



June 28, 2006

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the more than 900,000 members and activists of People For the American Way, we urge you to oppose the Stearns Amendment (No. 21) to H.R. 5672, the Science, State, Justice, Commerce, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for FY 2007. The Stearns Amendment would strip the Department of Justice of its ability to expend funds essential for enforcement of Section 203, the language assistance provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

People For the American Way believes that the right to vote is fundamental and that every American citizen should be able to do so unimpeded. The House Judiciary Committee agreed when it overwhelmingly voted on May 10th to renew Section 203 during the markup of the Voting Rights Act reauthorization bill. The Stearns Amendment subverts the proper legislative process of reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act and effectively undermines Americans' voting rights through the appropriations process.

The majority of Americans needing English language assistance are native born citizens including Native Americans, Native Alaskans, and Puerto Ricans. It would not be fair or just that these American citizens are denied the ability to cast an informed ballot.

Democracy thrives when its citizens are informed and knowledgeable. America is a better place when we all understand what we are voting on. Section 203 helps ensure that all Americans have the ability to cast an informed ballot by offering translations of non-partisan voter information materials and ballots. We urge you to reject the Stearns Amendment, which would serve to disenfranchise American voters. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Tanya Clay House, Director of Public Policy, at (202) 467-2341.

Sincerely,

Ralph G. Neas
President

Tanya Clay House
Director, Public Policy