

Research Assessment #11

Date: 2/17/2021

Subject: The *For the People Act, 2021* Division A: Voting

MLA Citation:

Democracyreform-Sarbanes.House.Gov, 2021,

https://democracyreform-sarbanes.house.gov/sites/democracyreform.house.gov/files/SI_MPLE-SECTION-BY-SECTION_H.R.-1_FINAL.pdf. Accessed 22 Feb 2021.

Democracyreform-Sarbanes.House.Gov, 2021,

https://democracyreform-sarbanes.house.gov/sites/democracyreform.house.gov/files/BIL_L-TEXT_H.R.-1-Introduction_FINAL.pdf. Accessed 22 Feb 2021.

Assessment:

For this week's assessment, I decided to look into the newly revised "For the People Act" that is currently circulating its way through the different chambers of congress. The reason I had decided to look into this bill is that during the recent winter storm that swept across Texas there were several individuals in the media world who expressed the sentiment that "Texans deserve this because it's what they voted for". This in-turn created a charged discussion about the different issues regarding voter suppression and gerrymandering across Texas which limits many different marginalized groups from being able to effectively voice their beliefs and wants for the lone star state. The proposed bill, also known as H.R. 1, is crafted to put an end to many of these problems and to give these groups their voices back.

The "For the People Act" was originally introduced in 2019 by Congressman John Sarbanes of Maryland's 3rd congressional district. The bill has generated overwhelming support from the vast majority of the Democrat portion of congress and has been labeled as "a danger to electoral integrity" by the remaining portion. The bill itself is broken up into three different divisions and each division focuses on its own topic regarding election practices. These divisions include Division A: Voting, Division B: Campaign Finance, and Division C: Ethics. For this assessment, I am primarily focusing on Division A: Voting which takes up the bulk of the bill's text.

Division A is broken down into three different titles covering election access, election integrity, and election security. Title 1 includes clauses that do all of the following: brings voter registration into the modern age, protects personal privacy, makes registration easier and faster, increases accessibility and means of voting and registration, prohibits things like voter intimidation and targeting, and allots funding for services that relate to the bill. Many of these clauses seem to have been included as a direct result of the issues faced during the 2020 presidential election. These include the parts that attack the spreading of misinformation to either mislead or misdirect voters. One of the most important portions of this division I believe is the portion covering the modernization of registration practices. This all-around makes conducting elections

much more easy and effective as well as makes sure all states have the same basic regulations and laws so that they do not create issues for people who change location in between elections. It also guarantees all Americans the same opportunities and chances to get registered correctly and efficiently.

Title 2 addresses election integrity and serves as a sort of rebuttal to many of the bill's opponents' worries. This section focuses on guaranteeing voting rights to all citizens including those in surrounding U.S. territories and the District of Columbia. One clause I found very significant is subtitle E which addresses redistricting reform. This would promote the creation of an independent redistricting commission to assure there will be no occurrences of gerrymandering in the organizing of congressional elections.

Title 3 covers election security. The bulk of this section addresses the creation of grant programs that can be provided to individuals and organizations who work to help increase the security of the election process. It also provides funding for the first year this bill is implemented that spans about 1 billion dollars in 2021 and 175 million dollars for the next 7 consecutive years.

In conclusion I believe that this portion of the H.R. 1 bill would create some significant and important changes to the way the U.S. government conducts elections and by passing this bill millions of U.S. citizens would finally have their voices heard in the legislative process.