. “I'm proud to reintroduce this legislation with Chair Durbin, and as we work to pass it into law, I look forward to building on John Lewis' lifetime of service to honor him by protecting the sacred right to vote.”

“Democrats will continue to heed the words of our late colleague, John Lewis, and work tirelessly to safeguard the right to vote, advancing the John R Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act,” said Schumer. “We must keep up the work, keep strategizing and, most of all, keep up the fight. We know what a serious challenge is ahead of us, and we know it is going to take all of us, working together to build a more responsive democracy.”

“A decade ago when it gutted critical components of the Voting Rights Act, the Supreme Court opened the floodgates to concerted efforts to deny voting rights. These efforts have relentlessly targeted Black voters and marginalized communities,” said Booker. “The right to vote is sacred for all Americans, and Congress must act urgently to defend it. The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act honors the legacy of the late Congressman John Lewis and so many civil rights activists by protecting and expanding voting rights in our country to help ensure that every vote counts.”

“There is no greater freedom or more fundamental right than the right to vote,” said Blumenthal. “The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act restores critical

protections against voting discrimination and secures equal opportunity for all Americans to participate in the political process – fulfilling the founding ideals of our nation. With voting rights under unprecedented assault in states around the country, this legislation safeguards access to the ballot box and protects the very foundation of our democracy.”

“I am proud to cosponsor the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act which will enshrine critical voting rights protections into law and reject efforts to undermine the very foundations of our democracy,” said Butler. “On that fateful Bloody Sunday, with nothing but courage and a backpack, John Lewis marched with peaceful protesters in demand of fair voting rights. In honor of his legacy, we need to live up to the ideals we believe in – not just talk about them – and ensure everyone has equal access to the ballot.”

The legislation is cosponsored by 50 U.S. Senators. Along with Durbin, Warnock, Schumer, Booker, Blumenthal, and Butler, the Senate cosponsors are: U.S. Senators Patty Murray (D-WA), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Jack Reed (D-RI), Thomas R. Carper (D-DE), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Bob Casey (D-PA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Jon Tester (D-MT), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Mark Warner (D-VA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Chris Coons (D-DE), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Angus King (I-ME), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Edward Markey (D-MA), Gary Peters (D-MI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Tina Smith (D-MN), Kyrsten Sinema (I-AZ), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Mark Kelly (D-AZ), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), John W. Hickenlooper, Jr. (D-CO), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Jon Ossoff (D-GA), Peter Welch (D-VT), and John Fetterman (D-PA).

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act is endorsed by [hundreds of organizations](#), including the following leading civil rights organizations: Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, American Civil Liberties Union, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), MALDEF, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law, and Demos.

The full text of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act can be found [here](#).

A section-by-section analysis of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act can be found [here](#).