

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

I am writing to urge you to cosponsor H.J. Res. 28, a proposed constitutional amendment to guarantee the right to vote.

Most Americans believe that voting is a fundamental, inalienable right of American citizenship. They want our voting system to be the pinnacle of our democracy - fair, efficient and accurate. But at present, neither is true. During the 2004 election no less than 1.2 million ballots were miscounted, lost or mistakenly thrown away by election officials. In North Carolina 4500 votes disappeared when a voting machine malfunctioned. Some voters faced harassment and discrimination when trying to vote. And voters across the country faced a myriad of policies regarding provisional ballot counting procedures and ID requirements. Even after the 2000 election debacle and the Help America Vote Act, our voting system remains broken.

Problems with our electoral process are founded on a simple fact: there is no affirmative right to vote in the Constitution. The Constitution only protects against overt discrimination based on race (15<sup>th</sup> amendment); sex (19<sup>th</sup> amendment); and age (26<sup>th</sup> amendment). The states regulate voting policies and procedures, and hold the exclusive authority to select presidential electors. In other words, our voting system is built on the foundation of "states" rights - 50 states, 3067 counties and more than 12,000 different election jurisdictions, all separate and all unequal. These election jurisdictions can each individually set voting policies and procedures such as ballot design, voter eligibility, which voting equipment is used, polling hours, how to count provisional ballots and what ID requirements are needed.

Furthermore, some states legally disenfranchise adult citizens who would be able to vote in most states. Close to five million American citizens today cannot vote due to a felony conviction. Every single one of those people could vote if they lived in one of the states that did not choose to take their voting rights away. The presidential commission headed by Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, led by both prominent Democrats and Republicans, called for states to change this policy. They realized that the right to vote is just that: a right, not a privilege.

**Here is what H.J. Res. 28 would do to ensure that the ability to vote should be a right for all not a privilege for the few.**

1. H.J. Res. 28 would require Congress to protect the individual right to vote by developing national minimum standards that all states must follow and be encouraged to improve upon to ensure that every registered voter vote is counted.
2. H.J. Res. 28 would guarantee that all American citizens 18 and over have an individual right to vote. This would effectively eliminate the targeted voter disenfranchisement that presently occurs.

I ask you again to please cosponsor this legislation and finally grant what most Americans mistakenly believe they already hold, a right to vote.

I look forward to hearing your views on this topic.

Sincerely

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