

**Committees:**

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## **Sponsor Testimony – State and Local Government – Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Resolution 22.

African Americans in the south and across the entire United States faced tremendous obstacles to voting before the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These obstacles included poll taxes, literacy tests and other restrictions. Many also faced harassment, intimidation and even physical violence while exercising their right to vote.

The voting rights act was designed to enforce the rights guaranteed by the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments. Congressional renewals of this act have largely been bipartisan and upheld by the U.S Supreme Court.

In 2013, in the case *Shelby County v. Holder*, parts of the voting rights act was ruled unconstitutional. As a result, the US House of Representatives passed HR 4 to amend and renew the voting rights act but the US Senate has failed to act on this important piece of legislation.

Many states have enacted laws making it more difficult to register to vote or cast a ballot at a time when every vote counts tremendously. Racism and inequality are still present in the US today and voting remains a challenge for African Americans.

Following the passing of John R. Lewis, who played a pivotal role in bringing about The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the entire civil rights movement, the US House of Representatives passed a measure renaming HR 4 to the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act however HR 4 has yet to be enacted.

The John Lewis Voting Rights Act would establish new criteria for determine which states and political subdivisions must obtain preclearance before changes to voting practices may take effect. Additionally it would require state and political subdivisions

to notify the public of any changes to voting practices and authorizes DOJ to require the state and political subdivisions to provide certain documents or answers to questions enforcing voting rights. Lastly HR 4 also provides and outline to courts of factors they must consider when hearing challenges to voting practices.

Ohio has a significant role in promoting equitable and fair elections as well as honoring the late John R. Lewis. HR 22 urges Congress to enact the John. R. Lewis Voting Rights act. The passage of this legislation is needed now more than ever to ensure free and fair elections for all.

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee, I thank you for your time, and will be happy to answer any questions