

TULCHIN RESEARCH

To: Southern Poverty Law Center

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IRE: Recent National Polling Finds Strong Support for Securing Right to Vote and Strengthening American Democracy

With the [U.S. House of Representatives passing sweeping voting rights reforms under H.R. 1](#) that are currently under [debate in the U.S. Senate](#), Tulchin Research was recently asked to conduct a national survey on behalf of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) to gauge public opinion toward H.R. 1 and other national voting reforms under consideration. The results from this research, conducted among 1,000 registered voters nationwide, are encouraging for advocates of strengthening democracy and expanding safe, easy, and equal access to voting. Below we describe the key findings.

Voters Utilized a Diverse Set of Voting Methods in 2020 and Strongly Prefer Maintaining these Options

With the pandemic taking center stage in the 2020 election and resulting in significant changes to how voters can vote, voters report utilizing a wide array of methods to exercise their right to vote in the 2020 election. Three key methods of voting were most widely cited by voters who cast a ballot in the 2020 general election – voting by mail led the way (30% reported voting by mail in the 2020 election) followed by similar numbers of voters who say they voted in-person on election day (27%) and who voted in-person early before election day (26%). Use of voting at a drop-off box (10%) as well as in-person absentee voting before election day (8%) were also options voters report using, but to a lesser degree.

Voters Cite an Array of Voting Methods Used in 2020

Thinking about the 2020 election this past November for President, Congress and other offices, how did you cast your ballot?

	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>WHITE</u>	<u>BLACK</u>	<u>LATINO</u>
In-person early before Election Day	26%	25%	32%	27%
In-person absentee before Election Day	8%	7%	11%	9%
In-person on Election Day	27%	27%	29%	24%
By drop-off box	10%	11%	7%	8%
By mail	30%	29%	20%	32%

The survey also finds that voters overwhelmingly prefer to continue using the voting method they used in the 2020 election (80% prefer to use that method in the future).



Voters Strongly Support National Voting Standards and H.R. 1 Specific Reforms

The survey asked voters about standardizing national voting methods, including voter registration and voting methods that are currently determined by each state. The survey finds two-thirds of voters (67% total support, 38% strongly support) support “enacting a federal law to establish nationwide baseline standards for voting registration and methods” while less than a quarter of voters (21%) oppose this effort and another 12% are undecided.

Support for National Standards for Voting Registration and Methods

Current federal law provides independence to states for developing and enforcing their own voting laws, including methods of registering to vote, determining election dates and voting itself. This is why some states have no form of in-person early voting, some have runoff elections, and some ban citizens with a felony conviction from voting for life while others restore their voting rights after they've served their time in prison.

Having heard this, would you say you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose enacting a federal law to establish nationwide baseline standards for voting registration and methods?

	<u>TOTAL</u>
Strongly support	38%
Somewhat support	29%
Somewhat oppose	9%
Strongly oppose	12%
DON'T KNOW	12%
 Total Support	67%
Total Oppose	21%
Support – Oppose	+46

The survey also finds similarly strong support for the specific legislation recently passed in the U.S. House of Representatives that addresses voting rights (H.R.1), known as the “For the People Act”, that is still subject to changes in the [U.S. Senate Committee on Rules & Administration on May 11](#). The legislation aims to “create baseline national standards for voting access and fairness” to increase transparency and fairness in how Congressional and legislative district lines are drawn, report how sources of money in politics are reported, prevent foreign interference in our electoral process and strengthen government ethics rules. The legislation carries broad support nationally (67% total support, 38% strongly support) while just 17% of voters oppose this legislation and another 16% are undecided.

Support for H.R. 1 Voting Reforms

As you may know, the U.S. House of Representatives recently passed legislation called H.R. 1 or the “For the People Act.”

This legislation creates baseline national standards for voting access and fairness. It aims to increase transparency and fairness in how Congressional and legislative district lines are drawn and sources of money in politics, increases safeguards against foreign interference in our electoral process and strengthens government ethics rules, among other reforms.

Having heard this, would you say you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose this legislation?

	<u>TOTAL</u>
Strongly support	38%
Somewhat support	29%
Somewhat oppose	6%
Strongly oppose	11%
DON'T KNOW	16%
 Total Support	67%
Total Oppose	17%
Support – Oppose	+50

Voters Strongly Support Key Elements of H.R. 1 Legislation

The survey also tested several specific elements of H.R. 1 and found strong support for nearly all of them. Among a myriad of elements in the survey, ensuring that there are enough voting locations so wait times never exceed 30 minutes (85% total support, 49% strongly support), ensuring voting access to voters with disabilities (82% total support, 56% strongly support), placing secure drop-boxes in every voting precinct (70% total support, 42% strongly support), placing voter registration centers on high school and college campuses (69% total support, 35% strongly support), preventing states from removing eligible registered voters from voting rolls (69% total support, 41% strongly support) and guaranteeing voters in every state at least two weeks of early voting access (67% total support, 39% strongly support) round out the most popular elements of the legislation in an isolated setting.

H.R. 1 Reform Elements

Here is a list of some specific proposals some have made to help make elections and voting more accessible for eligible voters. Please indicate whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each one?

