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**Faith Leaders Celebrate Senate Reintroduction of John Robert Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act;
Call for Immediate Passage In Effort to Restore the Voting Rights Act**

"Even as the urgency of restoring the VRA grows, bipartisan support to protect the freedom to vote has shamefully dwindled." - Sr. Quincy Howard, Fmr. Faithful Democracy Coordinator

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Ahead of the 59th anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama, Reverend Senator Raphael R. Warnock, Senator Richard Durbin and others reintroduced the John Robert Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. This legislation is named after the late Congressman and civil rights icon Rep. John R. Lewis, who risked his life for the right to vote. It would restore and modernize the 1965 Voting Rights Act and require preclearance on a nationwide scale for practices that disproportionately affect communities of color. This legislation is a critical second part to the faith community's democracy agenda along with the Freedom to Vote Act. Considering the continuing threats to voting rights, faith leaders welcome the introduction of the John Robert Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and strongly urge its immediate passage in the Senate, saying:

Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

"The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) commends Rep. Sewell for introducing the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, a vital piece of legislation that will protect the voting rights of all Americans, regardless of their race, color, or religion. This bill is a fitting tribute to the legacy of Rep. Lewis, a civil rights icon who dedicated his life to fighting for voting rights for all. We urge Congress to pass this important legislation without delay."

- ***Robert S. McCaw, Director of Government Affairs***

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

"As a nation, we are at a critical juncture in protecting our democracy. Fifty-six years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, many in this country still face racial disparities and inequalities in accessing the right to vote. We urge passage of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. If enacted, it would do much to further the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's resolve to call upon local, state, and federal governments to guarantee the right to vote to all citizens and to discourage or eliminate all laws, ordinances or regulations that would have the effect of racial and ethnic discrimination in the exercise of that right. In the words of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.'"

- ***The Rev. Amy E. Reumann, Senior Director, Witness in Society***



Faith in Public Life Action

"I know from my own voting experiences that unjust laws and unnecessary hurdles can prevent us from voting and being full participants in democracy. Several times, in several states, if I had not known my rights, I would not have been able to vote. In those moments I knew that the dignity and agency that Christ recognizes in me and in each of us was being challenged and threatened.

The ideals that we hold for our democracy require that all of us across race, location, gender, or political leanings have unencumbered access to the ballot box. Yet, since the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act a decade ago, we have seen at least 29 states make it harder for their residents to vote and live into the virtuous responsibilities of citizenship. Congress is a steward for our democracy. Passing the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act will safeguard the vehicle through which we choose policies that allow all of us to live into the dignity that God offers us."

- ***Jeanné Lewis, Chief Executive Officer***

Franciscan Action Network

"As Franciscans, our Gospel values and the example of St. Francis lead us to be always in solidarity with our sisters and brothers whose voices have been marginalized through restrictive voting laws. Jesus told us that we must never fail to care for those who have been made 'least' by our society (Mt. 25:45) and St. Francis deliberately abandoned his privilege to identify with those who lacked it. Today, we humbly ask members of the U.S. Congress to support the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to ensure that our fellow citizens in every state can make their voices heard through fair and nondiscriminatory voting laws."

- ***Michele Dunne, OFS; Executive Director***

Interfaith Alliance

"As the late Rep. John Lewis once said, 'The vote is precious. It is almost sacred.' Sadly, his vision for an America where all people, no matter who they are or who they vote for, can exercise that foundational right is under attack by extremists working to systematically disenfranchise people of color.

I can think of no better way to honor his legacy than to pass this crucial bill that bears his name, ensuring that every person can freely cast their vote. Those standing in the way of this legislation are not only willfully blind to the realities of voter suppression in America, but indeed aiding and abetting pernicious efforts to take us back in time and perpetuate racial inequities.



Over the last 10 years, the Supreme Court has systematically dismantled the Voting Rights Act of 1965, enabling state legislatures to pass dozens of laws creating barriers to vote that disproportionately impact communities of color. The bill introduced today will restore the critical protections of that landmark legislation and ensure equal access to the ballot box for all. As an organization dedicated to building an inclusive democracy, Interfaith Alliance will continue to advocate tirelessly to make that happen.”

- ***Rev. Paul Brandeis Raushenbush, President and CEO***

Interfaith Power & Light

“Interfaith Power & Light commends Senator Warnock, Senator Durbin, and their cosponsors for the reintroduction of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. This bill will strengthen our democracy by restoring key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that protect against discriminatory practices and election subversion. As people of faith and conscience, we view voting as a sacred practice. We cannot effectively lead on implementing solutions for the climate crisis, advancing environmental justice, and protecting our Sacred Earth without advocating for a system where every voice is heard and valued.”

