



Testimony of the New York Immigration Coalition  
In Support of New York Voting Rights Act, S. 7528  
March 3, 2020

Chairman Myrie and members of the Senate Committee on Elections,

- My name is Alana Pilar Cantillo and I'm the Senior Director of Advocacy for the New York Immigration Coalition.
- On behalf of the New York Immigration Coalition, and our 200 non-profit organizational members across the state who work with immigrant New Yorkers, we want to affirm our strong support the New York Voting Rights Act
- As previously stated, the need for these protections dates back to the federal government's enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in response to Jim Crow laws and widespread voter disenfranchisement and intimidation
- This Act gave the government the ability to actually enforce the 14th and 15th Amendments.
- One of the main tools created by the Act was preclearance.
- The preclearance requirement prohibited certain jurisdictions from implementing any changes that affected voting without preapproval from the US Attorney General or US District Court for DC that the change does not discriminate against "protected minorities."
- 9 states in the South were covered in their entirety and select counties in other states were covered under preclearance including NYS's Bronx, Kings, and New York counties.
- A US Supreme Court decision in 2013, largely invalidated the preclearance requirement.
- As a result, many states have begun sustained assaults on voting rights, specifically targeting non-white voters.
- Some of these changes are
  - poll site hours and locations (eliminating poll sites in communities of color),
  - reducing or eliminating early voting,
  - gerrymandering,
  - and introducing unnecessary and restrictive ID requirements.
- Enforcement of the VRA depends on the willingness of the federal government to secure the right to vote. The Trump Administration has made a conscious decision not to do so.

**New York Immigration Coalition**

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- Although mostly associated with Southern states, voter suppression and disenfranchisement have a long history throughout New York State.
- It is now up to each state to defend the voting rights of its residents.
- Several states have passed their own version of the voting rights act and New York must do the same.
- The NYVRA would be the strongest and most comprehensive state voting rights act to date and will establish New York as a national leader on voting rights.
- This bill includes
  - legal tools to fight racial voter suppression and vote dilution that are stronger and clearer than federal law or other state laws
  - A vital preclearance program
  - A greater ability for non-profits and legal providers to bring cases of voter discrimination
  - Expanded language assistance to limited English proficient voters
  - Protections against voter intimidation and deception
- The NYVRA is a vital and necessary tool to safeguard the right to vote of all New Yorkers and must be passed this year.
- We thank you for your time and attention to this testimony.
- For any follow up questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at [acantillo@nyic.org](mailto:acantillo@nyic.org).
- Respectfully submitted, The New York Immigration Coalition