



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, July 21, 2024

Protect and Expand Voting Rights

“To make it hard, to make it difficult – almost impossible – for people to cast a vote is not in keeping with the democratic process.” — Congressman John Lewis, interview with *The Atlantic*, 2012

“July 17th marked the fourth anniversary of the death of civil rights legend Congressman John Lewis. To honor him, pro-democracy groups around the country hosted days of action in support of current bills before the U.S. Congress that ... if passed, would protect and expand voting rights for all eligible Americans.

The [Freedom to Vote Act](#) creates baseline national standards for voting access, which would effectively overrule restrictive state laws, while the [John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act](#) seeks to restore voting rights protections in states with histories of voter suppression against Black citizens. Both bills passed the House of Representatives in the last Congress but couldn't get by the filibuster in the Senate. Both bills have been introduced again in the current Congress but have not made it out of committees.

The [Washington, D.C. Admission Act](#) is designed to make the city a commonwealth on equal footing with other commonwealths and states, with full representation in the U.S. Congress. Currently, residents have a non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives and no representation in the Senate.

The [Native American Voting Rights Act](#) improves access to voter registration, polling places, and drop boxes in Indian Country; mandates the acceptance of tribally or federally issued IDs where IDs are required; and provides culturally appropriate language assistance, among other provisions.” (Sisters of Mercy, *Mercy Justice Team*, 7/8/24)

Voting rights in PA: HB 1776

Efforts to discontinue partisan gerrymandering of district maps to ensure fair representation for PA citizens have been occurring statewide for 7 years. Fair Districts PA is one of the organizations leading this effort. A new bill, HB 1776, **amends the constitution to allow for an independent redistricting commission to end gerrymandering in our state**. As of April, HB 1776 had 29 co-sponsors in the PA House of Representatives. Activity on HB 1776 is expected in 2025.

On May 23, the US Supreme Court released [an opinion](#) that in effect endorsed partisan gerrymandering. However, the PA Supreme Court found partisan gerrymandering to be unlawful based on the PA Constitution (Article 1, Section 5) that promises free and equal elections with fair and equal representation.

“All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community.” (Catholic Social Teaching Principle)

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at socialjustice@holycrossphl.org.