

## 2021 Action of Immediate Witness

Title/Topic: Stop Voter Suppression and Partner for Voting Rights and a Multiracial Democracy

Description: Unitarian Universalist Social Justice's (UUSJ) Democracy Action Team (DAT) joins other UU advocates and actors as well as non-UU partners to acknowledge longstanding and ongoing challenges to the realization of healthy, multiracial, inclusive democracy in the United States. This action calls on the UUA and its congregations to work in partnership toward theologically grounded understanding and meaningful action on democracy matters -- eliminating voter suppression, restoring the right to vote to formerly incarcerated returning citizens, ensuring fair districts, protecting the right of protest, demanding transparency with respect to money in politics, supporting D.C. statehood, and more. To take immediate action on the For the people Act :

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## Stop Voter Suppression and Partner for Voting Rights and a Multiracial Democracy

**WHEREAS**, consistent with Unitarian Universalism's living tradition, our Fifth Principle on democratic process, and our 2019 SOC on Our Democracy Uncorrupted, we understand democracy in the U.S. as a hope, a promise, an aspiration toward a body politic something like a Beloved Community, recognizing that the sacredness and power of each voice and vote depends on the functioning of the whole;

**WHEREAS**, the exclusion of women, indifference to the differently abled, oppression of the poor and formerly incarcerated returning citizens, and structural racism has defeated the promise of democracy even as that promise has been periodically and partially fulfilled and the circle of “We the People” widened;

**WHEREAS**, this is no time for a casual faith, the guarantors of this vision and its enactment being our mutual responsibility and dedication with others, both within and outside of our faith;

**WHEREAS**, in 2013 the US Supreme Court gutted the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and today we witness rampant voter suppression across the nation, including restrictions on mail-in and in-person voting, voter identification laws, and greater powers vested in state legislatures [1];

**WHEREAS**, individual votes are concentrated or diluted according to lines drawn by state legislators to serve their interests above those of the People;

**WHEREAS**, the right to exercise free speech through protest is under attack nationwide ;

**WHEREAS**, money that seeks to influence politicians has muddied the purposes of politics [2];

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia, a city of roughly 700,000 [3], continues to be the world’s only capital city in a democracy lacking full and proper representation in its national legislature [4], a travesty justified recurrently on the basis of race [5];

**WHEREAS**, the US Supreme Court will be ruling on what remains of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and potentially further endangering access to the ballot [6];

**WHEREAS**, on January 6, 2021, white supremacist and nativist insurrectionists entered the Capitol, claimed that the 2020 presidential election was stolen, paraded a Confederate flag through its halls, took life and injured Capitol Police, and threatened the lives of Congresspersons, actions demonstrating the challenges we face;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** we, the 2021 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), call upon the UUA and its member congregations to:

Engage nationally with UU actors (campaigns such as UU the Vote and organizations such as Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice) to deepen our theological grounding in issues of democracy. Take action with these actors and those of interfaith and secular partners.

Organize and activate our faith to call, write, witness, and advocate for relevant national legislation, including the For the People Act (S.1), the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (pending), and The Washington, D.C. Admission Act (S.51).

Through UU State Action Networks (<https://cuusan.org/>) and/or UU congregations, collaborate with local partners to combat voter suppression and other anti-democracy efforts, including those by state legislatures.

Work with grassroots organizations/campaigns centering those most directly affected by voter suppression and other failures of democracy. [7]

## Sources

[1] As of May 2021, there were than 389 bills in 48 states, Brennan Center, “Voting Laws Roundup: May 2021,”

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-may-2021>

[2] Spending skyrocketed following *Citizens United* in 2010. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, a record-shattering \$14 billion in the 2020 election cycle, more than twice the amount spent in 2016. Forty-two percent (42%) of that spending was by ultra-rich individual donors and 22% by super PACs, political parties, and other nonprofit dark money groups. “Most Expensive Ever: 2020 Election Cost \$14.4 Billion”

<https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2021/02/2020-cycle-cost-14p4-billion-doubling-16/>

[3] The population of D.C. is greater than that of Vermont and Wyoming. United States Census Bureau, “Change in Resident Population of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico: 1910 to 2020,”

<https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/data/apportionment/population-change-data-table.pdf>

[4] Johnny Barnes, Towards Equal Footing: Responding To The Perceived Constitutional, Legal And Practical Impediments To Statehood For The District Of Columbia, 13 U.D.C. L. Rev. 1 (2010). Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.udc.edu/udclr/vol13/iss1/2> (Page 48).

[5] In July 2019, the United States Census Bureau estimated that nearly half the population of the District of Columbia is Black or African American followed by non-Hispanic White (37.5%), Hispanic or Latino (11.3%), and Asian (4.5%). “QuickFacts: District of Columbia,” <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/DC> D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser has testified: “Historic records are replete with statements of successive members of Congress referencing the ‘negro problem’ and the ‘color problem’ within D.C. as a justification to withhold Congressional representation.” “Testimony of Muriel Bowser, Mayor of Washington, DC,” ([delivered](#) March 22 before the House Committee on Oversight and Reforms,

<https://docs.house.gov/meetings/GO/GO00/20210322/111360/HHRG-117-GO00-Wstate-BowserM-20210322.pdf>

[6] *Brnovich* will be ruled on during this session of the US Supreme Court and could further endanger access to the ballot. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/28/us/politics/su>

[7] Examples being Fair Fight and the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition.