**NAME OF LOCALITY**

**RESOLUTION TO UPHOLD THE RIGHT TO VOTE**

**Supporting a Constitutional Amendment to Grant an Explicit Right to Vote, Establishing a Task Force on Voting, and Commencing a Call to Action**

WHEREAS, voter turnout in [*locality*] was [\_\_\_%] of registered voters and [\_\_\_%] of eligible voters in the last election for [*mayor and/or city council and/or school board*]; and

*[Consider inserting other locally relevant information – perhaps relating to changes in turnout, disparities in turnout and/or problems widely recognized to have taken place at the polls in your community. See North Carolina’s resolution template as an example.]*

WHEREAS, voter turnout was less than 60% of eligible nationwide voters in the 2012 presi­­dential election and [\_\_\_\_%] in [*state*]; and­­

WHEREAS, the fact that Americans often face unnecessary obstacles to voting, including restrictions on when, where, and how to vote, contributes to the low U.S. turnout rates, in which the United States ranks in the bottom 20% of nations in turnout in presidential elections, and even lower in congressional, state and local elections; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, new laws in many states created new obstacles to voting, including restrictions in voter registration and access to the polls; and

WHEREAS, according to a U.S. Senate survey released in May 2009, more than one-fourth of the ballots requested in the 2008 election by U.S. military personnel deployed overseas – and other eligible voters living abroad – went either uncollected or uncounted for; and

WHEREAS, the Supreme Court ruled in *Shelby County v. Holder* that the coverage formula in Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) is unconstitutional, thereby invalidating the formula used to determine which states are covered by Section 5 of the VRA, which was designed to prevent discrimination in voting by requiring many state and local governments with a history of racial discrimination in voting to get approval from the federal government before making any changes to their voting laws or procedures; and

WHEREAS, Sections 4 and 5 of the Voting Rights Act were effective tools in curbing racial discrimination in elections since 1965; and as recently as 2012 continued to be critical instruments for free, fair, and accessible elections, helping to block laws making it harder to vote; and

WHEREAS our nation’s counties are effectively limited in their choice of voting equipment for federal elections from a small pool of for-profit vendors, which lack open source software and the flexibility to meet the needs of local government; and

WHEREAS, twenty-three states have eased felon voting restrictions since 1997, but more than five million American citizens with felony convictions are still denied the right to vote due to state laws, including in some states which *permanently* bar such citizens from voting even after serving prison and probation terms; and

WHEREAS more than a half million citizens of Washington, D.C. experience direct oversight by the U.S. Congress without the power to elect a voting Member of Congress; and

WHEREAS, to begin addressing the problem of low voter participation, voter registration and education should be encouraged in public, private, and parochial high schools and colleges, and students should be taught, in a nonpartisan manner, about America’s suffrage history and the principles of voting as a way of increasing voter knowledge, education and participation; and

WHEREAS, expanding opportunities at local agencies for voter education and non-partisan voter registration beyond the requirements of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) would promote more engaged citizens and increase civic participation; and

WHEREAS, local governments like ours have the power to enact laws and procedures for local elections that meet and ideally surpass federal and state election standards, promote choice and hold representatives accountable; and

WHEREAS, local governments have a long history of being true laboratories of democracy in this nation, establishing new laws involving voting, representation and governance that influence state and national practices; and

WHEREAS, the failure of the United States to define and enforce minimum standards to protect voting rights has been one of the main reasons obstacles to voting arise; and

WHEREAS, the 15th, 19th, and 26th Amendments in the U.S. Constitution prohibit discrimination in voting on the basis of race, sex, and age respectively, and the 24th Amendment prohibits poll taxes, these amendments do not guarantee Americans an affirmative right to vote; and

WHEREAS, the United States is one of the 11 nations that does not have the right to vote in its constitution out of the 119 nations that elect their public officials using democratic elections; and

WHEREAS, an individual right to vote is a fundamental American right; and fundamental rights should be guaranteed to all Americans in the U.S. Constitution;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ OF \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ THAT:**

SECTION 1 – RIGHT TO VOTE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

We hereby affirm that the right to vote is a fundamental citizenship right to be cherished, protected, and exercised.

