

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051  
MINORITY (202) 225-5074  
<https://oversight.house.gov>

**MEMORANDUM**

**July 26, 2021**

**To: Members of the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**

**Fr: Subcommittee Staff**

**Re: Hearing on “Democracy in Danger: The Assault on Voting Rights in Texas”**

**On Thursday, July 29, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. E.T. in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building and remotely on the Zoom video platform**, the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties will hold a hybrid hearing on voter suppression efforts in Texas.

**I. HEARING PURPOSE**

In May 2021, Democratic state representatives in Texas blocked passage of a proposed elections overhaul bill by denying a quorum during the legislature’s regular session. On July 8, Texas Governor Greg Abbott convened a special session of the legislature to pass voting bills. In response, Democratic lawmakers left the state again to deny the legislature a quorum and came to Washington, D.C., to push for passage of the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.<sup>1</sup>

The Texas legislation would dramatically restrict ballot access for voters across the state. It specifically targets reforms enacted by officials in Harris County to expand voting rights during the pandemic, such as drive-thru voting and 24-hour voting.<sup>2</sup> These voting methods were used predominately by Black and Latino voters. Several other provisions would disproportionately affect communities of color, such as increased voter identification requirements for mail ballots; strict limits on voter assistance; and more stringent regulations on

---

<sup>1</sup> *Texas Democrats Flee State to Highlight G.O.P. Voting Restrictions*, New York Times (July 12, 2021) (online at [www.nytimes.com/2021/07/12/us/politics/texas-democrats-voting-bill.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/12/us/politics/texas-democrats-voting-bill.html)); *Texas Democrats to Spotlight National Voting Rights with Week of Events*, NBC News (July 18, 2021) (online at [www.nbcnews.com/politics/elections/texas-democrats-spotlight-national-voting-rights-week-events-n1274297](http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/elections/texas-democrats-spotlight-national-voting-rights-week-events-n1274297)).

<sup>2</sup> *In Texas, G.O.P. Voting Bills Zero in on Democratic Houston*, Associated Press (Apr. 15, 2021) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/politics-houston-voting-rights-crime-elections-0f9fc604f6daa4222e8009a1b0a1a995>).

how election officials can prevent voter intimidation by partisan poll watchers.<sup>3</sup> Texas has a long history of attempting to suppress Black and Latino voters; it has been judged the hardest state in which to cast a ballot.<sup>4</sup> The Texas legislation to restrict voting rights was drafted despite the fact that there was no widespread fraud in Texas elections last year.<sup>5</sup>

The hearing will examine the impact that these voting rights restrictions would have on communities of color and other vulnerable populations. It will also examine the urgent need for federal voting standards and for Congress to pass the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act to thwart these proposals and similar voter suppression efforts across the country.

## II. WITNESSES

### **The Honorable Senfronia Thompson**

Texas State Representative  
Member, Select Committee on Constitutional Rights and Remedies

### **The Honorable Nicole Collier**

Texas State Representative  
Chair, Texas Legislative Black Caucus

### **The Honorable Diego Bernal**

Texas State Representative  
Member, Mexican American Legislative Conference

### **Ms. Nina Perales**

Vice President of Litigation  
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

### ***Additional Witness to be determined***

Staff contacts: Candyce Phoenix and Jacob Glick at (202) 225-5051.

---

<sup>3</sup> *How the Texas Voting Bill Would Have Created Hurdles for Voters of Color*, Washington Post (May 31, 2021) (online at [www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/05/30/texas-voting-law/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/05/30/texas-voting-law/)); *What's in the New Voting Restriction Legislation Introduced in the Texas House and Senate*, Texas Tribune (July 8, 2021) (online at [www.texastribune.org/2021/07/08/texas-voting-bill-special-session/](http://www.texastribune.org/2021/07/08/texas-voting-bill-special-session/)).

<sup>4</sup> *See, e.g., Texas Closes Hundreds of Polling Sites, Making it Harder for Minorities to Vote*, The Guardian (Mar. 2, 2020) (online at [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/mar/02/texas-polling-sites-closures-voting](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/mar/02/texas-polling-sites-closures-voting)); Scot Schraufnagel et al., *Cost of Voting in the American States: 2020*, Election Law Journal (2020) (online at [www.liebertpub.com/doi/pdf/10.1089/elj.2020.0666](http://www.liebertpub.com/doi/pdf/10.1089/elj.2020.0666)).

<sup>5</sup> *Harris County Elections Were Fair and Secure, Task Force Finds*, Texas Tribune (Dec. 18, 2020) (online at [www.texastribune.org/2020/12/18/harris-county-elections-secure/](http://www.texastribune.org/2020/12/18/harris-county-elections-secure/)).