

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 13

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 193

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

[Filed with Secretary of State September 21, 2015.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 13, 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.

WHEREAS, Signed into law on August 6, 1965, by President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a landmark piece of federal legislation in the United States; and

WHEREAS, One hundred and forty-five years ago, in 1870, Congress ratified the 15th Amendment, which declared that the right to vote shall not be denied or abridged on the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude; and

WHEREAS, By 1910, violence and intimidation resulted in nearly all black citizens being disenfranchised and removed from the voter rolls in the former Confederate States, undermining the promise of equal protection under the law; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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