

RESOLUTION FOR PASSAGE OF THE “FREEDOM TO VOTE ACT” [which supersedes the “FOR THE PEOPLE ACT”] AND “THE JOHN LEWIS VOTING RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT ACT”

WHEREAS, the right to vote is not guaranteed by the United States Constitution as many believe. In 1868, the 14th Amendment was ratified guaranteeing “equal protection under the law to all Americans”; however, not until the passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870 was voting even mentioned in any Constitutional Amendment, as it stated the right to vote would not be denied because race. At the time, the right to vote was still not recognized; the right of equal treatment under the law was. Similarly, the 19th Amendment, now 100 years old, banned voting discrimination on the basis of sex, but did not recognize an inherent right to vote; and

WHEREAS, because of literacy tests, poll taxes and the like, the United States Congress saw that codifying voting rights was a necessity, so they passed the Voting Rights Act in 1965 to enforce the 15th Amendment. This law was readopted and strengthened in 1970, 1975 and 1982 so that voting has become a lynchpin of our democracy; and

WHEREAS, in the 2013 *Shelby County v. Holder* decision, the Supreme Court invalidated a decades-old “coverage formula” naming jurisdictions that had to pass federal scrutiny under the Voting Rights Act, referred to as “preclearance,” in order to pass any new elections or voting laws. In practice, the decision means that communities facing new discriminatory voting laws have had to file suits themselves or rely on Justice Department suits or challenges from outside advocates—sometimes after the discriminatory laws have already taken effect; and

WHEREAS, the *Shelby County v. Holder* decision also left it to Congress to come up with new criteria for coverage, which hasn’t happened yet but we are encouraged to believe it will happen soon.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Executive Committee of the Palm Beach County Democratic Party stands in support of the “Freedom to Vote Act” [which supersedes the “For the People Act”] and the “John Lewis Voter Advancement Act” and urges that they be passed by the United States Senate as soon as possible in order that free and fair voting, our gateway to democracy, be preserved.

Phil Levitt, Legislative Committee Chair; Ellen Baker; Vice Chair, Amelia Rose, Maria Torres-Lopez, Allen Robbins, Charles Bantel, Cameron Stempel, Drew Martin, Ira Raab, Tricia Mischler, Ted Parsons, Joel Schlifer, Ben Cooper, Carole Silverstein

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