

Talking Points: The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act



At National Council of Jewish Women, we believe that our vote is our voice. Throughout our history, NCJW has educated and engaged advocates to advance the right to vote, including fighting for women's suffrage and passage of the historic Voting Rights Act of 1965. Guided by the Jewish value of *tzedek*, or justice, we have a responsibility to work towards equality and to build a just society. The Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act, and as a consequence, state legislatures across the country are denying millions of people of their right to vote by passing restrictive laws. **We need the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to help secure the right to vote for all.**

Background

- The Voting Rights Act of 1965 barred discriminatory state laws that excluded voters based on race. This law was severely weakened in 2013 when the US Supreme Court ruled in *Shelby County v. Holder* to eliminate the federal government's power to review changes in election laws in states with a history of discrimination, a process known as "preclearance."
- Since the 2013 *Shelby* ruling, at least 31 states have enacted over 100 laws that make it harder for people to vote — from strict voter ID requirements, to limiting or eliminating early and mail-in voting, to purging voter rolls. These laws have led to widespread voter suppression, disproportionately affecting communities of color, minority-language speakers, low-income individuals, older adults, women, and transgender people.

Talking Points

- Named after the civil rights champion who dedicated his life to the fight for justice, the **John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act** (HR 14), led by Representative Terri Sewell (D-AL), will restore the power of the Voting Rights Act and protect Americans' access to the ballot.
- This bill would modernize and revitalize the Voting Rights Act, strengthening legal protections against discriminatory voting policies by restoring preclearance, requiring notice for changes to voting rules, and creating new legal avenues to challenge violations.
- As Jewish advocates, we teach that the word *kol* means both voice and vote — a sacred reminder that to vote is to speak up, to act, to repair the world. Justice requires that every vote be counted and every voice be heard. Our democracy can only fulfill its promise when each of us can make our voices heard, equally.
- **Congress must pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to ensure that we all have an equal say in our future.**