



GIVE US THE BALLOT: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America

New book by Fairfield native Ari Berman receives early praise

"Berman does a superb job of making the history of the right to vote in America not only easily understandable, but riveting. . . . This is the best kind of popular history—literate, passionate, and persuasive, balancing detail with accessibility."
—Publishers Weekly

"Ari Berman's Give Us the Ballot is a fascinating, if also infuriating, chronicle of the modern era in voting rights—a time when those hard-won rights are suddenly in great jeopardy. Comprehensive, fair-minded and wise, the book tells a haunting story of rights won and rights lost."—Jeffrey Toobin, author of *The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court*

Ari Berman is the son of Warren and Harriet Berman. He was raised in Fairfield and is a graduate of Maharishi School, where he participated in the speech program with Rodney Franz and was editor of the school paper. He graduated from Northwestern University School of Journalism. See his bio at apbspeakers.com/speaker/ari-berman. The following press release was provided.

There have been countless books written about the civil rights movement. Far less attention has been paid to what happened after the dramatic passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and the turbulent forces it unleashed. **GIVE US THE BALLOT: THE MODERN STRUGGLE FOR VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA** by journalist Ari Berman tells this story for the first time. In this groundbreaking narrative history, published on August 4, Berman charts both the transformation of American democracy under the Voting Rights Act as well as the counterrevolution

across the country. Berman, and former Attorney General Eric Holder, along with lesser-known figures at the grassroots level who have played pivotal roles in the fight for voting rights.

At this important historical moment, **GIVE US THE BALLOT** provides new insight into one of the most vital political and civil rights issues of our time, one that is still being played out in courts, state governments, the Supreme Court and voting booths

that has sought to limit voting rights from 1965 up to the present day.

The Voting Rights Act enfranchised millions of Americans and is widely regarded as the crowning achievement of the civil rights movement. And yet fifty years later we are still fighting heated battles over race, representation, and political power, with lawmakers devising new strategies to keep minorities out of the voting booth and the Supreme Court declaring a key part of the Voting Rights Act unconstitutional. "The VRA didn't end the debate over voting rights," Berman writes. "It started a new one."

August 6, 2015 marks the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Voting Rights Act, passed after the historic Selma to Montgomery marches. Berman, a contributing writer for *The Nation* and the author of **HERDING DONKEYS: THE FIGHT TO REBUILD THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND RESHAPE AMERICAN POLITICS**, brings the struggle over voting rights to life through meticulous archival research, in-depth interviews with key figures in the debate and incisive on-the-ground reporting. He vividly takes the reader from the demonstrations of the civil rights movement to the halls of Congress to the chambers of the Supreme Court. Leading characters include Congressman John Lewis, Chief Justice John Roberts, the conservative intellectual Abigail Thern-

strom, and former Attorney General Eric Holder, along with lesser-known figures at the grassroots level who have played pivotal roles in the fight for voting rights.

On August 10, Ari appeared on NPR's Fresh Air (npr.org/programs/fresh-air). On August 5, the New York Times featured his op-ed piece on the Voting Rights Act (nytimes.com). Also on August 5, Ari was interviewed about voting rights on Democracy Now. See the video and transcript at democracynow.org.