



**CENTER FOR LAW AND  
SOCIAL JUSTICE**  
AT MEDGAR EVERS COLLEGE,  
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

November 2, 2021

*Sent via email*

Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislative Caucus  
New York State Legislature  
Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12210

**Re: Support for the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York**

Dear Members of the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislative Caucus:

The New York Voting Rights Consortium, a group of leading local and national voting-rights advocates,<sup>1</sup> writes to urge all members of the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislative Caucus (“Caucus”) to co-sponsor the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York (“NYVRA”), which has been sponsored in the State Senate by Senator Zellnor Myrie as Senate Bill S1046A, and in the State Assembly by Assemblywoman Latrice Walker and others as Assembly Bill A6678A. Presently, only some Caucus members have joined Senator Myrie and Assemblywoman Walker by co-sponsoring the NYVRA.

Our Consortium supports this legislation without reservation. The NYVRA gives New York the chance to ensure that all eligible voters in New York have an equal and unburdened opportunity to exercise the fundamental right to vote in state and local elections, free from discrimination based on race, color, or membership in a language-minority group. As you know, the right to vote and participate equally in the political process and elect representatives of choice who can respond to the concerns of voters of color can be transformative for the lives of the communities that we serve. Thus, the NYVRA is a bill of generational importance for all New Yorkers—and particularly for the more than three million registered voters in New York who identify as Black, Latino, or Asian.<sup>2</sup> By enacting the NYVRA, our state has an opportunity to step forward as a national leader in voting rights, joining the efforts of states such as

---

<sup>1</sup> The New York Voting Rights Consortium is a non-partisan coalition consisting of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College, LatinoJustice PRLDEF, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., and others. The New York Voting Rights Consortium is committed to the full enforcement of federal and state laws that protect the voting rights of people of color.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2020* (Apr. 2021), available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-585.html> (Table 4b, “Reported Voting and Registration by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2020”).

California, Washington, Oregon, and Virginia, all of which have already enacted state-level voting rights acts.<sup>3</sup>

We applaud the Caucus for endorsing the NYVRA within “The People’s Budget” for Fiscal Years 2021-2022.<sup>4</sup> As the Caucus has recognized, the NYVRA “provides an opportunity for this state to provide strong protections for the franchise at a time when voter suppression is on the rise, vote dilution remains prevalent, and the future of the federal Voting Rights Act is uncertain due to a federal judiciary that is increasingly hostile to the protection of the franchise.”<sup>5</sup>

However, as noted above, we are concerned to see that not all Caucus members are currently identified as sponsors or co-sponsors of the NYVRA. This important legislation, because of its impact on the communities that we serve, deserves the Caucus’s *unanimous* support. For decades, the communities we serve in New York have looked to your leadership on issues affecting their fundamental rights, including the “precious, almost sacred” right to vote.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, we ask that every Caucus member sign on as a co-sponsor of the NYVRA and join us in advocating for the Act’s prompt passage.

If you have questions, or if you would like to discuss the NYVRA or other voting rights issues that necessitate the bill’s passage, please contact Michael Pernick, Redistricting Counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, at [mpernick@naacpldf.org](mailto:mpernick@naacpldf.org) or (917) 790-3597. Additionally, representatives of each of the Consortium’s member organizations can be contacted via their contact information below.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Steven Lance*

Leah C. Aden, Deputy Director of Litigation  
Kristen A. Johnson, Assistant Counsel  
Michael Pernick, Redistricting Counsel  
Steven Lance, Policy Counsel  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

---

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Testimony of Professor J. Morgan Kousser Before the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties of the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary Legislative Proposals to Strengthen the Voting Rights Act, Oct. 17, 2019, p. 2, *available at* <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20191017/110084/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-KousserJ-20191017.pdf> (noting the “striking success of minorities in using the state-level California Voting Rights Act” and the Act’s embodiment of the “continuing need of anti-discrimination laws”).

<sup>4</sup> N.Y. State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus, *The People’s Budget: Budget Equity XXIX* 68-69 (FY 2021-22), <http://www.bphacaucus.com/s/The-Peoples-Budget-2021-f7nz.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 68.

<sup>6</sup> *Rep. John Lewis: ‘Your Vote is Precious, Almost Sacred’*, PBS NewsHour (Sept. 6, 2021), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/rep-john-lewis-your-vote-is-precious-almost-sacred>.

40 Rector Street, 5th Fl.  
New York, NY 10006  
(212) 965-2200  
laden@naacpldf.org  
kjohnson@naacpldf.org  
mpernick@naacpldf.org  
slance@naacpldf.org

Lisa Cylar Barrett, Director of Policy  
Adam Lioz, Senior Policy Counsel  
Jared Evans, Policy Counsel  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.  
700 14th Street N.W., Ste. 600  
Washington, DC 20005  
lcylarbarrett@naacpldf.org  
alioz@naacpldf.org  
jevans@naacpldf.org

Margaret Fung, Executive Director  
Jerry Vattamala, Director, Democracy Program  
Susana Lorenzo-Giguere, Senior Staff Attorney  
Patrick Stegemoeller, Staff Attorney  
Asian American Legal Defense and Educational  
Fund  
99 Hudson St, 12th Floor  
New York, NY 10013  
(212) 966-5932  
mfung@aaldef.org  
jvattamala@aaldef.org  
slorenzo-giguere@aaldef.org  
pstegemoeller@aaldef.org

Lurie Daniel Favors, Esq., Executive Director  
Donna M. Lennon, Esq., Deputy Director  
Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers  
College, CUNY  
1150 Carroll Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11225  
ldfavors@clsj.org

Lourdes Rosado, President & General Counsel  
José L. Pérez, Deputy General Counsel  
Jackson Chin, Senior Counsel  
Fulvia Vargas-De León, Associate Counsel  
Cesar Ruiz, Equal Justice Works Legal Fellow  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF

475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1901  
New York, NY 10015-0018  
(212) 219-3360  
jperez@latinojustice.org  
jchin@latinojustice.org  
fvargasdeleon@latinojustice.org  
cruiz@latinojustice.org