



“The right to vote is the right upon which all of our rights are leveraged—and without which none can be protected.”

**Benjamin Todd Jealous**, civic leader and politician, president and CEO of the NAACP 2008-2013, from a keynote address given in July 2011

Photo credit: Gage Skidmore

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Barack Obama was the first African American elected as President in 2008. He served two terms in the White House. Many felt the injustices of disenfranchisement were now a part of our past.

But even before President Obama’s reelection, Benjamin Jealous and others started speaking out against voting measures, including voter ID regulations, designed to limit voter fraud. These new laws may have, in fact, imposed voting restrictions, especially among poor and minority populations.

Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence, “Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed.” Who could and should vote has been debated and fought over ever since. African Americans, women, Native Americans, non-English speakers, and citizens between the ages of 18 and 21 each in turn, fought for their right to vote.

Ensuring we protect and defend the voting rights of all citizens has proven to be an ongoing and unending challenge.

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