

Fannie Lou Hamer testified in Atlantic City in 1964 on behalf of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party about the fight for voting rights. The following year, the Voting Rights Act was passed.

In 2024, the fight continues, including in New Jersey.



NEW JERSEY NEEDS A #NJVRA**NOW**

NEW JERSEY NEEDS ITS OWN VOTING RIGHTS ACT (A4083/S3009)

New Jersey, one of the most diverse states in the country, must be a leader in combatting rampant voter suppression efforts across the country. We must pass a strong version of the John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey (a New Jersey voting rights act, or NJVRA) to fully protect access to the ballot for all of our residents, especially voters of color whose rights are under attack across America.

WHY WE NEED AN NJVRA:

The landmark 1965 Voting Rights Act is under attack. In 2013, the Supreme Court gutted Sec. 5, the foundational “pre-clearance” provision requiring states and localities with discriminatory histories to get federal approval for voting changes to ensure they don’t harm voters of color.

Now the Supreme Court, after weakening it last term, is considering a case that could further undermine Sec. 2, which prohibits voting practices that discriminate based on race. Already, many New Jersey voters, especially voters of color, face serious challenges while trying to vote, including late poll openings; long lines; barriers to physical access to polling locations for those with disabilities; and lack of language accessibility for those with limited English proficiency. Many find it difficult to access the court when they are disenfranchised. New Jersey must act. It’s not enough for us to follow already weakened federal standards.

We need voting rights legislation that permanently expands access to the polls and increases resources that will help people vote.

WHAT IS AN NJVRA?

A strong version of the John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey (A4083/S3009) - or a NJ Voting Rights Act - would protect voters of color and strengthen our democracy by reducing barriers to voting; increasing language access and assistance; prohibiting deceptive practices at the polls; and ensuring that communities of color will have their ballots counted.

Specifically, a strong NJVRA would:

- Require a “preclearance” program that makes local governments with a history of discrimination prove that certain changes they make to the voting process will not harm voters of color before they can go into effect
- Provide new legal tools to fight discriminatory voting rules and procedures in court
- Expand language assistance for voters with limited English proficiency
- Include strong protections against voter intimidation, deception or obstruction at the polls
- Instruct state judges to interpret election laws in a pro-voter way whenever possible
- Create a central database for election data and demographic information that will empower officials and communities to ensure accessible elections
- Ensure local and state voting laws, procedures and regulations do not deny voters of color and other protected categories of voters the right to cast their vote