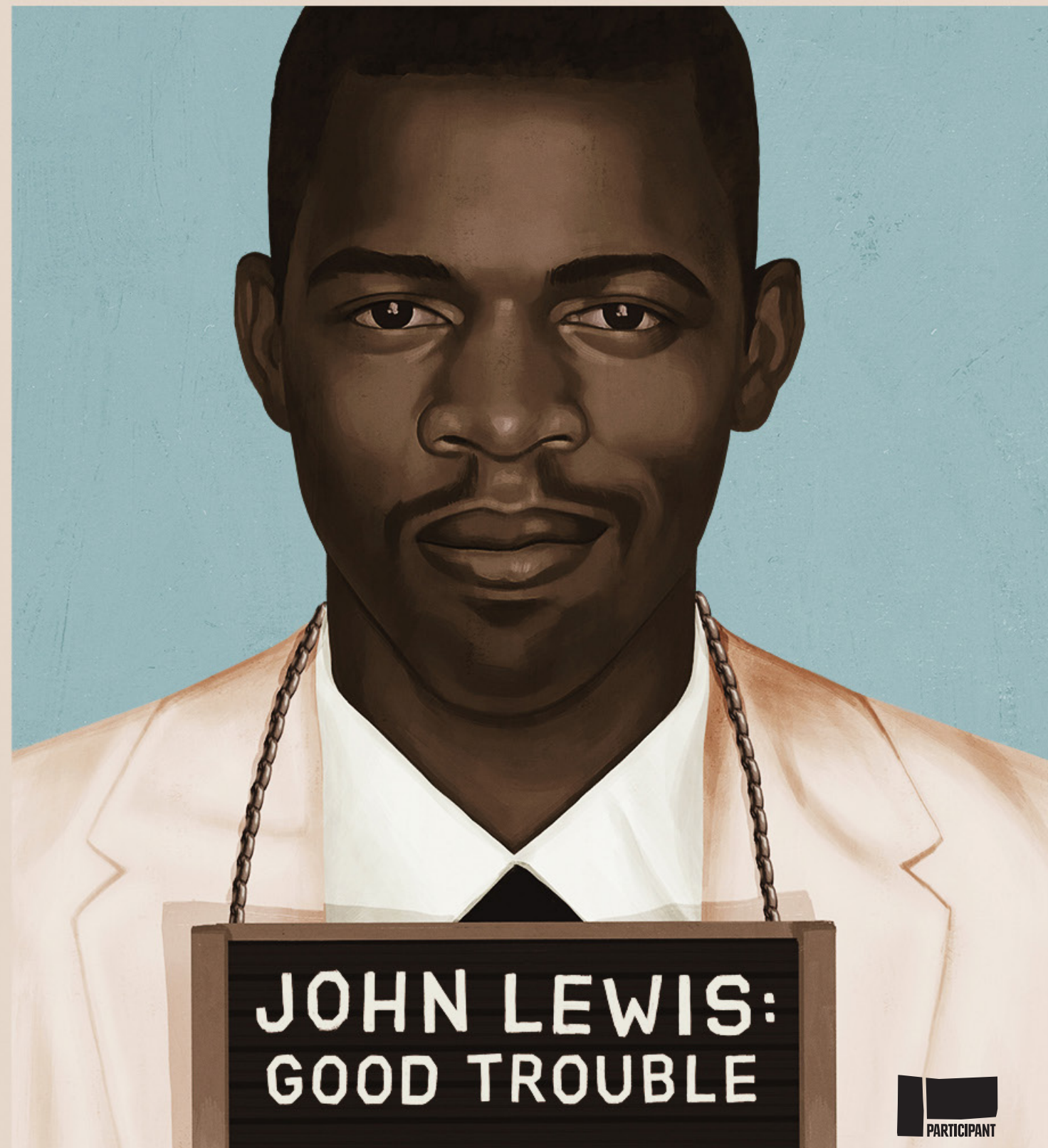


# THE GOOD TROUBLE HANDBOOK

YOUR GUIDE TO PROTECTING THE VOTE



**“THE RIGHT TO VOTE IS THE MOST POWERFUL  
NONVIOLENT TOOL WE HAVE IN A DEMOCRACY.  
I RISKED MY LIFE DEFENDING THAT RIGHT.”**

– Congressman John Lewis, *John Lewis: Good Trouble*



# GOOD TROUBLE

Congressman John Lewis' life's work has changed the very fabric of this country. Born in the heart of the Jim Crow South, in the shadow of slavery, he saw the profound injustice all around him and knew, from a young age, that he wanted to do something about it. By his late teens, he had joined the first Freedom Riders and later became the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), one of the groups responsible for organizing the 1963 March on Washington. On August 28, 1963, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, John Lewis gave his own rousing speech alongside some of the greatest leaders of the civil rights movement, including Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

But it was March 7, 1965, that etched Congressman Lewis into the American psyche.

