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House Committee on the Judiciary
United States House
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the National Education Association who work in 14,000 communities across the nation, thank you for holding this markup of the Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2019 (H.R. 4). We urge you to VOTE YES on the Voting Rights Advancement Act, which we believe combats voter discrimination and protects the most fundamental right in our democracy. Votes on this issue may be included in NEA's Report Card for the 116th Congress.

The U.S. Supreme Court in *Shelby v. Holder* invalidated a crucial provision in the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that prevented states with a history of discriminating against voters from changing their voting laws and practices without preclearance by federal officials. This federal review was an important feature of the Voting Rights Act; doing away with it has virtually annulled the federal oversight that was—and remains—crucial to ensuring that millions of people have equal access to the ballot box. After the 2013 *Shelby* decision, several states changed their voting practices in controversial ways that created barriers for people of color, low-income people, transgender people, college students, the elderly, and those with disabilities. The Voting Rights Advancement Act takes several steps toward reversing this harmful, undemocratic trend, including:

- Modernizing the Voting Rights Act so that preclearance covers states and localities with a pattern of discrimination;
- Requiring jurisdictions to publicly disclose, 180 days before an election, all voting changes; and
- Authorizing the Attorney General, either on Election Day or during early voting, to send federal observers to any jurisdiction where there is a substantial risk of discrimination at the polls.

NEA members live, work, and vote in every precinct, county, and congressional district in the United States. They take their obligation to vote seriously because it is essential to protecting the opportunities that they believe all students should have. Furthermore, educators teach students that voting is a responsibility of citizenship, a privilege for which many people have fought and died. We urge you to VOTE yes on the Voting Rights Advancement Act, and to support legislation to expand voter registration, safeguard our elections, and restore voting rights for people with past criminal convictions—important steps to ensure that all have a voice in our society.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association