



AFL-CIO

AMERICA'S UNIONS

**American Federation
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Congress of Industrial
Organizations**

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January 13, 2022

United States Senate
50 Constitution Avenue, NE
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators:

The right to vote is fundamental for working people. It is how we express our voice as citizens and the ultimate defense against the power of wealth and privilege. Like millions of Americans, we are deeply troubled by recent attacks on our democracy and by the seeming inability of the U.S. Senate to confront them. Next week, on the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 's birthday, you will have the opportunity to honor his legacy and secure the right to vote, by passing the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. In the strongest possible terms, we urge you to vote yes on these bills and to turn aside any procedural rules that make it impossible for the majority of United States Senators to protect our fundamental right to vote.

During the past year, dozens of states have passed laws to restrict our right to vote, to make it more difficult to vote and to create new powers for partisan officials to overturn the will of the people. You are uniquely positioned to reverse this assault on our democracy by enacting federal minimum standards that will guarantee every American the right to vote and to have our vote counted. We expect you to act.

Current procedural rules enable a minority to block the Senate from even debating broadly popular legislation. These rules were conceived by segregationists determined to keep Black citizens from achieving equality, and they have been used over and over again to block debate on measures protecting workers' rights on the job. Their defenders claim the ability of a minority to filibuster and block the will of the majority promotes compromise. Recent history has proven, however, that the filibuster has had the opposite effect. It has been a constant source of gridlock, stifling debate and giving the minority free reign to ignore the will of America's people.

Worse, the filibuster has allowed anti-democratic state legislatures to diminish working people's right to vote without challenge by the U.S. Congress. Ironically, state legislatures are passing bills to restrict the vote with a bare majority, but the U.S. Senate cannot vote to protect these rights without a supermajority. As former Senator Robert Byrd famously said, Senate rules "must be changed to reflect changed circumstances." That means we must reform the filibuster to allow our democracy to continue to function.

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To save democracy, to protect the rights of working people and to have a government that can secure a prosperous future for America, we need democracy in the U.S. Senate. The American labor movement has always stood up to defend our democracy, with our voices and our votes, at work and through our unions. Democracy is in our DNA. Our unions run, like our country, by voting and giving equal voice to members, on the job and in our communities. We expect no less of the U.S. Senate.

We speak on behalf of a unified labor movement. Working people's fundamental rights are at stake. It's time to fix the Senate and pass the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth H. Shuler
President



Fredrick D. Redmond
Secretary-Treasurer



Tefere A. Gebre
Executive Vice President

Stuart Appelbaum
RWDSU

Matthew Biggs
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Roxanne Brown
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