	Strong Support	Total Support	Total Oppose
<i>Ensure that there are enough voting locations so wait times to vote are never greater than 30 minutes</i>	49%	85%	9%
<i>Ensure that every voting option is accessible to voters with disabilities, including polling places, absentee ballots, and drop boxes</i>	56%	82%	9%
<i>Place secure drop-off boxes in every voting precinct for voters to return their ballots in</i>	42%	70%	21%
<i>Place voter registration centers on high school and college campuses</i>	35%	69%	20%
<i>Prevent states from improperly removing eligible registered voters from the voter rolls because they have failed to vote</i>	41%	69%	20%
<i>Guarantee voters in every state at least two weeks of early voting for federal elections, including options to vote on weekends and using drop-off boxes</i>	39%	67%	23%

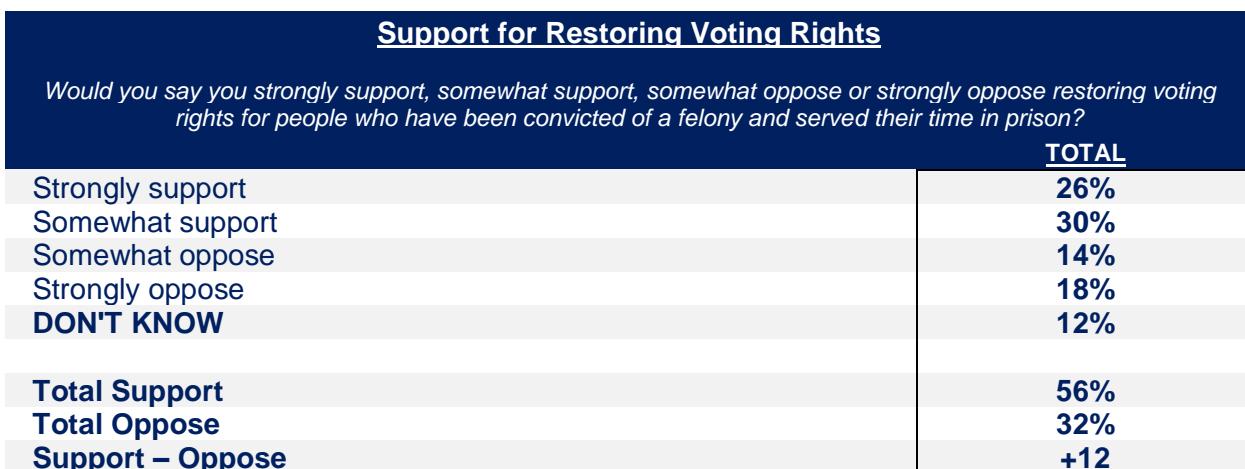
Voters Strongly Support Independent Redistricting Commissions

Furthermore, there is strong support for changing how redistricting is done in most states and taking that power away from politicians. Notably, nearly three quarters of voters agree (72% total agree, 40% strongly agree) that “our Congressional and legislative districts for elected office, including U.S. House and state legislative districts, should be determined by a local non-partisan, independent commission, not by the politicians representing these offices so they can draw lines that give them an advantage.” Conversely, just one in ten voters (11%) disagree with this statement while 17% are undecided.



Voters Support Restoring Voting Rights to People Who Complete Felony Convictions

This survey reveals solid support among voters for restoring the voting rights of individuals who have been convicted of a felony and served their time in prison. Currently, a solid majority of voters (56%) say they support restoring the voting rights “for people who have been convicted of a felony and served their time in prison”, including one-in-four voters who say they strongly support doing so. Conversely, only 32% of voters oppose restoring these voting rights while another 12% are unsure.



Voters Support Majority Rule for Passing Legislation in the United States Senate

Finally, as the debate about the utility of maintaining the filibuster in the U.S. Senate carries on, specifically the necessary vote threshold for passing a bill in the Senate, a majority of voters agree that “a simple majority of Senators should be required to pass any bill in the U.S. Senate” (55% total agree, 26% strongly agree). Conversely, just 28 percent of voters disagree with that statement and 17 percent of voters are undecided.

Agreement on Senate Vote Threshold

Please indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements.

“A simple majority of Senators should be required to pass any bill in the U.S. Senate.”

Total Agree	55%
Strongly Agree	26%
Somewhat Agree	28%
Total Disagree	28%
Strongly Disagree	16%
Somewhat Disagree	13%
Undecided	17%
Agree - Disagree	+26

Conclusion

In conclusion, voters have a strong appetite for voting reforms in general and strongly support specific voting reform legislation as proposed in H.R. 1. There is even greater support for some of the key elements included in the legislation, including limiting wait times, broadening voter access, putting an end to purging voter rolls and ensuring Congressional and legislative district lines are drawn fairly. A strong majority of voters also agree that the voting threshold to pass a bill in the U.S. Senate should be lowered. Members of Congress should be mindful of these sentiments among the voters they represent as they consider such reforms.

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Survey Methodology: From March 30 – April 3, 2021, Tulchin Research conducted an online survey among 1,000 registered voters nationwide. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.1%.