Known as "Bloody Sunday," Lewis and fellow activist Hosea Williams led approximately 600 marchers from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to protest the insidious racial discrimination that was systematically preventing black citizens from exercising their right to vote. At the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the marchers were met by white demonstrators waving Confederate flags and by state troopers who used brutal force and tear gas to push them back. The entire assault was captured on camera and televised across the country, forcing America to reckon with the horrific racism raging across the South and, ultimately, paving the way for the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

During the protest, John Lewis was hit on the head by a state trooper and suffered a fractured skull. On Bloody Sunday, Lewis risked his life for the right to vote and has since devoted his life to ensuring that every American has access to the ballot box.

Unfortunately, Congressman Lewis' work did not end with the Civil Rights era. In 2013, the Voting Rights Act, for which he shed his blood, was effectively gutted by a Supreme Court decision, *Shelby County v. Holder*. In the years since, voter suppression targeting communities of color has significantly increased.

Congressman Lewis' life exemplifies how to organize for positive change. "It wasn't just courage alone that advanced civil rights in this country," says *John Lewis: Good Trouble* director Dawn Porter. "It was strategy as well. Far too often, these leaders are lauded only for their bravery. Although that's certainly important, we also need to recognize that the planning and determination of organizers like John Lewis helped drive the movement to be successful."

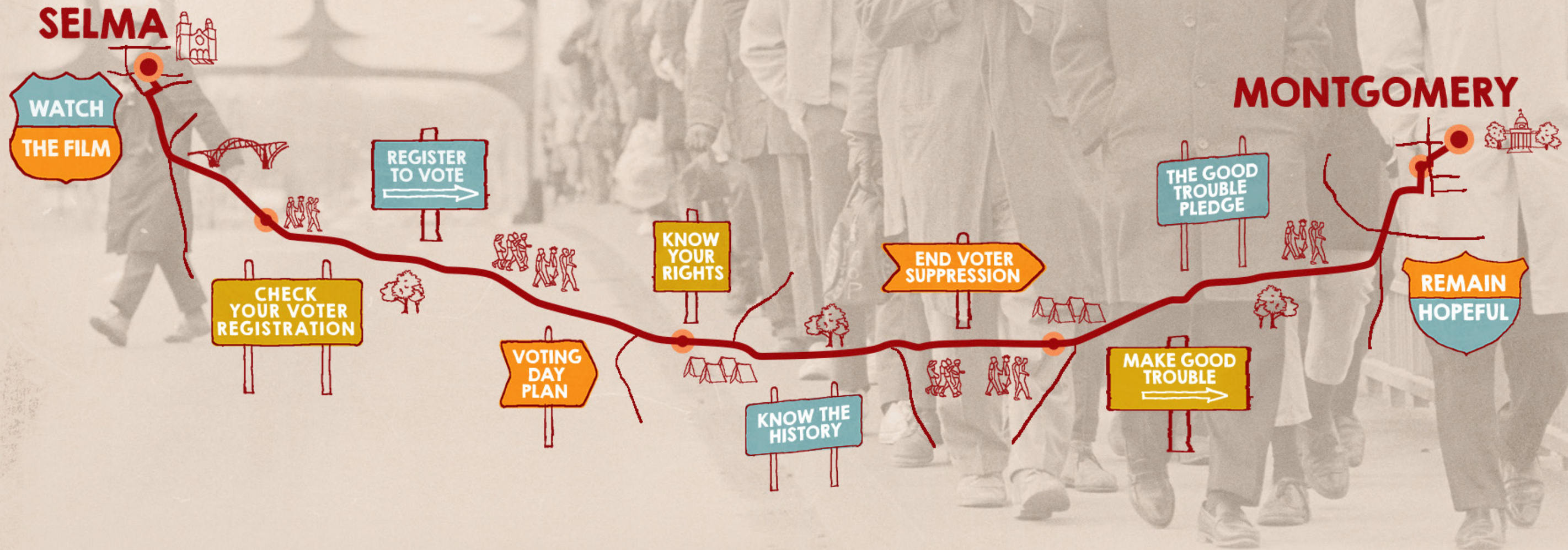
The movement continues.

