

Democracy Action Team Report for March 20, 2021 Board Meeting

The Democracy Action Team (DAT) was asked to lead the UUSJ advocacy effort for December. This was the group's first involvement with the new virtual advocacy process. We decided to focus our efforts on HR 1, the *For the People Act*, and particularly on components of that bill that make it easier to vote such as on-line and automatic registration, voting by mail and early voting. With Pablo and Anna's great assistance we were able to meet with 16 Senate staff members, both Democrat and Republican. Click on this link to read a [summary of the process we used and the meeting results](#).

In January we developed our [team priorities for 2021](#) which again focused heavily on voting rights and HR 1. We also discussed potential partners to evaluate. The list included: Brennan Center, Common Cause, Declaration for American Democracy, Faithful Democracy, Poor Peoples' Campaign, ACLU, NAACP, League of Women Voters, CASA/LUAC, Lawyers Committee, and Public Citizen. Team members split the list up and agreed to investigate each of these. We also formed a sub-group to determine how we should best follow-up with our Senate visits.

In February we reviewed the results of our partner investigation ([see meeting notes](#)) and concluded that the best partner for us to work with directly is [Faithful Democracy](#) who was already planning a round of meetings with Senate staff members to discuss HR1 / S1. They are pleased to work with us and have us participate in their meetings. Two of our members agreed to regularly attend Faithful Democracy meetings, participate in their activities, and report back to the DAT.

In March we developed an S. 1 Action Alert and were able to represent UUSJ at five Faithful Democracy Senate meetings, as well as schedule several of our own. We are inviting other members of Faithful Democracy to attend our Senate meetings which will take place from March 22-26 and potentially beyond. Given the extraordinary importance of HR1/S1 on the future of our democracy, it is a wonderful blessing to be able to work with such a strong and highly capable faith-based consortium.

At our March meeting Pablo reported on the UUSJ strategic work plan he is building and asked the DAT to look at what our priorities would be for the next few years. We will convene a special strategic meeting of the group to put this together as best we can including areas of focus, impacted communities, coalitions to monitor, and states to focus on.

The UUA has asked us to join with them on a series about pro-democracy and voter suppression and we agreed to participate. It's a good opportunity to work collaboratively with the UUA and reach a national audience.

Finally our team made use of a survey to see what the group's beliefs are on ending the filibuster. After voting on multiple options, the group agreed most closely with the Faithful Democracy stance of not letting the filibuster sideline passage of S.1. There was a strong sense that the current filibuster rules need to be changed and there was good support for a couple of options: creating a carve out for democracy legislation, and the general idea that filibuster rules should be changed to allow enough hours of discussion for a minority opinion to be expressed, but not an unlimited amount of time. Discussion followed of what authority DAT has to state UUSJ policy on issues. It was decided we have the authority and responsibility to report to UUSJ what the DAT thinks on an issue and what we hear from our strategic partners.

Fred Van Deusen

Convener, Democracy Action Team