

50 years later, voting rights still threatened

Written by Donna Brazile, DNC Vice Chair of Voter Registration and Participation
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Nearly 50 years ago, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act, to outlaw discrimination based on race, religion, gender, and more. The law strengthened voting rights and pushed for an end to racial segregation in schools, at the workplace, and in public places. The law passed with bipartisan support -- in fact, Republicans helped lead the charge and break the filibuster.

Unfortunately, today's GOP retreats headlong from the battle towards greater equality. In fact, many Republican are trying to sabotage or undermine crucial protections in the Civil Rights Act.

One of the critical goals of the Civil Rights Act was **"to enforce the constitutional right to vote." But instead of ensuring this right, today's Republican Party wants to make it more difficult for people to cast their ballots.**

Republicans are engaged in an aggressive and sustained campaign to make voting harder for millions of Americans. Across the country, Republican controlled legislatures enact laws that put barriers between voters and the ballot box. Apparently, Republicans have decided that if voters reject their ideas at the polls, they'll just rig the system by decreasing participation and making it more difficult to cast a ballot.

- In Texas, Alabama, Arizona, and Kansas, they have passed strict photo identification and proof of citizenship laws. The result: voters who change their name because they get married or can't provide an original birth certificate find it more difficult to have their vote counted.
- In Wisconsin, Ohio, and North Carolina, the GOP is restricting early voting periods.
- And in Minnesota, Republicans are trying to sue the Secretary of State to stop that state from implementing online voter registration.

Voting restrictions like these impact all Americans, but **they disproportionately hurt African Americans, Latinos, working people, seniors, young people, and women – the very groups the Civil Rights Act has been helping for fifty years.**

Meanwhile, Democrats are committed to our mission of ***ensuring that every eligible voter can register, that every registered voter can vote, and that every vote is accurately counted.*** Because we know that our nation has never moved forward with less participation. So as we mark 50 years since the Civil Rights Act became the law of the land, it is more important than ever that we recommit ourselves to protecting and expanding the franchise for **ALL** Americans.

And it's not just on voting rights that the GOP is standing on the wrong side of progress:

- Republicans made clear this week that they do not support legislation that would move us closer to equal pay for equal work and address the persistent discrimination that millions of American women experience in the workplace.
- On rights for LGBT Americans, the GOP blocked the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and

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in many states authored legislation to enshrine discrimination in the legal code.

- Republicans want to repeal the Affordable Care Act and take us back to the days where insurance companies could deny coverage to those with preexisting conditions, or even for just being a woman.
- The GOP continues to oppose and obstruct efforts to raise the minimum wage and ensure folks who work full time don't remain in poverty.
- Republicans refuse to act on immigration reform, dividing families and leaving millions of people stuck in a broken system.
- When it comes to civil rights, equality, and progress, **Republicans are not only on the wrong side of the issues, their positions stand in stark contrast to the views of the American people.** As Democrats, we will keep fighting to move our country forward, and work to get even closer to the ideals embodied in the Civil Rights Act over the next 50 years.



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