

Reps. Pocan and Ellison: Introduce right to vote constitutional amendment

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Reps. Mark Pocan (D-WI) and Keith Ellison (D-MN), along with Rep. John Lewis (D-GA) and 24 original cosponsors introduced a resolution, which would explicitly guarantee the right to vote. At a time when voting rights across the country have come under unprecedented assault and faith in our election process is being undermined by President Trump, the Pocan-Elison Right to Vote Amendment would amend the U.S. Constitution to provide all Americans with the affirmative right to vote.

While most Americans believe an explicit right to vote is enshrined in our Constitution, the Constitution contains no expressed guarantee of an individual's right to vote. A constitutional amendment can ensure this right is guaranteed while also providing a pathway to challenge attempts to restrict voting rights.

“The biggest strength of our democracy is that all citizens have an equal say through their vote,” **said Rep. Mark Pocan.** “We have seen constant attempts by some states to erode voting rights and make it harder for citizens to vote. Our current President has also spread lies about illegal voting in what clearly looks like an attempt to undermine our election process. This constitutional amendment would help prevent these attempts to erode voting rights and affirm the principle of equal participation in our democracy for every citizen. Our democracy is strongest when everyone is able to participate, and it is time to fulfill that promise to the American people.”

“Our democracy gains strength when more Americans participate in elections,” **Rep. Keith Ellison said.** “But millions cannot vote today because of restrictive voting laws in some states – and President Trump has pledged to expand those laws nationwide. A constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to vote would help stop this voter suppression. In 2016, 14 states had new restrictions in place for the first time in a presidential election. The impact this has on civic participation is devastating. Particularly for low-income communities and communities of color. Voting is central to the health of our democracy—every citizen in this country should have an inalienable right to vote.”

“The vote is the most powerful non-violent tool for change that we have in a democratic society,” **Rep. John Lewis said.** “We need to make it simple and easy for every American citizen, who is of voting age, to weigh in on the matters that govern their lives. This bill guarantees that eligible citizens cannot be so easily disenfranchised, and the right of each have a say in the democratic process is protected.”

The ongoing assault on voting rights in states across the country underscores the need for a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to vote. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, at least 46 bills to restrict access to registration and voting have been introduced in 21 states as of February 1, 2017, including efforts to require a photo ID, make voter registration more difficult, reduce early voting opportunities, and make it harder for students to vote.

This legislation is also cosponsored by Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Brendan Boyle (D-PA), Matt Cartwright (D-PA), Judy Chu (D-CA), Steven Cohen (D-TN), John Conyers (D-MI), Elijah Cummings (D-MD), Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), John Garamendi (D-CA), Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ), Eleanor Holmes-Norton (D-DC), Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Gwen Moore (D-WI), Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Lucille Roybal Allard (D-CA), Tim Ryan (D-OH), Louise Slaughter (D-NY), Mark Takano (D-CA), Marc Veasey (D-TX), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), and Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ).

The text of the amendment is below:

SECTION 1: Every citizen of the United States, who is of legal voting age, shall have the fundamental right to vote in any public election held in the jurisdiction in which the citizen resides.

SECTION 2: Congress shall have the power to enforce and implement this article by appropriate legislation.