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Interfaith Democracy Coalition Applauds Introduction of Freedom to Vote Act, Urges Passage

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Faithful Democracy coalition welcomes today's introduction of the Freedom to Vote Act for priority consideration in a packed legislative agenda. Senators Klobuchar, Kaine, King, Manchin, Merkley, Padilla, Tester, and Warnock crafted the Freedom to Vote Act as a robust package of widely-supported democracy reforms to ensure access to the ballot, secure our elections, root out the undue influence of special interest money, and end partisan gerrymandering.

The Freedom to Vote Act represents a good-faith effort on the part of lawmakers to advance meaningful reforms that will make our democracy truer to the ideals of transparency, fairness, and inclusion.

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

"The faith community's steadfast commitment to achieving meaningful voting rights protections is showing results. Today's introduction of the Freedom to Vote Act by a broad coalition of Democratic Senators is a welcome development in the fight to protect our democracy. This bill represents a coming together to find a path forward for badly needed reforms. Leaders from an array of faith traditions applaud today's introduction of the Freedom to Vote Act.

"While Democrats are working to win support from their colleagues across the aisle, passage of this legislation cannot wait. If Republicans refuse to support these needed reforms, then Senate leadership must find a way to pass this legislation. There is no time to waste and our democracy is too important."

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The Faithful Democracy Coalition is an interfaith coalition of national and state-based congregations and faith-based organizations that educate and advocate for federal reforms that protect and strengthen our democracy.

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

"As a pastor, I believe our freedom to vote is the foundation of our freedom to thrive. But a handful of politicians are putting up barriers to voting that target Black and brown voters - threatening our democracy and ability to provide for our families. Democrats took a critical step today in introducing the Freedom to Vote Act, another strong bill that would strengthen voting protections to ensure all citizens' equal access to the vote, the very bedrock of a government that serves all of us, not just the wealthiest. The Senate must not let the racist loophole of the filibuster stand in the way of our sacred freedom to vote. Time is running out and Democrats must act."

Jody Rabhan, Chief Policy Officer at the National Council of Jewish Women, said:

"National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) advocates have worked for more than 125 years to expand and protect the right to vote. The introduction of the Freedom to Vote Act is the next chapter in this work. We welcome this transformational legislation, which would make it easier to cast a ballot and counter state voter suppression laws. Our democracy is strongest when it reflects the diversity of its people. We look forward to working with lawmakers to ensure that the Freedom to Vote Act is as strong as possible so all our voices can be heard."

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

The Arizona African American Christian Clergy Coalition strongly encourages passage of the Freedom to Vote Act. While the compromise may not include everything we need, it is critical at this time that the passage of restrictive voting laws be stopped. This commonsense bill would eliminate insidious voter suppression strategies like those passed in Arizona's 2021 legislative session. As an African American multi generational coalition, we include many constituents who will vote in 2022 for the first time as well as some who marched with Dr King, John Lewis and other voting rights advocates. The AACCC calls on the Senate to stand for justice and pass the Freedom to Vote Act.

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

"We welcome the introduction of the Freedom to Vote Act in our work to protect the sanctity and integrity of our democracy. This is a robust bill that addresses the most urgent needs for reform right now. This is a huge step in the right direction and shows that our advocacy is having an impact. NETWORK and our advocates across the country congratulate these Senators for moving the ball forward and will continue to advocate for quick passage in the Senate."

Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Director Religious Action Center for Reformed Judaism said:

"Inspired by Jewish tradition that teaches us the selection of our leaders is a collective responsibility, we believe that democracy is strongest when every voice is heard. Because Americans' freedom to vote is too often dependent on their race, background, or zip code, the Reform Jewish Movement has been working to pass federal legislation that protects and strengthens the right to vote as part of our Racial Justice Campaign. We welcome the announcement of a revised Senate bill that strengthens our democracy by establishing minimum national standards for federal elections and ensures that voter registration and voting options are accessible across the United States. We applaud the tremendous advocacy work and grassroots organizing done by Reform Movement leaders, civil rights leaders, and partners at BIPOC-led, faith, and secular organizations, which have been instrumental in the crafting of this bill that bring us closer to our shared goal of strengthening democracy. And, while we are disappointed that important pieces of the For the People Act were not included in this revised proposal, we will continue to work with our partners to advocate for legislation that ensures all Americans are afforded the opportunity to vote and have their voices heard. We call on the Senate to pass the Freedom to Vote Act swiftly and protect every American's right to vote."

Stephen Schneck, Executive Director of Franciscan Action Network said:

The Gospels say we are measured by what we have done for those in poverty, the discriminated against, the vulnerable, those whom society has made powerless, excluded, and disenfranchised. Christians inspired by the life of St. Francis are particularly charged to heed this Gospel message. Yet, today that Gospel message is threatened by state laws seeking in subtle and not so subtle ways to deter the impoverished and marginalized from voting. Federal legislation is needed to address these shameful challenges. So, we applaud the introduction of the Freedom to Vote Act and with all people of faith we call for a faithful democracy where no one among us is deterred from voting.

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

"Over the past few months, more than 10,000 grassroots Christian members of Faithful America have called on their senators to pass a strong voting rights bill for the common good. We have raised our voices as a way of following the teachings of Jesus Christ, who treated everyone with equality, love, and dignity -- the exact opposite of what state bills targeting Black and Brown voters would do.

"The newly introduced Freedom to Vote Act is transformative legislation that will help move us closer to the promised land of democracy and equal rights for all. We call on every senator to support their constituents' freedom and dignity by voting to pass this important step."

Pablo DeJesús, Executive Director, Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice, said:

"The senate has produced a strong compromise for consideration and we are pleased. We were called to act for our democracy, and we did. We were asked to frame the moral consequences of inaction and we did. We were asked to express how our various faith traditions approach the covenant of voting, and we did. It seems the senate heard us.

This past year and recent months, our many faiths have walked together, united in the conviction that voting is a sacred act. Clear that we must have an inclusive and healthy American democracy. Firm that we will demand such from federal legislators.

The Unitarian Universalist faith tradition calls us to uphold the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process. We are pleased that the spirit of love has revealed a path forward with this compromise and we will live our faith and continue to urge passage."

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

As the President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, with congregations in all fifty states, I speak for our denomination which recently passed an Action of Immediate Witness calling for protection of voting rights. Our faith tradition recognizes that the sacredness and power of each voice and vote depends on the functioning of our whole democracy. We have wholeheartedly supported the For the People Act and will continue to work against state legislation that restricts access to voting. We support the Freedom to Vote Act as an important step forward for advancing needed reforms. We will organize and activate our faith to work for its passage as part of our mission to create the beloved community and build a strong multiracial democracy.

Rich Procida, Founder of the Truth and Democracy Coalition, said:

"The Freedom to Vote Act is a grand compromise designed to protect every American citizen's fundamental and sacred right to vote. In the Book of Genesis, God gave humanity dominion over all the earth and the right to rule ourselves. Every citizen has this right to vote, and it cannot be taken away based on some technicality of the law or unnecessary restriction. While one may lose their right to vote by committing a felony, one does not lose their right to vote simply because they don't have a particular type of identification or didn't vote the year before or whatever excuse state legislators have for purging voting roles and restricting access to the ballot box. We must ensure that every citizen is able and free to cast their vote. We must enact nationwide standards for federal elections to ensure that every citizen can access their right to vote. The Freedom to Vote Act ensures that every citizen can easily and freely vote without intimidation or undue burden."