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March 18, 2015

**SUPPORT THE VOTER EMPOWERMENT ACT, H.R. 12**

Dear Representative,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, we urge you to support the Voter Empowerment Act (H.R. 12). Today's introduction of the Voter Empowerment Act (VEA) sends a powerful and timely message about the importance of eliminating barriers to voting and improving the administration of our elections.

Coming just a few weeks after the activities commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the march from Selma to Montgomery known as "Bloody Sunday," this bill serves as a reminder that, though we have come far, there is still a great deal more to do to ensure fair and equal access to the voting booth.

The Leadership Conference believes that the ability to cast a vote and have that vote count is the most precious civil right in America. The Voter Empowerment Act is a comprehensive plan to strengthen elections, combat voter exclusion, and expand voter participation. The VEA will modernize our voter registration system; allow online voter registration; expand early voting; ensure the equitable allocation of polling place resources; and prohibit voter caging and other deceptive practices that deter people from exercising their constitutional right to vote.

The November midterm elections illustrated the need for the VEA. There were new efforts in states across the country to exclude citizens from registering and voting on a scale unheard of since passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The days of poll taxes, literacy tests, and brutal physical intimidation may be behind us, but today's disenfranchisement tactics aimed at minority communities, while more subtle, are no less pernicious. These measures only serve to suppress voter participation.

It is time to ensure that voters are protected from practices designed to keep them off the voter rolls and out of the voting booth. We urge you to support this important and timely legislation. Please feel free to contact Legal Director Lisa Bornstein, Bornstein@civilrights.org, at (202) 263- 2856 or Nancy Zirkin, Zirkin@civilrights.org, with any questions.

Sincerely,

Wade Henderson  
President & CEO

Nancy Zirkin  
Executive Vice President