

June 7, 2021

Re.: Support of the the *For the People Act* and a Call for Its Quick Passage

Dear Senator:

On behalf of People's Action, a national network of 40 state and local grassroots, power-building organizations in 30 states, we are submitting this letter of support for the *For the People Act* (S.1/H.R 1) and urging you and your colleagues to take swift action to pass it, restore faith in our democracy, and bring power back in to the hands of the people.

No matter what we look like, our background or zip code, most of us believe that voters pick our leaders -- our leaders do not get to pick their voters. When it comes to our elections, we want a transparent process we can trust, where Americans have equal freedom to vote, whether we live in a small town or big city, the south or the north.

This, however, is not what we are currently experiencing. Instead, a handful of extremist politicians put up barriers to silence our voices based on what we look like or where we live. Republican officials across 47 states have introduced nearly 400 bills in this legislative session alone that aim to restrict voting rights and undermine our democracy. At least 55 of them are in the legislative process, and 5 have already been signed into law.

Here are just a few examples of what People's Action member organizations are currently experiencing in their states and why we are looking to the federal government to act NOW to preserve our democracy:

- **ARIZONA:** On Monday, May 10th Arizonans witnessed an assault on the democratic process with the signing of SB1485 also known as the Permanent Early Voting List "PEVL" Purge. SB1485 is a voter suppression bill that could remove more than 200,000 Arizonan voters from the vote by mail list. This bill disproportionately impacts Black, Brown, and Indigenous voters and reverses much of the work our communities have done to ensure equitable access to casting your ballot. SB1485 undermines the vote by mail system that millions of Arizonians have used. Arizona's SB1485, SB1713, SB1003, SB1241 and the slate of over 400 voter suppression bills being introduced across the country by Republicans is a direct, organized, and orchestrated attack on democracy. We need federal intervention to protect and expand voter access, not limit it. This is only possible with the passage of H.R. 1 and S. 1, the "For the People Act". The For the People Act will modernize voting through automatic voter registration, establishing same day and online voter registration, protect voters from flawed purges like SB1485, and restores the federal voting rights of individuals with criminal convictions. [[Submitted by Stephanie Maldonado of Living United for Change in Arizona \(LUCHA\)](#)]
- **IOWA:** In late February, Republicans at the Iowa Statehouse pushed through a dangerous bill that would make voting harder for everyone in Iowa. Their bill would especially threaten the voting rights of working people, people of color, and people with disabilities. It would: (a) Restrict when early voting locations are open, (b) Make it harder for voters to get and return an absentee ballot, and (c) Close polling places an hour earlier on Election Day. Senate File 413 was passed on party line votes in both chambers and signed into law. This new law – in the wake of Iowa's record voter turnout in 2020 – take Iowa in a 180 turn and will make it more difficult to vote by: Reducing Iowa's early voting period from 29 days to 18; Stopping auditors from sending out absentee ballots until mid-October;

Barring auditors from voluntarily mailing absentee ballot request to voters; Barring anyone other than the voter or an immediate family member or caregiver from returning an absentee ballot; Allowing only one drop box for early ballots per county; and Making it more difficult for auditors to establish satellite voting locations. Iowa has faced continuously more attacks each week from Republicans hell bent on their agenda of division, but these attacks on our democracy have the potential to rig the rules for the foreseeable future. With Iowa Republicans having their way, voting is becoming harder for Iowans, and that's why Iowa needs federal democracy protections like H.R. 1. Bills like H.R. 1/ S. 1 are the first step in addressing attacks on Iowa voters. [\[Submitted by Adam Mason of Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement Action Fund \(ICCI-AF\).\]](#)

- **MICHIGAN:** During November and December 2020, we came perilously close in Michigan to losing Joe Biden's electoral votes, and the votes that kept Gary Peters in office. The press gives the credit to courts and the unicorn honest Republican, but that is not how we snatched back the rightful results from racists seeking to stop Detroit votes from being counted. It was 350 voters and poll challengers who attended the Wayne County Canvassing meeting, and for hours, one after the other, calling out the racist, inappropriate refusal to certify Wayne County's and thus, Detroit's results. Monica Palmer had voted against it at the beginning of the meeting, the BOC was tied 2-2, after dozens of people spoke out against it, she changed her vote. Without that certification, Aaron Van Langevelde, who has been hailed as the hero who "did the right thing" and voted to certify the results at the state level, would have been missing certification of Michigan's most populous county. People credit the law, but Republicans ignore the law and would have stalled certification indefinitely. We fought this on the ground, with no support nationally. These people learn from their losses. They are making laws that precisely target the way African Americans vote. They have developed this plan nationally, and handed it out to Republican legislatures in swing states. Here in Michigan, the proposals are to eliminate many ballot boxes, prohibit mailing of absentee ballot applications and postage-paid return envelopes to voters, make voter ID requirements stricter in ways that reduce African American voter turnout, allow poll and audit challengers to more aggressively intimidate voters, poll workers and vote counters, injecting more partisans into clerk's offices and county boards of canvassers, and to require results to be delivered by noon after Election Day. If they succeed we will not win next time around. We need the For the People Act/S1. This nationally-organized voter suppression effort needs a national "NO!" from our representatives in Congress. Please do not abandon us to person to person confrontation again. Please give the lawyers a way to have our backs, to protect Black and brown votes in Michigan [\[Submitted by Angana Shah of MI People's Campaign.\]](#)
- **MINNESOTA:** Minnesota's status as the only state in the nation with a divided legislature, together with having a DFL governor, protected their elections systems and their current streak of having the highest voter turnout in the nation for three straight cycles. The Republican-controlled Senate this year passed a Voter ID bill and a provisional ballot bill intended to nullify their same-day voter registration system. While both of those bills would harm the integrity of MN elections, the latter bill is particularly odious, as it would have added unnecessary bureaucracy to elections administrators across the state. The attacks on MN elections are relentless and, given the state of politics in this country, we know they are only going to get worse. Any legislative attempts to strengthen equity and increase BIPOC participation have been thwarted by the Senate. Minnesota's high voter turnout comes with a racial gap that is among the worst in the country. Only 49.2% of registered black voters actually voted in 2012 and 32.5% of Hispanic voters. Low voter turnout only compounds other disparities in our state and perpetuates second class citizenships through legislation and policies that uphold systemic racism in education, housing and criminal justice and countless other systems. Without assistance from the federal government, Minnesota, like many other states, will constantly be at the mercy of the next election. [\[Submitted by Yolanda Roth of Take Action MN \(TAMN\).\]](#)
- **NORTH CAROLINA:** North Carolina has been ground zero for anti-democratic and anti-voter legislation, since the gutting of the Civil Rights Act in 2013. Laws designed to disenfranchise Black voters with "surgical precision" have been struck down, and North Carolina districts have been found to be illegal racial gerrymanders...but not before important elections were conducted. This means that Carolinians have been forced to vote and live under the rule

