



AUG 8: Honoring the Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965

The Voting Rights Act: Then

The Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965 is one of the most important civil rights laws in U.S. history. It ended discriminatory voting practices—including literacy tests, intimidation, poll taxes, and discriminatory voter registration—that had prevented Black Americans from voting, especially in the South. As a bill to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment, it was reauthorized and amended in 1970, 1975, 1982, 1992, and 2006, often with bipartisan support.

The Voting Rights Act: Now

Recent court decisions have significantly changed how the Voting Rights Act is enforced. Many voting rights advocates, including the League of Women Voters, argue these changes weaken protections against racial discrimination in redistricting and voting.

For more than 100 years, the League of Women Voters has worked to protect voting rights through:

- Advocacy
- Litigation
- Voter education
- Community partnerships
- Grassroots organizing

“The Voting Rights Act had an immediate impact... By the end of 1966, only four of the 13 Southern states had fewer than 50 % of African Americans registered to vote.”

– National Archives

As we commemorate the anniversary of the Voting Rights Act, the League remains committed to protecting every eligible voter's right to participate in our democracy.

Faith Communities Pivotal to 1965 Voting Rights Act

- Black churches were at the heart of the voting and civil rights movement. In particular, laywomen, clergy and chaplains nurtured spiritual resilience and organized boycotts, voter registration, and marches.
- The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) coordinated communities to “redeem the soul of America” through nonviolent action for civic and economic equality.
- The Gandhian philosophy of *satyagraha*, with Hindu and Jain roots, inspired strategies and trainings for many civil rights faith leaders.
- Jewish young people comprised half of those participating in the Mississippi Freedom Summer, while Jewish leaders helped organize and fund civil rights organizations.
- The National Council of Churches met with President Johnson to urge passage of the Voting Rights Act. Northern faith communities marched in both South and North, and Quakers widely distributed MLK's *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*.
- Separately, Black Muslims advanced Black liberation and economic independence.

**“When I liberate myself,
I liberate others.”**

— Fannie Lou Hamer

Faith Communities Are Crucial Now, Too

- Preach or teach about the Voting Rights Act during the first weekend of August.
- Join the League of Women Voters' Day of Civic Action on August 8. Find local events [here](#).
- Attend [Faith Action Network's Election Engagement Training](#) on August 11. Check the website for multifaith resources to support free and democratic elections.
- Vote and encourage others to vote. Find more information at [Vote411.org](#) and learn about candidates at [lwvwa.org/forums](#).
- Contact members of Congress regarding the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

Learn More

- [League of Women Voters Washington](#)
- [Faith Action Network](#)
- [The Brennan Center for Justice](#)
- [Louisiana v. Callais](#)
- [Stanford MLK Research Institute](#)
- [Congressional Research Service](#)
- [PBS: This Far by Faith](#)