The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021 (H.R. 4) is proposed voting rights legislation named after civil rights activist John Lewis. The bill would restore and strengthen parts of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, strengthening legal protections against discriminatory voting policies and practices. Among the most notable parts of the act is its requirement for certain jurisdictions to seek federal approval before enacting certain changes to their voting laws. The bill was written in response to the Supreme Court decision in Shelby County v. Holder in 2013, which struck down the system that was used to determine which jurisdictions were subject to that requirement.

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R. 14) would modernize and revitalize the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Supreme Court has hampered the law by gutting its preclearance provisions in Shelby County v. Holder (2013) and by making it harder to sue to stop discriminatory practices in Brnovich v. DNC (2021). The John Lewis Act would strengthen the law, moving the nation closer to ending discrimination in voting and guaranteeing equal access to the ballot.

**KEY PROVISIONS:**

**Geographic coverage:** The John Lewis Act creates a new framework to determine which states and localities will be subject to preclearance. Under the requirement, jurisdictions with a history of voting discrimination must get approval from the Department of Justice or a federal court in Washington, DC, before changing their voting laws or practices to ensure that the changes are not discriminatory. In Shelby County, the Supreme Court struck down the Voting Rights Act’s preclearance formula, saying it was outdated. The bill updates the formula to ensure that state and local coverage is based on recent evidence of discrimination.

**Practice-based coverage:** The John Lewis Act makes some types of voting changes subject to preclearance nationwide, if certain conditions are met, because those changes are so often discriminatory. The following practices would be covered:

- Creating at-large districts in places with sufficiently large minority populations.
- Changing jurisdiction boundaries to remove minorities from the jurisdiction in places with sufficiently large minority populations.
- Changing the boundaries of a district where a minority group is sufficiently large and has had a large population increase.
- Imposing stricter requirements for documentation or proof of identity to vote.
- Reducing the availability of or altering multilingual voting materials.
- Reducing, consolidating, or relocating polling places, early and Election Day voting opportunities, or absentee voting opportunities in places with sufficiently large minority populations.
- Making it easier to remove voters from the rolls in places with sufficiently large minority populations.