We call on our members of Congress, and our representatives in the state legislature, to support an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would grant an explicit right to vote to every American citizen of voting age.

We urge our [*relevant legislative body*] to pass right to vote resolution committing support for an explicit right to vote in the U.S. Constitution.

SECTION 2 – TASK FORCE ON VOTING

We shall establish a Right to Vote Task Force to be charged with:

* Reviewing all local laws and practices that may affect the right to vote and that may affect the power of voters to elect candidates of choice and hold representatives accountable;
* Proposing changes to uphold voting rights and increased voter participation;
* Promoting greater awareness of our political process through civic education and high school programs on voter registration; and that evaluates the impact rules and activity after each election;
* Developing plans and taking actions to promote early voting in municipal elections and make recommendations to the City Council on any policies or actions needed to strengthen existing early voting efforts;
* Developing a plan for instituting Election Day voter registration for Municipal Elections;
* Developing plans for a voter registration program designed to register every eligible high school student who is at least 16 years old, support voter education programs to increase the citizenship knowledge and participation in the democratic process;
* Reviewing the potential of allowing voting in city election by those who are at least 16 years old;
* Reviewing other means that suffrage might be expanded in our community, such as the increasingly common practice of allowing legal immigrants to vote in local elections and extending suffrage in local elections for citizens with felony convictions;
* Reviewing all local laws and practices that may affect the right to vote and that may affect the power of voters to elect candidates, hold representatives accountable and recommend changes to our policies that would better uphold voting rights, which encourage increased voter participation;
* Reviewing state laws and recommending state legislation for our state representatives to introduce that would strengthen the right to vote in our community and the rest of the state;
* Partnering with our local election officials to jointly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of city election practices and regulations after each election;
* Recommending languages appropriate to [*locality*] into which all written and recorded voter resources including ballots should be translated;
* Reaching out and collaborating with non-profits such as TurboVote to expand the use of absentee ballots for municipal elections;
* Developing plans and timelines to implement all commitments made in this resolution.

SECTION 3 – CALL TO ACTION

We call on all elected officials to stand with voters by supporting actions to increase voter turnout and voter education, oppose tactics to game elections through manipulation of voting rights and election laws, and evaluate proposed electoral reforms based on whether they promote participation and a level political playing field rather than their impact on incumbent elected officials or political parties.

We call on Congress and our state government to take action to uphold voting rights, including ensuring that our nation has a modern voter registration system that meets the basic goal of complete and accurate voting rights, that citizens of the District of Columbia have full congressional representation, that all jurisdictions have an option to purchase publicly owned or non-profit managed voting equipment and that all voters can be confident that their local jurisdiction meets certain minimum performance standards involving election administration.

We call on Congress to restore Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by creating a new coverage formula to determine which states and local jurisdictions should have voting changes undergo pre-enforcement review for potential discriminatory impact.

We will encourage voter education and voter registration by government entities and residents of our community, and agree to host a voter registration drive in conjunction with nonpartisan efforts such as National Voter Registration Day.

We, in order to correct misinformation and encourage voter turnout on Election Day, will communicate to all voters through means of mail, television, radio advertisements and/or any other effective means of communication the following information: general information about voting on Election Day, the format of the ballot and any new state and federal laws involving voting.

We will encourage the recruitment of poll workers and effective training of election officials and poll workers to uphold the individual right to vote.

We will support programs with Internet and/or hotline capacity that will provide information about the mechanics of voting and respond to any problems at the polls, both in national and local elections.

We resolve that despite the obstacles to exercising our right to vote imposed by burdensome laws, we shall make every effort to ensure residents who are eligible voters can fully participate in every election in which they are eligible to cast a vote.

Suitable copies of this resolution will be provided to the governor, our state legislative representatives, U.S. Speaker of the House, U.S. Senate Majority Leader, this state’s congressional delegation, and the U.S. President.