WHEREAS, voter turnout was [X%] of registered voters in the last election for [mayor and/or city council and/or school board] in [your community]; and

[Consider inserting other locally relevant information – perhaps relating to changes in turnout, disparities in turnout and/or problems widely recognized to have taken place at the polls in your community]

WHEREAS, voter turnout was less than 60% of eligible voters in the 2012 presidential election and [X% - Find out at PromoteOurVote.com] in [your state]; and

WHEREAS, the United States is one of the 11 nations that does not have the right to vote in its constitution out of the 119 nations that elect their public officials using democratic elections; and

WHEREAS, the 15th, 19th, and 26th Amendments in the U.S. Constitution prohibit discrimination in voting on the basis of race, sex, and age respectively, and the 24th Amendment prohibits poll taxes, these amendments do not guarantee Americans an affirmative right to vote; and

WHEREAS, one reason for the country’s low voter turnout is a faulty and outdated voter registration system that is inefficient in registering voters; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Supreme Court wrote in Bush v. Gore, “the individual citizen has no federal constitutional right to vote”; and

WHEREAS, in the 2012 presidential election, there were more than 241 million people of voting age and 220 million eligible voters, but some 90 million eligible voters did not participate, more than half of whom were not registered to vote;

WHEREAS, the fact that Americans often face unnecessary obstacles to voting, including restrictions on when, where, and how to vote, contributes to the low U.S. turnout rates, in which the United States ranks in the bottom 20% of nations in turnout in presidential elections, and even lower in congressional, state and local elections; and

WHEREAS, one of the main reasons for these obstacles is the failure of the United States to define and enforce minimum standards to protect voting rights; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Senate Rules Committee in 2009, released a comprehensive study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) of the 2008 election revealing that problems with the U.S. voter registration system resulted in an estimated seven million eligible and registered voters...
nationally not being allowed to vote for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to the following: not having government-issued identification, computer errors causing no-match/no-vote comparisons, absentee ballots not sent, voter registration forms not turned in by a third party, wrongful voter roll purges, uncounted provisional ballots, insufficient polling places, non-compliance with the mandates of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) by Departments of Motor Vehicles and other designated government agencies, long lines at polling places, the allocation or misallocation of voting machines, lack of voting rights for those with prior felony convictions, voter suppression tactics, lack of voter education and information, inadequate election resources and name changes due to marriage or divorce not recorded with voter registrars; and

WHEREAS, the MIT study also found that an additional nine million potential voters who tried to register were prevented from doing so for a variety of technical issues such as missed deadlines, changes in residency, and other non-essential issues; and

WHEREAS, according to a U.S. Senate survey released in May 2009, more than one-fourth of the ballots requested in the 2008 election by U.S. military personnel deployed overseas – and other eligible voters living abroad – went either uncollected or uncounted; and

WHEREAS our nation’s counties are effectively limited in their choice of voting equipment for federal elections from a small pool of for-profit vendors, which lack open source software and the flexibility to meet the needs of local government; and

WHEREAS, expanding opportunities at local agencies for voter education and non-partisan voter registration beyond the requirements of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) would promote more engaged citizens and increase civic participation; and

WHEREAS, to begin to rectify this situation of low voter participation, voter registration and education should be encouraged in public, private, and parochial high schools and colleges, and students should be taught, in a nonpartisan way about America’s suffrage history and the principles of voting as a way of increasing voter knowledge, education and participation; and

WHEREAS more than a half million citizens of Washington, D.C. experience direct oversight by the U.S. Congress without the power to elect a voting Member of Congress; and

WHEREAS, twenty three states have eased felon voting restrictions since 1997, more than five million American citizens with felony convictions are denied the right to vote due to state laws, including some states permanently barring such citizens from voting even after serving prison and probation terms; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, new laws in many states created new obstacles to voting, including restrictions in voter registration and access to the polls; and

WHEREAS, local governments like ours have the power to enact laws and procedures for local elections that meet and ideally surpass federal and state election standards, promote choice and hold representatives accountable; and

WHEREAS, local governments have a long history of being true laboratories of democracy in this
nation, establishing new laws involving voting, representation and governance that influence state and national practices; and

WHEREAS, an individual right to vote is a fundamental American right; and fundamental rights should be guaranteed to all Americans in the U.S. Constitution;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the [legislative body] of [jurisdiction], assembled this [X] day of [month, year] do hereby affirm that the right to vote is a fundamental right to be cherished, protected and exercised; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the over-arching intent of this Right to Vote resolution is to strengthen the ties that connect residents, elected officials and city government; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we actively encourage voter education and voter registration by government entities and residents of our community, and agree to host a voter registration drive in conjunction with nonpartisan efforts such as National Voter Registration Day; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we, in order to correct misinformation and encourage voter turnout on Election Day, will communicate to all voters through means of mail, television, radio advertisements and/or any other effective means of communication the following information: general information about voting on Election Day, the format of the ballot and any new state and federal laws involving voting; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we will support programs with Internet and/or hotline capacity that will provide information about the mechanics of voting and respond to any problems at the polls, both in national and local elections;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we encourage the recruitment of poll workers and effective training of election officials and poll workers to uphold the individual right to vote; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we establish a task force or standing ‘Right to Vote’ committee to:

- Review all local laws and practices that may affect the right to vote and that may affect the power of voters to elect candidates of choice and hold representatives accountable
- Propose changes to uphold voting rights and increased voter participation
- Promote greater awareness of our political process through civic education and high school programs on voter registration; and that evaluates the impact rules and activity after each election; and
- Develop plans and take action to promote early voting in municipal elections and make recommendations to the City Council on any policies or actions needed to strengthen existing early voting efforts.
- Develop a plan for instituting Election Day voter registration for Municipal Elections.
- Develop plans for a voter registration program designed to register every eligible high school student who is at least 16 years old, support voter education programs to increase the citizenship knowledge and participation in the democratic process.
• Review the potential of allowing voting in city election by those who are at least 16 years old.
• Review other means that suffrage might be expanded in our community, such as the increasingly common practice of allowing legal immigrants to vote in local elections and extending suffrage in local elections for citizens with felony convictions.
• Review all local laws and practices that may affect the right to vote and that may affect the power of voters to elect candidates, hold representatives accountable and recommend changes to our policies that would better uphold voting rights, which encourage increased voter participation.
• Review state laws and recommend state legislation for our state representatives to introduce that would strengthen the right to vote in our community and the rest of the state.
• Partner with our local election officials to jointly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of city election practices and regulations after each election.
• Recommend languages appropriate to [your community] into which all written and recorded voter resources including ballots should be translated.
• Reach out and collaborate with non-profits such as TurboVote to expand the use of absentee ballots for municipal elections.
• Develop a plans and timeline to implement all commitments made in this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the task force regularly evaluates the impact of changes and puts forth suggestions for further refinement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we call on Congress and our state government to take action to uphold voting rights, including ensuring that our nation has a modern voter registration system that meets the basic goal of complete and accurate voting rights, that citizens of the District of Columbia have congressional voting rights, that all jurisdictions have an option to purchase publicly owned or non-profit managed voting equipment and that all voters can be confident that their local jurisdiction meets certain minimum performance standards involving election administration; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we do hereby call on our Members of Congress to support an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would grant an individual right to vote to every American citizen of voting age; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution are provided to the governor, our state legislative representatives, U.S. Speaker of the House, U.S. Senate Majority Leader, this state’s congressional delegation, and the U.S. President.