

Sixteen Senate Republican Hypocrites Oppose The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act Despite Previous Votes To Reauthorize The Voting Rights Act

SUMMARY: In 2021, congressional Democrats introduced the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, or HR4, which would reinstate certain provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) that were struck down in the 2013 Supreme Court Shelby v. Holder decision, including [preclearance](#).

HR4 passed the House but now faces an almost certain Republican [filibuster](#) in the Senate.

Sixteen sitting Republican senators have previously voted for reauthorizations of the Voting Rights Act but now refuse to support the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

- In 2006, Sens. McConnell, Grassley, Shelby, Crapo, Collins, Burr, Inhofe, Graham, Thune, Cornyn, Blackburn, Blunt, Boozman, Capito, Moran, and Wicker voted for the 2006 reauthorization.
- In 1982, Sen. Grassley both voted for and cosponsored the VRA reauthorization.

These senate Republicans owe the public an explanation as to why they now oppose protecting the right to vote by reauthorizing the VRA.

The Voting Rights Act Of 1965 Outlawed Discriminatory Voting Practices And Has Been Reauthorized Multiple Times In The Decades Since Its Original Passage With Bipartisan Support.

The Voting Rights Act Became Law In 1965 To Outlaw Discriminatory Voting Practices That Mainly Targeted Black Voters, Including Bureaucratic Restrictions Meant To Deny Them The Right To Vote.

The Voting Rights Act Of 1965 “Outlawed The Discriminatory Voting Practices Adopted In Many Southern States After The Civil War, Including Literacy Tests As A Prerequisite To Voting.” “This act was signed into law on August 6, 1965, by President Lyndon Johnson. It outlawed the discriminatory voting practices adopted in many southern states after the Civil War, including literacy tests as a prerequisite to voting.” [OurDocuments.gov, Accessed [10/8/21](#)]

The Voting Rights Act Was Created In Response To Decades Of Black People Facing “Tremendous Obstacles To Voting, Including Poll Taxes, Literacy Tests, And Other Bureaucratic Restrictions To Deny Them The Right To Vote.” “This ‘act to enforce the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution’ was signed into law 95 years after the amendment was ratified. In those years, African Americans in the South faced tremendous obstacles to voting, including poll taxes, literacy tests, and other bureaucratic restrictions to deny them the right to vote. They also risked harassment, intimidation, economic reprisals, and physical violence when they tried to register or vote. As a result, very few African Americans were registered voters, and they had very little, if any, political power, either locally or nationally.” [OurDocuments.gov, Accessed [10/8/21](#)]

The Voting Rights Act Of 1965 Has Been Reauthorized Multiple Times By Congress With Bipartisan Support, Including Bills In 1982 And 2006, Which Were Both Backed By Current Republican Senators.

In 1982, Congress Reauthorized The Voting Rights Act Of 1965 And Extended Its Preclearance Requirements. “(Measure passed Senate, amended, roll call #190 (85-8) (Inserted text of S. 1992, as amended)) Amends the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to extend from August 6, 1982, to August 6, 1984, the current preclearance requirements (under which jurisdictions covered through the triggering mechanism must submit proposed electoral changes to the Department of Justice). Establishes a new standard for jurisdictions to "bail-out" of these requirements effective August 6, 1984.” [Congress.gov, Accessed [10/12/21](#)]

In 1982, The Senate Voted On H.R.3112 In Lieu Of S. 1992, The Voting Rights Act Amendments Of 1982, With 85 Yeas And 8 Nays. [Congress.gov, Accessed [10/8/21](#)]

- **Grassley Was A Cosponsor Of The Senate Version Of The Voting Rights Act Amendments Of 1982.** [Congress.gov, Accessed [10/25/21](#)]

In 2006, The Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, And Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization And Amendments Act Of 2006 Passed The Senate With A Vote Of 98 To Zero And Passed The House With A Vote Of 390 To 33. [Congress.gov, Accessed [10/8/21](#)]

- **Sens. McConnell, Grassley, Shelby, Murkowski, Collins, Burr, Inhofe, Graham, Thune, And Cornyn All Voted For The Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, And Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization And Amendments Act of 2006.** [GovTrack, [7/20/06](#)]
- **Sens. Blackburn, Blunt, Boozman, Capito, Moran, And Wicker — All Members Of The House Of Representatives At The Time — Voted For The Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, And Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization And Amendments Act Of 2006.** [GovTrack, [7/13/06](#)]

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, Or HR4 — The Latest Voting Rights Act (VRA) Reauthorization Bill — Has Passed The House, But Senate Republicans Are Poised To Block The Legislation.

