

## Ongoing Voter Suppression

Voter suppression is a strategy to influence the outcome of an election by discouraging or preventing people from exercising their right to vote. This form of oppression is one of the most deplorable acts perpetrated against minorities over the past 200 years. Unfortunately, it remains an issue in today's political environment. To inhibit one from exercising their right to express their opinions via voting by way of malicious means is dishonorable and a violation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The voter suppression issues that still exist are the arguably unconstitutional and creative tactics that state officials and political parties set forth to prohibit targeted groups from casting their votes. These tactics include reducing or eliminating the number of early voting days, robo-calls/mailers providing incorrect information to selected groups of citizens in an effort to prevent them from voting, changing polling locations, reducing the number of polling locations, restricting voting hours days before an election, imposing mandatory voter ID laws, and changing election dates. These are just a handful of the nefarious tactics used to suppress voters. So much time and money is being spent to keep minorities bound and voiceless. One should ask the question, why is it so imperative to prevent eligible, registered voters from casting their votes? It's their right to be heard as American citizens, guaranteed by the Constitution. Over the past few years, there have been reports of states attempting to pass laws in direct violation of Amendment 15. After each failed attempt, they modify the law and resubmit to the courts for review in the hopes that the law would be altered enough to pass. State, political, and judicial officials all play a part in this continued violation of voters' rights.

To find a solution to this ongoing problem, minorities must become more engaged in their local and state election processes. We must be more proactive and educate our communities on the current requirements for voting, such as polling locations, hours of voting, and ID requirements. It is imperative we gain more community involvement. Some possible measures could include securing busses to shuttle those without transportation, helping our citizens obtain proper identification and become registered with a valid address. Educational measures could involve door-to-door campaigning and establishing a central location where we have the most accurate information pertaining to elections posted for all to see. These are just a few suggestions, which may seem small but are necessary to ensure we reach as many affected citizens and give them the opportunity to exercise their right to vote.

Most importantly, our National Committee on Civil Rights and Equality along with the NAACP, ACLU and other sister organizations should join forces and appeal to Congress, the Senate, and the Supreme Court to set and enforce strict consequences for those State officials found in direct violation of voters' rights. They should be held liable for their acts against those affected by their malicious actions. It's time to put an end to voter suppression and we have the power to do so!