



Contra Costa County

To: Board of Supervisors
From: John Gioia, District I Supervisor
Date: August 18, 2015

Subject: A Resolution celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of August, 1965.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

ADOPT Resolution No. 2015/298 celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of August, 1965.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None

BACKGROUND:

The 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted African Americans the right to vote in 1870, but there were many hurdles in place to restrict them from registering. Literacy tests and poll taxes were among the discriminatory tactics still used to suppress voting.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965, signed on August 6 by President Lyndon Johnson, is a milestone in national legislation that prohibits discriminatory practices for disenfranchising "any citizen on account of race or color."

The act was passed as the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing throughout the country.

☒ APPROVE

☐ OTHER

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF CNTY ADMINISTRATOR

☐ RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD COMMITTEE

Action of Board On: **08/18/2015** ☒ APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED ☐ OTHER

Clerks Notes:

VOTE OF SUPERVISORS

AYE: John Gioia, District I
Supervisor
Candace Andersen, District II
Supervisor
Mary N. Piepho, District III
Supervisor
Karen Mitchoff, District IV
Supervisor

ABSENT: Federal D. Glover, District V
Supervisor

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of an action taken and entered on the minutes of the Board of Supervisors on the date shown.

ATTESTED: August 18, 2015

David Twa, County Administrator and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By: Stephanie L. Mello, Deputy

Contact: Robert Rogers
510-231-8688

cc:

Although Contra Costa County was far removed from some of key events of the movement, discrimination remained a problem.

The Supreme Court upheld that poll taxes were illegal a year after the Voting Rights Act was passed,

BACKGROUND: (CONT'D)

and the Act was extended in 1970, 1982 and 2006. When signing the extension, President Ronald Reagan said the right to vote “is the crown jewel of American liberties and we will not see its luster diminished.”

Since its initial passage, the act has expanded in scope to protect non-English speakers by requiring language-specific election materials to jurisdictions with large numbers of those groups. Contra Costa County provides voter materials like registration forms, ballots, voting instructions, in English and Spanish. Chinese and Tagalog versions are also available at some precincts. Elections staff at the office and at polls also speak several languages.

The recognition of the 50th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act comes at a time when the percentage of California voters who turnout continues to decrease. In Contra Costa County, 49.2 percent of registered voters cast a ballot in the November 2014 Gubernatorial General Election, down from 66 percent in 2010.

Despite those figures, the Contra Costa Elections Office, League of Women Voters, Civil Rights groups and community advocates remain steadfast in continuing to educate residents about the democratic process and protecting voter rights.

ATTACHMENTS

Resolution No. 2015/298

Voting Rights Proclamation