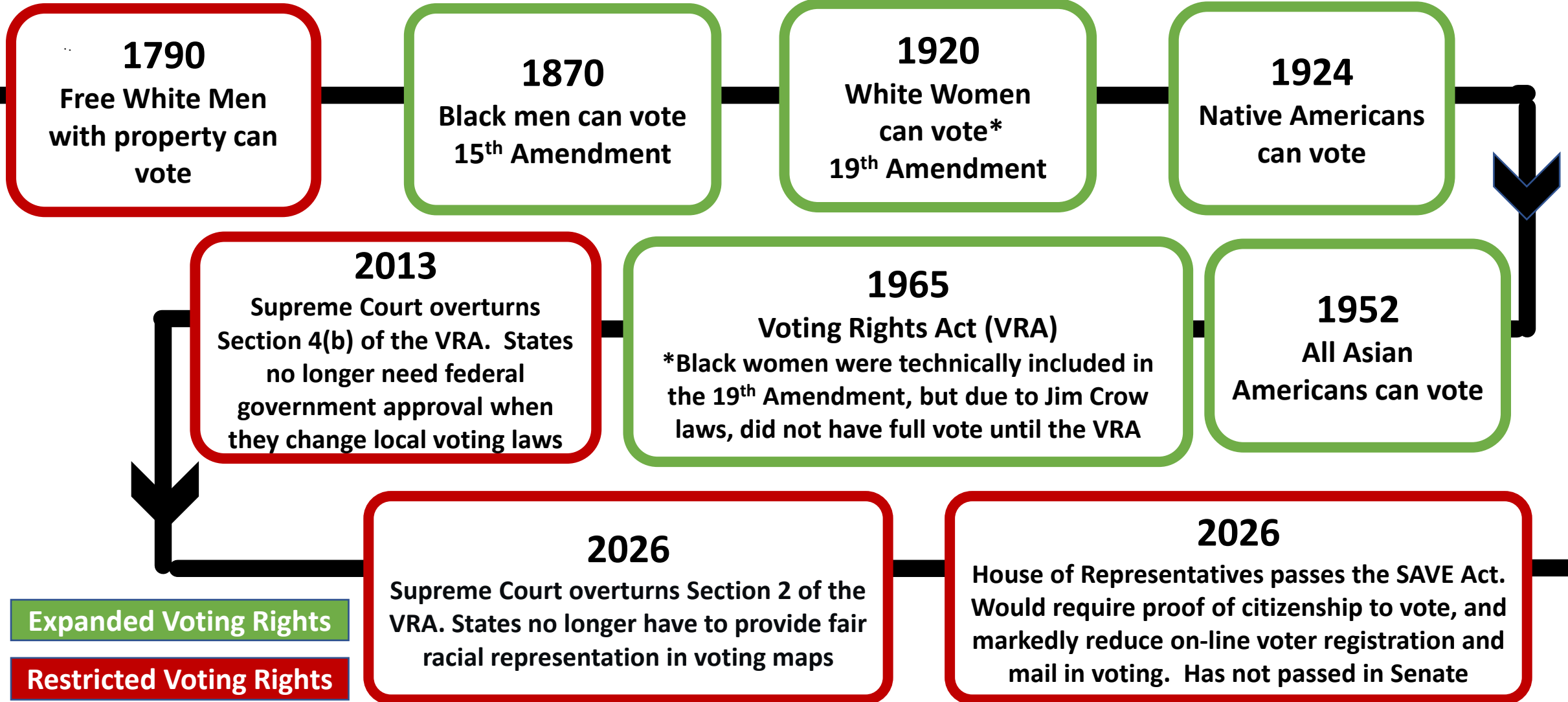


Your Vote Matters..... or they wouldn't work so hard to take it away



ELECTION PROTECTION 2026

WHAT CAN I DO?

If our vote isn't important, they sure are trying hard to take it away. The federal government is ramping up efforts to override a free & fair mid term election, using federal power to **DECEIVE** Americans, **DISRUPT** our elections and **DENY** fair results. **We are not powerless!** Our most effective election protection strategy is overwhelming voter turnout and our ability to be ready for anything - this helps us to respond and makes election interference harder to pull off.



ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE:

Sign up to become an election judge or registrar



Learn about the current and potential risks to the integrity of the 2026 mid term election, including mail in voting.



SCAN ME



DO IT:

- **Register to vote. Check your registration regularly.**
- **Make sure you have a current license or state ID. Obtain a passport or certified copy of your birth certificate if you can.**
- **Make a plan to vote early. Early voting can increase voter turnout by 2-4% and makes it harder to sabotage election results. If you have a mail in ballot, try to drop it off in a locked ballot box.**



SHARE IT:

- **Share this information with everyone you know - encourage them to do the same.**



Join a local and/or national voting advocacy group - this work is too important to do alone. Sign up for alerts or calls to action. If you are able, make a donation to a group that is monitoring voter rolls and voter suppression laws, or filing lawsuits to keep our election safe.

