



# **Durbin, Duckworth Join Colleagues to Int**

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today joined Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and six of their Democratic colleagues to introduce the *Voter Empowerment Act*. This legislation would help protect the voting

rights of people across the country by ensuring equal access to the ballot for every eligible voter, modernizing voter registration, and helping to eliminate deceptive practices that deter people from voting. Companion legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives by U.S. Representative John Lewis (D-GA-05).

“In 2013, the Supreme Court dealt a devastating blow to American democracy with its decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*. That decision was issued amid a flurry of discriminatory state laws passed by Republican legislatures around the country that made it more difficult for elderly, minority, low-income, and disabled voters to cast a ballot,” said Durbin. “Disenfranchisement may no longer take the form of poll taxes and literacy tests, but make no mistake, it is still a sinister threat to our most fundamental rights. I’m proud to join Senator Gillibrand and Congressman Lewis to introduce this critical legislation.”

“The right to vote is a founding tenet of our democracy, but far too many Americans face discrimination and unnecessary barriers when it comes to casting their ballot,” said Duckworth. “This legislation will make it easier, not harder, for every American to vote and it will bolster the democratic systems that are crucial to the strength of our nation.”

With some states implementing or planning to implement new barriers for voters, the *Voter Empowerment Act* would take a comprehensive approach to close the gaps in voting access and ensure that every American can participate in the electoral process.

Specifically, the *Voter Empowerment Act* would do the following:

#### Ensure Access to the Ballot

- Modernize the voter registration system;
- Ensure access to online voter registration;
- Ensure ballots are counted from Americans serving in the military or overseas;
- Allow same day registration;
- Notify voters when voting changes are made;
- Encourage youth to become voters;
- Assist voters with disabilities; and
- Restore rehabilitated citizens’ right to vote.

#### Preserve Integrity in Voting Systems

- Provide informed and reliable poll workers;
- Count all provisional ballots;
- Prohibit voter caging; and,
- Protect voters from deceptive practices and intimidation.

## Demand Accountability in Election Administration

- Create a national voter hotline;
- Ensure votes are counted correctly; and,
- Reauthorize the Election Assistance Commission.