



Election Law Clinic
HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

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LDF, AALDEF, CLC, ELC, and LatinoJustice Launch State Voting Rights Act Model Bill

The Legal Defense Fund (LDF), Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), Campaign Legal Center (CLC), Election Law Clinic at Harvard Law School (ELC), and LatinoJustice PRLDEF today [launched a Model State Voting Rights Act](#), designed to serve as a much-needed template for states to more efficiently and effectively craft State Voting Rights Act (State VRA) legislation that builds upon the successful but currently threatened portions of the federal Voting Rights Act that codify robust protections against racial discrimination in voting.

With federal attacks on the right to vote increasing every day, it's more important than ever that legislatures enact State VRAs in order to protect elections statewide. In-state discrimination in voting is a persistent threat that countless voters are encountering at their ballot boxes. Whether its lack of accessible entrances, language assistance issues, or hidden agendas in redistricting designed to silence voices of color, states urgently need to address these concerns in order to protect the right to vote for their constituents. In fact, many states currently enforce robust anti-discrimination laws that cover other areas of daily life — like housing, employment, and education — but neglect the most fundamental right in our democracy.

State VRAs can help with that. And they are enormously popular. [78% of voters](#) support passing a state VRA for their home state and state legislatures should heed this clear directive from their constituents.

The Model Bill will also allow legislators to focus resources and efforts on tailoring protections to respond to critical state needs. It will also offer states an opportunity to go above and beyond federal protections. State VRAs don't just restore safeguards that federal courts have limited, they also allow states to be laboratories of democracy.

"The Model State Voting Rights Act will be an essential tool for state legislators and advocates to combat racial discrimination in the elections process," said **Janai Nelson, LDF President and Director-Counsel**. "We are in the fight of our lives when it comes to voting rights, with ceaseless attacks pouring in from all sides. If we want our multiracial democracy to function, we must create a system that works for every voter, not just a privileged few. This Model Bill will serve as a crucial springboard to ensuring that fair access for Black communities is the standard."

“For Asian and other communities of color, the promise of the federal Voting Rights Act has never been fully realized. Voter suppression and other attempts to marginalize our communities and attack our multiracial democracy have only increased,” said **Bethany Li, Executive Director of AALDEF**. “But with this Model Bill, voters can take this fight to the state level, demanding their state legislatures to advance systems of representation that give all communities the meaningful access to power we deserve.”

“Campaign Legal Center is immensely proud to have partnered in this effort to develop model state VRA legislation,” said **Bruce Spiva, Senior Vice President at CLC**. “Amidst increasing federal attacks on voting rights, state-level protections like state VRAs are one of the most powerful tools we can use to ensure that all Americans can participate in our democracy. As the momentum to implement state VRAs grows across the country, we celebrate each and every state that takes steps towards a more accountable and inclusive government.”

“The Model State Voting Rights Act targets racially discriminatory practices that exclude too many voters from the democratic process,” said **Ruth Greenwood, Director of ELC**. “To help craft this bill, Election Law Clinic students drew on their experience litigating state VRA claims in New York. I’m proud to see students apply lessons from these cases to safeguard the fundamental right to vote. Federal voting protections are under attack, but the next generation of election lawyers is rising to the occasion.”

“As the federal Voting Rights Act continues to be weakened by this administration and our courts, states must step up to enact strong, enforceable protections for communities that have been historically disenfranchised from the ballot,” said **Lourdes M. Rosado, President and General Counsel, LatinoJustice PRLDEF**. “This model bill, particularly its language access provisions, offers states a clear, actionable path to ensure that all eligible voters, including those who speak languages other than English, can meaningfully participate in our democracy.”

State VRAs have been gaining traction in recent years. States must act now to become leaders in our democracy. Eight states have enacted State VRAs in recent years and over 10 others have made recent progress towards enacting similar legislation.

To learn more about State VRAs, visit [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation’s first civil rights legal organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957, though it was founded under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall while he was at the NAACP. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute (TMI) is a division of LDF that undertakes innovative research and houses LDF’s archive. In all media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF (do not include NAACP) and refer to the Institute as LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute or TMI.

