



TO: **Interested Parties**
FROM: **Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee**
DATE: **February 2, 2022**
RE: **The Path Forward for Voting Rights
Is through the States**

Voting rights legislation faces an uphill battle in the U.S. Congress, leaving statehouses as the best path forward to defend this fundamental right. As we recognize Black History Month, the DLCC and state Democrats will keep pushing the importance of state legislative races so we can ensure that all Americans can cast their ballots freely, safely, and equally.

Last year, 17 Republican-controlled states passed 32 anti-voter laws, creating deliberate barriers to voting for 110 million Americans. The GOP's goal is very clear: not election safety or accessibility, but to remain in power at any cost — even if the cost is taking away the voices, power, and self-determination from people of color, those with low-income and people with disabilities.

Following the Democratic victory in the 2020 presidential election, Republicans began a coordinated attack on the freedom to vote, emboldened by Donald Trump and his baseless conspiracy theories.

Here are some of the GOP's most infamous anti-voter actions and bills across the country:

- › **Georgia** attacked vote-by-mail and early voting and criminalized Georgians who give food or water to those waiting in line to vote. Because of their 2021 law, we have seen Democrats, particularly Black Democrats, **purged** from county elections boards and the subsequent cancellation of Sunday voting, which is widely used by the Black community.
- › **Texas** drastically cut voting centers in Harris County (the home of 4.7 million people, which has been trending Democratic), banned overnight early voting, restricted drive-thru voting and vote-by-mail, and empowered partisan poll watchers leading to increased risk of voter intimidation.
- › **Florida** undermined a voter-passed initiative supported by more than 5.1 million Floridians that would have restored voting rights to those with felony convictions.
- › **Arizona** undermined the state's Permanent Early Voting List, which automatically sent ballots to voters for each election and was used by nearly 90% of voters in 2020. The change is expected to purge more than tens of thousands of voters.

In total, state legislators in 49 states introduced **more than 440 anti-voter bills** in 2021. Already in 2022, we have seen Republican state legislators **introduce** nearly 400 anti-voter bills and it's only February.

Last year, **17 Democratic-controlled states** expanded the freedom to vote. These laws make the promise of democracy real for all of us by expanding vote-by-mail and early voting, improving language accessibility, providing greater access for people with disabilities, simplifying voter registration, and much more.

Here are a few examples of state Democrats standing by voters and their right to vote:

- › **Nevada passed a pro-voter law** last year to send mail-in ballots to every registered voter, add more drop boxes around the state, and allow voters to receive help from family members or friends if they need assistance filling out or returning their ballots.
- › **Virginia** passed the **Voting Rights Act** of Virginia to enshrine the federal Voting Rights Act at the state level, prohibiting racial discrimination or intimidation around voting. This bill followed Virginia Democrats' success in 2020 to allow no-excuse early voting, create a permanent mail-in voter list, pass automatic voter registration and same-day early voting legislation, and make election day a state holiday.
- › **New Jersey expanded the freedom to vote** by allowing no-excuse early voting and specifically **requiring** a day of early voting on the Sunday before election day, allowing Black voters in the state to participate in a Souls to the Polls event for the first time.

Civil rights leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rep. John Lewis fought, bled, and died for equality and justice, especially the right to vote. Ultimately, their courage and persistence led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which banned discriminatory voting practices like poll taxes and literacy tests that prevented Black Americans from voting.

The U.S. Supreme Court has since struck down critical parts of the Voting Rights Act, punting jurisdiction over voting and elections to the states and leaving millions of Americans vulnerable to deliberate barriers to voting.

Given the current political landscape, the **best** path forward to protecting and expanding the right to vote and upholding the lessons of the civil rights movement is through state legislatures.

The DLCC will continue to identify and condemn state Republicans who introduce and support anti-voter bills, and to support Democrats who make voting safe and accessible, and push our freedom to vote as a top election issue in 2022.