



Advancing Equity and Inclusion in Our Community

Why Voting Rights are Important to the Belmont Human Rights Commission

States across the country are poised to attack voting rights by limiting access to the polls. The justification put forth in these mostly partisan efforts is to ensure election integrity after the results of the 2020 Presidential elections were questioned. This argument holds little merit given that more than 50 lawsuits questioning the integrity of the election were rejected.

Georgia recently passed a voting bill that is the first of many proposed across the country. The Georgia bill restricts voting access in ways that will disproportionately impact poorer voters and voters of color. The pandemic has shown that many essential workers are people of color who do not have the option to work remotely, and often their work hours are not conducive to restrictive voting hours. The Georgia bill shrinks the window for early voting and absentee voting; only sends ballot applications to voters who request them rather than sending them automatically to every voter; mandates new voter ID requirements providing one of several forms of identification; limits the number of drop boxes available for early voting; gives state lawmakers more say over county and local elections; and bans handing out food and water within proximity to polling places.

In 43 states across the country, new election restrictions have been proposed in over 250 bills that would “limit mail, early in-person and Election Day voting with such constraints as stricter ID requirements, limited hours or narrower eligibility to vote absentee”, according to the nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice. On the other hand, more than a dozen states have enacted Automatic Voter Registration linked to the Division of Motor Vehicles. Georgia was one such state until it passed its recent voting restriction law ending the practice.

This is not a partisan issue. Every voter should have easy access to casting a vote. Efforts to obstruct this right should be repudiated and challenged in court. Every voter should care about this issue and fight to shore up our democracy in every way possible. Every voter should have equal access to the polls, and any effort to disenfranchise any voter should alarm us all and impel us to act. The bedrock of our democracy is our right to cast a vote. We must protect it in any way we can and look for ways to facilitate voting rather than obstruct it. To learn more, go to the non-partisan Reclaim our Vote: <https://reclaim-our-vote.webflow.io/>

The Belmont Human Rights Commission is dedicated to fighting discrimination in all forms and to increasing visibility and awareness of issues regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion. If you have experienced discrimination in Belmont, please contact us at belmont.hrc@gmail.com or call 617-993-2795.