

**For Immediate Release**

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(213) 747-7606 ext. 4414, (323) 253-6431 (cell)**NALEO Educational Fund Calls on Congress to Honor Anniversary of
Bloody Sunday by Passing Legislation to Combat Modern Day
Voting Discrimination**

Civil rights struggle continues 50 years later, with nearly seven million eligible Latino voters residing in jurisdictions that no longer have proactive protections under the Voting Rights Act

Washington, D.C. – In advance of the 50th anniversary of the Bloody Sunday march in Selma, Ala. that spurred lawmakers to pass the bipartisan Voting Rights Act of 1965, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund is calling on Congress to honor the sacrifices of these brave men and women by enacting modern, nationwide protections for Latino voters and all Americans. Congress should achieve this important goal by passing a bill to restore the strength of the Voting Rights Act (VRA).

The VRA was significantly weakened in 2013 when the Supreme Court ruled in *Shelby County v. Holder* that one of its central provisions (a process called “preclearance”) could no longer be enforced. Nearly seven million Latinos eligible to vote residing in jurisdictions that were previously subject to preclearance pre-*Shelby County* have lost proactive protections under the VRA. A NALEO Educational Fund [report](#) released in 2014 found that legislation like the recently introduced Voting Rights Amendment Act (HR 885) would restore protections to more than 4.5 million - or nearly two-thirds - of those Latinos residing in jurisdictions that were previously subject to preclearance.

“The civil rights struggle continues today, especially in states like Alabama that have rapidly growing Latino populations,” said Arturo Vargas, NALEO Educational Fund Executive Director. “Since the heart of the Voting Rights Act was struck down in *Shelby County v. Holder*, Alabama and many other states with emerging Latino populations have passed laws that aim to make voting and registering to vote more difficult for the nation’s second largest population group and all qualified U.S. citizens. We will continue to fight to protect voting rights in Alabama and nationwide, working with Congress to find a legislative fix that combats modern day voting discrimination. We will also help ensure that eligible voters have the information necessary to make their voices heard at the ballot box through our national toll-free bilingual 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA hotline.”

[Analysis](#) from NALEO and MALDEF found that there have been numerous attempts to restrict Latino voters’ access to the ballot box since the *Shelby County* decision in 2013. These discriminatory practices are carried out in various forms, including replacing single member

district elections with at-large elections, voter purges, discriminatory redistricting, proof of citizenship for voter registration, and restrictive voter ID requirements.

As the Latino population becomes a larger segment of the electorate, it is increasingly important for Latinos to be able to make their voices heard at the ballot box without confronting discriminatory barriers or obstacles. NALEO Educational Fund estimates that more than 28.5 million Latinos will be eligible to cast ballots in Election 2016, making it vital for Congress to act to restore the VRA.

Vargas went on to say, “The anniversary of Bloody Sunday is a reminder of how far our country has come since that fateful day on March 7, 1965 and how far we have to go. While progress has been made in the last 50 years, more work remains to be done before the voting rights of Latinos and all Americans are fully protected. We call on Congress to commemorate this historic march by acting on legislation that will restore the strength of the Voting Rights Act.”

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About NALEO Educational Fund

NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-partisan, non-profit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.