



May 9, 2024

To: Chair Jim Carlson and Chair Mike Freiberg
Cc: Elections Policy Conference Committee Members
Re: Elections Policy Omnibus, MNVRA

Hello Chair Carlson and Chair Freiberg,

Minnesota Voice is a member-based coalition of 40+ grassroots organizations working to increase civic engagement and voter participation among Black, Native, Latinx, Asian, and Immigrant voters across the state. We coordinate Minnesota's largest nonpartisan voter registration and turnout programs, train new organizers of color every election, and support more than 20 organizations with data, technology, and programmatic support.

MN Voice writes in support of the Elections Policy Omnibus Bill, especially highlighting the Minnesota Voting Rights Act (House lines 4/18 - 13.5). This legislation builds upon the federal Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965, one of the most successful civil rights measures in history, undoing Jim Crow-era discriminatory policies and ensuring the right and freedom to vote of every citizen. Since then, several restrictive voting laws and court decisions weakening the VRA have been passed. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit ruled that private citizens can no longer bring lawsuits against discriminatory voting policies under section two of the VRA. This alarming decision is binding in Minnesota and several neighboring states.

In Minnesota, significant racial inequities exist in both voter registration and voter turnout figures, emphasizing the need and urgency of the protections of the MNVRA. In November 2020, white Minnesotans were registered to vote at a rate 5% higher than Asian voters, 9% higher than Hispanic voters, and 13% higher than Black voters (source: [U.S. Census Bureau](#)). Looking at voter turnout, white Minnesotans turned out to vote at a rate 13-16% higher than Black, Asian, and Hispanic voters.

Our voters, especially our Black, Brown, and Immigrant voters, are at risk of losing critical protections against racial discrimination in voting. This discrimination comes in many forms, including lack of sufficient language access for non-native speaking voters, voter intimidation, and voter suppression. The Minnesota Voting Rights Act would restore and strengthen protections against these exclusionary policies.

Minnesota Voice and its partners prioritize investing in BIPOC community civic engagement and addressing the disparities we have seen within our voting communities. The MNVRA both aligns with and advances these priorities, and we urge members of the Elections Conference Committee to ensure its inclusion in the report's final passage.