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**ADL Foundation**

Glen S. Lewy, President

August 23, 2021

Dear Representative,

On behalf of ADL (the Anti-Defamation League), we write to urge you to support H.R. 4, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021 (VRAA). This legislation is fittingly named after John Lewis, who spent his entire life fighting to ensure equality and the right to vote for all Americans.

ADL is a leading anti-hate organization and has been working to secure justice and fair treatment for all since its founding in 1913. ADL is devoted to ensuring that all Americans have a voice in our democracy, opposing efforts to restrict the freedom to vote and establish deliberate barriers to voting such as photo ID laws, partisan and racial gerrymandering, efforts to limit vote-by-mail and ballot drop boxes, and more. ADL has championed the Voting Rights Act (VRA) since before its passage in 1965, and long recognized it as one of the most important and effective pieces of civil rights legislation ever passed.

However, court decisions and state laws enacted over the years have chipped away at the foundation of the VRA and undermined the right to vote for many Americans. The Supreme Court invalidated a core part of the Voting Rights Act in *Shelby County v. Holder (2013)* – a decision that has opened the door to harmful, unnecessarily restrictive voting laws that have disproportionately affected marginalized communities, low-income persons, elderly Americans, and students. These laws undermine fair representation and run counter to the 15th Amendment’s guarantee of equal voting rights.

This year, in *Brnovich v. DNC (2021)*, the Supreme Court ruled that the VRA did not bar Arizona lawmakers from limiting voters’ access to the ballot, even though the Arizona legislation disproportionately affected Black and brown voters, Native American voters, students, and low-income voters. This decision set a dangerous new precedent for restrictive laws in other states.

Enactment of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act will be critical to preventing states from instituting additional measures to suppress the vote in a discriminatory way. The VRAA would establish a new formula for determining when federal oversight is necessary to prevent such voting restrictions and require all states to publicly disclose any new changes to voting practices. By requiring all states to disclose any changes to voting practices, the legislation would promote ballot access and help ensure that all voters understand where and how to cast their ballot.

When our election processes are free, fair, and accessible, Americans make their voices heard. During our most recent election in 2020, expanded vote-by-mail, drop boxes, and more opportunities enabled record numbers of Americans to cast their ballots, despite a global pandemic and laws making it more difficult to vote in some jurisdictions, particularly for members of marginalized communities. However, cases like *Brnovich v. DNC* and *Shelby County v. Holder*, and countless other measures to deliberately erect barriers to voting, continue to endanger the right to vote for many Americans. Passing the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act can help enforce the constitutional prohibition on racial discrimination in voting and protect civil rights for all Americans.

The right to vote is fundamental to American democracy and should never be abridged on the basis of race, ethnicity, or any other similar factor. Passing the VRAA will bolster the foundation of our democracy and protect equal voting rights for all. I hope you will honor John Lewis's legacy and dedication to justice for all by standing against discriminatory restrictions on the right to vote and by voting to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Max Sevilla', written over a horizontal line.

Max Sevilla  
Vice President, Government Relations, Advocacy & Community Engagement  
Anti-Defamation League