HR4, Which Would Restore Key Provisions Of The Voting Rights Act, Passed The House In August 2021.

In Late August, The House Passed The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. “The House on Tuesday passed voting rights legislation named for the late Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), a party-line vote that underscores the bill's nearly impassable upward climb in the Senate.” [Politico, [8/24/21](#)]

Republicans Opposed HR4, Which Would Restore Key Provisions Of The Voting Rights Act That Were Struck Down In 2013 By The Supreme Court. “But most Republicans also oppose the more targeted Lewis-named legislation, which would restore key provisions of the Voting Rights Act that were struck down by the Supreme Court in 2013.” [Politico, [8/24/21](#)]

The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act Would “Modernize And Restore Preclearance,” Prevent Laws That Unevenly Burden Voters Of Color, Limit Gerrymandering, And Ensure Politicians Can’t “Handpick Their Voters And Entrench Their Power.” “The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would modernize and restore preclearance. It would prevent voting laws that unevenly burden voters of color. It would take important steps to limit gerrymandering and make sure that politicians don’t get to handpick their voters and entrench their power. In short, it would be the most significant federal expansion of voting rights in a generation.” [The Hill, [9/3/21](#)]

The Senate Received The Bill In September, But It Has Been Met With Republican Opposition That Will Likely Result In A Filibuster.

The Senate Received The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act On September 14, 2021, But There Has Not Been A Vote. [Congress.gov, Accessed [9/28/21](#)]

The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act Is Not Likely To Pass The Senate As The Legislative Filibuster Would Likely Prevent Its Passage. “The House on Tuesday passed voting rights legislation named for the late Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), a party-line vote that underscores the bill’s nearly impassable upward climb in the Senate. [...] The bill passed by a 219-212 vote. It is unlikely to advance further in the Senate, where the legislative filibuster remains intact despite a progressive push for changes that would weaken the chamber’s supermajority requirement to pass most bills.” [Politico, [8/24/21](#)]

Fifteen Current Republican Senators Voted For The 2006 VRA Reauthorization, And One Senator Voted For Both The 1982 And The 2006 Reauthorizations, But Now They Hypocritically Refuse To Support HR4.

Sen. Mitch McConnell Spent Decades Verbally Supporting The Voting Rights Act And Voted To Reauthorize The Bill In 2006, But He But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

Sen. Mitch McConnell Previously Supported The Voting Rights Act, Including Preclearance Provisions. “McCarthy and McConnell omit the fact that they once supported the Voting Rights Act and provisions such as preclearance. McConnell once said “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” when talking about the Voting Rights Act. Now, he’s against passing the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and restoring the law to its former strength.” [The Hill, [9/3/21](#)]

- **When Talking About The Voting Rights Act, McConnell Once Said “If It Ain’t Broke, Don’t Fix It,” Yet He Opposed Passing HR4.** “McCarthy and McConnell omit the fact that they once supported the Voting Rights Act and provisions such as preclearance. McConnell once said “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” when talking about the Voting Rights Act. Now, he’s against passing the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and restoring the law to its former strength.” [The Hill, [9/3/21](#)]

On July 20, 2006, The Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, And Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization And Amendments Act Of 2006 Passed The Senate With A Vote Of 98 To Zero. [Congress.gov, Accessed [10/8/21](#)]

- **McConnell Voted Yea On The 2006 VRA Reauthorization.** [GovTrack, [7/20/06](#)]

In 2006, McConnell Referred To The 2006 Reauthorization Saying That Members Of Congress Recognized It As Legislation That Has Worked. “It’s curious, because not only did McConnell vote in favor of reauthorizing the VRA in 2006, he was the majority whip, which means he was responsible for getting all of his fellow Republicans to vote in favor of it too. ‘I happen to have been there the day the original voting rights bill was signed... We have, of course, renewed the Voting Rights Act periodically since that time, overwhelmingly, and on a bipartisan basis, year after year after year because members of Congress realize this is a piece of legislation which has worked. And one of my favorite sayings that many of us use from time to time is, ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.’ ‘This is a good piece of legislation which has served an important purpose over many years... And this landmark piece of legislation will continue to make a difference not only in the South but for all of America and for all of us, whether we are African-Americans or not.’” [Brennan Center, [8/7/20](#)]

