



Why does Maryland need a Voting Rights Act?

The weakening of the Voting Rights Act of 1965

- ★ Many of the protections enshrined by the VRA of 1965 have been eliminated or weakened in the last few decades.
- ★ Alongside rampant restrictive voting policies, barriers to voting have significantly increased.
- ★ The consequences disproportionately impact Black and Brown, first-time, rural, and limited English-speaking voters.

Our not-so-distant history

- ★ Maryland may have a progressive reputation nationally, but some counties and cities have a troubling history when it comes to race and voting.
- ★ Some local governments have never had Black elected officials, despite Black Marylanders making up one-third of our population
- ★ Recent examples of racial discrimination in voting occurred in Baltimore County and Federalsburg.



Why right now?

Voting rights are under attack

The MDVRA would give Maryland the power to protect its voters, regardless of any decision made by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Positive, not punitive

This legislation will empower local governments — not punish them. Election officials are already under fire, and this legislation will give them the support and funding they need to remedy voting access issues.

Opportunity to cement national leadership

We've made great progress in building an inclusive democracy in recent years. Adding strong protections for voters of color and others can cement the Free State's status as a national leader on voting rights.

What will the **Maryland Voting Rights Act** do?



Expand Language Access

This legislation helps ensure that non-English speakers are not left behind in the electoral process. It will require jurisdictions that have a population of 2% or more that fall within a language minority to provide voting materials in that additional language.

Prohibit Against Vote Denial, Dilution, and Intimidation



This legislation provides a framework to prevent vote dilution via gerrymandering and other barriers to the right to vote in a way that is efficient and cost-effective for both voters and local governments. It will also provide Marylanders with a civil cause of action against voter intimidation, deception, or obstruction.



Provide Funding

This legislation provides grants for jurisdictions that need to expand their language-related assistance, and for jurisdictions covered by preclearance to do things like voter outreach and education, and trainings for election officials. It also emphasizes that the Attorney General will provide educational and technical assistance to help jurisdictions comply, including grant funding to be used to hire experts who can help.

Stop discrimination before it happens



When Congress passed the federal Voting Rights Act in 1965, it recognized that case-by-case litigation alone was too slow and too costly to stop discrimination and prevent its resurgence. The MDVRA uses the framework of the VRA: Instead of voters having to prove that new election laws and practices are discriminatory, jurisdictions with a history of voter discrimination will need to have changes to elections get “preclearance” from the Maryland Attorney General or a court to show the new systems will not disadvantage minority voters.