of candidates chosen in undemocratic and unjust elections. These politicians have gone on to pass innumerable additional laws that hurt poor and working Carolinians of all races. This process should never happen again in the United States of America, yet efforts to weaken and attack our democratic process are ongoing. Right now, several bills, including HB 782 and SB 326 are moving through our state legislature. If passed, these bills would shorten the absentee ballot request window, and nullify the tens of thousands of valid ballots that arrive at local board of elections offices after 5pm on election day. This is a blatant attempt to restrict the ability of voters to participate in our most cherished democratic process. We must pass the For the People act to secure the blessing of liberty and democracy for every American. [\[Submitted by Dreama Caldwell and Todd Zimmer of Down Home North Carolina \(DHNC\).\]](#)

- **PENNSYLVANIA:** Pennsylvania became a defining swing state in the 2020 United States Presidential election and is poised to hold one of the most significant elections for the United States Senate in 2022. Although the current Democratic control over the Governor's office and the State Supreme Court prevent the worst Republican attempts at voter suppression - we are by no means safe from the threat to Democracy. This winter the Pennsylvania Republicans attempted to introduce a constitutional amendment that would change the state's voting system for state judicial candidates from a statewide vote to a district based vote. This proposal for 'judicial gerrymandering' would disenfranchise hundreds of thousands of Black and Brown voters living in dense urban areas like Philadelphia. It's a thinly veiled attempt to change the balance of power in the judicial branch of state government. Although the Republicans failed to get this amendment on the ballot for this spring's primary election, they are very likely to succeed at putting it on the ballot in November of 2021. This is particularly dangerous because it only needs a simple majority of voters to pass, and no ballot initiative in Pennsylvania has failed to get at least 50% since 1993. [\[Submitted by Lev Hirschhorn of PA Stands Up \(PASU\).\]](#)
- **WISCONSIN:** The threat to the right to vote in Wisconsin is grave. Wisconsin has a number of voter suppression laws on the books from the Scott Walker administration which would be addressed in part by HR 1/SB 1. Because we have a Democratic governor for the time being, there is not a threat of the enactment of new voter suppression bills that have been introduced by the GOP Legislature. But there is a threat that the Legislature will find a legal path, in cooperation with a conservative Supreme Court, to remove the Governor from the redistricting process, locking in badly gerrymandered maps for another decade. H.R.1/ S.1 would address this threat in part. But if this happens, and the GOP picks up the Governorship in 2022, there would be further voter suppression laws impacting the 2024 election, and a serious threat that the Legislature would give itself the authority to select Wisconsin's presidential electors in 2024. [\[Submitted by Robert Kraig of Citizen Action WI \(CAWI\).\]](#)

It's time for national standards for voting so all of us have a say in key decisions in who represents us and around key issues like affordable care, quality jobs and a healthy future. Together, we can ensure that voters across our country can safely and freely cast our ballots so that every voice is heard and our elections reflect the will of the people.

Across the nation in 2020, Americans experienced unprecedented voter suppression, historic levels of dark money spent to drown out the voices of everyday Americans, and rampant ethical abuses. The backlash against a democracy for the people continues. We desperately need the Senate to lean in and save and reform our democracy. We cannot wait for action on this any longer. We urge Congress to make this pro-voter, anti-corruption legislation a priority NOW.

The Senate must bring this legislation to the floor for a vote immediately. We would like to see this legislation advance before the July 4th recess and we are looking for you to ensure the passage of the *For the People Act* in any way that you need to. Our democracy - and, in turn, all the issues that we care about - depends on it.

On behalf of the 40 member organizations of People's Action,

Handwritten signature of George Goehl in black ink, appearing as stylized letters G, E, P, G, and L.

George Goehl
Executive Director

Handwritten signature of Bree Carlson in black ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'B' followed by a long horizontal line.

Bree Carlson
Deputy Director

Handwritten signature of Sondra Youdelman in blue ink, featuring a stylized 'S' and 'Y'.

Sondra Youdelman
Campaigns Director