



**THE CORE OF THE FIGHT:  
THE CONTINUED STRUGGLE FOR  
EQUAL VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA**

**Stacey Abrams**

# Modern-day voter suppression has swapped rabid dogs and cops with billy clubs for restrictive voter ID and tangled rules for participation.

Across America, would-be voters, like my own grandmother, continue to turn away or opt out of the system.

Their fear is again and again made real by stories of neighbors denied provisional ballots or lines that wind around city blocks because voting machines lack electrical cords.

The mechanisms of voter suppression have transformed access to democracy in ways that continue to reshape not only our partisan politics but the way we live our daily lives. In 2020, a poor woman in South Georgia, miles away from a doctor or a hospital, may discover her pregnancy too late to make a choice. If she makes more than \$6,000 per year, she is too rich to qualify for Medicaid and too impoverished to afford anything else because the governor refuses to expand the program. If she is black in Georgia, she is three times more likely to die of complications during or after her pregnancy than a white woman in the same position. Her child is more likely to attend underfunded schools, face a return to “tough on crime” policies that target black and brown people, and live in a state with a minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour. All because her vote didn’t count in 2018.

In 2018, I ran for governor of Georgia, with the goal of building a new coalition of voters to change the electorate. In response, Donald Trump tweeted nasty words at me. Tucker Carlson ranted about me. Breitbart and Fox News called me a liar. My cardinal sin is that I have refused to concede the outcome of the 2018 gubernatorial contest, and I have made a crusade of calling out and defeating voter suppression. I do so as a private citizen, and this reality greets me every day. As I have traveled the country in the months since the election, I typically begin my speeches the same way. "I am not the governor of Georgia," I tell the assembled crowds, to boos and hisses of support. Then I declare with equal conviction a truth I hold deep in my heart: "We won."

In our campaign, we increased turnout to record numbers, engaged voters who never engaged before, and forced the closest election in Georgia since 1966. As I traveled the state for eighteen months, running for governor, I met skeptical Americans who neither trusted government nor believed their votes counted. But 1.9 million voters showed up for me on Election Day, the highest number of Democratic votes in Georgia history. We won because people trusted, if only for a single election, that it was worth a leap of faith. In political circles, what we accomplished would be dismissed as a moral victory. To that, I say, absolutely. Because I learned long ago that winning doesn't always mean you get the prize. Sometimes you get progress, and that counts. This lesson has been drummed into me for most of my waking life. When it comes to voting in America, I certainly believe.

Civil rights icon Congressman John Lewis often refers to the right to vote as "almost sacred." As the child of ministers, I understand his hesitation to label a simple, secular act as sacred. Voting is an act of faith. It is profound. In a democracy, it is the ultimate power. Through the vote, the poor can access financial means, the infirm can find health care supports, and the burdened and heavy-laden can receive a measure of relief from a social safety net that serves all. And we are willing to go to war to defend the sacred.

I am not calling for violent revolt here. We've done that twice in our nation's history—to claim our freedom from tyranny and when we fought a civil war to recognize (at least a little) the humanity of blacks held in bondage. Yet, as millions are stripped of their rights, we live out the policy consequences, from lethal pollution running through poor communities to kindergartners practicing active shooter drills taught with nursery rhymes. I question what remedy remains. The questions that confront me every day are how to defend this sacred right and our democracy, and who will do so. As it stands now, on one side, we have a Republican Party in power that believes that it has complied with the letter of the law, having twisted the rules to barely reflect its spirit. On the other hand, the Democrats—the party to which I hold allegiance—talk about full civic engagement but take inconsistent steps to meaningfully expand the electorate and build infrastructure. Embedded in this duality is a fundamental concern: Who is entitled to full citizenship? Based on our national story, and from where we stand now, the list is far shorter than it should be.

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Full citizenship rights are the bare minimum one should expect from the government. Yet, for two-thirds of our history, full citizenship was denied to those who built this country from theory to life. African slaves and Chinese workers and Native American environmentalists and Latino gauchos and Irish farmers—and half the population: women.

Over the course of our history, these men and women, these patriots and defenders of liberty, have been denied the most profound currency of citizenship: power. Because, let's be honest, that is the core of this fight. The right to be seen, the right to be heard, the right to direct the course of history are markers of power. In the United States, democracy makes politics one of the key levers to exercising power. So, it should shock none of us that the struggle for dominion over our nation's future and who will participate is simply a battle for American power.

