



# The Rise and Fall of the Voting Rights Act (Studies in American Constitutional Heritage)

*Charles S. Bullock III, Ronald Keith Gaddie, Justin J. Wert*

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On June 25, 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, invalidating a key provision of voting rights law. The decision—the culmination of an eight-year battle over the power of Congress to regulate state conduct of elections—marked the closing of a chapter in American politics. That chapter had opened a century earlier in the case of *Guinn v. United States*, which ushered in national efforts to knock down racial barriers to the ballot. A detailed and timely history, *The Rise and Fall of the Voting Rights Act* analyzes changing legislation and the future of voting rights in the United States.

In tracing the development of the Voting Rights Act from its inception, Charles S. Bullock III, Ronald Keith Gaddie, and Justin J. Wert begin by exploring the political and legal aspects of the Jim Crow electoral regime. Detailing both the subsequent struggle to enact the law and its impact, they explain why the Voting Rights Act was necessary. The authors draw on court cases and election data to bring their discussion to the present with an examination of the 2006 revision and renewal of the act, and its role in shaping the southern political environment in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, when Barack Obama was chosen. Bullock, Gaddie, and Wert go on to closely evaluate the 2013 *Shelby County* decision, describing how the ideological makeup of the Supreme Court created an appellate environment that made the act ripe for a challenge.

Rigorous in its scholarship and thoroughly readable, this book goes beyond history and analysis to provide compelling and much-needed insight into the ways voting rights legislation has shaped the United States. *The Rise and Fall of the Voting Rights Act* illuminates the historical roots—and the human consequences—of a critical chapter in U.S. legal history.

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