Make a contact list. If they start seizing ballot boxes, arresting officials, delaying certification - who are you calling? The visible response needs to be national. Who can join a purged voter phone bank or attend a rapid response protest with you? Start these conversations now, so you're ready for whatever happens this fall.

**DO YOU EVER
WONDER IF
VOTING IS
WORTH IT?**



You're Not Alone

The Nov 2024 Election had record turnout....and still less than **2/3** of eligible voters in the whole country actually voted! 89% of people who were registered to vote did vote....so **getting registered is key.**

72% of eligible Sangamon County voters turned out in 2024, but only 24% of us made it to the polls for the March 2026 primary.

For young people who did not vote, the most common reasons were lack of time and feeling like their vote would not make a difference.



Only a FEW voters decided these elections

In a 2024 Sangamon County Board race, the winner **won by just 9 votes** out of 4083 total votes cast.

The 2019 Ward 2 Springfield City Council race was so close there was a recount and the race was **declared a tie.** To determine the winner, the Mayor pulled **a ping pong ball out of a bag,** and Ward 2 Alderman Shawn Gregory was declared the winner.



A LOT of voters decided Hungary's election

Victor Orbán was Prime Minister of Hungary for 16 years. In 2026, voters were fed up with his authoritarian policies and corruption. 70% of Hungarians voted and Orbán lost in a landslide. TURNOUT MATTERS!



"The vote is precious. It is almost sacred. It is the most powerful non-violent tool we have in a democracy."

~ Congressman John Lewis, 2019



THE 1965 VOTING RIGHTS ACT (VRA)

A little History:

- The 15th Amendment outlawed racial discrimination in voting in 1870.
- Despite the 15th Amendment, states openly blocked Black citizens from the polls. Activists fought back. They marched, were beaten, and some even died.
- Feb. 18, 1965, 26 (yr old) Jimmie Lee Jackson was killed by an Alabama State Trooper during a peaceful demonstration.
- March 7, 1965 known as “Bloody Sunday” more than 50 marchers were hospitalized after a violent response by officers & ‘possemen” wielding billy clubs, bullwhips and (cont.)

- (cont.) tear gas on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, seen on TV by millions.
- The violent events in Selma, Alabama, made the nation pay attention. The **Voting Rights Act (VRA)** was signed into law **August 6, 1965**. The law prohibited discrimination based on race, color, or language-minority status in registration and voting nationwide. The VRA also provides protections for blind, disabled, or illiterate voters.

Learn more:



Freedom Fighters

Congressman John Lewis was among the original 13 Freedom Riders who rode buses across the South in 1961 to challenge segregation in public transportation. The riders were attacked, beaten & arrested and one of their buses was firebombed. Freedom Riders changed the way people traveled & set the stage for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

John Lewis

- helped organize the 1963 March on D.C.
- He led the first 1965 March on Selma, GA
- served as a Member of Congress for nearly four decades championing the causes of marginalized communities
- Encouraged us all to “Get in good trouble, necessary trouble, and help redeem the soul of America.”

Each July, on the anniversary of his death in 2020, the Good Trouble Lives On National Day of Action honors his legacy and the civil rights movement.



Freedom Fighters' Arrest Photos



WHAT DOES VRA SAY?

The act required some state & local governments that demonstrated a history of voting rights violations, to get federal approval before changing their voting laws.