Right now, we are experiencing a massive cultural change, spurred by a demographic transition sweeping the nation. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people of color comprise nearly 40 percent of the U.S. population; and millennials and Gen Z are the largest combined age cohort in the country. When added to socially moderate and progressive-leaning whites, this population is a New American Majority, and their impact on American life can be felt in nearly every corner. Diversity, which we can admit is an incomplete descriptor of this transformation, has altered how we engage and interact, from the Black Lives Matter movement to marriage equality to Dreamers pressing for action on immigration to women challenging the silence of sexual harassment and assault.

We can also trace a darker, angrier politics to this evolution, including a resurgence of neo-Nazi rhetoric in the open, domestic terrorism against black, Jewish, Latino, and LGBTQ+ groups, a xenophobic response to immigration, rising religious intolerance, and a retrenchment of hyperconservative ideology. Those who see their relative influence shrinking are using every tool possible to limit access to political power. For those who cling to the days of monochromatic American identity, the sweep of change strikes a fundamental fear of not being a part of an America that is multicultural and multicolored. In their minds, the way of life that has sustained them faces an existential crisis, and the response has been vicious, calculated, and effective.

However, they are not using new tools. At its inception, our nation served as a refuge to those whose difference placed them in danger; but the same newcomers stole land from and murdered the original inhabitants, enslaved blacks and stripped them of their humanity, and denied basic rights to women and nonwhites from abroad. This history means we understand what is at stake, how our opponents will try to block change, and, most important, our obligation to realize our destiny.

At its core, America's challenge is a question of who we are. Some on the right will dismiss this as absurd identity politics, but identity is politics. Choices are based on personal needs—end of story. Yet so much of today's politics require mollifying people terrified of this basic fact. A multiracial, multiethnic, youth-driven majority has grown over the last twenty years; and as a result, we've seen nothing less than a sea change toward progress.

There's a famous psychology test of situational awareness, where the subject is told to count how many times a certain action is performed. The viewer instinctively focuses on the task so intently, he invariably misses a glaring oddity: a person in a gorilla suit crossing through his field of vision. As Americans, we have become accustomed to a fundamental belief in the inevitability that we'll get it right in time: that from bigotry to poverty to the planet's very sustainability, eventually, we will make the right choice. This confidence in the American experiment has welded together a disparate group of folks, driven by conflicting desires and intersectional needs. But our belief in the resilience of our national narrative has been so complete that we've missed the Invisible Gorilla in our existing political system: those at risk of losing power—that powerful minority—have changed the rules of the game. Again.

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As the first black woman ever to win a primary for governor for a major political party in American history, one who ran against one of the worst purveyors of voter suppression and xenophobia since George Wallace, I watched in real time as the conflicts in our evolving nation became fodder for racist commercials, horrific suppression—and the largest turnout of voters of color in Georgia’s history. Because, despite the final tally of the election, our campaign energized this New American Majority in tremendous ways, proving the resilience and possibility of our national destiny. What excites me is not the litany of challenges to our body politic—although they must be explored and exposed—but the potential I saw in the tired eyes of an African American shift worker waiting in a four-hour line to cast a ballot of hope.

Our nation’s core narrative can be summed up in the disconnect between the Constitution’s pledge of equality and the rampant disregard for that ambition that has plagued the United States of America ever since. Though the Founding Fathers gave a nod to universal equality in the Declaration of Independence, they abandoned the aspiration by the time they penned the country’s organizing documents. Let me be clear here: the codification of racism and disenfranchisement is a feature of our lawmaking—not an oversight. And the original sin of the U.S. Constitution began by identifying blacks in America as three-fifths human: counting black bodies as property and their souls as nonexistent.

Voting rights are the most basic tenet of our democracy, and the bare minimum one should expect from the government. Our presidents can send our neighbors to war. Local elected officials decide the mundane questions of trash pickup and the weightier issues of hospital closures. At every level of our lives in this republic, we choose men and women to speak for us, yes, but also to determine the direction of our daily lives.

And all it takes is a teachers' strike or a government shutdown to remind us how vital elections can be to the daily rhythms of life.

