

109TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. CON. RES. 216

Expressing the sense of the Congress that, as Congress observes the 40th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and encourages all Americans to do the same, it will advance the legacy of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by ensuring the continued effectiveness of the Act to protect the voting rights of all Americans.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 22, 2005

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia (for himself, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, Mr. CHABOT, and Mr. NADLER) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

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## CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress that, as Congress observes the 40th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and encourages all Americans to do the same, it will advance the legacy of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by ensuring the continued effectiveness of the Act to protect the voting rights of all Americans.

Whereas brave Americans, known and unknown, of different races, ethnicities, and religions, risked their lives to stand for political equality and against racial discrimination in a quest culminating in the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965;

Whereas numerous Americans paid the ultimate price in pursuit of that quest, while demanding that our nation live up to the guarantees enshrined in the 14th and 15th amendments to the United States Constitution;

Whereas the historic struggle for equal voting rights led non-violent civil rights marchers to gather on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama on March 7, 1965, a day that would come to be known as “Bloody Sunday,” where their bravery was tested by a brutal response, which in turn sent a clarion call to the nation that the fulfillment of our democratic ideals could no longer be denied;

Whereas eight days after Bloody Sunday, President Lyndon B. Johnson called for a comprehensive and effective voting rights bill as a necessary response by Congress and the President to the interference and violence, in violation of the 14th and 15th amendments, encountered by African American citizens when attempting to protect and exercise the right to vote;

Whereas a bipartisan Congress approved the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and on August 6, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed this landmark legislation into law;

Whereas the Voting Rights Act of 1965 stands as a tribute to the heroism of countless Americans and serves as one of the Nation’s most important civil rights victories, enabling political empowerment and voter enfranchisement for all Americans;

Whereas the Voting Rights Act of 1965 effectuates the permanent guarantee of the 15th amendment that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State

on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude”;

Whereas the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was amended in 1975 to facilitate equal political opportunity for language minority citizens and was amended in 1982 to protect the rights of voters with disabilities;

Whereas the Voting Rights Act of 1965 has helped advance true democracy in America by encouraging political participation by all citizens and providing voters with the ability to elect their representatives in the Federal, State, and local governments;

Whereas the Voting Rights Act of 1965 has increased voter registration among racial, ethnic, and language minorities, as well as enhanced the ability of those citizens to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice to public office, the result of which is reflected in 81 African American, Latino, Asian, and Native American Members of Congress and thousands of minority State and local officials elected nationwide;

Whereas despite the noteworthy progress from 40 years of enforcement of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, voter inequities, disparities, and obstacles still remain for far too many minority voters and serve to demonstrate the ongoing importance of the Voting Rights Act of 1965;

Whereas the Voting Rights Act of 1965 provides extensive voter protections, such as equipping voters with the means to challenge election laws that result in a denial or abridgement of voting rights on account of race, color, or language minority status (section 2), eliminating literacy tests nationwide (section 201), requiring federal approval before covered jurisdictions (those with a history

of practices that restrict minority voting) rights can implement changes in existing voting practices and procedures (section 5), providing the Department of Justice with the authority to appoint federal election monitors and observers to ensure that elections are conducted free from discrimination and intimidation (sections 6–9), and mandating language assistance and translated voting materials in jurisdictions with substantial concentrations of language minorities (section 203);

Whereas several of these provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 will expire in August 2007 unless Congress acts to preserve and reauthorize them;

Whereas it is vital to our democracy at home, and to our efforts to promote democracy abroad, that the provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 are fully effective to prevent discrimination and dilution of the equal rights of minority voters;

Whereas in 2005, the year marking the 40th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, we must applaud the substantial progress that has been made in protecting the right to vote, but continue efforts to ensure fairness and equal access to the political process in the United States in order to protect the rights of every American; and

Whereas the Voting Rights Act of 1965 has been widely hailed as the single most important achievement of our civil rights laws: Now, therefore, be it

1        *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*  
2 *concurring), That the Congress—*

1           (1) observes and celebrates the 40th anniver-  
2 sary of the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of  
3 1965;

4           (2) pledges to advance the legacy of the Voting  
5 Rights Act of 1965 to ensure its continued effective-  
6 ness in protecting the voting rights of all Americans;  
7 and

8           (3) encourages all Americans to celebrate the  
9 40th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

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