

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 11, 2026

### MEDIA CONTACTS

Legal Defense Fund: [media@naacpldf.org](mailto:media@naacpldf.org)

ACLU: [media@aclu-md.org](mailto:media@aclu-md.org)

Campaign Legal Center: [media@campaignlegalcenter.org](mailto:media@campaignlegalcenter.org)

Common Cause: [mmajikas@commoncause.org](mailto:mmajikas@commoncause.org)

### **Advocates, Marylanders: We Need the Maryland Voting Rights Act Now** *General Assembly Must Act to Empower Voters Now Amid Federal Attacks on Voting Rights and an Affordability Crisis*

Today, a coalition of voting rights organizations, impacted voters and state legislators gathered to demand the swift passage of the Maryland Voting Rights Act and other key voting rights legislation.



*Pictured: Members of the Everyone Votes MD coalition gather at the House of Delegates to demand the General Assembly pass the Maryland Voting Rights Act.*

The coalition is pushing for the legislature to act now to strengthen voter protections and ensure all voices are heard as Marylanders continue to face federal attacks on their freedom to vote.

“This is about giving Marylanders more power to shape decisions on the issues that matter to them — from bringing down costs to improving schools and making neighborhoods safer,” **said Joanne Antoine of the Everyone Votes MD coalition.** “When everyday people are shut out of the democratic process, corporations

and wealthy special interests can protect policies that benefit their bottom line, not working families. Strengthening access to the ballot box isn't partisan or abstract — it's essential to creating a democracy that works for everyone.”

The Maryland Voting Rights Act ([SB 255](#)/[HB 350](#) and [HB 219](#)) will empower Marylanders by providing a state pathway to protect their voting power and their ability to freely cast a ballot without fear.

“Today, the voting rights several generations of Americans fought and died for are imperiled,” **said Delegate Stephanie Smith, sponsor of HB 350.** “Maryland must act swiftly to ensure its residents have legal protections against voter intimidation and suppression. Our democracy is only preserved through proactive advocacy. Virginia adopted their state voting rights bill half a decade ago. Surely Marylanders are just as deserving of these same voting protections. This emergency legislation isn't rooted in hysteria but in rational recognition of eroding federal commitments to free and fair elections.”

“At a time when the federal government is weakening voting protections, Maryland must stand up and protect the rights of Maryland voters,” **said Delegate Greg Wims, sponsor of HB 219.** “HB350 is necessary to make sure Maryland protects voting rights and ensures every resident's vote and voice is heard.”

"As it is getting increasingly difficult to bring voting rights cases before federal courts, I am glad to see the Senate enshrine critical protections against voter dilution in state law. SB 255 will protect the fundamental right to full and equal participation in the local governance of our communities,” **said SB 255 bill sponsor Senator Charles E. Sydnor III.**

Maryland voters attending the event emphasized that strengthening their freedom to vote is directly tied to their futures and would ensure they can hold their government accountable.

“True democracy requires true representation,” **said Monica Brooks, Wicomico County NAACP President.** “In Wicomico County, we fought hard to empower our community by restoring Black voters' access to the ballot box. The Maryland Voting Rights Act will give all Marylanders the legal tools they need to gain the power they rightfully deserve.”

“We all deserve to have a voice in the communities we live in, and the policy decisions that impact us,” **said Monica Cooper, Executive Director of Maryland Justice Project.** “People in prison are still Maryland residents, and still affected by laws about healthcare, education, and jobs. Taking away their right to vote says their voice doesn't matter. The Maryland Voting Rights Act builds on our efforts to ensure voting rights for all by strengthening access to the ballot box for those impacted by the criminal justice system.”

The timing is critical: while Maryland only has until April 13 to pass this legislation this year, pending Supreme Court cases continue to threaten the only other protections currently available.

“Every day we wait to pass the Maryland Voting Rights Act and its pro-voter companion bills is a day Marylanders lose,” **said Michelle Whittaker, Executive Director of Ranked Choice Voting Maryland.** “Federal attacks on voting rights are accelerating, and costs are increasing. These issues won’t get fixed unless we ensure everyday Marylanders can make their voices heard. The ask is simple – pass the Maryland Voting Rights Act now.”

###

*The Everyone Votes MD Coalition is a group of civil rights, voting rights and grassroots organizations working toward protecting voting rights in Maryland.*