

to restrict or suppress voter participation, Congressman John Lewis (GA) and 174 of his colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives have introduced H.R. 12, the Voter Empowerment Act. This important legislation would expand and protect voters' access to the polls and would increase accountability and integrity among election officials and poll workers. It also would expand eligibility to allow all ex-offenders who have been released from prison to register and vote in federal elections (even those who may still be on probation or parole).

Specifically, the Voter Empowerment Act would:

Guarantee early voting—require that every state establish early voting sites that are open at least 15 days prior to a general election day;

This includes weekends, which many working people may find to be the only time they can get to the polls;

Require automatic registration—the bill would use modern technology to automatically and permanently register all eligible voters;

Allow same-day registration throughout the country—H.R. 12 would ensure allow voters to register to vote on election day at their polling place;

Ensure on-line voter registration—the Voter Empowerment Act would ensure that online voter registration is a viable option nationally;

Outlaw “voter caging”—makes illegal a practice by which mail is sent to a registered voter's address and, if the mail is returned as “undeliverable” or if it is delivered and the

voter does not respond, his or her registration is challenged;

Clarify and strengthen the use of provisional ballots—ensures that provisional ballots are counted;

Make voter intimidation and deception punishable by law—with strong and tough penalties so that people who commit these crimes suffer more than just a slap on the wrist, and establish a process for reaching out to misinformed voters with accurate information so they can cast their votes in time;

Re-enfranchise ex-offenders—H.R. 12 incorporates the provisions of the NAACP-supported “Democracy Restoration Act” by allowing ex-offenders, once they are out of prison, the opportunity to register and vote in federal elections without challenges or complication;

Encourage youth voters—the Voter Empowerment Act requires colleges and universities to offer and encourage voter registration to all students;

Assure voting by overseas residents—H.R. 12 increases assurances that Americans who may be living overseas, especially those serving our country in the armed services, can cast a valid vote and be assured that their vote was counted.

In short, we can and should do more to guarantee that the vote to right—the cornerstone of our Constitution and our democracy—is not only protected but made easier. I would again like to commend and thank Congresswoman Chu, Congresswoman Roybal-Allard, and Congresswoman Sanchez for their leadership in this area; please know

that Director Shelton and the entire NAACP stand ready to work with you in Washington and here at home, and I look forward to our round table discussion.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate of February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Thursday, September 29, 2016 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's RECORD.