

Chair Carlson, members, I'm David Fisher. I teach at the University of Minnesota Law School and am a former Minnesota Commissioner and Metropolitan Council member.

I represent Clean Elections MN, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working for inclusive and healthy democracy. And we urge your support for SF3994.

Jefferson described our right to vote as 'the ark of our safety.' – the exercise of a right from which all others flow.

The Federal Voting Rights Act is a crown jewel of the civil rights era – ending voter suppression, specifically on the basis of race. Yet our Federal courts have weakened this Law, unleashing torrents of State laws suppressing our vote, subverting elections; diminishing democracy.

And our U.S Congress shows little backbone to address it.

Well, Federal authorities have spoken – let the states do it. Let states be the beacon of democracy, of fair and free voting rights.

With this Bill, Minnesota takes up the challenge!

Make no mistake, there is systemic underrepresentation of BIPOC voters evident across Minnesota, based on studies such as that in 2020 by the Reflective Democracy Campaign. It found that in 32 counties there is a significant gap between the BIPOC share of the population and the BIPOC share of county commissioners.

This is a red flag of racial discrimination in voting – of insufficient polling places, or district maps that crack or pack voters of color to dilute voting strength. These are precisely the harms the MN Voting Rights Act is designed to remedy.

We call on Minnesota to get done what history will judge: prevent voter suppression and assure full access to voting.

Particularly important is Section 4 of SF3994:

- 1) protecting the right of natural-born citizens to cast an effective ballot;
- 2) ensuring this right is not impaired;
- 3) ensuring that each lawful vote is counted;
- 4) making this right accessible to all qualified natural-born citizens; and
- 5) ensuring that protected class members have equitable voting access.

Remedying race discrimination is critical, as well as the right of each of us to exercise free speech supporting democracy – as Lincoln put it, ensuring a government “of the people, by the people, for the people,” This is the promise of democracy.

Will you help us fulfill this promise?

Thank you for your work and your commitment to further strengthen our nation. Please support SF3994!