

Our Homes, Our Votes Act

Purpose

The *Our Homes, Our Votes Act* builds upon the transformative foundation of the *National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993*, or "Motor Voter Law," which dramatically expanded access to voter registration by allowing it at DMVs and paving the way for other state and federal agencies to adopt similar programs that boosted voter registration. Just as the NVRA widened pathways to registration, this Act seeks to extend that model to federally subsidized housing programs administered by HUD and Public Housing Agencies. It will allow residents to register to vote as they sign their leases and have their income verified. It also mandates compliance with NVRA requirements to ensure that Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) and private landlords meet their voter registration responsibilities. Lastly, in alignment with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, this bill provides for language access services to aid tenants with Limited English Proficiency, so they can access voter registration materials and assistance in their preferred language.

Background

Barriers to voter registration disproportionately affect low-income and housing-insecure individuals. Obstacles like lack of permanent addresses, limited transportation, and difficulties obtaining identification can make the registration process challenging and inaccessible. Public housing residents often need help with frequent moves, making it hard to stay registered and receive crucial voting materials, like mail-in ballots. Political campaigns tend to overlook low-income voters, resulting in less outreach and awareness of election processes. Data from the 2022 midterms highlights these disparities: 58% of eligible homeowners voted, compared to only 37% of eligible renters. The gap is even more stark for low-income voters, with those earning under \$20,000 participating at a rate of 33%, while those earning above \$100,000 voted at a rate of 67%. The *Our Homes, Our Votes Act* directly addresses these inequities.

The "*Our Homes, Our Votes Act*" would

- **Expand Registration Access:** By allowing eligible and interested tenants in subsidized housing administered by a public housing agency (PHA) to register to vote as they sign their lease document without requiring that they provide duplicate information, meaning that they would not have to fill out additional paperwork to become voters at their new addresses.
- **Ensure Timely Transmission of Registration Forms:** PHAs and private landlords will be required to quickly submit completed registration forms to local election authorities, preventing delays.
- **Include Private Landowners in the Registration Process:** Private landlords of subsidized housing will become "voter registration agents," distributing forms and providing assistance as needed. This covers all properties receiving funding through HUD's public assistance programs.
- **Promote Language Accessibility:** In line with Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Act encourages language services for non-English speaking tenants, ensuring that every eligible resident can register and vote