

## **People Over Long Lines (POLL) Act**

### **The problem:**

The right to vote for all Americans is fundamental. Rules for voting and election administration in every state should protect and promote voter participation. However, for too many federal elections, the right to vote has been effectively suppressed using long waiting times at polling locations, particularly in communities of color, as a deterrent to voting. These long lines discourage people from voting, undermine confidence in the electoral system and impose economic costs on voters. The POLL Act seeks to remedy this disenfranchisement and hold states and chief election officials accountable.

### **The bill would specifically:**

- Mandate that no later than 60 days before each federal election, states make public and submit for public comments and to the independent, bipartisan U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) a written plan describing the measures they are implementing to ensure equitable waiting times for all voters and specifically waiting times of less than 30 minutes at all polling places in the election;
- Direct the EAC to issue a public report following each federal election on the states they reviewed and the decision on whether to issue a remedial plan to states, and provide additional funding to the EAC to implement these new requirements.
- Require any jurisdiction to comply with a state remedial plan when the EAC determines that a substantial number of voters waited more than 60 minutes. The remedial plan will provide for the effective allocation of resources to administer elections and to reduce waiting times;
- Provide for the use of emergency ballots, in all languages that are available for other ballots and that list the names of candidates for federal office, at a location where there is a failure of voting equipment or other circumstance at a polling place that causes an unreasonable delay;
- Establish a private right of action for voters who experience unreasonably long lines in a federal election. Voters are entitled to collect civil penalties from the state based on the length of their waiting time, starting at \$50 for a wait longer than 30 minutes and then an additional \$50 for every hour thereafter. In addition, voters can collect reasonable attorney fees, including litigation expenses, and costs. If the court determines that the long lines were due to an intentional action to suppress votes or made with reckless disregard of the requirements governing state implementation plans, the civil penalty assessed is increased to \$650 for a wait longer than 30 minutes and then an additional \$150 for every hour thereafter;
- Direct each state to provide for the minimum required number of voting systems, poll workers, and other election resources for each voting site on the day of any federal election and on any early voting days for that same election;
- Appropriate funding of \$500 million to the states to prevent unreasonable voter wait times;
- Require the Attorney General in coordination with the EAC to establish guidance regarding the minimum number of voting systems, poll workers, and other election resources required at polling locations for federal elections; and
- Prohibit a chief state election official from taking an active part in political management or in a political campaign with respect to any election for federal office over which such official has supervisory authority.