**JOIN US TO MAKE SOME GOOD TROUBLE!**

**"YOU ONLY PASS THIS WAY ONCE,  
AND YOU HAVE TO GIVE IT ALL YOU HAVE."**

— Congressman John Lewis, *John Lewis: Good Trouble*

# THE ROAD TO GOOD TROUBLE





# OUTLINE YOUR PERSONAL VOTING DAY PLAN

Voting can be more difficult than it should be. Here's a checklist to make sure you can cast your ballot without incident in November.

First, make sure you're properly registered to vote. Check your [registration here](#).

## CREATE A PLAN FOR VOTING DAY:

- [Where is your polling location?](#)
- [Are early voting dates and hours available?](#)
- [Do you need an ID to vote?](#) If so, what kind?
- Can you vote by mail or vote absentee? [Request an absentee ballot.](#)
- [When is your vote by mail due?](#)
- When will you vote? Mark your calendar.

## DO YOU HAVE A PLAN TO VOTE?

**GREAT, YOU'RE READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP.**

# KNOW YOUR VOTING RIGHTS

Now that you have a plan to vote, it's important to remember that voting is a **RIGHT** that you cannot be denied.

The ***ACLU put together a Know Your Rights Tool*** addressing a few issues you may encounter.<sup>1</sup>

- If the polls close while you're still in line, stay in line – you have the right to vote.
- If you make a mistake on your ballot, ask for a new one.
- If the machines are down at your polling place, ask for a paper ballot.
- If you run into any problems or have questions on Election Day, call the Election Protection Hotline:
  - English: 1-866-OUR-VOTE / 1-866-687-8683
  - Spanish: 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA / 1-888-839-8682
  - Arabic: 1-844-YALLA-US / 1-844-925-5287
  - For Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Urdu, Korean, Mandarin, Tagalog, or Vietnamese: 1-888-274-8683



<sup>1</sup>) From the ACLU website:

<https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/voting-rights/#what-are-my-general-rights-on-election-day>

# LEARN THE HISTORY OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

It's hard to overstate the significance of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and how voter suppression has recently evolved to keep poor people and communities of color from accessing the ballot.

KNOW THE HISTORY

## What is the Voting Rights Act of 1965?

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a landmark piece of federal legislation passed to ensure that state and local governments do not deny American citizens the equal right to vote.

Voter suppression laws, including grandfather clauses, poll taxes, and literacy tests, were used to block people of color from voting for decades. The Voting Rights Act enforced the 14th and 15th Amendments of the Constitution, which enshrines the right of every American citizen to vote.

## How did the 2013 U.S. Supreme Court's *Shelby County v. Holder*'s decision affect the Voting Rights Act of 1965?

The Voting Rights Act is widely considered one of the most sweeping and significant pieces of federal legislation ever passed. Prior to it becoming law, states were allowed to pass local election laws including poll taxes, literacy tests, and other tactics designed to systematically deny black citizens the right to vote.

Among other minority protections, the Voting Rights Act required states with a history of racial discrimination to submit any proposed changes to voting to the U.S. Department of Justice. This ensured states could not pass laws that harmed minority voters.

But *Shelby County v. Holder* changed that. On June 13, 2013, the Supreme Court ruled 5 to 4 that the basis used to determine which jurisdictions should be included in this oversight was unconstitutional. In other words, this section of the Act is invalid until Congress passes new parameters which are deemed constitutional.

## How does this impact voters?

Since *Shelby County v. Holder* was decided, several states with a history of racially motivated voter suppression have passed strict voter ID laws, added voter registration restrictions, and initiated significant voter purges. These changes have made it far more difficult for poor people and people of color to vote.

Learn more about the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the latest on changes to it [here](#).





# UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE OF SUPPRESSION

The language of voter suppression can be confusing. Below are some of the common terms you may hear. These definitions come from the ACLU site and you can learn more [here](#).

## Voter Registration Restrictions

Restricting the terms and requirements of registration is one of the most common forms of voter suppression. Restrictions can include requiring documents to prove citizenship, penalties for voter registration drives, or limiting the window of time in which voters can register. Learn more about how registration restrictions are used as a tactic of suppression or about the restrictions in your state [here](#).

## Voter ID Laws

There are 36 states with some form of government-issued photo identification requirement at the polls. This means that over 21 million U.S. citizens are not permitted to vote because ID cards aren't always accessible for everyone. Voter ID laws have been estimated by the U.S. Government Accountability Office to reduce voter turnout by 2–3 percentage points, translating to tens of thousands of votes lost in a single state. Learn more about voter ID laws [here](#).