Over the course of our history, the right to vote had to be purchased by blood and protest in each generation. The Revolutionary War included enslaved patriots and Native Americans who would be denied citizenship once the nation became official. The savagery of the Civil War had no clearer argument than whether blacks were property or human beings capable of self-governance. Even the suffrage movement tangled with complex issues of gender and race, where white women would benefit from obtaining suffrage while working to deny the same to the black women who helped power the movement.

But the right to vote is not simply a request for voice in the conduct of the affairs of state. People have sacrificed their lives in pursuit of the most profound currency of citizenship: power. Because, let's be honest, that is the core of this fight. Power is the right to be seen, the right to be heard, the right to direct the course of history and benefit from the future. In the United States, democracy makes politics one of the key levers to exercising power. Simply put, the struggle for dominion over our nation's future and who will participate is a battle royal for America's power, full stop.

However, the battle has long targeted the marginalized and the dispossessed, cordoning off the right to vote for a select group, from the beginning. In the first full year of our nation's founding, the Naturalization Act of 1790 passed to prevent anyone except former slaves and "free white persons" from becoming citizens. This targeted the Native Americans who had occupied the nation long before the Mayflower reached American shores.

Having dispatched with the potential of too many freed slaves by enshrining slavery into the founding documents, the U.S. Supreme Court cemented this position in *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857), deciding that blacks could not be considered American citizens and had no standing to challenge slavery.

Chief Justice Roger Taney wrote, “A negro, whose ancestors were imported into this country, and sold as slaves” was permanently disenfranchised because a black person inherently was “[not] a member of the political community formed and brought into existence by the Constitution.”

The notion of “political community” lay at the heart of this denunciation of black participation in American democracy, creating a private club where the only accepted members had to look and act the part. At the country’s inception, the Founding Fathers decided who would be deemed worthy of citizenship; and they used, as a measuring stick, the ability to maintain the class and power structure that had laid the foundation for their wealth and political dominance. Not surprisingly, only white men were granted such esteemed status. Dred Scott, in contrast, was an enslaved man who had been moved along with his wife and children into first Illinois and then the Wisconsin Territory. Under the laws of the time, Scott and his family were due to be freed because the slave owner had remained too long in a territory that did not allow slavery. Scott sued for his family’s emancipation; but Justice Taney, rather than reviewing the law, went to the fundamental question of whether Scott had the right to sue in a court of law, a perquisite of citizenship. Justice Taney rejected Scott’s bid for freedom because he did not see in Dred Scott the markers of privilege that would entitle him to redress. That is to say that because Scott was not a white male, one whom the Founding Fathers had deemed worthy of citizenship when the Constitution was written, Justice Taney and the majority

of the Supreme Court held that Scott and all descendants of African slavery were permanently barred from citizenship. Despite later decisions overturning Dred Scott's case, Justice Taney set a course for the intervening centuries to test our battle for voting rights. For Justice Taney and his ilk, only privileged white men had the constitutional rights of citizenship and the right to chart the course of the nation. From the mundane decision of taxation to the sale of human chattel, the Constitution envisioned the narrowest class of power brokers, and constraints on citizenship are the most effective means to filter out the interlopers.

What is so damning about Dred Scott is the absolute denial of citizenship—of participation in power—to an American who had every reason to believe he was entitled to the protection of membership. With the decision in Scott's case, states continued to deny the rights to citizenship. Slavery flourished until the Civil War, and even in the free states, blacks were allowed to be state citizens but had no say in federal laws or decision making. Each time the most effective marker of citizenship—the right to vote—is suppressed, there are echoes of Justice Taney's edict. Those who cannot vote have no say in the operation of government, which creates a permanent state of powerlessness.

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“They thought they could make an example out of me.” Talking to a reporter in 2019, Mayor Nancy Dennard described how then secretary of state Brian Kemp justified why she and eleven others faced 120 felony charges for winning an election in Southwest Georgia less than a decade earlier. Back then, Dr. Dennard was an African American speech pathologist who had run twice for the school board in Quitman, Georgia, to no avail. In white-majority Brooks County, where Quitman is the largest city, the public schools were predominantly black. Dr. Dennard worried that too few blacks held positions of leadership within the school system, and she ran for school board. First in 2004 and again in 2008, she ran and lost. But when a special election came up in 2009, she was ready.

