



January 19, 2026

### **Statement in Support of the Vermont Voting Rights Act**

Today, [RepresentWomen](#) — a national, nonpartisan nonprofit that has spent more than a decade tracking the systems and structural levers that increase women's representation in elected office — is expressing its support for a Vermont Voting Rights Act. State voting rights advance RepresentWomen's mission to increase women's representation in elected office by addressing the systemic barriers that prevent fair participation and representation, particularly for women of color and other historically excluded communities.

For nearly 60 years, the federal Voting Rights Act has served as a cornerstone of representative democracy, ensuring that communities, regardless of race or background, have fair opportunity to elect candidates who reflect their interests and lived experiences. That promise of fair representation has never been automatic; it has required vigilant enforcement and sustained commitment. Today, those protections face unprecedented challenges, placing increased responsibility on the states to uphold and strengthen voting rights through state-level Voting Rights Acts. These laws play a critical role in safeguarding against vote dilution and ensuring that democratic systems function as intended.

From RepresentWomen's research, one conclusion is clear: [voting rights protections and representation outcomes are deeply interconnected](#). When safeguards against discrimination and vote dilution are strong, women — particularly women of color — are better positioned not only to participate as voters, but to emerge as candidates and leaders. When those protections are weakened, the effects ripple beyond the ballot box, narrowing how one can compete for power and whose voices are heard in governing institutions. Women whose leadership has long sustained civic life are too often to be the first to be excluded when democratic systems fail.

State Voting Rights Acts help address these structural barriers by providing meaningful tools to challenge discriminatory practices and by enabling remedies that expand, rather than restrict, opportunity. RepresentWomen's research shows that remedies to voting rights violations that address underlying systems, including [proportional voting structures](#), are among the most effective approaches to improving representation



outcomes. In jurisdictions where such remedies have been implemented, governing bodies have become more reflective of the communities they serve, strengthening democratic legitimacy and accountability.

Portland, Oregon offers one example of this impact. Following the adoption of the council expansion alongside [proportional ranked choice voting](#) as a remedy, women now hold half of all city council seats, and [four of the six women elected are women of color](#), making it the most representative council in the city's history. These outcomes demonstrate what becomes possible when voting rights protections are paired with systems designed to prevent vote dilution and foster fair representation.

The Voting Rights Act was the product of generations of organizing, sacrifice, and courage — particularly by Black women whose leadership has long been the backbone of democratic progress. Protecting and strengthening its promise at the state level honors that legacy while ensuring that democracy continues to evolve toward greater inclusion and representation.

By advancing a Vermont Voting Rights Act, the state has the opportunity to reaffirm the right to vote is inseparable from the right to be represented.

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