

Voting

continued from page 9

Department is forced to play whack-a-mole filing lawsuits against the most onerous, most visible voting laws.

“The real problem is you have a lot of these local jurisdictions, nobody is going to have the resources to bring the lawsuits,” said Ornstein. “There will be stuff below the surface that we will not see that will have a real impact.”

In an effort to reverse the damage of the Shelby County v. Holder decision, lawmakers crafted the Voting Rights Act of 2014 in the House of Representatives. The bill requires all states to publicize any last minute changes to voting laws.

If a state committed five or more violations in the last 15 years, they would automatically fall under the supervision of the Justice Department. Cities and counties face a lower threshold under the new bill; if they commit three violations in a 15 year period, the Justice Department can step in and require preclearance for any changes in

voting laws and could effectively block laws before they disenfranchise voters.

Under VRA 2014, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi would require preclearance for any changes. “We are not out of the woods yet,” said Rep. John Conyers

the soft touch given to restrictive voter ID laws. “Although the Lawyer’s Committee doesn’t agree with every single provision of the act, this is a true demonstration, a meaningful action on this critically important issue for our country,” said Barbara Arn-

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(D-Mich.) referring to VRA 2014 during his keynote address at the summit. “The bipartisan cooperation that has allowed us to get this far will ultimately carry the day and allow us to meet these challenges made by the Supreme Court and continue strong enforcement around our most fundamental right a sacred right, the right to vote.”

As many voters’ rights advocates applauded the bipartisan effort on the bill they also noted the shortcomings, especially

wine, the president and executive director of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Ornstein was less optimistic about the bill.

“Despite the fact that this is sponsored in a bipartisan way there is no appetite in the leadership of the House of Representatives to move a voting rights act. We have to start thinking about other alternatives,” said Ornstein.

Panelists during the afternoon session on

breaking down voting barriers also took aim at the Presidential Commission on Election Administration’s recent report on the “American Voting Experience.”

The commission’s report recommended increasing opportunities for eligible voters to register online, expanding early voting opportunities, upgrading the certification process for voting machines, and increasing training for poll workers. The panelists acknowledged the limits of the report and noted the commission failed to tackle restrictive voter ID laws that swept in after the Supreme Court’s decision in the Shelby v. Holder.

“The commission has no enforcement power. There’s also a question of whether or not the states are listening,” said Gilda Daniels, an associate professor of law at the University of Baltimore. “I don’t see the federal government passing any of these suggestions.”

Tecnology

continued from page 12

lend financial support and political weight to the cause.

“When the Ferguson grand jury decision came out, that was the first time I watched TV to get information on Ferguson,” says

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“From Civil Rights elders there’s a lot to be learned as relates to strategizing, as well as coming up with a

Technology may become the bridge between the Civil Rights Movement and today’s youth-led agitation

Wright, adding that he followed the story via videos on Vine and first-person reports on Twitter from Ferguson protesters and residents. “I think we see instances of people using social media as part of [using their] power, and we actually have gotten further along with that. But the challenge here is that it’s not sustained.”

As an uprising continues to boil over police brutality, racial discrimination, and condoned police shootings,

specific plan for policy action and seeing it through. But I also think young people bring an energy and a new methodology or reaching masses in a very short time,” says Jones-DeWeever.

“The power and potential of [technology] is extraordinary, and we need to continue to use it as a weapon in our arsenal. But we also need to remember the other side of the coin regarding strategy. It needs to be a both-and approach.”

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