

2013-K1168

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION memorializing Congress to enact legislation to support the Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 in order to preserve integrity, equality and fairness in elections in 2014 and beyond

WHEREAS, The right to vote is a fundamental right of United States citizens and is the most important of civic rights and obligations; and

WHEREAS, The election of representatives who voice the concerns of the public ensures a responsive and accountable government; and

WHEREAS, The failure of eligible Americans to vote jeopardizes the strength and vitality of our country's democracy; and

WHEREAS, The Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution ensures that the right of citizens of the United States to vote is not denied on account of race or color, and grants Congress the authority to protect the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, Congress has exercised this authority by passing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, landmark legislation that seeks to abolish discriminatory procedures and barriers that disenfranchise minority voters; and

WHEREAS, Congress has, time and again, reaffirmed the need for protection against abuses that might curtail the right to vote by renewing the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and

WHEREAS, The Voting Rights Act's highly effective preclearance procedures have been suspended as a result of the Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*; and

WHEREAS, The *Shelby County* decision has greatly diminished the ability of the federal government to protect equal access to the ballot box; and

WHEREAS, Voter discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and language minority status is not a thing of the past but a current reality and has been an effective procedure to ensure the voting rights of New Yorkers in New York, Kings and The Bronx counties where all changes to election

laws were sent to the U.S. Department of Justice for review and approval; and

WHEREAS, A bipartisan group of Members of Congress has proposed legislation - the Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014, H.R. 3899 and S. 1945 - that would respond to the Shelby County decision by modernizing voting rights protections; and

WHEREAS, The Voting Rights Amendment Act would protect voters throughout the nation, and extend appropriate oversight to any jurisdiction with a significant recent history of discriminatorily restricting access to elections, consistent with the Constitution; and

WHEREAS, The Voting Rights Amendment Act would increase transparency in election administration and policymaking in the interest of ensuring that discriminatory voting laws do not escape the notice of advocates who have the knowledge and resources necessary to vindicate voters' rights; and

WHEREAS, The Voting Rights Amendment Act is a positive first step toward adapting the Voting Rights Act to meet 21st century needs and apply adequate scrutiny to suspect voting laws consistent with the Supreme Court's decisions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Congress of the United States be and hereby is respectfully memorialized by this Legislative Body to enact legislation supporting the Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 in order to preserve integrity, equality and fairness in elections in 2014 and beyond; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the President of the Senate of the United States, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and to each member of the Congress of the United States from the State of New York.