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# **COMMISSIONERS COURT ADOPTS ELLIS RESOLUTION DEFENDING VOTING RIGHTS, FAIR REPRESENTATION IN HARRIS COUNTY**

## **RESOLUTION CONDEMNS SUPREME COURT'S GUTTING OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT AS SOUTHERN STATES RUSH TO DISENFRANCHISE COMMUNITIES OF COLOR**

**HARRIS COUNTY** — Harris County Commissioners Court today adopted a resolution introduced by Commissioner Rodney Ellis recognizing the historic significance of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and reaffirming Harris County's commitment to safeguarding the right to vote in free and fair elections.

The resolution comes as states across the South rush to purge Black representation, eliminating majority-Black congressional districts and disrupting elections in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's April 29 decision in Louisiana v. Callais.

### **Statement from Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis:**

"The Voting Rights Act was one of the most important civil rights laws ever passed because it enforced the promise that Black Americans and other communities of color have an equal voice in our democracy. Today, those protections are being dismantled in plain sight.

*"Extremists could not stop minority political participation outright, so they're diluting minority political power instead. Their tactics may look different than they did during Jim Crow, but the goal is the same: preserving power for some by limiting it for others.*

*"Today's racist redistricting schemes are the modern descendants of poll taxes, literacy tests, and racial intimidation designed to silence communities of color.*

*"Harris County is drawing a line. We will continue defending the freedom to vote, protecting fair representation, and standing up against efforts to make some voices count less than others."*

Last month's Supreme Court ruling in *Louisiana v. Callais* effectively dismantled Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, making it harder for voters to challenge maps that dilute Black voting power. The decision is the latest blow to the landmark civil rights law in a series of rulings that have steadily eroded voting protections.

Signed into law in 1965, the Voting Rights Act enforced the 15th Amendment's guarantee that the right to vote cannot be denied based on race and expanded opportunities for communities of color to meaningfully participate in the political process.

In the wake of *Callais*, states including Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Florida have targeted majority-Black districts by cracking and packing communities of color across multiple districts to dilute their voting power.

In Texas, where people of color accounted for 95 percent of recent population growth, lawmakers last year redrew congressional maps to eliminate two of the state's four majority-Black districts, including the historic 18th Congressional District in Houston.

Today's resolution also calls on Congress to pass legislation restoring and strengthening the Voting Rights Act and advancing equal access to the ballot box for all Americans.

**Read the full text below:**

**WHEREAS**, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) was signed into law on August 6, 1965, by President Lyndon B. Johnson, prohibiting racial discrimination in voting and marking a landmark achievement for the civil rights movement and a watershed moment for our country; and

**WHEREAS**, the VRA and its subsequent reauthorizations established critical voting rights protections, outlawed literacy tests, and brought an end to poll taxes and other Jim Crow-era

voting procedures passed by state legislatures—particularly in the south—to disenfranchise Black voters, Latino voters, Asian voters and others; and

**WHEREAS**, nearly 100 years after the 14th and 15th Amendments were passed, the VRA enforced the voting rights they guaranteed. The 14th Amendment, granted equal protection and citizenship to all persons "born or naturalized in the United States," including formerly enslaved people. The 15th Amendment, established that the "right to vote shall not be denied or abridged on the basis of race, color or previous condition of servitude"; and

**WHEREAS**, the VRA was won because fearless civil rights activists and leaders, led by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., despite facing violence and intimidation, risked life and liberty to advance the freedom to vote for all people. The VRA has been called the single most "effective piece of civil rights legislation ever passed by Congress," that led to increased voter registration, electoral participation, and representation by people of color; protected language access and assistance at the polls; and built a more inclusive and representative democracy; and

**WHEREAS**, the VRA has been reauthorized by Congress five times, most recently in 2006 with strong bipartisan support. Upon signing the reauthorization, President George W. Bush said that the VRA "broke the segregationist lock on the ballot box." Seven years later, it was gutted by the Supreme Court's 2013 Shelby decision, which stripped the act of essential preclearance safeguards, paving the way for states to pass restrictive voting laws; and

**WHEREAS**, Texas has the largest Black population of any state, the second-largest Latino population, and the third-largest Asian American and Pacific Islander population. The Brennan Center reports that since Shelby, the "gaps between turnout rates for white voters and voters of color have grown," and that Texas had a higher turnout gap between white and Black voters in 2020 than at any other point in the previous 24 years; and

**WHEREAS**, the Supreme Court's Louisiana v. Callais decision on April 29, 2026, struck a blow to the VRA's Section 2, making it easier

to dilute voting power and disenfranchise voters of color and harder to challenge racially discriminatory maps and voting laws; and

**WHEREAS**, sixty-one years of progress are being swiftly undone in the wake of Callais, with several southern states wasting no time upending, suspending, and postponing their primary elections to target and eliminate Black and Latino-majority congressional districts through rapid and unprecedented redistricting efforts—even when, in some cases, ballots have already been cast; and

**WHEREAS**, the dismantling of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a call to action to protect and advance voting rights for all people, uphold the 14th and 15th Amendments, remove barriers to equal democratic participation, and strengthen our democracy; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that Harris County condemns all forms of discrimination in our democracy, affirms its duty to uphold the Constitution, and commits to defending voting rights and ensuring fair access to the ballot box at the local level. Furthermore, Harris County calls on Congress to pass legislation that revitalizes the Voting Rights Act, advances the freedom to vote for all people, safeguards fair representation, and protects our democracy now and for future generations.

**ADOPTED** on this **14th day of May 2026** by Harris County Commissioners Court, Harris County, Texas.

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**About the Office of Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis:**

*A longtime civil rights leader with more than four decades of public service, Commissioner Rodney Ellis represents Harris County Precinct One, a diverse, 365-square-mile region in the nation's third-largest county. Under Commissioner Ellis' leadership, the office champions purpose-driven public service to improve quality of life, build thriving communities, and advance opportunity, equity, and justice for all. Precinct One is home to more than 1.2 million residents, over 8,500 acres of greenspace, and major regional assets including the Texas*

*Medical Center, George Bush Intercontinental Airport, leading sports and entertainment venues, several Fortune 500 headquarters, and all of Houston's major institutions of higher learning. For more information, visit [www.hcp1.net](http://www.hcp1.net).*

## **ABOUT THE OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER RODNEY ELLIS**

The Office of Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis is committed to championing purpose driven public service to improve quality of life, build thriving communities, and advances opportunity, equity, and justice for all.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

**The Office of County Commissio...**

## **COPY LINK**

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