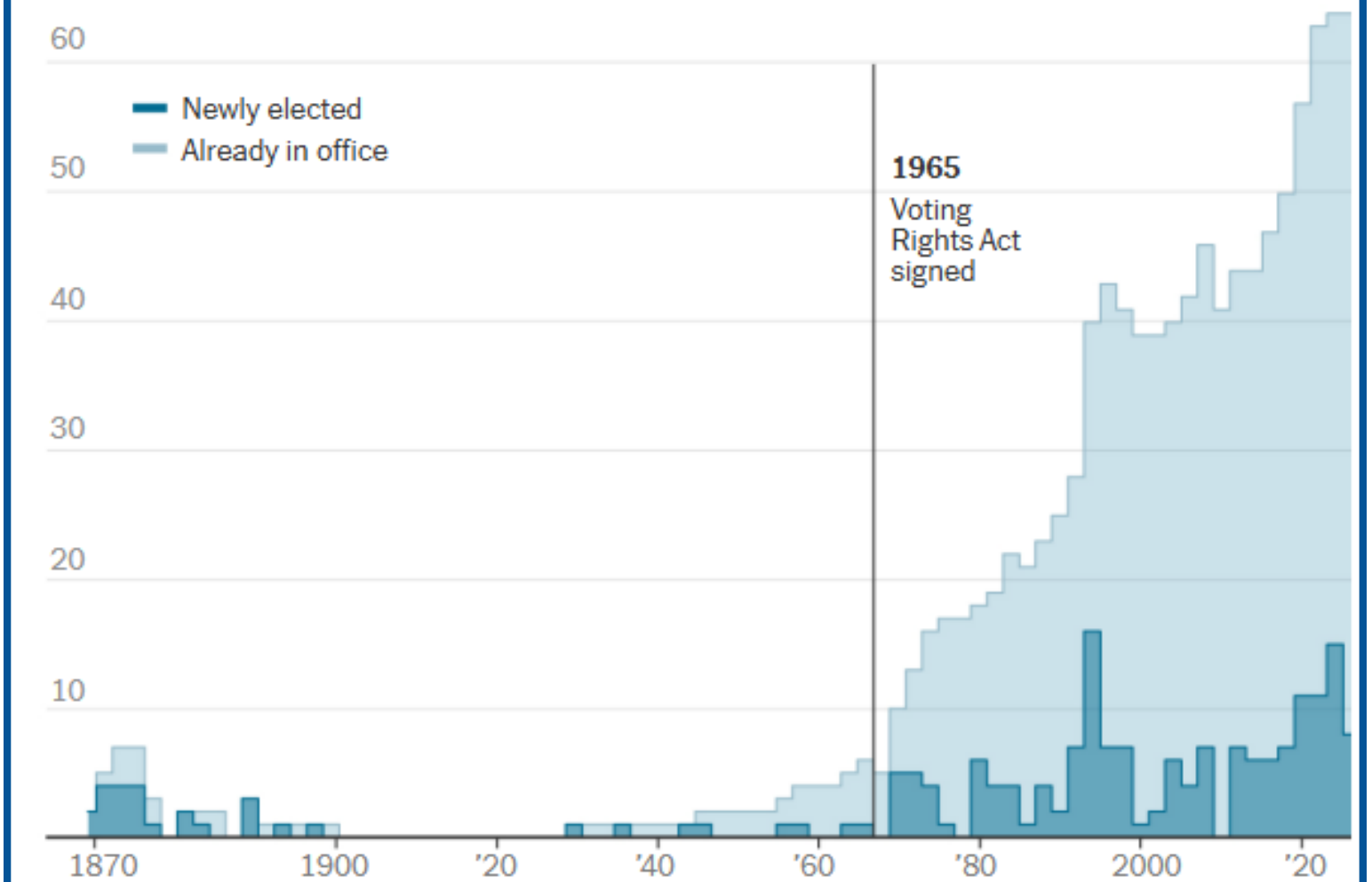
- This led to a rapid reduction in poll taxes and other Jim Crow laws.

It also banned voting practices that discriminate based on race.

- This eventually led some states to draw new congressional maps with districts that have a majority of Black voters. The result was a dramatic increase in Black representation in Congress.

Black members of the U.S. House of Representatives

Number of Black representatives in office by election cycle



U.S. House of Representatives. Katherine Chui/The New York Times

CAN THE VRA BE SAVED??

YES IT CAN!

Congress can pass laws to restore VRA provisions
(Who elects Congress? – We Do!)

- The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (JLVRAA) would
 - Restore Federal Oversight of voting laws and ensure fair access to voting.
- The Freedom to Vote Act would
 - Ban all partisan gerrymandering and set national standards for election rules.
- Ten states have enacted their own VRAs, including Illinois.

naacp.org, brennancenter.org, ncsl.org

VRA UNDER ATTACK...

- **2011 – VRA** blocked a record number of bills & voting laws aimed at minority voters.
- **2013 – Supreme Court Shelby vs. Holder decision** gutted the VRA, finding that all states no longer need federal clearance before passing voting laws.
 - Many states immediately began passing restrictive voting laws – over 100 new laws in 29 states have been passed so far on:
 - Strict voter ID requirements, & restrictions in mail in voting or access to early voting or polling places.
 - Since 2013, the gap between voter turnout for white and black voters in Alabama has tripled.
- **2026 the Supreme Court Louisiana vs. Callais decision:**
 - Decided that using race as the main reason to create these voting districts violated the Constitution.
 - Makes it much more difficult for minority voters to use the Voting Rights Act to fight unfair or discriminatory voting maps in court.
 - Gerrymandering is legal if done for partisan purposes (to create an advantage for the political party in power). States can now use partisan gerrymandering as defense against allegations of racial discrimination in redistricting.
 - Even if states' congressional maps have the impact of reducing minority voting opportunities, to be in violation of the VRA it would have to be proven that the intent was to disadvantage minority voters.