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Wade Henderson

October 20, 2021

SUPPORT S. 2747, THE FREEDOM TO VOTE ACT
This vote will be scored by The Leadership Conference
on Civil and Human Rights

Dear Senators:

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 S. 2747, the Freedom to Vote Act (FTVA).** The right to vote is the very foundation of our democracy, and the FTVA would move us closer to a democracy that welcomes every voter to participate in civic life and demands integrity, fairness, and transparency in our nation's elections. 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.

For far too long, our elections have been undermined by practices and tactics intended to undercut 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 numerous hurdles that voters experienced during the 2020 election cycle amid a pandemic — exacerbated by the relentless efforts of President Trump to undermine election integrity and other politicians' efforts to impose barriers to the ballot box — reinforce this urgent need to secure voter access and election administration.

The historic voter turnout in the November election despite these challenges demonstrated the determination and resilience of the American people. And while not every flaw in our democracy can be easily fixed, there are strong and ready solutions to many of our most significant voting barriers. The FTVA is a comprehensive package that would address these barriers, including by establishing uniform national standards for elections. The reforms in the FTVA are necessary to advance racial justice and ensure that our government works for all people, not just a powerful few.

The FTVA would set a basic federal foundation for voting access for all Americans. It would require states to modernize voter registration by instituting automatic and same-day registration, protecting against discriminatory purges, allowing all voters to request mail ballots, and ensuring voters have access to early voting. The legislation would also permit voters who lack photo identification to use a variety of documents to establish their identity, restore voting rights to citizens with past convictions once they complete any term of incarceration, and prevent state election subversion. Moreover, the bill would also ban partisan gerrymandering and take other steps to protect racial and language minorities in the redistricting process.¹ These reforms will make it easier for everyone to vote — and virtually all of them address barriers that disproportionately affect Black, Latino, Asian, and Native American voters and voters with disabilities, and are modeled after reforms that have been successfully implemented in multiple states.

The FTVA would stop most of the worst anti-voter measures that some lawmakers are proposing and passing in states across the country.² For instance, the FTVA would eliminate efforts to roll back early voting by ensuring states offer at least two weeks of early voting, including on nights and weekends. Furthermore, the legislation would require that provisional ballots are counted within a county and create a minimum standard for secure drop boxes, as well as establish Election Day as a holiday. By providing a baseline set of national voting rules that every American can rely on, the FTVA protects all Americans, including voters of color, against efforts to manipulate those rules. In addition, it includes much-needed protections for groups including students, voters with disabilities, and military and overseas voters.

Policies in the FTVA are supported by a large bipartisan majority. A recent poll conducted by ALG Research found that 72 percent of voters across party lines support many of the policies in FTVA.³ We must end the debate about voting and move to protect the most basic freedom of our democracy: the freedom to vote. The 2020 election cycle made it painfully clear that we must address these attempts to undermine our democracy and enact reasonable protections to build a democracy that works for everyone.

Shortly before his death last year, the civil rights giant 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 The bill also contains other essential reforms as well, including a much-needed overhaul of a campaign finance system that [persistently disadvantages](#) communities of color.

² <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/congress-could-change-everything>

³ <https://ecuactionfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Freedom-to-Vote-Poll-SEPT-2021-1.pdf>

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Safeguarding our democracy should not be a partisan issue. The Leadership Conference coalition is strongly committed to making the promise of our democracy real for all. We urge senators to support the upcoming procedural vote and later pass the Freedom to Vote Act. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Jesselyn McCurdy at mccurdy@civilrights.org.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson
Interim President and CEO



Jesselyn McCurdy
Executive Vice President of Government Affairs