

# Sen. Dick Durbin Opening Statement At 'Jim Crow 2021' Hearing Voting Rights In America

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, today delivered his opening statement during the “Jim Crow 2021: The Latest Assault on the Right to Vote” hearing. Durbin highlighted America’s long history of voter suppression laws that states have passed to disenfranchise Americans of color. He also slammed Georgia’s new voting restrictions, which will make it harder for Georgians of color to vote, and criticized the provisions included in the new law that will reduce the number of drop boxes available to voters in the Atlanta area, restrict access to and implement strict voter ID requirements for absentee ballots, and make it a criminal offense to provide food or water to voters waiting in line to cast a ballot.

Durbin called on Congress to take steps to protect the right to vote, such as passing the [\*John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act\*](#), and enshrining an affirmative right to vote in the United States Constitution.

Key Durbin comments:

“Since our nation’s founding, there has been an intractable conflict between champions of democracy and defenders of white supremacy.”

“Many of the most egregious voter suppression tactics were outlawed by civil rights legislation in the 1960s. But the insidious effort to suppress the rights of voters of color has evolved and continued—most recently through a scourge of voter suppression laws introduced in state capitols across America.”

“Just this year, more than 360 bills with restrictive voting provisions have been introduced in 47 states. These new pieces of legislation may not involve literacy tests, or counting the number of jelly beans in a jar, like the original Jim Crow. But make no mistake: they are a deliberate effort to suppress voters of color.”

“It wasn’t long ago that an American could be barred from voting for failing to guess the number of jelly beans in a jar. Now, they might be not be able to vote because they are stuck in a lengthy line on a hot day—and they can’t even receive a drink of water from a good Samaritan.”

“But President Trump’s own officials at the Department of Homeland Security declared that the 2020 election was the most secure election in American history. Some of my colleagues on this committee were on the same ballot as President Trump – and they’re willing to accept the results that showed their reelections as valid. So, if our elections

are secure, these laws really aren't about 'integrity.' What is the problem that lawmakers in Georgia are hoping to address with the new law? The problem is obvious: too many voters are showing up."

"In our Republic, politicians don't choose our voters. The voters choose us. We ought to enact legislation that makes it as easy as possible to vote, while ensuring our elections are safe and secure. There are a number of steps Congress can take to advance this goal – like the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, and enshrining an affirmative right to vote in the United States Constitution."

"One of my heroes, and friends, our former colleague, John Lewis said, 'The vote is precious. It is almost sacred. It is the most powerful non-violent tool in a democracy.' Recent efforts to prevent Americans from participating in our democracy remind us of how much work remains to protect this precious, almost sacred right."