

Assembly Joint Resolution

No. 13

Introduced by Assembly Member Ridley-Thomas

April 7, 2015

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 13—Relative to the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 13, as introduced, Ridley-Thomas. The Voting Rights Act of 1965

This measure would recognize August 6, 2015, as the 50th anniversary of the signing of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965. This measure would also urge the Congress and President of the United States to continue to secure citizens' right to vote and remedy any racial discrimination in voting.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, Signed into law on August 6, 1965, by President
2 Lyndon B. Johnson, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a landmark
3 piece of federal legislation in the United States; and
4 WHEREAS, One hundred and forty-five years ago, in 1870,
5 Congress ratified the 15th Amendment, which declared that the
6 right to vote shall not be denied or abridged on the basis of race,
7 color, or previous condition of servitude; and
8 WHEREAS, By 1910, violence and intimidation resulted in
9 nearly all black citizens being disenfranchised and removed from
10 the voter rolls in the former Confederate States, undermining the
11 promise of equal protection under the law; and

1 WHEREAS, Native American, Latino, and Asian
2 American/Pacific Islander communities experienced similar
3 attempts to disenfranchise citizens in their communities throughout
4 the United States; and

5 WHEREAS, Between 1870 and 1965, voters faced,
6 “first-generation barriers,” such as poll taxes, literacy tests,
7 vouchers of “good character,” disqualification for “crimes of moral
8 turpitude”, and other tactics intended to keep African Americans
9 from the polls on Election Day; and

10 WHEREAS, During the 1920s, African Americans in Selma,
11 Alabama formed the Dallas County Voters League (DCVL).
12 During the 1960s in partnership with organizers from the Student
13 Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the DCVL held registration
14 drives and classes to help African Americans in Dallas County
15 pass the literacy tests required to register to vote. On March 7th,
16 1965, the first march from Selma to Montgomery took place. The
17 march, nicknamed “Bloody Sunday” for the horrific attack on
18 unarmed marchers by armed police, was broadcast nationwide and
19 led to a national outcry for the passage of the Voting Rights Act;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, Often regarded as one of the most effective civil
22 rights laws, the Voting Rights Act was passed with the intent to
23 ban discriminatory voting policies at all levels of government; and

24 WHEREAS, The Voting Rights Act is credited for the
25 enfranchisement of millions of minority voters as well as the
26 diversification of the electorate and legislative bodies throughout
27 all levels of government; and

28 WHEREAS, Before Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act was
29 added in 1975, language minorities were disenfranchised from the
30 electoral process. Section 203 required certain jurisdictions to
31 provide registration or voting notices, forms, instructions,
32 assistance, or other materials and information regarding the
33 electoral process in the language of the applicable minority group;
34 and

35 WHEREAS, In June of 2013, the Supreme Court struck down
36 key sections of the Voting Rights Act that were designed to prevent
37 discriminatory voting policies that can disenfranchise minority
38 voters; and

1 WHEREAS, Despite 50 years of progress, racial minorities
2 continue to face voting barriers in jurisdictions with a history of
3 discrimination; and

4 WHEREAS, To build a stronger and more cohesive state and
5 nation, we must continue to help advance the cause of voter
6 equality and equal access to the political process for all people in
7 order to protect the rights of every American; and

8 WHEREAS, We must continue to educate the next generation
9 about the importance of civic engagement in our communities;
10 now, therefore, be it

11 *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of*
12 *California, jointly*, That the Legislature recognizes August 6, 2015,
13 as the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Voting Rights Act
14 of 1965, and recognizes the significant progress made by the
15 Voting Rights Act to protect every citizen's right to vote; and be
16 it further

17 *Resolved*, That the Legislature honors and remembers those who
18 struggled and died for this freedom; and be it further

19 *Resolved*, That the Legislature urges the Congress and the
20 President of the United States to continue to secure citizens' right
21 to vote and remedy any racial discrimination in voting; and be it
22 further

23 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
24 of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United
25 States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the
26 Majority Leader of the United States Senate, and to each Senator
27 and Representative from California in the Congress of the United
28 States.