



March 2, 2021

Dear Members of the U.S. House of Representatives

The following faith-based advocates and congregations strive for policies that diminish inequality, support the most vulnerable, nurture human potential, root out systemic racism, and protect the health and well-being of all members of our society and of creation. A broken democracy has clear and detrimental impacts on the issues important to us. The democratic systems that underlie our advocacy no longer seem capable of contending with the big problems facing our country, our communities, and our congregations. **It is in that spirit that we urge immediate passage of the For the People Act (H.R.1).**

Reforms to address the outsized influence of money in politics, to protect voting rights, to strengthen accountability of elected leaders, and to ensure fair representation have languished in Congress for decades. In the meantime, harmful Supreme Court rulings like *Shelby* and *Citizens United* accelerated disturbing trends of voter suppression and dark money that have further undermined public faith in our democracy.

In the 2020 election, low income communities and communities of color experienced voter suppression by gerrymandered state legislatures. We also witnessed historic levels of dark money drown out the voices of everyday voters and a concerted misinformation campaign strategically aimed at undermining civic trust. Then, after ballots were counted and recounted in many states, ethical abuses sought to overturn election results through both state and federal channels. The systemic weaknesses and vulnerabilities in our election systems urgently call for transformational democracy reforms.

The For the People Act (HR 1) is a bold, comprehensive bill that would increase the accessibility and transparency of our democracy by bolstering the power of voters, limiting the influence of big money, and curbing unethical practices of elected leaders. The For the People Act includes measures that have overwhelming public support, including:

**Expanding Voting Rights and Increasing Election Security**

- The bill protects voting rights by either eliminating rules known to disproportionately disenfranchise Black and Brown voters or by mandating alternatives to accommodate the needs of low-income and communities of color.
- The bill requires states to adopt best practices for increasing voter registration in federal elections, including online voter registration, automatic registration for eligible voters, and same day voter registration. These reforms have improved turn-out among voters of color and have significantly increased registration rates in Black and Brown communities in states where they apply. Additionally, the bill protects against improper purges of registration rolls—a practice known to disproportionately impact eligible voters of color.
- H.R.1 restores the right to vote to people with prior criminal convictions, a harmful legacy of racial discrimination known to disenfranchise low-income and voters of color.

- The bill improves election administration with national standards for access to the ballot. Voters can count on 15 days of early in-person voting and voting by mail without burdensome requirements or restrictions.
- H.R.1 establishes standards and processes for drawing federal congressional districts, banning racial and partisan gerrymandering and requiring states to use independent redistricting commissions.

### **Reducing the Influence of Big Money in Politics**

- H.R.1 empowers low-income donors by creating a small donor matching system to finance campaigns, thus freeing officeholders to represent their constituents rather than wealthy megadonors. Matches are funded by a small surcharge on settlements of criminal financial schemes, thus empowering low-income and donors of color while penalizing the wealthiest bad actors.
- The bill promotes transparency by requiring shadow money organizations to disclose their donors and by strengthening funding and oversight of campaign finance and political spending.

### **Enhancing Ethics Standards for Government**

- H.R.1 strengthens enforcement of ethics rules for all three branches of government and broadens conflict of interest laws related to personal financial interests. It slows the “revolving door” between government officials and lobbyists.

Our faith traditions teach that the right to vote in a democracy is a matter of dignity and that engaging in politics to create a more just world is our responsibility. Our advocacy work is predicated on a functional democracy where lawmakers are held accountable and constituents trust that they are taken into account.

The recent physical attack on the halls of Congress grew out of a deeper assault on democracy that demonstrates just how strong the currents of white supremacy run. The election fraud lies that largely targeted communities of color are now being used in many states to justify new laws that make it harder to vote for those same communities. The redistricting process set to begin later this year could set the stage for another decade of extreme partisanship. Our democracy is in peril and these reforms are needed now.

We urge moral leadership in Congress to enact transformative legislation that builds a democracy accessible to all of its citizens. **We ask lawmakers to show the moral courage to vote YES on the For the People Act (H.R.1).**

Sincerely,

**NATIONAL PARTNERS:**

**Alliance of Baptists**  
**American Friends Service Committee**  
**Bread For the World**  
**Center for Common Ground**  
**Church World Service**  
**Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach**  
**Faith Commons**  
**Faith in Public Life**  
**Faithful America**  
**Franciscan Action Network**  
**Friends Committee on National Legislation**  
**Hindus for Human Rights**  
**Interfaith Power & Light**  
**Islamic Society of North America**  
**Leadership Conference of Women Religious**  
**Mormon Women for Ethical Government**  
**National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd**  
**National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC)**  
**National Council of Jewish Women**  
**NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice**  
**Pax Christi USA**  
**People Demanding Action**  
**Poligon Education Fund**  
**Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness**  
**Reclaim Our Democracy**  
**Sadhana: Coalition of Progressive Hindus**  
**Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team**  
**Sojourners**  
**The Episcopal Church**  
**The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society**  
**Unitarian Universalist Association**  
**Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice**  
**United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries**  
**United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries**

**STATE AND LOCAL PARTNERS:**

**Arizona African American Christian Clergy Coalition**

**Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church**

**Lake Oconee Community Church**

**The Freedom BLOC**

**Wisconsin Council of Churches**

**Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice**