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Georgia Legislators and Advocates Announce Henry McNeal Turner Voting Rights Act

At a time when voting rights and fair elections are under coordinated attack nationwide, Georgia lawmakers are taking action. Today, Georgia legislators and voting rights advocates announced the introduction of the Henry McNeal Turner Voting Rights Act (Georgia VRA). Sponsored by Georgia Senate Minority Leader Harold Jones, the Georgia VRA will provide and expand critical protections for Georgia voters, particularly for those who have faced extensive historical discrimination at the ballot box.

Georgia voters are no strangers to attacks on their fundamental right to participate in our democracy: from elections offices serving high percentages of Black voters being targeted based on a disproven voter fraud narratives to a Supreme Court that has dismantled federal voter protections with decisions in major cases like Shelby County and Brnovich, and blatant voter suppression efforts like Georgia's SB 202 that places disproportionate and discriminatory burdens on Black voters and other voters of color.

If Georgia wants to be a free, fair, and representative democracy, the legislature needs to act now.

Among other provisions, the Georgia VRA will prohibit voter suppression and discriminatory policies that weaken the political power of voters of color; stop voting discrimination before it occurs; expand language access materials; prohibit voter intimidation, deception, and obstruction; boost election transparency; enshrine a democracy canon; and empower voters to fight discrimination in court. And measures like the Georgia VRA are overwhelmingly popular – with 78% of voters across the country supporting their state legislators passing a State VRA.

FOOTAGE: High quality footage of the press conference can be [viewed and downloaded here](#). Please feel free to use this footage without attribution.

“With more and more attacks on the right to vote coming every single day and with the federal government's gross overstep in authority in Fulton County and elsewhere, there's no better time than now to ensure that Georgia voters are protected when they register to vote and go to the ballot box,” said **Senate Minority Leader Harold Jones**. “With this bill, we honor Henry McNeal Turner and all of those that have dedicated their

lives and work to ensuring free and fair access to elections in Georgia. And I urge all of my colleagues in the state Senate to support this bill and help restore our constituents' faith in Georgia's democracy."

"We are in a crisis of democracy right now and Georgia voters, unless we step up to protect them, are going to pay the price," said **Senator Nikki Merritt, Chair of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus**. "Named after one of the first Black state legislators in Georgia, the Henry McNeal Turner Voting Rights Act will provide absolutely crucial protections and expand the rights of Georgia voters so that they have an equal chance to participate without fear of discrimination in free and representative elections. We cannot rely on a federal government that refuses to fortify voting safeguards – the Georgia legislature must act now to pass the Georgia Voting Rights Act in order to restore the protections all of our voters once enjoyed under a fully enforced Voting Rights Act."

"The right to vote is directly linked to Georgia voters' ability to effect change in their communities and to hold their government accountable," said **Legal Defense Fund President and Director-Counsel Janai Nelson**. "With a federal administration intent on pursuing continuously disproven election narratives at the cost of the freedom to vote, Georgia lawmakers have an opportunity to join the national movement of states restoring voter protections and public trust in our democracy by passing and enacting the Henry McNeal Turner Voting Rights Act."

"Protections keeping elections fair are under attack – the Supreme Court is chipping away at our voting rights, restrictive bills are moving in states and Congress, and the president is calling to rig voting maps and 'take over' elections," said **Lauren Groh-Wargo, CEO, Fair Fight Action**. "It's a coordinated effort to take power away from 'we the people'. In Georgia, we know what that looks like – longer lines, major rule changes, fewer voting locations, and maps drawn to silence Black voters and communities of color. The Georgia Voting Rights Act is a firewall to protect our freedom to vote – in fair elections – when Washington won't."

"We are here because Georgia voters have lived through constant legislative instability. The rules change, the process shifts, confusion grows, and the burden falls where it always falls – on working people, on rural communities, on voters with disabilities, on voters with language barriers, on Black and brown communities that have been targeted for generations," said **Isabel Otero, Georgia Policy Director, Southern Poverty Law Center**. "When voting becomes harder to navigate, fewer voices are heard, and democracy shrinks – and a democracy for the privileged few is not a democracy for all. The Georgia VRA draws a line in the sand. It is a promise and a vision for our future. Georgia has a long history of pushing people out of the circle of belonging, and the SPLC is here to protect voters, permanently."

“Greater Augusta’s Interfaith Coalition seeks 100% voter participation and the free exercise of voting as well as 100% civic engagement by all adult citizens of Georgia and the United States of America,” said **Rev. Christopher G. Johnson of the Greater Augusta’s Interfaith Coalition**. “We strongly urge the Georgia state legislature to pass the Henry McNeal Turner Voting Rights Act with all due haste in order to protect Georgia voters from any further discrimination at the polls.”

To learn more about the Georgia VRA, [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.