The reason the Democratic National Committee filed a lawsuit against Arizona this month is

simple: the right to vote is sacred, and it is under attack in Arizona – a state with a particularly poor record of discrimination and disenfranchisement in minority communities.

It’s certainly no accident that so many of the long waits to vote in the March primary election occurred in Maricopa County, which is home to a large minority population. The state closed 70 percent of its polling locations, citing “cost-cutting” as the reason.

But this is far more serious than a careless oversight, or a bureaucratic mix-up.

Arizona is a state where conservatives banned bilingual education in 2000, where Sheriff Joe Arpaio has run roughshod over the rights of Hispanics with illegal traffic stop detentions, and where Hispanic, African American, and Native American voters have long faced undue burdens in exercising their most basic rights as citizens.

The issue isn’t just that voting locations were severely cut back. Many polling locations have been moved or changed, causing more unnecessary confusion. In fact, almost half of all Maricopa County polling locations changed between 2006 and 2008, and election officials actually have more changes planned before Election Day in November.

 Republican laws and changes disproportionately burden students and young people who are more likely to move within a district, and those dependent on public transportation and the elderly, who are more likely to need assistance voting by mail.

This is part of a much broader, deliberate and concerted effort by Republicans to reduce turnout among particular groups of voters who are inconvenient to them on Election Day. And those voters are more vulnerable today than they have been in the past.

When the Supreme Court decided a case called *Shelby v. Holder* three years ago, it gutted a key provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that has protected voters since the height of the Civil Rights movement. Before the *Shelby*decision, Arizona was considered a “covered jurisdiction,” which meant that the Department of Justice would review any changes to voting rules there to protect against precisely the type of irregularities voters faced last month.

But since the Supreme Court poked a major hole in the Voting Rights Act, Republicans have used the opportunity to attack voting rights among groups who traditionally do not vote for Republicans in those previously covered jurisdictions.

*If no one steps in now, Maricopa County would become one of their greatest disenfranchisement success stories.*

This is completely wrong, and it’s why this lawsuit is absolutely necessary.

When teacher Luz Magallanes arrived at her polling place to vote in the Arizona primary before work, she hoped to share her voting story with her students later that day. But looking at the long lines

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stories prompted those of us at the Democratic National Committee [to file suit](http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/elections/2016/04/14/democrats-sue-arizona-over-voter-access/83034630/)in the U.S. District Court of Arizona against the state officials responsible. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, Kirkpatrick for Senate, the Arizona Democratic Party and eight individual voters, including Magallanes and Feldman, joined the suit.

If successful, the lawsuit will restore federal election oversight of Maricopa County, and make it easier for voters to vote in locations near their homes or workplaces.

It would also reverse a new Arizona state law that made it a felony for absentee voters to have signed and sealed ballots turned in for them, rather than having to mail them in – a practice used widely among minority groups to vote early. So this case isn't just about responding to what happened in March – this case is about the future. It’s about restoring election protections long-needed and relied upon by Arizonans in time for the General Election.

Democrats believe our country is stronger when every voice is heard and every vote is counted, and we will keep fighting to make sure the sacred right of every American to vote is protected.

It’s impossible to know how many people didn’t vote because they couldn’t spend the long hours waiting in line. But it is possible to make sure long lines, convoluted rules and unnecessary barriers to the ballot become a thing of the past. That’s what this lawsuit is about.

Every voter deserves a voice. Every election matters. And when a state passes laws that make it unduly difficult to cast a ballot, that state is out of step with American values, the law, and the Constitution. As Democrats, we’re sending a clear signal that we will not stand for it.

*Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Florida, is chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee.*