## Voter Purges\*

Updating state voter databases can contribute to maintaining the integrity of an election because many people move, die, or become ineligible to vote for other reasons. But sometimes, states use this process to purge eligible voters from rolls for illegitimate reasons or based on inaccurate data and, often, voters only learn they've been purged when they show up at the polls on Election Day. Voter purges have increased in recent years. A recent Brennan Center for Justice study found that almost 16 million voters were purged from the rolls between 2014 and 2016. Learn more about voter purges and how the gutting of the Voting Rights Act allowed for this practice to increase [here](#).

## Felony Disenfranchisement\*

A felony conviction can come with drastic consequences, including the loss of the right to vote. Some states ban voting only during incarceration, others while on probation or parole, and some ban a convicted felon's right to vote for life. Due to racial bias in the criminal justice system, felony disenfranchisement laws disproportionately affect people of color, who often face harsher sentences than white people for the same offenses. This means that millions of Americans are denied an equal voice in our democracy. Learn more about felony disenfranchisement and the difference in its impact among racial groups [here](#).

**“DON'T GET LOST IN A SEA OF DESPAIR.”**

— Congressman John Lewis, *John Lewis: Good Trouble*

## Gerrymandering\*

Every 10 years, states redraw district lines based on population data gathered in the census. Legislators use these district lines to allocate representation in Congress and state legislatures. When redistricting is conducted properly, district lines are redrawn to reflect population changes and racial diversity. But too often, states use redistricting as a political tool to manipulate the outcome of elections, allowing the politicians to choose their voters instead of voters choosing their politicians. That's called gerrymandering — a widespread, undemocratic practice that's stifling the voices of millions of voters. Learn more about gerrymandering [here](#).

## For Further Thought:

The results of the 2020 Census will determine the allocation of congressional seats and the drawing of district lines, not to mention the designation of billions of dollars in federal assistance to states and localities. If your community is not fully and accurately counted, its needs and interests won't be adequately reflected in these decisions. Historically, the census has disproportionately undercounted certain population groups, particularly black Americans.

## Have you been counted yet?

Visit [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov) to make sure you are counted today.



\*These definitions come from the ACLU: <https://www.aclu.org/news/civil-liberties/block-the-vote-voter-suppression-in-2020/>

# HOW TO MAKE GOOD TROUBLE

High voter turnout is an excellent measure of a thriving democracy, yet just over 50 percent of the voting-eligible population votes in presidential elections. How can you get into good trouble and help ensure everyone eligible to vote does so in future elections?

## Suggestions to get involved leading up to your voting window:

- **Help others check their registration.** Encourage your friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, teammates, clubs, and congregation members to check their registration status. It only takes a few minutes.
- Create a voting day plan and know your rights.
- Share and host a *John Lewis: Good Trouble* screening and discussion using this guide with your friends, family, or community groups to pass the baton and carry on the legacy of John Lewis.
- **Write a letter to the editor,** blog post, or op-ed about a voter ID-related topic.
- **Write or call your congressperson** to ask them to invest in expanding vote by mail and early voting, as well as ensure that in-person polling locations have the resources they need to operate safely and efficiently.
- **Print and post voter information** about your state at your local schools, churches or other places of worship, or other civic or community organizations.
- **Volunteer to be a poll worker** at your local precinct.
- Protect the vote as a **nonpartisan Poll Watcher.**

**“AS LONG AS I HAVE  
BREATH IN MY BODY, I WILL  
DO WHAT I CAN.”**

– Congressman John Lewis, *John Lewis: Good Trouble*



## Suggestions to support voter engagement when it's time to vote:

- Vote and make sure to tell others as well! Ask them what their plan is to vote and help them make a plan should they need it.
- Volunteer to drive others to the polls or connect people to free transportation resources to get to the polls. Metro or rideshare services often will offer free or discounted rides on Election Day.

None of the above suggestions work for you? There are many ways to get involved that fit your ability, time, and resources. To brainstorm other ideas for how you can get involved, visit **Rock the Vote.**

## For Further Thought:

As you reflect on ways you can continue Congressman John Lewis' legacy of protecting the right to vote, what do his contributions to our democracy mean to you and your community?

# TAKE THE GOOD TROUBLE PLEDGE

Pick the action you're committing to, then click [here](#) to share your pledge to social media and inspire some good trouble.

## I pledge to:

- Check my voter registration.
- Register to vote.
- Vote.
- Help five friends or family confirm their voter registration status.
- Create a voting plan and understand my rights at the polls.
- Volunteer to protect the right to vote.





**“WE MAY NOT HAVE  
CHOSEN THE TIME, BUT THE  
TIME HAS CHOSEN US.”**

– Congressman John Lewis, *John Lewis: Good Trouble*

EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE



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