

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-D007
Title: Resolution to Address the Issue of Voter Suppression
Proposer: The Rev. Debra Bennett
Topic: Civil Rights

Directly Related: (Attached)

2018-C047 Support Voting Reforms that Achieve "One Person, One Vote"
2018-D003 Call on Governments to Cease Voter Suppression and Increase Voter Participation
2006-A094 On the Topic of the Right of All Citizens to Vote (Rejected)
1994-D132 Reject Racism Toward Immigrants and Request the Church to Respond

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

None

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2018, selecting "direct" resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The "direct" resolutions are attached and "indirect" resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#) or call 800-525-9329.

D007 - Resolution to address the issue of Voter Suppression

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: The Rev. Debra Bennett

Endorsed by: Mrs. Crystal Plummer, The Rev. Tracy Johnson Russell

Requests New Interim Body: No

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

HiA: HD

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 08 - Social Justice & United States Policy

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That this 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church hereby again direct and encourage the adoption, on a state-by-state basis, the following package of reforms that would expand voter registration, increase voter eligibility, and make voting processes more accessible by: implementing automatic voter registration; enabling same-day voter registration; preparing for natural disasters; allowing online registration; expanding the circle of people who are eligible to vote; making it easier to vote by mail; enabling no-excuse absentee voting; creating long-term mailing lists for absentee voters; making it easier for people to vote early, in person; enabling weekend voting and extended hours; and, guaranteeing an adequate number of voting locations; and be it further

Resolved, that this 80th General Convention calls for the elimination of all statewide voter access legislation that has been adopted since the 2013; and be it further

Resolved, That this 80th General Convention direct, consistent with established policies and procedures, that the Executive Council refer this Resolution to the Office of Government Relations, so that it may take all actions necessary to accomplish the intentions and purposes of this Resolution.

Explanation

In the United States, elections are administered locally, and forms of voter suppression vary among jurisdictions. At the founding of the country, the right to vote in most states was limited to property-owning white males. Over time, the right to vote was formally granted to racial minorities, women, and youth. During the later 19th and early 20th centuries, Southern states passed Jim Crow laws to suppress poor and racial minority voters – such laws included poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses. Most of these voter suppression tactics were made illegal after the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In 2013, discriminatory voter ID laws arose following the Supreme Court's decision to strike down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, which some argue amount to voter suppression among African Americans.

In Texas, a voter ID law requiring a driver's license, passport, military identification, or gun permit, was repeatedly found to be intentionally discriminatory. The state's election laws could be put back under the control of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). Under a previous Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, however, the DOJ expressed support for Texas's ID law. Sessions was accused by Coretta Scott King in 1986 of trying to suppress the black vote. A similar ID law in North Dakota, which would have disenfranchised large numbers of Native Americans, was also overturned.

In Wisconsin, a federal judge found that the state's restrictive voter ID law led to "real incidents of disenfranchisement, which undermine rather than enhance confidence in elections, particularly in minority communities"; and, given that there was no evidence of widespread voter impersonation in Wisconsin, found that the law was "a cure worse than the disease." In addition to imposing strict voter ID requirements, the law cut back on early voting, required people to live in a ward for at least 28 days before voting, and prohibited emailing absentee ballots to voters.

Other controversial measures include shutting down Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offices in minority neighborhoods, making it more difficult for residents to obtain voter IDs; shutting down polling places in minority neighborhoods; systematically depriving precincts in minority neighborhoods of the resources they need to operate efficiently, such as poll workers and voting machines; and purging voters from the rolls shortly before an election.

Often, voter fraud is cited as a justification for such laws even when the incidence of voter fraud is low. In Iowa, lawmakers passed a strict voter ID law with the potential to disenfranchise 260,000 voters. Out of 1.6 million votes cast in Iowa in 2016, there were only 10 allegations of voter fraud; none were cases of impersonation that a voter ID law could have prevented. Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate, the architect of the bill, admitted, "We've not experienced widespread voter fraud in Iowa."

In May 2017, President Donald Trump established the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, purportedly for the purpose of preventing voter fraud. Critics have suggested its true purpose was voter suppression. The commission was led by Kansas secretary of state Kris Kobach, a staunch advocate of strict voter ID laws and a proponent of the Crosscheck system. Crosscheck is a national database designed to check for voters who are registered in more than one state by comparing names and dates of birth. Researchers at Stanford University, the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard University, and Microsoft found that for every legitimate instance of double registration it finds,

Crosscheck's algorithm returns approximately 200 false positives. Kobach has been repeatedly sued by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for trying to restrict voting rights in Kansas.



Resolution Number: 2018-C047
Title: Support Voting Reforms that Achieve "One Person, One Vote"
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church authorize Executive Council to create a working group to study, define, and propose reforms by which civil government at all levels (local, state, and federal) may move closer toward making a reality of the principle of one person, one vote; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention budget allocate \$35,000 (salary and benefits) for 1/4 FTE staff person at the Office of Government Relations of The Episcopal Church to track federal legislative proposals for the creation and operation of the One Person, One Vote working group, and to provide timely action alerts to bishops, dioceses, and Episcopal Public Policy Network subscribers.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), p. 508.



Resolution Number: 2018-D003
Title: Call on Governments to Cease Voter Suppression and Increase Voter Participation
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That this 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church hereby calls on all states to cease and desist efforts to suppress the voting rights of American Citizens; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church calls on governments on all levels to create policies to enhance voter participation by, among other strategies, seeking to implement policies that will increase early voting, extend registration periods, guarantee an adequate number of voting locations, allow absentee balloting without the necessity of having an excuse, and prohibit forms of identification that restrict voter participation; and be it further

Resolved, That in accordance with Executive Council Resolution AN033 adopted October 25, 2017, the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church reaffirms that one person one vote means that the votes of all citizens of all races and ethnicities are fairly represented, counted and accounted for; that we oppose any form of partisan gerrymandering which has the same effect of racial gerrymandering; and be it further

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention call upon the National Conference of State Legislators to address gerrymandering as a major focus in developing a fair, not gerrymandered electoral process.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), pp. 672-673.



Resolution Number: 2006-A094
Title: On the Topic of the Right of All Citizens to Vote
Legislative Action Taken: Rejected
Text of Resolution:

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 75th General Convention support federal statutory protection for the right of all citizens to vote in local, state, and federal elections, ~~especially provisions prohibiting imposition of discriminatory practices or identification requirements;~~ and be it further

Resolved, That ~~these actions be communicated to the Office of Government Relations for action and distribution to the Episcopal Public Policy Network~~ *agencies of The Episcopal Church at all levels be encouraged to support these actions.*



Resolution Number: 1994-D132
Title: Reject Racism Toward Immigrants and Request the Church to Respond
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Substituted and Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 1994 General Convention of the Episcopal Church declare reprehensible the widespread racist and unjust treatment of immigrants that has become a convenient theme of current political discourse; and be it further
Resolved, That provinces and dioceses develop programs of literacy, citizenship, voter registration and advocacy to counteract violations of civil rights.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995), p. 355.