



June 24, 2014

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
Chairman  
United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley  
Ranking Member  
United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the largest grassroots Arab-American organization committed to protecting civil rights, promoting mutual understanding, and preserving Arab American cultural heritage, we are writing you to voice our strong support for the Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 (VRAA) (S. 1945). As the largest Arab-American civil rights organization, ADC strongly supports legislation that protects the right to vote.

The Voting Rights Act (VRA) is a landmark law that prohibits discriminatory practices that have periodically denied the right to vote to racial, ethnic, and language minorities. Voting is a fundamental right in America. It is not merely a Democratic or a Republican issue, but a human rights issue. Racial discrimination in voting is a reality that merits an urgent response. It is time for Congress to modernize the VRA and restore the important voter protections that were crippled by the Supreme Court's June 25 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* last year.

Much has changed since the passage of the Voting Rights Act almost 50 years ago, but much still remains the same in terms of discrimination. Since the Supreme Court's decision in the *Shelby* case, many states and localities have pushed forward discriminatory changes to voting procedures, such as changing district boundaries and moving polling locations in areas with high concentrations of minority voters. Many voters of limited means do not have the resources to travel long distances to polling locations to cast a vote. Discrimination in voting is not a thing of the past. We need a modern Voting Rights Act that provides tools that respond to discriminatory voting laws.

The VRAA is a bipartisan bill that offers common sense fixes to update the VRA in response to the *Shelby* decision. The VRAA would amend the VRA and ensure a modern, flexible, and forward-looking set of protections to ensure an effective response to voting discrimination. Now is the time to pass legislation that ensures the Voting Rights Act can be fully enforced. If this bill is not passed before the mid-term elections in November, many Americans will lose their right to vote simply because of their race or lack of English language proficiency. Every day that Congress fails to act, voters are in danger, and so is the most fundamental right in our democracy. If the right to vote is threatened, the integrity of our entire democracy is also threatened. The time to act is now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Samer E. Khalaf", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Samer E. Khalaf, Esq.  
ADC President