



NALEO NEWS

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials

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NALEO Calls for Fix to Combat Modern Day Voting Discrimination Against Latino Voters Prior to Election 2014

Organization urges Latino community to sign petition calling on Congress to pass the bipartisan Voting Rights Amendment Act (VRAA) to enact nationwide voting protections for all;

More than 7.8 million Latino voters are expected to head to the polls this November, making it critical for Congress to act swiftly to modernize the Voting Rights Act (VRA)

Washington, DC – On the 49th anniversary of the Presidential signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) called on Congress to enact modern, nationwide protections for Latino voters and all Americans by passing the bipartisan Voting Rights Amendment Act (VRAA) prior to Election 2014.

To move this important legislation forward, NALEO has asked our nation's Latino elected and appointed officials to meet with members of Congress while they are home in their districts during August recess to voice their support for passage of the VRAA (HR 3899/S 1945) and to sign a nationwide petition. The petition, which is part of the VRA for Today project of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, is available [here](#).

“Our democracy thrives when all its citizens are able to participate fully in the nation’s political system,” said Arturo Vargas, NALEO Executive Director. “We are proud to sign on to this petition of support and call on Congress to promote policies that make voting and registering to vote more accessible to the nation’s second largest population group and all qualified U.S. citizens.”

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 earlier this year found that the VRAA 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.

Recent [analysis](#) from NALEO and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) found that attempts to restrict Latino voters’ access have increased since the *Shelby County* decision last year. 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. Examples of attempts that have taken place post-*Shelby County* include:

- **Voter purge in Florida.** In 2012, the Florida Secretary of State began a process to remove alleged noncitizens from the voter rolls statewide. The state's use of inaccurate data negatively affected naturalized citizens. Preclearance challenges initially blocked the purge, but after *Shelby County* these cases were dismissed and Florida resumed the effort.
- **Voter ID in Texas.** Immediately after *Shelby County*, Texas announced that it would implement a voter ID law that a reviewing court and DOJ had concluded would discriminate against Latinos and African Americans.

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. This November, NALEO Educational Fund [projects](#) that 7.8 million Latinos will cast ballots in Election 2014, accounting for nearly 8 percent of the nation's voters. With the election only three months away, it is vital for Congress to move on the bipartisan VRAA legislation immediately upon its return from August recess to restore the strength of the VRA and protections for Latinos and all Americans.

Vargas went on to say, "In the lead up to the election, we will be hard at work ensuring that Latino voters have the information and access necessary to cast ballots on November 4th. The bilingual operators of our toll-free voter information hotline, 888-VE-Y-VOTA (888-839-8682), will continue to serve as a resource to any voter with questions or concerns about their rights or any aspect of the electoral process, 12 hours per day, 7 days per week."

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About NALEO

The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials is the leadership organization of the nation's more than 6,000 Latino elected and appointed officials.