



## Pass H.R.1/S.1 Talking Points

### 2020 ELECTION CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

- ★ The 2020 election cycle demonstrated that our democracy CAN STILL DELIVER thanks to dedicated voters, civil servants, and engaged citizens. Regular people make our democracy work.
- ★ It was the highest percentage of voter turnout since the election of 1900, that's in spite of a deadly pandemic. Over 70% of votes were cast early or by mail. Options to access the ballot make a difference in how our democracy works—voters want to engage and WILL if given the opportunity.
- ★ The election also exposed the fragility and vulnerabilities of our systems:
  - Blatant attempts to undermine voting rights and suppress the vote.
  - Lack of protections against voter intimidation at the polls.
  - Confusion and uncertainty caused by incessant litigation and differing rules.
  - Obstructionist state election rules passed by severely gerrymandered state legislatures.
  - Obscene levels of political donations from known and unknown sources.
  - Rampant misinformation exploiting voter confusion and partisanship.
- ★ We need democracy reforms that build on the successes of the 2020 election by opening up access to the ballot for eligible voters and improving options to make voting easier and more secure. We also need democracy reforms that protect future elections from the attacks and vulnerabilities in our current systems that have undermined faith in our democracy. That is what the reforms in HR1/S1 do.

### BROKEN SYSTEMS RESULT IN DYSFUNCTIONAL GOVERNMENT

- ★ The breakdown of our democratic systems over years has brought us to an impasse: facing congressional gridlock, delayed COVID response legislation despite a devastating economic crisis, extreme hardship by the most vulnerable, and exploding COVID infection rates and deaths.
- ★ Instead of legislating, we see partisan gridlock, manipulation of political rules for partisan advantage, corruption, inability to meet the needs of the nation, policy sacrificed to politics. This is unacceptable, a major legislative fix is needed.

### THE SOLUTIONS ARE AT HAND

- ★ To create the kind of change voters want to see in our democracy, we urge the passage of H.R.1/S.1—the For the People Act — a once-in-a-generation democracy reform package. Reforms would clean up our political system, get big money out of politics, end partisan



gerrymandering, hold elected officials accountable for corruption, expand and protect voting rights, and create a democracy that values the voices of all Americans.

- ★ The people are ready and eager for Democracy reforms—these ideas are overwhelmingly popular across the political spectrum. H.R. 1/S. 1 includes reforms drawn from bills that have long had bipartisan political sponsorship at both the federal and state levels and are broadly supported. This is only a partisan issue on Capitol Hill.
- ★ Voting is a sacred rite and policies should make it easier, not harder, to vote. H.R.1/S.1 will modernize and secure our elections through automatic voter registration, standardized access to absentee and early voting, and prohibiting common voter suppression practices.
- ★ Voting is a sacred right and voters should trust their ballots are counted. H.R.1/S.1 would shore up our voting systems by ensuring jurisdictions have the resources they need to maintain election infrastructure and proper standards, and it would require backup paper ballots in every state.

#### STATES CANNOT UNDERMINE OUR DEMOCRACY

- ★ Fueled by lies of widespread voter fraud, bills have been introduced--and some passed--in 47 states which have the potential to dramatically reduce voting access. The For the People Act (H.R. 1/S. 1) would [thwart virtually every single one](#), instead expanding access to the ballot for eligible voters. (*State-specific impact of reforms outlined in article*)
- ★ In the states where partisan and severely gerrymandered state legislatures are choosing to limit access to the ballot for political advantage, residents need federal protection of their voting rights. Elections are meant to be won by adding voters through attraction, not excluding voters from being heard.
- ★ H.R.1/S.1 would create a national baseline for voting access that every American can rely on, and it would foil state efforts to manipulate voting rules to exclude eligible voters or create discriminatory barriers to voting.
- ★ The Constitution (Article I, Section 4) says that states can set the rules on the time/place/manner of federal elections, but also that “the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations.” While Congress has failed to exercise this power, now is the urgent time to do so.
- ★ The [Supreme Court](#) has explained that this includes the power to “provide a complete code for congressional elections.” Congress’s power here is “paramount, and may be exercised at any time, and to any extent which it deems expedient.”

#### HARSH VOTING RULES ARE NOT ELECTION INTEGRITY

- ★ The Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection demonstrated the urgent need for leaders to pass reform policies that begin renewing faith in the fairness and security of our democratic systems. Recent efforts by state legislatures to clamp down on voters’ access to the ballot is a misguided approach to election integrity that only reinforces the lie of mass voter fraud in the 2020 election. [Restrictive voting laws](#) at the state level are not the answer to election integrity.



