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Suggested Title: Voting Rights Protections in the United States

General Church Budget Implications: No

Global Implications: No

**NEW: Voting Rights Protections in the United States**

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church has a historic and present commitment to racial justice, equity, and equality under the law,

WHEREAS, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which states that the right to vote “shall not be denied or abridged ... on account of sex” (1920),

WHEREAS, we honor the work of the women’s suffrage movement,

WHEREAS, we recognize and lament that women of color in many cases did not reap benefits from passage of the 19th amendment,

WHEREAS, despite the active work of women of color for women’s suffrage, many were left without the right to vote for many more years,

WHEREAS, the history of voting rights in the United States has been fraught with practices of extreme violence, intimidation, and systemic disenfranchisement of people of color,

WHEREAS, we honor the generation of faithful leaders who worked without ceasing to secure the right to vote for themselves and others, courageously persevering in the face of tremendous violence and threat of violence, often at great personal cost,

WHEREAS, we especially remember and honor the extraordinary witness and legacy of the civil rights martyrs,

WHEREAS, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was enacted to ensure that the right to vote would not be abridged at any level of government,

WHEREAS, the Supreme Court decision in *Shelby v. Holder* (2013) removed a key provision (Section 5) of the Voting Rights Act of 1965,

WHEREAS, recent actions by state governments reestablish exclusionary tactics that undermine the voting rights achievements of the 20th century, suppress voter participation, and permit practices known to be racially discriminatory,

WHEREAS, intensified identification requirements, justified by false claims of widespread voter fraud, harm the exercise of one of the most solemn ways that individuals can influence governmental decision-making and undercut the goal of full access to participation in government,

WHEREAS, recent cases suggest that inadequate access to polling places and voter registration opportunities, coupled with intensified identification requirements, have had a particularly dampening effect on Native American communities' access to the vote,

WHEREAS, recent research shows that African American and Latinx voters are far more likely to face obstacles to voting than white voters, including being told they "did not have correct identification," being "harassed or bothered while trying to vote," and being told their names were "not on the list even though they [were] registered" (poll by Public Religion Research Institute and *The Atlantic*, 2018),

WHEREAS, partisan gerrymandering continues to hurt the cause of democracy in the United States,

WHEREAS, felony disenfranchisement laws enacted at the state level have disproportionately harmed African American voters and African American communities, impacting individuals who are currently or formerly incarcerated, on probation, on parole, and/or post-sentence,

WHEREAS, this disproportionate impact is a direct result of the unjust criminalization of communities of color and the United States' egregious overuse of incarceration (see Resolution 3379),

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Congress should aim to guarantee that the voting rights of every eligible voter are protected, —

*Be it therefore affirmed that,* The United Methodist Church calls on the U.S. Department of Justice to exercise its duty to engage in all actions that enhance wider civic participation and that ensure protection of the right to vote as central to securing a robust and inclusive democracy, and

*Therefore,* be it resolved that The United Methodist Church calls on local churches, annual conferences, general agencies, and other church-related organizations to:

- Report all efforts to suppress voting rights to their state office of the attorney general as well as to the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice and make the discovery public to other churches within the state for continued follow up and action.
- Support efforts to end felony disenfranchisement and restore voting rights to people who have been impacted by the criminal justice system.
- Contact their congressional representatives, urging that they introduce and pass new voting rights legislation that meets the call to repair, restore and strengthen the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Date: August 14, 2019

Signature of the Petitioner:

Identification of the Petitioner: General Secretary/CEO, United Methodist Women

Phone: 212-870-3752

City, State, Province, Country: New York, NY, USA

E-mail Address: [HOlson@unitedmethodistwomen.org](mailto:HOlson@unitedmethodistwomen.org)