After her first campaign, from hundreds of miles away, a Republican-controlled state government in Atlanta had eased the rules for absentee ballots—the ability to vote from home and mail in your choices. Historically, Republicans had utilized absentee ballots far more frequently than Democrats, so the decision made sense. But Dr. Dennard studied the rules and put them to use. She ran a stealth campaign to increase absentee ballots among black voters, and it worked. Dr. Dennard won a special election to the board, drawing the attention of local leaders and voters alike.

For the 2010 primary for other available school board seats, she recruited more black women to run, and she trained them and a committed group of organizers on the laws of absentee ballots. Once again, the strategy succeeded. A handful of black women got elected to the Brooks County School Board, and control of the board flipped from white majority to black majority. In a town described by some residents as Mayberry of *The Andy Griffith Show*, the Technicolor victories were hard to take.

Angered by the unexpected wins, a vanquished school board member, a suspicious postmaster, and the school board's attorney banded together to challenge the legitimacy of the new slate's electoral wins. First, they simply tried to undo the election. Dr. Dennard's allies had run for office during the Democratic primary because almost everyone in town ran as a Democrat. That should have ended the matter. In Georgia, candidates can run for office in a primary, but if they lose, they can't try to get on the ballot in the general election that same cycle. The prohibition is commonly referred to as the "sore loser" law. But the candidates who lost decided to go around the law and get a second shot in November. To Dennard's surprise, a local judge allowed the losing candidates to run again as independents. But the team was ready, and black turnout tripled—exceeding white turnout 1,461 to 1,259, and absentee ballots made the difference. The losers lost a second time.

Confounded by the success of the absentee ballot strategy and the second routing in a year, the rejected incumbents and their cronies reached out to Secretary Kemp. He responded aggressively to the false accusations of voter fraud, the only excuse opponents could come up with to explain their defeat. Black voters didn't vote absentee, and certainly not in Brooks County. Kemp, newly installed in his office, took up the cause of the losers and the conspiracy theories. He authorized the Georgia Bureau of Investigation—the state's version of the FBI—to pursue the matter on the department's behalf. Agents raided their homes and offices and arrested the duly elected school board members and their supporters. The governor removed them from office, and several lost their regular employment, their reputations smeared.

Years passed before their criminal trials commenced; and in the end, not a single person was convicted. No voter fraud had occurred, just clever use of a process rarely leveraged by black voters. But the damage was done, the goal accomplished: black voters had been punished for utilizing rules white voters had enjoyed for years. Access to the ballot had severe limits; and despite doing nothing wrong, the consequences of full engagement could be devastating.

The horrible tale of the Quitman 10 + 2 (so named due to the original ten organizers plus two additional supporters included in the indictments) illustrates a truism that extends far beyond Georgia. If a voter has survived the gauntlet of challenges to staying on the rolls, the next issue is the ability to access a ballot and vote. While Kemp's attack on the black voters of Quitman occurred before the gutting of the Voting Rights Act, his actions simply previewed what would follow. State legislators, secretaries of state, and governors—almost entirely Republican—returned to their greatest hits in voter suppression. Limits on absentee ballots and restrictive voter ID laws came first, followed by an increase in closed or consolidated precincts, reductions in early voting, vulnerable or inadequate equipment, and lax oversight of county application of state laws. Separately and together, these actions block voters from accessing the ballots that make voting real. In state after state, incompetence and malfeasance operates in tandem, and the sheer complexity of the nation's voting apparatus transforms voter suppression into a nearly seamless system.

These hurdles have had their desired effect of hampering voters, making it harder to cast a ballot. Federal court systems have aided bad state actors by allowing more and more rules to limit access or stop voters from getting a remedy. Where President Obama harnessed unlikely voters into an electoral phenomenon, states responded by

slashing when and how voting occurred and who could participate. Voting lines for black voters in the nation grew longer. Native Americans faced a nightmarish return to second-class citizenship in states where their votes could tip the balance of elections. Naturalized citizens had to sue for their newly secured rights, and organizations continue to fight for ballots and access in multiple languages. The disabled community found itself pitted against black voters in an attempt to justify limits to access. Moreover, across the country, where states neglected their elections infrastructure, the result has been vulnerable, sometimes inoperable machines that were inadequately distributed to communities.

In isolation, each of these examples is troubling, as it represents a voter who could not fully participate in the body politic. Combined, they demonstrate the disenfranchisement of American voters in general and the targeting of communities of color and other marginalized groups in particular. Ballot access is the second line of attack on our voting rights, and to defeat its malicious affect, we must understand how it operates.

