

FROM PLATFORM TO POLICY

The Iowa Democratic Party [Platform](#) is a roadmap which you can and should expect a Democrat running for and elected to office to be guided by when supporting legislation and policies.

Voting Rights

From the DRAFT of the 2020 Democratic National Platform

Democrats are committed to the sacred principle of “one person, one vote,” and we will fight to achieve that principle for every citizen - regardless of race, income, disability status, geography or language. We stand united against the Republican campaign, who seem determined to disenfranchise voters through onerous voter ID laws, excessive unconstitutional purges of the voter rolls, and closures of polling places in low-income neighborhoods, college campuses, and in communities of color. Americans should never have to wait in hours-long lines to exercise their voting rights.

Policy

Voting is both a right and a responsibility of all citizens to ensure the continuance of our democracy and to ensure our government works for us. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a piece of federal legislation that prohibits racial discrimination in voting. Despite the adoption of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, voter suppression and other roadblocks to election freedoms have surfaced in various states across the nation. Regulations on voter identification, restoration of voting rights for citizens released from prison, voter registration, and voting by mail may be significantly different from state to state.

The proposed National Democratic Party Platform calls for legislation to restore and strengthen the Voting Rights Act and ensure the Department of Justice challenges state laws that make it harder for Americans to vote. The party has also committed, in its proposed platform, to fully implement the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), passed in 2002, which requires accessibility to voters with disabilities and establishes minimum election administration standards for all states. Implementation has been left up to each state, which allows for varying interpretations of the federal law.

Where are we now?

Iowa is the last state to restore voting rights to persons with felony convictions. On August 5, 2020, Governor Reynolds issued an executive order allowing people with felony convictions to vote once they complete their sentences, including parole, probation, or special sentence. Persons who committed felony homicide offenses will still have to petition the governor to have voting rights restored. In order to make this permanent, a constitutional amendment must be passed. (Note: A previous executive order in 2005 giving felons voting rights was rescinded in 2011.) At this time, the Republican-led Senate refuses to pass a resolution to start the amendment process.

Iowa Democrats want to ensure Election Laws treat all people fairly and that implementation of HAVA guidelines are done in a way to encourage and promote voting among all citizens, including young voters, diverse communities, people of color, low-income families, people with disabilities, the elderly and women.

This month marks the 100th anniversary for the ratification of the Amendment to the US Constitution which gave women the right to vote. Last month we paid homage to former Georgia Congressman John Lewis whose peaceful protests and activism eventually resulted in the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Following these progressive examples, Democrats will continue to be committed to the fundamentals of Democracy, the power of the individual, and the right to vote.