

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 642

To direct the Attorney General to establish a voter information response system and hotline to respond to the questions and complaints of voters in elections for Federal office, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 1, 2021

Mr. BROWN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on House Administration, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To direct the Attorney General to establish a voter information response system and hotline to respond to the questions and complaints of voters in elections for Federal office, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Voter Information  
5 Hotline Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. VOTER INFORMATION RESPONSE SYSTEMS AND**  
2 **HOTLINE.**

3 (a) ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF SYSTEMS  
4 AND SERVICES.—

5 (1) STATE-BASED RESPONSE SYSTEMS.—The  
6 Attorney General shall coordinate the establishment  
7 of a State-based response system for responding to  
8 questions and complaints from individuals voting or  
9 seeking to vote, or registering to vote or seeking to  
10 register to vote, in elections for Federal office. Such  
11 system shall provide—

12 (A) State-specific, same-day, and imme-  
13 diate assistance to such individuals, including  
14 information on how to register to vote, the loca-  
15 tion and hours of operation of polling places,  
16 and how to obtain absentee ballots; and

17 (B) State-specific, same-day, and imme-  
18 diate assistance to individuals encountering  
19 problems with registering to vote or voting, in-  
20 cluding individuals encountering intimidation or  
21 deceptive practices.

22 (2) HOTLINE.—The Attorney General, in con-  
23 sultation with State election officials, shall establish  
24 and operate a toll-free telephone service, using a  
25 telephone number that is accessible throughout the  
26 United States and that uses easily identifiable nu-

1       merals, through which individuals throughout the  
2       United States—

3               (A) may connect directly to the State-  
4       based response system described in paragraph  
5       (1) with respect to the State involved;

6               (B) may obtain information on voting in  
7       elections for Federal office, including informa-  
8       tion on how to register to vote in such elections,  
9       the locations and hours of operation of polling  
10      places, and how to obtain absentee ballots; and

11              (C) may report information to the Attor-  
12      ney General on problems encountered in reg-  
13      istering to vote or voting, including incidences  
14      of voter intimidation or suppression.

15              (3) COLLABORATION WITH STATE AND LOCAL  
16      ELECTION OFFICIALS.—

17              (A) COLLECTION OF INFORMATION FROM  
18      STATES.—The Attorney General shall coordi-  
19      nate the collection of information on State and  
20      local election laws and policies, including infor-  
21      mation on the statewide computerized voter reg-  
22      istration lists maintained under title III of the  
23      Help America Vote Act of 2002, so that indi-  
24      viduals who contact the free telephone service  
25      established under paragraph (2) on the date of

1 an election for Federal office may receive an  
2 immediate response on that day.

3 (B) FORWARDING QUESTIONS AND COM-  
4 PLAINTS TO STATES.—If an individual contacts  
5 the free telephone service established under  
6 paragraph (2) on the date of an election for  
7 Federal office with a question or complaint with  
8 respect to a particular State or jurisdiction  
9 within a State, the Attorney General shall for-  
10 ward the question or complaint immediately to  
11 the appropriate election official of the State or  
12 jurisdiction so that the official may answer the  
13 question or remedy the complaint on that date.

14 (4) CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS FOR DE-  
15 VELOPMENT OF SYSTEMS AND SERVICES.—The At-  
16 torney General shall ensure that the State-based re-  
17 sponse system under paragraph (1) and the free  
18 telephone service under paragraph (2) are each de-  
19 veloped in consultation with civil rights organiza-  
20 tions, voting rights groups, State and local election  
21 officials, voter protection groups, and other inter-  
22 ested community organizations, especially those that  
23 have experience in the operation of similar systems  
24 and services.

1       (b) USE OF SERVICE BY INDIVIDUALS WITH DIS-  
2 ABILITIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH  
3 LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY.—The Attorney General shall  
4 design and operate the telephone service established under  
5 this section in a manner that ensures that individuals with  
6 disabilities are fully able to use the service, and that as-  
7 sistance is provided in any language in which the State  
8 (or any jurisdiction in the State) is required to provide  
9 election materials under section 203 of the Voting Rights  
10 Act of 1965.