- ***Rev. Susan Hendershot, President of Interfaith Power & Light***

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

“We stand on the shoulders of our Founders giving thanks for the creation of a great nation while we continue to build it up to its potential, for even the Founders knew that what they had begun was imperfect. And so, for the past nearly 50 years, the Voting Rights Act served as a supporting wall advancing equality through the democratic process of voting. However, that supporting wall is crumbling due to recent court decisions and new state laws. We are here to stand strong and declare our support for the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, and we call on Congress to act quickly to pass this foundational bill restoring voting rights for the 21st Century.”

- ***Fran Eskin-Royer, Executive Director***

National Council of Churches

“This is a pivotal moment in history, as voting rights are increasingly threatened. It is incumbent upon lawmakers to champion and pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act and unite in safeguarding unfettered access to the ballot box. Passing this bill is a vital step towards dismantling systemic barriers that inhibit individuals from exercising their constitutional right to vote. It sends a powerful message that voter suppression will not be tolerated, every voice deserves to be heard and every vote counts.”

- ***Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, President and General Secretary***



National Council of Jewish Women

"Jewish texts teach that our well-being is tied to that of our community; we must take part in building the nation we want. That's why NCJW supports policies that secure and guarantee our freedom to vote, with equitable access to the ballot box and a transparent process we can trust, like the John. R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Our vote is our voice, and with state legislatures passing laws making it more difficult to vote—especially for people of color, individuals with disabilities, and other marginalized populations—our leaders have a responsibility to pass comprehensive legislation that protects this sacred right. For democracy to work for all of us, it must include us all, no matter our color, party, or zip code. Senator Warnock and leaders in Congress are taking critical strides in advancing this holy work by reintroducing the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, to ensure eligible voters can participate in safe, accessible, and transparent elections."

- ***Jody Rabhan, Chief Policy Officer***

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

"The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act will ensure that all voters have a voice in selecting the leaders who represent them through the free and fair exercise of the right to vote. Throughout our history, people have given their lives to protect and expand the franchise. In this time of increasing efforts to limit the access and ability of some voters to the ballot, this legislation will ensure that every eligible person can safely and freely cast their votes. Preserving and protecting the right to vote is an imperative not just for communities of color but for all Americans if we are to maintain our representative form of governance and ensure a more inclusive democracy. This is a fundamental responsibility of our government, and Congress should pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act now, without reservation."

- ***Mary J. Novak, Executive Director, and Joan F. Neal, Deputy Executive Director and Chief Equity Officer***

"Democracy is the form of government best suited to guarantee the protection and flourishing of all people. A government that is functional and truly representative is a basic criterion for passing policies that care for and protect the most vulnerable members of our society because it is inevitably those who are on the periphery who suffer the most when democracy is failing or under threat. This legislation cannot wait any longer. In the last decade since the Shelby County v. Holder Supreme Court decision gutted key enforcement mechanisms in the Voting Rights Act, at least 29 states have passed more than 100 laws making it harder to vote, with at least 11 states enacting 13 restrictive voting laws in 2023 alone. We call on Congress to take immediate action to restore faith in our government, safeguard our right to vote, and secure our democracy for such a time as this."

- ***Min. Christian S. Watkins, Government Relations Advocate***



Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness

"The American democratic system draws inspiration from Presbyterian Polity, which ensures that individuals, irrespective of their economic or cultural background, are entitled to representation in seats of power and have the right for their voices to be heard when decisions affecting their lives are made.

In the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves and to work for the common good. Jesus identifies himself with the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and imprisoned, reminding his followers, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' Today, as Presbyterians, we strive to embody this call through our commitment to dismantling systemic racism, eradicating poverty, and building congregational vitality. This mission intersects with every aspect of life as we address climate change, confront militarism, and promote gender equity.

The John Lewis Voting Rights Act is a critical step toward safeguarding the rights of all citizens to engage in our democracy, voice their values, and share concerns that directly impact their communities. By reinstating key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, this legislation seeks to prevent discrimination in voting practices and ensure that every voice is heard.

