

(Washington DC) Today, the House Republican leadership acquiesced to Republican members from Georgia and Texas and pulled the Voting Rights Act (VRA) from floor consideration. Last week, Republican Leadership set the current week's schedule, which included a floor debate and vote on reauthorizing crucial portions of the VRA set to expire next year. However, this morning at the Republican Conference meeting, a members-only weekly summit, rank and file members complained about Section 5, a provision that would continue to guarantee the right to vote for minorities in areas with lengthy histories of discriminatory voting practices.

"I am very disappointed that a minority of House Republicans stopped consideration of the reauthorization of the VRA since the bill enjoys broad, bi-partisan support.

Far right elements of the Republican Party have delayed a bill that Judiciary Chairman Jim Sensenbrenner has fought hard to craft and enact. Throughout this process, Chairman Sensenbrenner worked closely with the top Judiciary Democrat, Rep. John Conyers, and Congressional Black Caucus Chair Melvin Watt. They drafted legislation many members of the House and Senate, Democrat and Republican, support.

The fringe right should not be allowed to block that a bill a majority of the House supports and will vote for.

Let us not forget that the VRA provisions in need of renewal safeguard the right of American citizens to vote, a right first granted in the Constitution and subsequently strengthen and broadened through the VRA. Congress drafted and improved the VRA to protect the voting rights of groups who had historically been hindered or blocked in exercising this fundamental right.

The right to vote is the foundational right all others rely on. If citizens cannot use their vote to hold elected officials accountable for policies choices then democracy cannot work. Our nation needs to ensure that we protect the right to vote and VRA reauthorization as currently drafted does that."

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