



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

MARY KAY HENRY  
International President

MICHAEL P. FISHMAN  
International Secretary-Treasurer

KIRK ADAMS  
Executive Vice President

GERRY HUDSON  
Executive Vice President

EILEEN KIRLIN  
Executive Vice President

VALARIE LONG  
Executive Vice President

ROCIO SÁENZ  
Executive Vice President

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of the 2.1 million members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), I write to express strong support for the Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 (S. 1945). This bipartisan, bicameral legislation is a good first step toward restoring key protections of the Voting Rights Act, specifically Section 5, which were undermined by the Supreme Court's decision on *Shelby County v. Holder*.

Regardless of race or where we live, we all deserve the right to vote, and yet racial discrimination in voting is real and ongoing. In 2012, before *Shelby*, Section 5 protected voters when there were efforts to disenfranchise them in Texas, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, and elsewhere. Since *Shelby*, states and localities have moved swiftly to enact potentially discriminatory changes to voting, such as changing district boundaries to disadvantage some voters, moving polling locations in areas with high concentrations of minority voters, eliminating early voting periods, reducing polling location hours and machines in minority areas. The unfortunate reality is that discrimination in voting is not a thing of the past—it still happens today and we need tools that respond.

Because of the Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, the voting protections we currently have are not enough. By gutting Section 5 voters now must now wait until they have been deprived of their rights before judicial intervention can be sought, at which point the damage has already been done, and the election has most likely been decided.

The Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 currently proposed includes many key elements of a modern, flexible and forward-looking VRA. While key improvements are needed to undo the full damage done by *Shelby*, the bipartisan cooperation that has allowed us to get this far will ultimately carry the day and allow us to meet the challenges made by the Supreme Court, and to continue strong enforcement around our most fundamental right: the right to vote.

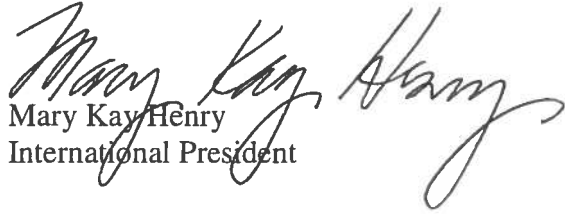
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We believe the time is now to pass legislation to ensure that the Voting Rights Act can be fully enforced, and to that end, we must move this bipartisan bill forward. Every day we wait is another day voters are at risk of being kept from the polls.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Kay Henry". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Mary Kay Henry  
International President

MKH:DD:bq

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afl-cio, clc