Access to the ballot box is foundational to the operation of a just and equitable society. Regrettably, we have observed persistent attempts to suppress voting rights, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities. As Presbyterians, we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, and we believe that democracy flourishes when all citizens are empowered to participate fully. Therefore, we urge lawmakers to endorse and enact the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, reaffirming our dedication to justice and equality for all."

- ***Rev. Jimmie R. Hawkins, Director***

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

"The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas have watched in dismay as states pass restrictions on voting that make it much more difficult for Black, brown and indigenous Americans to participate in our most basic right as citizens. We support the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act as a critical measure for addressing this fundamental injustice made possible by the devastating Shelby v. Holder Supreme Court ruling in 2013. States should not be allowed to change voting laws in ways that, intentionally or not, disproportionately disenfranchise certain segments of the population."

- ***Sister Terri Bednarz, RSM; Institute Leadership Team***



Sojourners-SojoAction

"The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act is long overdue and desperately needed legislation to shore up the freedom to vote and protect our democracy. Protecting voting rights is not a partisan issue, it is the foundation of a healthy and legitimate democracy. The freedom to vote is not a given; it has been contested since our nation's founding and must be fought for and defended, and constantly expanded. Twenty-first century voter suppression and election subversion are designed to deter and limit who votes and whether all votes are counted. There is no more urgent moral cause right now than protecting the right to vote—which benefits and impacts every other issue and justice cause, from maternal and child health to climate change and immigration. Sojourners and SojoAction appeals to the faith and conscience of every member of Congress urging you to act justly, show mercy, and treat voting rights as a bipartisan imperative by passing the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act into law immediately."

- ***Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, President***

The Episcopal Church

"We believe participating in our democracy through voting is a central part of caring for one another and tackling the toughest challenges of our time. We applaud the reintroduction of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act as one necessary and fundamental step toward protecting and expanding the right to vote in the U.S."

- ***Alan Yarborough, Church Relations Officer***

Union for Reform Judaism

"Jewish tradition teaches that the selection of leaders is not a privilege but a collective responsibility. Guided by this teaching and by our commitment as Americans to a robust participatory democracy, the Reform Jewish Movement has long worked to ensure that all eligible citizens are afforded the opportunity to vote and have their votes counted. We urge Congress to quickly pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to protect the fundamental voting rights of all citizens."

- ***Barbara Weinstein; Director, Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism***

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

"As Unitarian Universalists, we are deeply committed to an inclusionary American democracy. The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2023 moves us in that direction."

A decade ago, the Supreme Court eviscerated the Voting Rights Act. As a consequence, we have seen too many states make it harder to vote. Yet, we believe democracy works best for each of us, as individuals, when it covers all of our communities in the blessings of liberty. This is a



blessed liberty that should be secured by peaceful means, at the ballot box, in free and fair elections. This is a blessed liberty that should include all Americans, regardless of color, political party, or zip code. The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act will help ensure this blessed liberty.

In the past, Voting Rights had bipartisan endorsement and this bill merits similar support. Today's federal legislators should rise to the moment and reject an exclusionary American democracy. They should meet their obligations to a more perfect union, to establish justice, to ensure domestic tranquility, to promote the general welfare, and most especially to – 'secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.' We urge Congress to pass this essential legislation with no delay."

- ***Pablo DeJesús, Executive Director***

United Church of Christ

"As a tradition steeped in democratic values, the United Church of Christ has long struggled for equal voting rights for all. It has been over a decade since the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act and as a result, we have now seen state legislatures pass laws making it harder for some to vote. WE THE PEOPLE must act. Rep. Lewis himself once noted, 'The vote is precious. It is almost sacred. It is the most powerful non-violent tool we have in a democracy.' As people of faith and conscience, we must protect the precious gift of democracy, and ensure it endures for future generations. As such, we applaud the introduction of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and call on Congress to ensure its swift passage. Our future depends on it."

- ***Rev. Michael Neuroth, Director of Washington D.C. Office***

The United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society

"As the United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society, we fervently support the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. This crucial legislation protects marginalized voters, preserves democracy, and upholds the right to engage in the political landscape of the United States. By restoring and fortifying key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, it ensures equal access to the ballot box for all citizens, regardless of race or socioeconomic status. This act serves as a vital safeguard against discriminatory voting practices and suppression tactics, honoring the legacy of John Lewis while advancing the collective goal of a more just and equitable society. It is imperative that we pass this legislation to protect democracy and uphold the promise of equal representation for all Americans."

- ***Rev. Kendal L. McBroom, Director of Civil and Human Rights***