

U.S. Rep. Moore: Votes to pass HR 4, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021

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Today, Congresswoman Gwen Moore voted to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021, which restores the ability of the federal government to stop voter suppression practices targeting minority citizens under the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Congresswoman Gwen Moore released the following statement:

“The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy. John Lewis, among others, shed blood on the Edmund Pettus Bridge for this crucial right. Since the Supreme Court’s 2013 Shelby v. Holder decision and a subsequent 2021 decision gutted this keystone law, GOP state legislators have pushed forward measures that builds barriers to the ballot box, disproportionately hurting Americans of color, including here in Wisconsin.

I spoke out and fought strongly against efforts, by then Gov. Scott Walker to implement a voter ID bill in Wisconsin because of concerns that they would disproportionately affect communities of color and make it harder for those votes to exercise this critical civil right as a number of federal courts have noted.

As I have noted before, the threat to voting rights today, while subtle, is as pernicious as it was during the civil rights era. Over the course of 13 hearings in two Congresses, including six just this year alone, Congressional committees have built a substantial record demonstrating the continuing need to help vulnerable communities against a range of voter suppression practices.

After the 2020 election, state lawmakers have been working overtime to pass

legislation that deny Americans access to the ballot box. This year alone, at least 18 states have enacted 30 bills that create hurdles to voting

Now, more than ever, we need to restore the power of the Voting Rights Act, protect the right to vote and honor the legacy of John Lewis.”

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021 would create a new preclearance coverage formula that looks at repeated voting rights violations by a jurisdiction in the preceding 25 years.

- States and political subdivisions that qualify for preclearance under the new formula will be covered for a period of 10 years. If they have a clean record during that time, the bill provides a process for them to be extracted from coverage.

The bill also importantly would apply a nationwide preclearance requirement for jurisdictions that engage in certain kinds of proposed changes to voting rules, such as the following:

- The imposition of certain stricter voter ID requirements.
- Reductions in polling locations or polling hours.
- Reductions in the availability of non-English language voting materials relative to materials in English.
- Changes to procedures regarding maintenance of voter registration lists.

Background

- The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is one of the most consequential laws Congress has ever enacted. As Supreme Court Associate Justice Elena Kagan pointed out, “The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is an extraordinary law. Rarely has a statute required so much sacrifice to ensure its passage. Never has a statute done more to advance the nation’s highest ideals. And few laws are more vital in the current moment.”¹
- Tragically, in recent years, the Supreme Court has undermined the original Voting Rights Act of 1965 with two damaging decisions:

Shelby County v. Holder (2013): This decision effectively gutted the Voting Rights Act's most important enforcement mechanism - its Section 5 preclearance provision. Specifically, the decision struck down the formula contained in Section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act. That formula determined which states and localities should be subject to preclearance—striking down Section 4(b) effectively rendered the law's preclearance provision inoperative.¹

Brnovich v. DNC (2021): This decision substantially curtailed the scope of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, making it significantly more difficult for parties to challenge voting laws that result in the denial or abridgment of the right to vote on account of race, color, or language-minority status.¹

Read more on the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021 [here](#).¹