- ★ We need baseline standards nationwide to ensure that all eligible voters have equal opportunity to cast their ballots in the 2022 election, regardless of what state they live in. Evidence-based reforms that increase the transparency, uniformity and integrity of our election systems are included in H.R.1/S.1.
- ★ Funding for updated election infrastructure, training for election officials and poll-workers, transparent maintenance and upkeep of voter registration rolls, foolproof auditing systems and developing best practices for vote by mail are just a few of the reforms that help secure our elections.
- ★ Restoring voters' faith in the elections must be based on evidence, must address identified weaknesses in our systems, and must aim to strengthen security while meeting baseline standards for access to the ballot. Easier access to the ballot for eligible voters should always be a goal for election integrity.

#### THE FAITH COMMUNITY HAS A STAKE IN DEMOCRACY REFORMS – IT'S AN URGENT MORAL ISSUE

- ★ If we are ever going to see progress on the policy issues we care about--systemic racism, climate change, hunger, violence, poverty, healthcare, and more--we must have a democracy that responds to the needs and priorities of voters - not wealthy donors and corporate interests.
- ★ People of faith are called to participate in the public square to help usher in a better world—part of this call is ensuring space for others to participate meaningfully as a matter of dignity. Advocating for meaningful democracy reforms affirms the dignity of each person.
- ★ Ideas of equity, dignity, trust, participation, peace, communal responsibility, accountability and civic love are embedded in the founding principles of this democracy and should be modeled by our democratic systems and elected leadership.
- ★ We believe that democratic governance is the best existing system to peacefully hold a diversity of ideas, to enable healthy compromise among competing interests and to instill a sense of belonging among all its members. A democracy that works better will help our nation heal and thrive.

#### MONEY IN POLITICS IS CORRUPTING

- ★ We do not want our police or our fire fighters to be funded by wealthy individuals because it can influence where and how they respond to needs. In the same vein, we should not have public servant lawmakers that are funded by wealthy individuals and dark money which can skew their priorities and who they serve.
- ★ Total spending in the 2020 election cycle is estimated to have reached a record-shattering \$14 billion, more than twice the amount spent in the 2016 election cycle (which set the previous record). (Center for Responsive Politics).
- ★ 42% of that spending came from the ultra-rich individual donors. 22% was spending by super PACs, political parties, and other nonprofit dark money groups. This money largely consists of



huge influence-seeking contributions that are corruptive for federal officeholders and government policy decisions. The GOOD NEWS is that small donors also participated in record numbers--making up 22% of the spending. Small-donor financing should be the lifeblood of political campaigns.

- ★ H.R. 1/S. 1 will bring transparency and accountability to our campaign finance system by disclosing large donors--\$10,000 or more--who spend money to sway elections. Voters deserve to know who is trying to influence them.
- ★ Campaign finance reform will open up our political system to allow more people from diverse backgrounds to run and win competitive campaigns. A Small Donor Matching fund (financed by fees on settlements for lawbreakers and wealthy tax cheats) would match donations under \$200 to-one. Small donor support is amplified and opens up the field of candidates for low-wealth, working-class and candidates of color.
- ★ H.R. 1/S. 1 includes a duty-to-report offers of illicit campaign support by foreign governments to the FBI and FEC. Recent [reports revealed](#) continued attempts to meddle in the 2020 election by Russian President Putin, highlighting the need for these reforms. The obligation would apply to political committees (campaigns committees, PACs, Super PACs, etc.).

#### GERRYMANDERING DISTRICTS IS UNFAIR, UNACCOUNTABLE, BREEDS CYNICISM

- ★ Congressional districts should ideally represent communities of interest, gerrymandering has artificially divided up voters to manipulate power. Every vote should count equally in determining elected leadership.
- ★ Currently, the impact of a vote in electing leadership varies greatly because of gerrymandered districts that distort representation to ensure continued control by those in power. When politicians are assured of their power they do not feel accountable to constituents.
- ★ Unaccountable decision-makers do not need to understand the issues that affect people they represent.
- ★ People represented by those policy makers are also given no reason to believe that their participation will make a difference. Gerrymandering creates a destructive, cynical dynamic counter to civic engagement and trust.