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Right now, a war over numbers threatens to reshape the next decade of American life, and almost no one is paying attention. Stephanie Hofeller certainly never expected to be a key player in the fight. Estranged from her father, Thomas Hofeller, Stephanie had not spoken to him or seen him in several years. As she tells it, she only learned of his death by searching for him on the Web while her car idled in the parking lot of a convenience store. Stephanie then trekked from Kentucky to North Carolina to her mother's home. During her visit, her mom allowed her to take several files belonging to her dad, perhaps hoping it would spark a reconnection. Stephanie dutifully combed through the hard drives and thumb drives, finding family pictures and other memorabilia. But the images of kids and happier days shared data space with work product from his day job as a redistricting consultant for Republicans.

The banal term "redistricting" has been added to the general American political diet in recent years, but how and why it happens remains murky. Indeed, most people have never heard of the conservative Thomas Hofeller or his daughter, Stephanie, the political independent. Fewer have visited the website she set up, known as The Hofeller Files, where she has published thousands of pages and spreadsheets of her father's work despite legal threats and accusations of theft. The documents she uncovered in her father's records, compiled over several years, tell the story of how the GOP has fixed itself on a singular goal: aggregating and maintaining Republican dominance in state and federal politics regardless of the will of the people.

The grasp for power should surprise no one who pays attention to the nightly news, but the methodical and vicious nature of Hofeller's advice might. He served as a national guru on redistricting, the process by which congressional lines, state legislative districts, and local political maps are drawn. For the Republicans, he was a savant on the art of gerrymandering: twisting and turning those geographic lines into unbeatable political

districts for Republican candidates. In document after document, Hofeller taught a master class to lawmakers and lobbyists on how to use statistical data and legal tactics to block efforts to increase civic participation by people of color. He composed memos and reports on limiting the decennial count of nonwhite residents in the United States, as part of the nation's makeup.

In 2020, his work has increased in relevance, because since 2010, more Americans have learned the effect of gerrymandering on the composition of Congress and state legislatures. After three twentieth-century presidential elections where the winner lost the popular vote, a renewed discussion of the Electoral College rages on the internet and in small intellectual enclaves. But at the core of these debates, at the center of the maelstrom, is a single instrument of immense importance, one that shapes all the contours of power in America, and that's the U.S. census.

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The U.S. census typically gets attention in the weeks leading up to its start, and in the days before it ends. A few blips capture America's attention afterward, like the announcement of how fast a state has grown or how many people live here now. Knowing who is in the United States has been a constant part of our national identity from the beginning. The Constitution calls for a count of all persons residing in America every ten years, with the first census conducted in 1790. Article I, Section 2, dictates an "enumeration" of people, regardless of citizenship, and it lays out who counts and why. From the outset, unsurprisingly, the count had caveats. The three-fifths compromise allowed Southern states to undercount enslaved blacks for the purposes of the census. "Indians not taxed" were also excluded as part of the national calculus, relegating most Native Americans to invisibility. Over time, the rules have expanded to count each person residing in the states, including citizens, noncitizen legal residents, noncitizen long-term visitors, and undocumented immigrants. Short-term visitors are not counted, and neither are Americans living abroad who are not directly employed by the U.S. government, like military personnel and foreign service officers and their dependents. Who counts matters a great deal, and the accuracy of the process has been a source of controversy from the start.

More than a simple head count, the U.S. census steers more than a trillion dollars for critical services like health care and education, guides the drawing of lines for political districts and school zones, and informs businesses and employers about opportunities for economic development. No one is exempt from the impact of these decisions, yet in each iteration, certain populations remain hard to reach. The most undercounted groups are people of color, low-income persons, LGBTQ+ persons, young children, ethnic minorities, undocumented immigrants, renters, and those in rural areas.

Referred to collectively as hard-to-count, these populations comprise more and more of the American majority. This undercount costs communities economic access and reduces their political power a decade at a time, and who we understand as our national population influences every facet of public life and is wound inside nearly every mechanism of election administration. Overall, the census is a trove of rich, useful data that can assess where a hospital should be built or where a business might locate a factory. Researchers, scientists, and social justice advocates alike turn to it for guidance. I have referenced its statistics as a legislator to bolster an argument and as an entrepreneur when making a pitch. No one is immune to the reach of the census, whether they try to be or not. In the decade that follows the upcoming census, more than \$1.5 trillion will be allocated on an annual basis. Likewise, based on the numbers collected in 2020, political power will be distributed at nearly each level of government until 2030. But when it is corrupted by intent, or when efficiencies trump accuracy, the census becomes a weapon against the most vulnerable.

