



June 22, 2021

SUPPORT S.2093, THE FOR THE PEOPLE ACT

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 220 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we write to urge you to support this week's upcoming procedural vote on the For the People Act. **The Leadership Conference will score this vote in our Voting Record for the 117th Congress.**

The For the People Act represents a transformative vision for American democracy. It would create a democracy that welcomes every eligible voter's chance to participate in civic life, and a democracy that demands integrity, fairness, and transparency in our nation's elections. For far too long, voter suppression has been a shameful reality in our country — undercutting the power and representation of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, people with disabilities, and other communities historically excluded from our political process. The ability to meaningfully participate in our democracy is a racial justice issue. It is a civil rights issue. And the need for legislative action is urgent.

The numerous hurdles that voters faced during the pandemic-plagued 2020 election cycle — exacerbated by the relentless efforts by President Trump to undermine election integrity and impose barriers to the ballot box — reinforced this urgent need. The historic voter turnout in the November election despite these challenges demonstrated the determination and resilience of the American people.

Not every flaw in our democracy can be easily fixed, but there are strong and ready solutions to many of our most significant voting problems. The For the People Act would establish uniform national standards for elections, including automatic and same-day voter registration, a minimum of two weeks of early voting, expanded vote-by-mail, and the elimination of felony disenfranchisement laws. The House of Representatives passed the For the People Act in March 2021.

The For the People Act provides a North Star for the democracy reform agenda. It is a bold, comprehensive reform package that offers solutions to a broken democracy. Repairing and modernizing our voting system goes hand in hand with reforms that address the rampant corruption flowing from the corrosive power of money in our elections, and reforms that address the myriad ethical problems that plague all three branches of the federal government. The reforms in the For the People Act are necessary to advance racial justice and ensure that our government works for all people, not just a powerful few.

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In addition, Congress must pass two other essential racial justice and democracy reform bills. The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, when it is reintroduced in a few months, would restore a critical provision of the Voting Rights Act gutted by the Supreme Court's infamous 2013 *Shelby County v. Holder* decision. The House-passed Washington, D.C. Admission Act would grant long overdue statehood status to the nation's capital. We urge you to support these critical pieces of legislation.

Shortly before his death last year, civil rights icon John Lewis stated: "In our country, the right to vote is precious — almost sacred. Countless people marched and protested for this right. Some gave a little blood, and far too many lost their lives. Around the globe, generations of U.S. officials boasted of this legacy and progress. Today, the world is horrified watching Americans — especially people of color — once again stand in immovable lines and experience undeniable, targeted, systematic barriers to democracy... Time is of the essence to preserve the integrity and promises of our democracy."¹

We fully support the ideal of bipartisan cooperation on voting rights and share the desire to see this issue elevated above the bitter partisanship that has come to define so much of our modern politics. At the same time, we cannot allow the partisan political agenda of some in the Senate to block the passage of a bill that has broad bipartisan support in the country. The policy proposals in the For the People Act are supported by large bipartisan majorities across the country. A recent poll conducted by the Global Strategy Group and ALG Research found that in West Virginia, 76 percent of registered Republicans support the bill. In Arizona, the bill has support from 78 percent of registered Republicans and 75 percent support from voters who backed Donald Trump in the 2020 election.² In a meaningful way, the For the People Act *is* a bipartisan bill.

Our country is at an inflection point. Many of us believe that the right of every American citizen to enjoy equal and unfettered access to the ballot is sacred. Others are fighting to restrict the right to vote because they are willing to sacrifice democracy in favor of their partisan interests. We understand and support the role of the Senate as a place of deliberation and debate. But at some point, debate must end, and votes need to be taken, particularly on an issue that is so fundamental to our democracy. Any rule or procedure that functions to stop bills from ever being considered on the floor is not a procedure to promote debate, it is a procedure to promote gridlock. And with state legislatures across the country passing more and more draconian bills to undermine the right to vote, our democracy cannot afford gridlock.

Put simply, if the choice is between protecting the voting rights of every eligible American citizen or upholding the right of a minority of senators to block a floor vote on a popular pro-democracy bill, we strongly urge you to stand in support of the American people and the fundamental right to vote. Congress and the Biden administration must heed this call. The 2020 election cycle made it painfully clear that we must address this crisis and enact transformational change to build a democracy that works for everyone. The civil and human rights coalition is strongly committed to expanding the franchise and fixing our

¹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20200719053551/https://johnlewis.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/rep-john-lewis-demands-doj-action-anniversary-shelby-v-holder-decision>

² <https://ecuactionfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/EUCU-LAV-AF-HR1-F02.26.pdf>

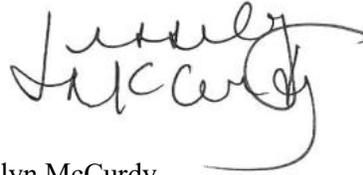


democracy, and we urge the Senate to support the upcoming procedural vote and later pass the For the People Act. Safeguarding our democracy should not be a partisan issue.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson
Interim President and CEO



Jesselyn McCurdy
Interim Executive Vice President for Government
Affairs/Managing Director