



2000 Massachusetts Avenue, NW • Washington, DC 20036

November 24, 2020

Dear Representative,

Democracy 21 strongly urges you to vote again for the For the People Act when it comes up for consideration in the House early next year.

We also strongly urge you to oppose any efforts to undermine the holistic approach embodied in the legislation to fix our broken political system and repair our corrupting campaign finance system. Now more than ever it is critical you vote once again for this historic democracy reform legislative package and resist any attempt to weaken or abandon its comprehensive approach.

In 2019, every House Democrat supported H.R. 1, the For the People Act. The legislation that the House is planning to vote on early next year is expected to contain the same essential reforms as the For the People Act of 2019.

The campaign finance and voting rights problems starkly demonstrated in the 2020 elections have only affirmed just how essential it is to fix our democracy by enacting the For the People Act.

In the 2020 elections, we saw outside spending groups receive record amounts of huge, unlimited contributions with the ability to have corrupting influence over government decisions. Without providing candidates an alternative way to finance their campaigns, the corrupting influence of Washington political money will grow far worse.

Because the Supreme Court's disastrous *Citizens United* decision is the law of the land, we cannot prevent outside groups from spending unlimited, influence-seeking contributions in federal elections.

But what we can do is dramatically increase the role and importance of small donations by enacting an essential new, alternative way for candidates to finance their campaigns. The small donor, public matching funds system in H.R. 1 would accomplish this goal and fundamentally change the way campaigns are financed by focusing the system on *non-corrupting* small contributions. This system would match contributions up to \$200 per donor at a 6-to-1 ratio. Thus, each \$200 contribution to a participating federal candidate would provide \$1,400 to the candidate.

Record amounts of small contributions were raised in the 2020 elections. A new, small donor financing system, combined with the rapidly increasing ability to raise small contributions online, would empower tens of millions of ordinary Americans.

The system would provide presidential and congressional candidates with the funds they need to run competitive races without being dependent on, or obligated to, megadonor influence-seeking funders. It would dramatically reduce the impact and influence of big money in American politics. It would free officeholders to represent their constituents and allow them to spend far less time raising money.

Unlike past proposals, the public matching funds provided in H.R. 1 would be financed entirely by a small surcharge on the fines, penalties, and settlements paid to the government by lawbreaking corporations, corporate executives, and wealthy tax cheats. Under H.R. 1, no tax revenues could be used to pay for the system.

We also saw in the 2020 elections unprecedented attacks led by President Trump on the right to vote and on our electoral system. The attacks included: voter suppression and discrimination, incessant attacks by Trump on voting by mail, restrictions on voting by mail, prohibitions on counting votes before Election Day, refusals to count ballots postmarked before the election but received after, a political Post Office leadership that seriously damaged timely mail delivery, and elimination of drop boxes and polling precincts, among other issues.

The voting rights reforms in H.R. 1 would address these anti-democracy attacks. They include: automatic voter registration that would add tens of millions of citizens to the voting rolls, requirements for nationwide early voting in federal elections, increased protections against deception and intimidation practices, protections against improper voter purges, and other reforms. A separate bill, H.R. 4, affiliated with H.R. 1, would restore the protections against voter discrimination originally contained in the Voting Rights Act, and should also be enacted.

Many of the voting rights reforms in H.R. 1 come from the Voter Empowerment Act of 2019, legislation sponsored by the legendary voting rights leader, the late Rep. John Lewis. The iconic Rep. Lewis, a leading voice for H.R. 1, was a fierce advocate for the right of every eligible citizen to vote and have their vote properly counted. Rep. Lewis also advocated the essential need for reforming our campaign finance laws, [once saying](#):

“Political candidates should not be up for sale to the highest bidder. ... I did not march across the bridge at Selma on March 7, 1965 and almost lose my life to become part of a political system so corrupt that it pollutes the very idea of what we marched for.”

Democracy 21 strongly urges you to continue your support for historic democracy reforms by again voting for the For the People Act in the new Congress and by opposing any efforts to undermine or weaken its holistic approach to repairing our democracy.

Sincerely,



Fred Wertheimer
President, Democracy 21