

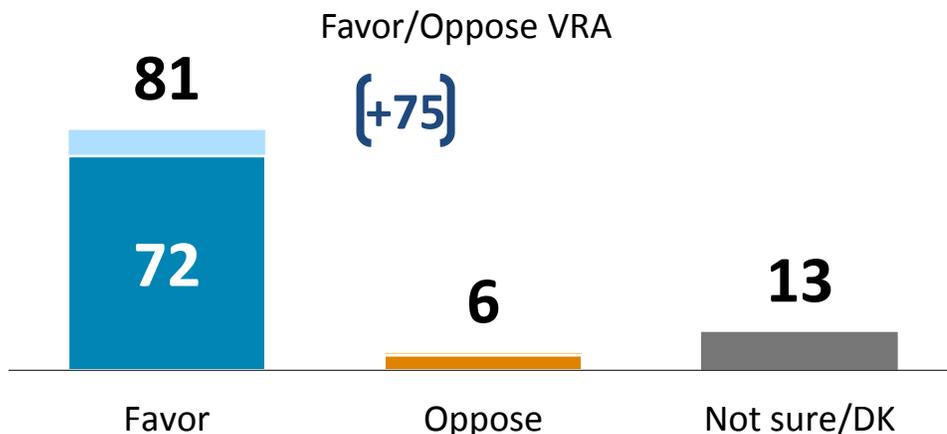
To: Interested parties  
 From: Celinda Lake, David Mermin, and Brittany L. Stalsburg  
 Re: Recent research on the Voting Rights Act  
 Date: September 30, 2014

The Voting Rights Act (VRA) has protected voters from discrimination for nearly 50 years. Last year, the Supreme Court in *Shelby County v. Holder* weakened those protections by striking down a key section of the VRA. In January, a bipartisan group of lawmakers introduced legislation that would restore the VRA's protections.

Recent polling<sup>1</sup> reveals that voters strongly support the VRA and oppose the changes made to it. The polling also shows that voters favor restoring the VRA.

**Voters Strongly Favor the VRA for Combatting Voting Discrimination:**

When voters are given a simple description of the VRA that includes a reference to discrimination in voting based on race, more than 8 in 10 say they favor the VRA (72% strongly) and only 6% oppose it.<sup>2</sup> Support is strong among voters of all races, including 81% of white voters (71% strongly).



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<sup>1</sup> Lake Research Partners conducted a live phone survey July 26-30, 2014 among 800 likely 2016 general election voters, with oversamples of 125 African Americans, 175 Latinos, and 200 Asian Americans. Additionally, oversamples of 200 voters in North Carolina, 20 African Americans in North Carolina, 200 voters in Ohio, and 40 African Americans in Ohio were included. The overall margin of error is +/- 3.5%. This research was conducted on behalf of The Leadership Conference Education Fund.

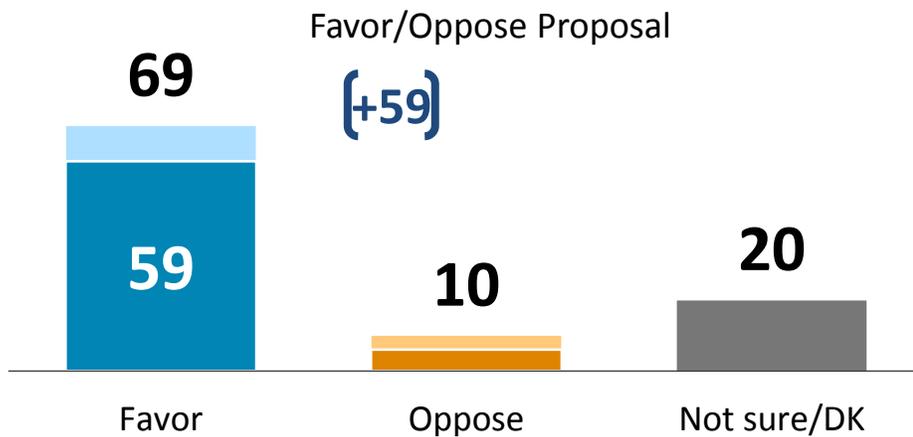
<sup>2</sup> Question text: As you may know, the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965 to stop state and local governments from passing laws or policies that deny American citizens the equal right to vote based on race, by prohibiting discriminatory practices. Do you favor or oppose the Voting Rights Act, or are you not sure?

