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Arizona, West Virginia, and National Faith Leaders Decry Senate Filibuster of For the People Act

Sr. Quincy Howard, OP: "Each and every Senator who refused to debate democracy reforms is failing in their duty."

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, 50 Republican Senators chose to block further consideration of S.1, The For the People Act despite the public's overwhelming and bipartisan support for its reforms.

S.1 would expand and protect voting rights for all, end partisan and racial gerrymandering, get dark money out of politics, and restore transparency and accountability in our government. Moreover, it would dismantle the racist and systemic barriers intentionally built over decades to exclude Black and brown voices from fully participating in our democracy.

In response, the Faithful Democracy coalition and its faith partners issued the following statements:

Sister Quincy Howard, OP, Coordinating Director, Faithful Democracy Coalition, said:

"The actions of the Republican Senators who blocked today's procedural vote on S.1 are shameful and damaging to our democracy. What Republicans in the Senate fail to appreciate is that they also would benefit from the passage of the For the People Act. The alternative—continued inaction—leads to an unjust and unfair future for our country, characterized by increasingly anti-democratic tactics to suppress the vote. The Republican Party needs these reforms just as much as the Democratic Party to protect the integrity of our elections.

"Each and every Senator who refused to debate democracy reforms is failing in their duty. These reforms are overwhelmingly popular with the public and deserve to be deliberated. Refusing to consider the threats to our democracy is a position that accepts voter suppression and the growing control of money in politics."

Dr. Warren H. Stewart, Sr., Chairperson of the Arizona African American Christian Clergy Coalition, said:

"In light of the immediate threats to voting rights and fair elections in Arizona, the African American Christian Clergy Coalition is deeply disappointed by today's vote by Senate Republicans to block debate on the For the People Act. It would be a miscarriage of justice if the filibuster—a misused Senate procedural rule—is allowed to continue blocking a floor vote on S.1.

We urge Senator Sinema, who cosponsored S.1, to prioritize protecting her constituents' voting rights over the filibuster rule and to work with her Democratic colleagues to create a path for consideration of this critical bill. This is a seminal point in our history. What happens now will impact future generations. We demand nothing less than a full court press—and a reform of the filibuster—to protect our voting rights and our democracy."

Rev. Katie Sexton-Wood, Executive Director, Arizona Faith Network, said:

"Today's filibuster of S.1 was very discouraging for those of us who have spent the past months fighting relentless efforts to restrict the freedom to vote for Arizonans. We have watched our democracy's guardrails being torn down by the state legislature and now rely on our national leaders to protect our voting rights.

"As people of faith, we know that it is always possible to make a way out of no way and so we refuse to accept defeat with today's filibuster. Instead, we call on Senators Sinema and Kelly to show leadership, to create a pathway to passage for the For the People Act."

Rabbi Victor Urecki, West Virginia's longest serving rabbi in Charleston, West Virginia, said:

"I have been honored to know Senator Manchin for many years. His critical vote today to advance consideration of S.1 aligns with his long held principles of listening to constituents and ensuring that everyone's voice can and must be heard.

"His vote is a powerful reminder that important legislation should be publicly debated and that the "greatest deliberative body" in the world must find a way to address the threats to our democracy. The precious right to vote and the responsibility of leaders to protect our democracy have come to a defining moment for this generation. I urge our Senator—even as he continues to seek common ground across the aisle—to be prepared to take bold action to preserve our democracy for future generations."

Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, said:

"As a Unitarian Universalist minister, I call on all senators to follow their elected duty and moral conscience to maintain the integrity of our democracy and voting rights. And I decry the use of the filibuster to block this critical legislation. We must protect everyone's fundamental right to vote—especially Black, Brown, Indigenous and low-income communities that have been disenfranchised for generations.

"We must end the procedural filibuster because it renders our government ineffective and obstructs the will of the people. The filibuster has historically been abused and wielded to prevent vital civil rights and voting rights legislation from being passed. Conservatives must stop retelling the Big Lie as a false reason to shut down this legislation. They fear the For the People Act because it will nullify their state bills that thwart free access to the polls—through throw-back Jim Crow legislation. The UU faith tradition upholds democratic principles and the inherent worth of all people and we believe that every voice matters, every vote matters."

Mary J. Novak, Executive Director of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, said:

"Once again, the filibuster blocks progress on racial justice and equity in our country. S.1, the For the People Act, is made up of bold, bipartisan democracy reforms to protect the freedom to vote and strengthen our electoral system. Today, X Republican Senators used the filibuster to block efforts to protect our democracy. Much like their obstruction of a bipartisan January 6th Commission, they avoid deliberations that might get at the legacy of white supremacy and its continued threat to our democratic institutions.