11       (c) VOTER HOTLINE TASK FORCE.—

12           (1) APPOINTMENT BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.—  
13       The Attorney General shall appoint individuals (in  
14       such number as the Attorney General considers ap-  
15       propriate but in no event fewer than 3) to serve on  
16       a Voter Hotline Task Force to provide ongoing anal-  
17       ysis and assessment of the operation of the tele-  
18       phone service established under this section, and  
19       shall give special consideration in making appoint-  
20       ments to the Task Force to individuals who rep-  
21       resent civil rights organizations. At least one mem-  
22       ber of the Task Force shall be a representative of  
23       an organization promoting voting rights or civil  
24       rights which has experience in the operation of simi-  
25       lar telephone services or in protecting the rights of

1 individuals to vote, especially individuals who are  
2 members of racial, ethnic, or linguistic minorities or  
3 of communities who have been adversely affected by  
4 efforts to suppress voting rights.

5 (2) ELIGIBILITY.—An individual shall be eligi-  
6 ble to serve on the Task Force under this subsection  
7 if the individual meets such criteria as the Attorney  
8 General may establish, except that an individual may  
9 not serve on the task force if the individual has been  
10 convicted of any criminal offense relating to voter in-  
11 timidation or voter suppression.

12 (3) TERM OF SERVICE.—An individual ap-  
13 pointed to the Task Force shall serve a single term  
14 of 2 years, except that the initial terms of the mem-  
15 bers first appointed to the Task Force shall be stag-  
16 gered so that there are at least 3 individuals serving  
17 on the Task Force during each year. A vacancy in  
18 the membership of the Task Force shall be filled in  
19 the same manner as the original appointment.

20 (4) NO COMPENSATION FOR SERVICE.—Mem-  
21 bers of the Task Force shall serve without pay, but  
22 shall receive travel expenses, including per diem in  
23 lieu of subsistence, in accordance with applicable  
24 provisions under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title  
25 5, United States Code.

1 (d) BI-ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later  
2 than March 1 of each odd-numbered year, the Attorney  
3 General shall submit a report to Congress on the operation  
4 of the telephone service established under this section dur-  
5 ing the previous 2 years, and shall include in the report—

6 (1) an enumeration of the number and type of  
7 calls that were received by the service;

8 (2) a compilation and description of the reports  
9 made to the service by individuals citing instances of  
10 voter intimidation or suppression, together with a  
11 description of any actions taken in response to such  
12 instances of voter intimidation or suppression;

13 (3) an assessment of the effectiveness of the  
14 service in making information available to all house-  
15 holds in the United States with telephone service;

16 (4) any recommendations developed by the  
17 Task Force established under subsection (c) with re-  
18 spect to how voting systems may be maintained or  
19 upgraded to better accommodate voters and better  
20 ensure the integrity of elections, including but not  
21 limited to identifying how to eliminate coordinated  
22 voter suppression efforts and how to establish effec-  
23 tive mechanisms for distributing updates on changes  
24 to voting requirements; and

1           (5) any recommendations on best practices for  
2           the State-based response systems established under  
3           subsection (a)(1).

4           (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

5           (1) AUTHORIZATION.—There are authorized to  
6           be appropriated to the Attorney General for fiscal  
7           year 2021 and each succeeding fiscal year such sums  
8           as may be necessary to carry out this section.

9           (2) SET-ASIDE FOR OUTREACH.—Of the  
10          amounts appropriated to carry out this section for a  
11          fiscal year pursuant to the authorization under para-  
12          graph (1), not less than 15 percent shall be used for  
13          outreach activities to make the public aware of the  
14          availability of the telephone service established under  
15          this section, with an emphasis on outreach to indi-  
16          viduals with disabilities and individuals with limited  
17          proficiency in the English language.

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