**Voters Overwhelmingly Oppose *Shelby* Decision Impact on VRA:**

Voters are also opposed to changes made to the Voting Rights Act that resulted from the *Shelby* Supreme Court decision. Overall, a majority of voters (54%) oppose the changes, 26% favor them, and 19% are not sure.<sup>3</sup> Majorities of white, Black and Latino voters oppose the changes to the VRA.

**Voters Strongly Support Restoring VRA:**

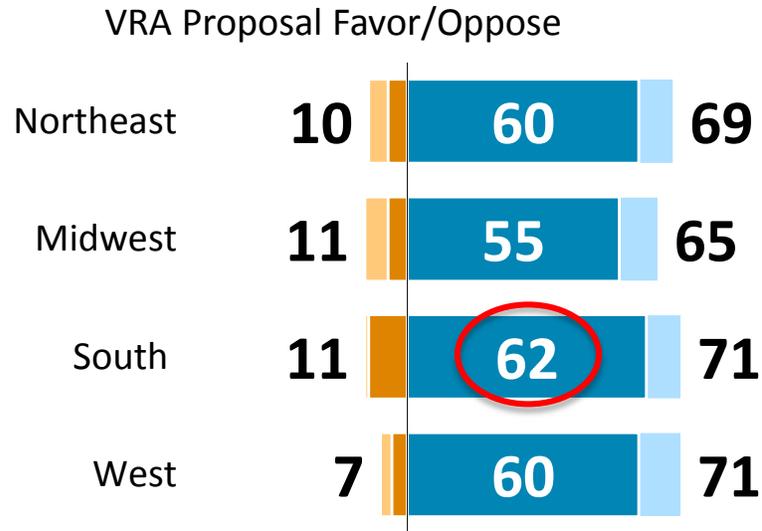
Voters strongly support a proposal to restore the Voting Rights Act and strengthen protections for the right to vote. More than two-thirds of voters favor the proposal, with a solid majority (59%) who strongly favor it.<sup>4</sup> Voters of all parties and all races favor the proposal, including 84% of Democrats (77% strongly), 63% of Independents (53% strongly), 57% of Republicans (45% strongly), and 67% of white voters (57% strongly). All communities of color surveyed are also resolute in their support for restoring the VRA, with 77% of Black voters in favor (66% strongly), 80% of Latino voters (71% strongly), and 77% of Asians (63% strongly).



Voters in every region of the country favor the proposal to restore the VRA, including in the South where 71% of voters favor the proposal and 62% strongly favor it. Only 11% of Southern voters oppose the proposal.

<sup>3</sup> Question text: As you may know, recently there have been changes made to the Voting Rights Act. Previously, [certain states/states that have a history of racially discriminatory voting laws] were not allowed to make changes to voting rules without national oversight and review to ensure the changes did not discriminate. Now, these states are allowed to make changes without this oversight. Do you favor or oppose these changes to the Voting Rights Act, or are you not sure?

<sup>4</sup> Question asked of half the sample: There is now a proposal in Congress to pass a law that would restore the Voting Rights Act and strengthen protections for the right to vote. Do you favor or oppose the proposal, or are you not sure?



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For more information on this research, please contact Celinda Lake ([clake@lakeresearch.com](mailto:clake@lakeresearch.com)), David Mermin ([dmermin@lakeresearch.com](mailto:dmermin@lakeresearch.com)), or Brittany Stalsburg ([bstalsburg@lakeresearch.com](mailto:bstalsburg@lakeresearch.com)) at 202-776-9066.