

Written by
Tuesday, 02 July 2013 11:18

WASHINGTON—U.S. Reps. Mark Pocan (D-WI) and Keith Ellison (D-MN), authors of the *Right to Vote Amendment* that would provide an affirmative constitutional right to vote for all Americans, issued the following statement after the Supreme Court rejected Section 4 of the landmark Voting Right Act, which contains a formula to determine specified jurisdictions that need federal government approval before making voting changes that could be racially discriminatory. In its ruling on *Shelby County v. Holder*, the Court determined that the current formula was outdated. Congress is now required to pass a new formula that reflects current conditions.

"Today's Supreme Court decision is an assault on our most fundamental right as Americans. While the Court is correct that current law to protect voters from discriminatory voting laws is outdated, it is because it's not expansive enough. The right to vote is under attack across the country. Already in 2013, more than 30 states have introduced over 80 restrictive voting laws that often target low-income, student, elderly and minority voters.

"As disappointed as we are by today's decision, it demonstrates why we cannot wait to enact a constitutional amendment that would guarantee an affirmative right to vote for all Americans—no matter where they live. A country built on the foundation of civic participation should never tolerate any politically-motivated threats to our ability to express our views at the polls. We will continue to work with our colleagues and build the grassroots support needed to ensure we protect our right to vote."

Last month, Pocan and Ellison introduced legislation to explicitly guarantee the right to vote in the Constitution. The Pocan-Ellison Right to Vote Amendment would amend the Constitution to provide all Americans the affirmative right to vote and empower Congress to protect this right. Without a constitutional provision, courts have upheld voter identification laws, burdensome registration requirements, and reduced early voting opportunities in various states across the country. We need a constitutional amendment to protect this fundamental right.