S 1659

Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2015

Congress: 114 (2015–2017, Ended)
Chamber: Senate
Policy Area: Government Operations and Politics
Introduced: Jun 24, 2015
Current Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. (Sponsor introductory remarks on measure:
Latest Action: Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. (Sponsor introductory remarks on measure: CR S4604-4606) (Jun 24, 2015)
Official Text: https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1659

Sponsor

Name: Sen. Leahy, Patrick J. [D-VT]
Party: Democratic • **State:** VT • **Chamber:** Senate

Cosponsors (45 total)

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Sen. Reid, Harry [D-NV]	D · NV		Jun 24, 2015
Sen. Sanders, Bernard [I-VT]	I · VT		Jun 24, 2015
Sen. Schumer, Charles E. [D-NY]	D · NY		Jun 24, 2015
Sen. Shaheen, Jeanne [D-NH]	D · NH		Jun 24, 2015
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Sen. Warner, Mark R. [D-VA]	D · VA		Jun 24, 2015
Sen. Warren, Elizabeth [D-MA]	D · MA		Jun 24, 2015
Sen. Whitehouse, Sheldon [D-RI]	D · RI		Jun 24, 2015
Sen. Wyden, Ron [D-OR]	D · OR		Jun 24, 2015
Sen. Menendez, Robert [D-NJ]	D · NJ		Jun 25, 2015
Sen. Cardin, Benjamin L. [D-MD]	D · MD		Jul 7, 2015
Sen. McCaskill, Claire [D-MO]	D · MO		Jul 23, 2015
Sen. Peters, Gary C. [D-MI]	D · MI		Jul 29, 2015
Sen. Heitkamp, Heidi [D-ND]	D · ND		Aug 4, 2015
Sen. Hirono, Mazie K. [D-HI]	D · HI		Aug 4, 2015
Sen. Reed, Jack [D-RI]	D · RI		Aug 4, 2015
Sen. Bennet, Michael F. [D-CO]	D · CO		Aug 5, 2015
Sen. Markey, Edward J. [D-MA]	D · MA		Sep 8, 2015
Sen. Murkowski, Lisa [R-AK]	R · AK		Sep 9, 2015
Sen. Murphy, Christopher [D-CT]	D · CT		Sep 16, 2015
Sen. Heinrich, Martin [D-NM]	D · NM		Sep 21, 2015
Sen. Mikulski, Barbara A. [D-MD]	D · MD		Oct 5, 2015
Sen. Cantwell, Maria [D-WA]	D · WA		Oct 6, 2015
Sen. Schatz, Brian [D-HI]	D · HI		Oct 6, 2015
Sen. Udall, Tom [D-NM]	D · NM		Oct 29, 2015
Sen. Tester, Jon [D-MT]	D · MT		Nov 9, 2015
Sen. Carper, Thomas R. [D-DE]	D · DE		Dec 10, 2015

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Sen. Boxer, Barbara [D-CA]	D · CA		Mar 2, 2016
Sen. Donnelly, Joe [D-IN]	D · IN		Apr 5, 2016
Sen. King, Angus S., Jr. [I-ME]	I · ME		Apr 20, 2016
Sen. Nelson, Bill [D-FL]	D · FL		Jun 7, 2016

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Judiciary Committee	Senate	Referred To	Jun 24, 2015

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

Government Operations and Politics

Related Bills

Bill	Relationship	Last Action
114 HR 2867	Identical bill	**Jun 15, 2016:** Motion to Discharge Committee filed by Mr. Aguilar. Petition No: 114-4. (Discharge petition text with signatures.)

Summary (as of Jun 24, 2015)

Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2015

This bill amends the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to allow a representative official of an Indian tribe, with authorization from the governing body of the tribe, to request one or more polling places to be located on tribal lands. The state or political subdivision shall provide each requested polling place at no expense to the Indian tribe if certain criteria are met.

A federal court shall retain jurisdiction to enforce constitutional voting guarantees, but also certain violations of the Act as well as of any federal prohibition against discrimination on the basis of race, color, or membership in a language minority group, for an appropriate period to prevent commencement of new devices to deny or abridge the right to vote.

Requirements are revised for determining which states and political subdivisions are or are not covered by criteria for declaratory judgments that they have not used devices to deny or abridge the right to vote.

Any state (and all of its political subdivisions) shall be subject to such requirements for a 10-year period if:

- 15 or more voting rights violations occurred there during the previous 25 years; or
- 10 or more violations occurred during the previous 25 years, at least one of which was committed by the state itself (as opposed to a political subdivision within it).

Any specific political subdivision of a state shall also be subject to those requirements for a 10-year period if 3 or more violations occurred in it during the previous 25 calendar years.

A state or political subdivision that obtains a declaratory judgment that it has not used a device to deny or abridge the right to vote shall be exempt from such requirements unless new violations occur after the declaratory judgment was issued.

Each state and each political subdivision shall: (1) identify any newly enacted or adopted law, regulation, or policy that includes a voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or a voting-related standard, practice, or procedure (covered practice); and (2) ensure that no such covered practice is implemented unless or until the state or political subdivision complies with certain preclearance requirements.

This bill prescribes transparency requirements, including reasonable public notice, regarding any changes to: (1) voting prerequisites, standards, or procedures; (2) polling place resources; or (3) demographics and electoral districts.

Department of Justice authority to assign observers receives new extensions, including authority to assign observers to enforce bilingual election requirements.

Courts shall grant preliminary injunctive relief if a complainant raises a serious question whether the challenged covered practice violates the Act or the Constitution and, on balance, the hardship imposed upon the defendant by the relief will be less than the hardship on the plaintiff if the relief were not granted.

Actions Timeline

- **Jun 24, 2015:** Introduced in Senate
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