"The filibuster blocks debate. The filibuster blocks justice. The Senate must make a way to advance S.1. We need inclusive, fair, functional elections so that We the People are truly represented by our elected leaders."

Rev. Nathan Empsall, Executive Director, Faithful America, said:

"The current form of the filibuster is a Jim Crow relic. Senate Republicans like Mitch McConnell, Marco Rubio, and Ron Johnson proved this last month when they blocked an investigation into the January 6 attack on the Capitol, which was a failed attempt to overturn the ballots of Black and Brown voters. They proved it yet again today by blocking the For the People Act, which would make it easier and more equitable for all Americans to vote, regardless of race or income.

"A functioning democracy is key to protecting the common good and honoring the God-given dignity of every voter. Since Senate Republicans have proven time and time again that they care more about protecting their own partisan power than they do securing our democracy or treating all Americans equally, it's time for Senate Democrats, including Kyrsten Sinema and Joe Manchin, to take a moral stand and finally repeal the Jim Crow filibuster."

Jason Miller, Director of Campaigns and Development, Franciscan Action Network, said:

"As Franciscans and Franciscan hearted individuals, we believe in the human dignity of each and every human being. We believe that that dignity extends to every United States citizen, who should be given equal access to the vote. That is why the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) was saddened to see that today the For the People Act was filibustered in the Senate today.

"The For the People Act is a transformational piece of legislation that would expand voter access, enact ethics reforms, and silence big money in politics. These reforms are necessary, and the filibuster should not get in their way. The filibuster is merely a loophole, a Senate rule that has been changed numerous times.

"Not only are those Senators who filibustered today's vote not willing to support the For the People Act, many are cheering on the 389 voter suppression bills that have been proposed in 48 states—with 22 passing so far in 14 states. Instead of making it harder to vote, those Senators should build on the extraordinarily secure 2020 election by supporting the widely popular For the People Act and make it easier, not harder, for Americans to vote."

Rev. Jennifer Butler, CEO of Faith in Public Life Action, said:

"As a pastor, I believe that the freedom to vote is sacred. We will not accept a faction of politicians exploiting political loopholes to grab power and block overwhelmingly popular legislation that protects the right to vote. Today is not the end for the For the People Act. Now, the work involves abolishing the filibuster, a tool of white supremacy that has long been used to block laws that protect Black, Brown, Native and Asian voters.

"White supremacist politicians filibustered anti-lynching laws. They filibustered the Civil Rights Act. They filibustered the Voting Rights Act. And by using the filibuster, they're continuing that shameful tradition today. We must abolish the filibuster so that Congress may deliver on moral issues like healthcare, citizenship for immigrants, economic policies that help us thrive, and so many more. This is the beginning

of the battle in the Senate that will last throughout the summer. People of faith will be raising our voices louder and louder.”

Susan Stephenson, Executive Director, Interfaith Power & Light, said:

“Valuing all people, not just the powerful, is a basic tenet of our faith traditions and any functioning democracy. Equal access to the ballot is a right as well as a moral principle. The filibuster is being misused by senators to block majority rule. Elections are determined by a majority of voters, and that’s how the U.S. Senate should operate.”

Sheila Katz, CEO, National Council of Jewish Women, said:

“As Jews, we are commanded by our tradition to pursue justice. Our democracy is strongest when it reflects the diversity of its people. We must always protect and promote the right to vote for all Americans. We urge the Senate to follow the lead of the House by reintroducing and passing the For the People Act, effectively putting the people of this country first.”

Johanna Mustafa, Policy and Advocacy Manager, Poligon Education Fund, said:

“The blocking of S.1 in the Senate today is a disappointing development and a testament to how detached some of our elected representatives in Congress have come from the people they represent. At a time when draconian voter suppression laws continue to attack the people’s right to vote and rule for the wealthiest few, proactive action on For the People Act in the Senate is the ground for safeguarding voting rights, not the ceiling.

“We call on our Senators to center the needs of their vulnerable constituents, particularly Black and brown Americans, who will continue to be disenfranchised and silenced without For the People Act. We reaffirm our unwavering support for democracy reform and demand that procedural obstacles, including the Senate filibuster, not stand in the way of protecting the freedom to vote for all Americans.”

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[The Faithful Democracy Coalition](#) is a growing inter-faith coalition of congregations and faith-based organizations that educate and advocate for transformational federal reforms that protect and strengthen our democracy.