McConnell Has Not Committed To Supporting HR4, As Sen. Murkowski Is The Only Republican Who Has Endorsed The Proposal. “The other proposal on the Democrats’ agenda — named after John Lewis, the civil rights leader and House member who died last July — faces a steep uphill climb to winning the 10 Republicans needed to break a filibuster in the Senate, according to conversations with key senators. Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, the only Republican who has endorsed the proposal.” [NBC News, [6/7/21](#)]

McConnell Said The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act Is “Unnecessary,” Claiming There Is No Threat To The Voting Rights Law Since It’s Already Against The Law To Discriminate Based On

Race. “Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., on Tuesday said the bill is ‘unnecessary.’ ‘So there’s no threat to the voting rights law, it’s against the law to discriminate against the basis of race already, and so I think it’s unnecessary,’ he said.” [NBC News, [6/7/21](#)]

Sen. Chuck Grassley Has Previously Supported And Twice Voted To Reauthorize The Voting Rights Act, But He Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

In 1982, The Senate Voted On H.R.3112 In Lieu Of S. 1992, The Voting Rights Act Amendments Of 1982, With 85 Yeas And 8 Nays. [Congress.gov, Accessed [10/8/21](#)]

- **Grassley Was A Cosponsor Of The Senate Version Of The Voting Rights Act Amendments Of 1982.** [Congress.gov, Accessed [10/25/21](#)]

In 2014, Grassley Noted Previous Voting Rights Act Reauthorizations Were Bipartisan On Multiple Occasions And Said He Worked Extensively In 1982 With Sens. Kennedy And Dole To Ensure The Law Was Extended. “For almost 50 years, the Voting Rights Act has made effective the commands of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments in protecting the right to vote. Its enactment was bipartisan. Its reauthorization was bipartisan on multiple occasions. The current reauthorization of the law will continue in effect for another seventeen years. I am pleased to have played a role several times in reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act. In 1982, I worked extensively with Senators Kennedy and Dole to make sure that the law was extended.” [The Office of Chuck Grassley, [6/25/14](#)]

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- **Grassley Voted Yea On The 2006 VRA Reauthorization.** [GovTrack, [7/20/06](#)]

In 2006, Grassley Said It Was The Senate’s “Duty To Guarantee That All Citizens Have The Same Opportunity To Participate In The Political Process And To Elect Representatives Of Their Choice.” “As he had done in 1982 when Ronald Reagan was president, Grassley also voted to reauthorize the VRA in 2006 under President George W. Bush. ‘I will repeat what I said on this floor 15 years ago: It’s our duty to guarantee that all citizens have the same opportunity to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice,’ he said in 2006. “All of us here today recognize that it is our duty, as elected representatives of the people, as guardians of democracy, to protect the right to vote.” [Medium, [9/28/15](#)]

Grassley Has Not Committed To Supporting HR4, As Sen. Murkowski Is The Only Republican Who Has Endorsed The Proposal. “The other proposal on the Democrats’ agenda — named after John Lewis, the civil rights leader and House member who died last July — faces a steep uphill climb to winning the 10 Republicans needed to break a filibuster in the Senate, according to conversations with key senators. Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, the only Republican who has endorsed the proposal, expressed uncertainty Monday when asked to describe a path to 60 votes in the evenly split chamber.” [NBC News, [6/7/21](#)]

Sen. Richard Shelby Voted In Favor Of The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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- **Shelby Voted Yea On The 2006 VRA Reauthorization.** [GovTrack, [7/20/06](#)]

Referring To The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, Shelby Claimed Democrats Were “Reaching For Too Much Too Soon.” “Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., said Democrats are going about it wrong when he was asked about the prospects of the John Lewis act. ‘They’re reaching for too much too soon,’ he said.” [NBC News, [6/7/21](#)]

Sen. Mike Crapo Missed The Vote On The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization For Medical Reasons, But He Officially Supported The Bill. And Now Is Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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- **Crapo Did Not Vote On The Bill In 2006.** [GovTrack, [7/20/06](#)]

Crapo Was Absent For The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization Vote Because He Had A Doctor’s Appointment With An Oncology Specialist, But He Submitted A Statement To The Congressional Record In Support Of The VRA. “Idaho Senator Mike Crapo today lauded the extension of federal law assuring the right of all Americans to vote freely in elections. President Bush signed the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act (VRA) this morning during a ceremony at the White House. The legislation was approved last week unanimously by the Senate. However, a long-standing follow-up medical appointment with an oncology specialist in Baltimore caused Crapo to miss the Senate vote. Crapo submitted a statement to the Congressional Record signifying his support of the VRA.” [The Office of Mike Crapo, [7/27/06](#)]

