



Dear Senators Capito and Manchin,

As faith leaders and faith-based advocates in the state of West Virginia, we write to you today about the urgent need to pass the *For the People Act (S.1)*. The *For the People Act (S.1)* includes reforms to protect voting rights, address the outsized influence of money in politics, curb unethical practices by elected leaders, and to ensure fair representation in Congressional redistricting.

We believe that an inclusive and accessible democracy is foundational for a healthy nation. In 2020, due to Covid-19, West Virginia expanded the option of voting by mail to all registered voters. This expansion led to 802,726 West Virginians casting their ballot—the most in 60 years. Our state has traditionally had low turnout, but we saw that people want to vote and when undue barriers are lifted, more people will participate in our democracy. Nationally, voter turn-out saw a similar increase, reaching the highest rate in a century despite a deadly pandemic.

Unfortunately, we have also seen how the erosion of voter rights and the flood of money into our elections undermines the integrity of our democracy. The false narrative about election fraud that led to an insurrection on January 6 has emboldened many states to justify restrictive rules that make it harder for millions of Americans to vote--especially in Black and Brown and historically marginalized communities. Barriers to voting promote the legacy of racism in our country at a time when we should be undoing this legacy of systemic injustices. The right to vote and participate in a democracy is a matter of dignity and is preservative of all other rights.

This is a critical moment to affirm voters' increased engagement by passing the *For the People Act*. The voting and election reforms in S.1, written by the late Rep. John Lewis, would set federal baseline standards of access for every eligible voter, regardless of where they live. These provisions—along with other transformative reforms in the bill—make S.1 the comprehensive package that is needed to address the deep, systemic, and wide-ranging problems in our democratic systems. Its scope reflects the reality that restoring faith in democracy cannot be done through piecemeal changes.

Over the years, many West Virginians have served to make the world safe for democracy, to ensure that our children and grandchildren can live safely and be secure at home. In the [2020 annual report by Freedom House](#), an international democracy watchdog group, the United States fell to a new low in rankings of world democracies. At this crucial juncture in our nation's history, we believe that the government also has an important role to play in ensuring our democracy is protected.

Our faith calls us to uphold justice, support the most vulnerable, nurture human potential, root out systemic racism, and protect the health and well-being of all members of society. A broken democracy has clear and detrimental impacts for how our nation can collectively answer that call. To this end, we ask that you support the *For the People Act (S.1)*.

Sincerely,

Bishop Mike Klusmeyer
Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia

Sister Carmella Campione, CSJ
Congregation of Saint Joseph

Rabbi Victor Urecki
B'nai Jacob Synagogue

Ronald English
President of the Charleston Branch NAACP