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I abhor the Electoral College, and I am not alone. Democratic candidates for the presidential nomination have called for its abolition. Editorials from the *Washington Post* and articles in the *Atlantic* decry its origins and its current purpose. The process is an antiquated, racist, and classist gerrymandering of the nation's elections. Proposed as a compromise between the slaveholding South and the classist North, the Electoral College has long skewed elections away from active engagement of the nation. At the time of its conception in 1787, the North and South had roughly equal populations, but in the North, more of the nation's inhabitants had the right to vote. Southern legislators wanted to count the bodies of slaves for political power but refused to recognize their humanity or grant them suffrage. In the North, leaders fretted about whether immigrants and the uneducated should have a voice in selecting the nation's chief executive. Mimicking what had become the three-fifths compromise for the treatment of blacks held as slaves, the Electoral College offered the South a version of what had been delivered for congressional seats: the benefit of a population count without the need to grant freedom to the enslaved.

Today, the use of the Electoral College continues to dramatically undermine the outcomes of elections. In the past twenty years, two presidents have been elected despite losing the popular vote: George W. Bush and Donald J. Trump. For blacks in the South, the terrible twisting of voter intent continues, and in areas where blacks comprise 25 percent of the population, five of the six states have voted against the will of Democratic-leaning black voters in the recent elections. Those voters have no chance of aggregating their will with like-minded voters across the fifty states because votes only count for the state where they live. Thus, although 80 to 90 percent of black voters tend to vote Democratic, until they all move to the same state, their votes will be drowned out in Republican states and amplified in Democratic ones.

For 75 percent of the country, candidates for the nation's top job do not bother to show up and campaign, narrowing their pitch and their obligations to the states considered relevant for the next four-year cycle. According to the National Popular Vote campaign, which is trying to undo the Electoral College, statistics show how few of us actually get to participate in the process. Nearly 70 percent of all the general-election campaign events in the 2016 presidential race occurred in six states and 94 percent took place in twelve states. The Electoral College was never designed to protect small states against the tyranny of larger states—not at its inception and not today. Instead, it served to protect slaveholders from a loss of power then and to advantage a small coterie of states deemed competitive today.

During my time in the legislature, I cosponsored a bill to include the state of Georgia in the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. The compact attempts to do through state legislation what would otherwise require a federal constitutional amendment. Under the system, each state agrees that all its electoral votes will be allocated to the winner of the popular vote, but the compact only takes effect once a sufficient number of states—comprising a majority of the electoral votes—agrees. As Georgia is one of the states long ignored by presidential contests, my Republican cosponsor and I moved the bill successfully through the state house on a bipartisan vote, but the bill died in the state senate. Later that year, Donald

Trump won the Electoral College vote while losing the popular vote by more than three million ballots cast.

Amending the U.S. Constitution is the cleanest way to eliminate the antiquated system that has recently allowed two presidents to take office against the expressed will of the people. Voters can lobby their representatives to introduce a constitutional amendment and pass it, but this is unlikely given the composition of Congress. The rules require a two-thirds vote in both the House and the Senate, which is a high hurdle. A two-thirds majority of states can vote for a constitutional convention, but if that were to happen, the entire constitution would be open to amendment.

**I propose that Congress should authorize the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, settling any concerns about whether it would be constitutional. More important, a federal signal from Congress may speed passage by states that have hesitated to agree. By doing so, voters will finally have the ability to vote directly for president without hoping the rest of their state agrees. 🇺🇸**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stacey Abrams is a *New York Times* bestselling author, serial entrepreneur, nonprofit CEO and political leader. After serving for eleven years in the Georgia House of Representatives, seven as Democratic Leader, Abrams became the Democratic nominee for Governor of Georgia in 2018, winning more votes than any other Democrat in the state's history.

In the wake of the 2018 election, Abrams launched Fair Fight Action and Fair Fight 2020 to defend voting rights. She also launched Fair Count to ensure accuracy in the 2020 Census and greater participation in civic engagement, and the Southern Economic Advancement Project, a public policy initiative to broaden economic power and build equity in the South.

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