

(Library ebook) Voting Rights--and Wrongs: The Elusive Quest for Racially Fair Elections

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Abigail Thernstrom

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Abigail Thernstrom : Voting Rights--and Wrongs: The Elusive Quest for Racially Fair Elections before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Voting Rights--and Wrongs: The Elusive Quest for Racially Fair Elections:

The 1965 Voting Rights Act is the crown jewel of American civil rights legislation. Its passage marked the death knell of the Jim Crow South. But that was the beginning, not the end, of an important debate on race and representation in American democracy. When is the distribution of political power racially fair? Who counts as a representative of black and Hispanic interests? How we answer such questions shapes our politics and public policy in profound but often unrecognized ways. The act's original aim was simple: Give African Americans the same political opportunity enjoyed by other citizens the chance to vote, form political coalitions, and elect the candidates of their choice. But in the racist South, it soon became clear that access to the ballot would not, by itself, provide the political opportunity the statute promised. Most southern whites were unwilling to vote for black candidates, and southern states were ready to alter electoral systems to maintain white supremacy. In this provocative book, Abigail Thernstrom argues that southern resistance to black political power began a process by which the act was radically revised both for good and ill. Congress, the courts, and the Justice Department altered the statute to ensure the election of blacks and Hispanics to legislative bodies ranging from school boards and county councils to the U.S. Congress. Proportional racial representation equality of results rather than mere equal opportunity became the revised aim of the act. Blacks came to be treated as politically different entitled to inequality in the form of a unique political privilege. Majority-minority districts that reserved seats for blacks and Hispanics succeeded in integrating southern politics. By now, however, those districts may perversely limit the potential power of black officeholders. Max-black districts typically elect candidates to the left of most voters; those officeholders rarely win in majority-white settings. Such race-conscious districting discourages the development o

Abigail Thernstrom is simply the best writer and thinker we have on voting rights in America. *Voting Rights--and Wrongs*, the culmination of decades of research and thinking, is the watershed book that will reframe our thinking on minorities and the vote. This book is grounded in an irony: that race-specific voting policies designed to achieve racial equality in fact perpetuate racial inequality. And now fate has conspired to reinforce Thernstrom's thesis. Barack Obama's election makes it clear that minorities can now win in a political open market. This is the book we need to understand voting rights in post-Obama America. --Shelby Steele, Robert J. and Marion E. Oster Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution

Abby Thernstrom has studied issues relating to race throughout her illustrious and academically productive career. *America in Black and White*, co-authored by her husband Stephan Thernstrom, is the gold standard for those who want to trace racial progress in America. *Voting Rights--and Wrongs: The Elusive Quest for Racially Fair Elections* will stand honorably alongside *America in Black and White* as an invaluable contribution to how Americans evolve in their thinking about race. With the election of Barack Obama and reconsideration of the Voting Rights Act, this new work of scholarly excellence could not come at a better time. --Ward Connerly, president, American Civil Rights Institute

Abby Thernstrom has studied issues relating to race throughout her illustrious and academically productive career. *America in Black and White*, co-authored by her husband Stephan Thernstrom, is the gold standard for those who want to trace racial progress in America. *Voting Rights--and Wrongs: The Elusive Quest for Racially Fair Elections* will stand honorably alongside *America in Black and White* as an invaluable contribution to how Americans evolve in their thinking about race. With the election of Barack Obama and reconsideration of the Voting Rights Act, this new work of scholarly excellence could not come at a better time. It has become a shibboleth of moral fiber in America to support upholding the Voting Rights Act as if 45 years after 1965, there are still grimy bigots waiting to bar blacks from the voting booth as soon as the Feds turn their backs. Abigail Thernstrom makes a clean argument that the Voting Rights Act is today a brake on the progress that the civil rights movement is supposed to be about. --John McWhorter, senior fellow, Manhattan Institute