Crapo Has Not Committed To Supporting HR4, As Sen. Murkowski Is The Only Republican Who Has Endorsed The Proposal. “The other proposal on the Democrats’ agenda — named after John Lewis, the civil rights leader and House member who died last July — faces a steep uphill climb to winning the 10 Republicans needed to break a filibuster in the Senate, according to conversations with key senators. Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, the only Republican who has endorsed the proposal, expressed uncertainty Monday when asked to describe a path to 60 votes in the evenly split chamber.” [NBC News, [6/7/21](#)]

Sen. Susan Collins Voted In Favor Of The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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- **Collins Voted Yea On The 2006 VRA Reauthorization.** [GovTrack, [7/20/06](#)]

Collins Declined To Comment On Whether She Supports The John Lewis Proposal. “Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, didn’t say whether she supports the John Lewis proposal when she was asked Monday. Her office declined to comment.” [NBC News, [6/7/21](#)]

As Of June 2021, Sen. Collins Would Not Comment On Her Stance On HR4. “Murkowski’s friend and fellow moderate, Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, didn’t say whether she supports the John Lewis proposal when she was asked Monday. Her office declined to comment.” [NBC News, [6/7/21](#)]

Sen. Richard Burr Voted In Favor Of The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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- **Burr Voted Yea On The 2006 VRA Reauthorization.** [GovTrack, [7/20/06](#)]

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Sen. Jim Inhofe Voted In Favor Of The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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- **Inhofe Voted Yea On The 2006 VRA Reauthorization.** [GovTrack, [7/20/06](#)]

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Sen. Lindsey Graham Voted In Favor Of 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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- **Graham Voted Yea On The 2006 VRA Reauthorization.** [GovTrack, [7/20/06](#)]

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Sen. John Thune Voted In Favor Of The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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Sen. John Cornyn Voted In Favor Of The Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, And Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization And Amendments Act Of 2006 But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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- **Cornyn Voted Yea On The 2006 VRA Reauthorization.** [GovTrack, [7/20/06](#)]

In June 2021, Sen. Cornyn Said He Opposed The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act And Added That He Hoped The Bill Could Not Garner 10 Republican Supporters. “Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, the former chief vote counter for the Republican caucus, said he opposes the measure and intends to talk to his colleagues ‘so they understand what the implications are.’ [...] Asked whether he believes 10 Republicans could support it, Cornyn said, ‘I hope not.’” [NBC News, [6/7/21](#)]

Sen. Marsha Blackburn, A Member Of The House Of Representatives At The Time, Voted In Favor Of The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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- **Blackburn Voted Yea On The 2006 VRA Reauthorization.** [GovTrack, [7/13/06](#)]

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Sen. Roy Blunt, A Member Of The House Of Representatives At The Time, Voted In Favor Of The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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- **Blunt Voted Yea On The 2006 VRA Reauthorization.** [GovTrack, [7/13/06](#)]

Blunt Has Not Committed To Supporting HR4, As Sen. Murkowski Is The Only Republican Who Has Endorsed The Proposal. “The other proposal on the Democrats' agenda — named after John Lewis, the civil rights leader and House member who died last July — faces a steep uphill climb to winning the 10 Republicans needed to break a filibuster in the Senate, according to conversations with key senators. Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, the only Republican who has endorsed the proposal, expressed uncertainty Monday when asked to describe a path to 60 votes in the evenly split chamber.” [NBC News, [6/7/21](#)]

Sen. John Boozman, A Member Of The House Of Representatives At The Time, Voted In Favor Of The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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- **Boozman Voted Yea On The Bill In 2006.** [GovTrack, [7/13/06](#)]

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Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, A Member Of The House Of Representatives At The Time, Voted In Favor Of The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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Sen. Jerry Moran, A Member Of The House Of Representatives At The Time, Voted In Favor Of The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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- **Moran Voted Yea On The 2006 VRA Reauthorization.** [GovTrack, [7/13/06](#)]

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Sen. Roger Wicker, A Member Of The House Of Representatives At The Time, Voted In Favor Of The 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization But Is Now Denying Support For The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

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