

Resolution 2021-R5

A Resolution to Address the Issue of Voter Suppression

Whereas, In the United States, elections for all levels of government are administered locally. At the founding of the country, the right to vote in most states was limited to property-owning white males. Over time, the right to vote was formally granted to racial minorities, women, and those of at least 18 years of age. Notwithstanding the expansion of the voting franchise, forms of voter suppression continued to exist throughout the United States. During the later 19th and early 20th centuries, Southern states passed “Jim Crow” laws to suppress poor and racial minority voters – such laws included, among other things, poll taxes, literacy tests, and “grandfather clauses” (i.e., you can only vote if your grandfather voted). Most of these voter suppression tactics were made illegal after the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. However, starting in 2013, the Supreme Court's decision in the Shelby County v. Holder case to strike down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, has, in the minds of many, fostered voter suppression among minority Americans; and

Whereas, the courts, notably in cases brought in Texas, North Dakota and Wisconsin, have overturned state laws which might have had the effect of disenfranchising minority Americans; and

Whereas, other controversial measures affecting voter enfranchisement have been enacted throughout the United States, including shutting down Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offices in minority neighborhoods (making it more difficult for residents to obtain IDs; shutting down polling places in minority neighborhoods; systematically depriving precincts in minority neighborhoods of the resources they need to operate efficiently, such as poll workers and voting machines; and purging voters from the rolls shortly before an election; and (fact check is in order)

Whereas, often, voter fraud is cited as a justification for such laws even when the incidence of voter fraud is low. In Iowa, lawmakers passed a strict voter ID law with the potential to disenfranchise 260,000 voters. As an example, out of 1.6

million votes cast in Iowa in 2016, there were only 10 allegations of voter fraud; none were cases of impersonation that a voter ID law could have prevented. Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate, the architect of the bill, admitted, "We've not experienced widespread voter fraud in Iowa;

Therefore be it resolved that this 155th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island hereby directs and encourages the adoption, on a state-by-state basis, voting law reforms that would expand voter registration, increase voter eligibility, and make voting processes more accessible by: implementing automatic voter registration; enabling same-day voter registration; preparing for natural disasters interfering with the electoral process; allowing online voter registration; expanding the circle of people who are eligible to vote; making it easier to vote by mail; enabling "no-excuse" absentee voting; creating long-term mailing lists for absentee voters; making it easier for people to vote early, in person; enabling weekend voting and extended hours; and, guaranteeing an adequate number of voting locations; and be it further

Be it further resolved that this 155th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island hereby supports the elimination of all statewide Voter ID legislation that has been adopted since the 2013 Supreme Court Shelby Case; and be it further

Be it further resolved that this 155th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island adopts the aforementioned resolution and hereby directs the Secretary of this Convention to forward this resolution to the Secretary of General Convention of The Episcopal Church as a duly authorized resolution from this Diocese.

Submitted by:

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