

OPEN LETTER

from former Republican Members of Congress

Undermining the Voting Rights Act Would Be Catastrophic For America

As former Republican Members of Congress, we proudly served our Party and constituents in pursuit of a stronger, freer, and fairer nation. We write today out of deep concern that undermining Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, as is currently being considered in *Louisiana v. Callais*, would be catastrophic for the country we swore to protect.

For nearly half a century, the Voting Rights Act stood as the embodiment of a rare bipartisan value: that the right to vote is the foundation of every other freedom. Section 2, in particular, was one of the most transformational and necessary voting rights policies our Congress ever passed. It helped to end Jim Crow and ensured that every American, regardless of race or background, could participate equally in the democratic process.

The Republican Party once led the charge for this vision.

The original Voting Rights Act had 20 Republican cosponsors and passed the Senate with wide Republican support. It was reauthorized multiple times, the last being in 2006 when it received wide bipartisan support in both chambers, passing unanimously in the Senate. That proud history should not be forgotten.

Now, however, *Louisiana v. Callais* threatens to undo decades of important work. Weakening Section 2 would betray the promise of equal access to the ballot box, further undermine the already tenuous separation of powers, and disregard decades of congressional fact-finding and bipartisan reauthorizations.

As former Members of Congress, who took seriously our constitutional responsibility to protect voting rights as dictated by the Fourteenth Amendment, Fifteenth Amendment, and Elections Clause, we cannot stress enough the calamity we fear lays ahead if those rights are undermined.

The success of our democracy has always depended upon a simple principle: every citizen's vote must count, and every citizen's voice must be heard. For every American's fundamental right to participate in elections without having their power diluted or their voices silenced. For decades, Republican and Democratic members and presidents demonstrated their commitment to our democracy through overwhelming support. Now, when faith in our institutions is at its most fragile, we must renew, not retreat from, that shared commitment.

We urge all who value the rule of law and the integrity of our nation to stand with us in defending Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. To abandon it now would not be a victory for conservatism. It would be a stunning betrayal of everyone who fought before us to guarantee that we are a nation for and of the people.

Respectfully,

Rep. Charles Boustany

Former Representative from Louisiana's 7th Congressional District from 2005-2011 and Louisiana's 3rd Congressional District from 2011-2017

Rep. Tom Coleman

Former Representative from Missouri's 6th Congressional District from 1976-1993

Rep. Barbara Comstock

Former Representative from Virginia's 10th Congressional District from 2015-2019

Rep. Mickey Edwards

Former Representative from Oklahoma's 5th Congressional District from 1977 to 1993

Rep. Wayne Gilchrest

Former Representative from Maryland's 1st Congressional District from 1991 to 2009

Rep. Bob Inglis

Former Representative from South Carolina's 4th Congressional District from 1993 to 1999 and from 2005 to 2011

Rep. John LeBoutillier

Former Representative from New York's 6th Congressional District from 1980-1982

Rep. Connie Morella

Former Representative from Maryland's 8th Congressional District from 1987-2003

Rep. Claudine Schneider

Former Representative from Rhode Island's 2nd Congressional District from 1981 to 1991

Rep. David Trott

Former Representative of Michigan's 11th Congressional District from 2015 to 2019