



December 13, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leaders Schumer and McConnell,

We write to express our concern about threats to our nation's democracy and to urge you to take action by passing the Freedom to Vote Act and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Without decisive action by the federal government this year to protect voters' access to the ballot and ensure the integrity and transparency of our elections, the voices of Americans across the country, especially Americans of color, will be suppressed.

Free and fair elections are fundamental to the United States Constitution. It is simply undemocratic for politicians to abuse their power and seek to pre-determine or even overturn our election results. Yet since the 2020 election, state legislators across 48 states have introduced nearly 400 bills to restrict Americans' access to the ballot.<sup>1</sup> Even now, legislators in some states are pushing to rewrite election laws—some they themselves passed—simply because they did not like the outcome of the last election. These state-level efforts to limit access to the ballot undermine voting rights and create disparities across the country regarding voting access.

Our democracy works best when every eligible voter has safe, convenient, and secure access to the ballot. While we continue to thwart efforts to restrict voting in our respective states, we can't do it alone and need a federal solution through legislation like the Freedom to Vote Act and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

As you know, **the Freedom to Vote Act** would:

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<sup>1</sup> *Equity for the People*, Brennan Center for Justice, June 17.2021, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/equity-people>.

- Stop gerrymandered election maps;
- Ensure transparency of our elections;
- Push back against new voter suppression laws;
- Protect local election officials and poll workers from partisan attacks and harassment; and
- Establish standards for post-election audits.

And **The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act** would:

- Restore the protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the government's ability to respond to discrimination at the polls;
- Update the law in the wake of the Supreme Court decision in *Shelby v. Holder*;
- Modernize the formula used to determine where there are patterns of discrimination;
- Ensure last-minute changes to voting do not adversely affect voters; and
- Strengthen the government's ability to send federal observers to jurisdictions where elections are facing threats of discrimination.

We appreciate and applaud the efforts by Senate Majority Leader Schumer and Senate Democrats to date to protect access to the ballot box. However, we've been extremely disappointed to see Republicans use congressional procedures to block the paths of these straightforward, commonsense, and long-overdue pieces of legislation in the Senate.

As governors, we know well that red and blue states have been implementing policies to make the ballot more accessible at the state level, and that voter protection is steeped in a strong, bipartisan history at the national level.

Congress has the chance to set uniform standards for voting, to bring transparency to our elections, and to fight back against insidious voter suppression laws. Therefore, we urge you to do everything in your power to find a path forward for the policies in the Freedom to Vote Act and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act before the year's end. The protection of our nation's most fundamental right – the right to vote – is not a political issue or a partisan issue. It is an issue of our democracy.

Sincerely,



Governor Gretchen Whitmer  
State of Michigan



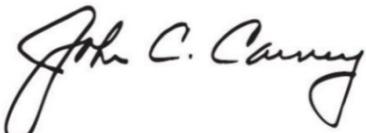
Governor Gavin Newsom  
State of California



Governor Jared Polis  
State of Colorado



Governor Ned Lamont  
State of Connecticut



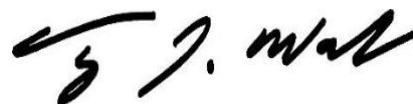
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State of Oregon



Governor Tom Wolf  
State of Pennsylvania



Governor Jay Inslee  
State of Washington



Governor Tony Evers  
State of Wisconsin