



2000 Massachusetts Avenue, NW • Washington, DC 20036

March 1, 2021

Dear Representative,

Democracy 21 very much appreciates your sponsorship of [H.R. 1, the For the People Act of 2021](#), which is scheduled to be considered on the House floor this week. We urge you to oppose any amendments to weaken H.R. 1, and to vote for its final passage.

Our country has a broken political system, a corrupting campaign finance system and a democracy in critical need of repair. H.R. 1 is landmark democracy reform legislation that addresses these fundamental problems and includes voting rights, campaign finance, redistricting, government ethics, election security and foreign interference reforms.

The 2020 presidential election saw record voter turnout. This was due in large part to increased opportunities for eligible citizens to vote by mail and to vote early in-person. The record voter turnout occurred with no evidence of any meaningful voter fraud.

This, however, has not stopped former President Trump from repeatedly and falsely claiming that widespread fraud did occur, and that the presidential election was stolen from him. Trump has made these false claims without providing any evidence.

Trump's Big Lie is now being used in a number of Republican-controlled legislatures to pursue regressive new laws to suppress absentee voting and early in-person voting, and to disenfranchise large numbers of voters, particularly voters of color.

In the face of record turnout in 2020, these partisan efforts at voter suppression are seeking to make it much harder for eligible voters to exercise their sacred right to vote.

According to a recent [article in The New York Times](#), "Republicans in state legislatures nationwide are mounting extraordinary efforts to change the rules of voting and representation — and enhance their own political clout." The article stated:

At the top of those efforts is a slew of bills raising new barriers to casting votes, particularly the mail ballots that Democrats flocked to in the 2020 election. But other measures go well beyond that, including tweaking Electoral College and judicial election rules for the benefit of [Republicans](#); clamping down on citizen-led ballot initiatives; and outlawing private donations that provide resources for administering elections, which were crucial to the smooth November vote.

According to a recent [Brennan Center study](#), “legislators have introduced well over four times the number of bills to restrict voting access as compared to roughly this time last year.” The [study stated](#), “These proposals primarily seek to: (1) limit mail voting access; (2) impose stricter voter ID requirements; (3) slash voter registration opportunities; and (4) enable more aggressive voter roll purges.”

H.R. 1 builds on the historic turnout in the 2020 elections by codifying the voting rules that led to this success. In establishing the rules for future federal elections that will ensure citizens can vote easily and safely, H.R. 1 will supersede new laws enacted in the states that would suppress voting and disenfranchise voters in federal elections.

H.R. 1 also provides federal candidates with a voluntary, new way to finance their campaigns that frees them from being obligated to special interest, big money funders.

So long as *Citizens United* remains the law of the land, we cannot stop unlimited contributions being spent by “independent” groups in federal elections. But we can give Members a way out of being trapped in a corrupting campaign finance system.

H.R. 1 creates a small donor-based financing system for presidential and congressional candidates in which contributions up to \$200 per donor are matched with public funds at a 6 to 1 ratio. When combined with the rapidly growing ability to raise small contributions on the internet, the new system will allow candidates to run competitive races without the need to rely on influence-seeking donors. This system will greatly reduce the influence of big money funders.

Taxpayer revenues do not finance the matching payments. *In fact, the For the People Act prohibits the use of taxpayer revenues to pay for the public matching funds system.*

Instead, the public matching funds are financed *entirely* by a new, small surcharge on fines, penalties, and settlements paid to the government by corporations or corporate officials, and by wealthy tax cheats. Anyone who claims that the new financing system is paid for by tax revenues is not telling the truth.

The small donor-based system in H.R. 1 is important to voters who believe their voices are being drowned out in Congress by influence-seeking funders. It is important [to women and people of color](#) who are repeatedly shortchanged in being able to raise the money needed to run competitive races for Congress. It is important to ordinary Americans who believe Washington is rigged by monied interests. It is important to Members of Congress who do not want to be in debt to influence-seeking funders, and who want to spend more time serving their constituents and less time raising money.

H.R. 1 also provides for automatic voter registration, ends dark money being spent to influence elections, reforms the dysfunctional Federal Election Commission, provides for fair redistricting, strengthens prohibitions on foreign influence in federal elections, and toughens government ethics rules, among other provisions.

Democracy 21 strongly urges you to continue your support for historic democracy reforms by voting for H.R. 1 and by opposing any efforts to weaken its holistic approach to repairing our democracy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred Wertheimer", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Fred Wertheimer
President, Democracy 21