

February 6, 2019

The Honorable Elijah Cummings, Chairman
Oversight and Governmental Reform Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim Jordan, Ranking Member
Oversight and Governmental Reform Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee,

As faith-based advocates and congregations, we seek systems that diminish inequality, support the most vulnerable, nurture human potential, and protect the health and well-being of all members of our society and of creation. We look to our government to reflect those ideals and we support a strong democracy:

...where voting is a fundamental right and a civic responsibility.

...that serves the people rather than the private interests of public officials and wealthy political donors.

...where our influence is based on the force of ideas, not the size of our wallets.

...where people know who is trying to gain influence over our representatives, who is trying to influence our votes, and how and why policy is being made.

...that works to respond to the needs of all people and their communities, building trust in governance and equity.

A broken democracy has clear and detrimental impacts on the issues important to us. We are faithful advocates who work within the existing political system, yet that system no longer seems capable of contending with the big problems facing our country, our communities, and our congregations. The faith community offers witness to what is obvious to most Americans¹: our democracy is out of balance.

The current system allows powerful corporate and wealthy interests to regularly defy the foundational principles of fairness, equity, ethics, accountability, and respect for the rule of law. The unfortunate result is that our government has become more responsive and accountable to wealthy political donors than to the public. Today's broken democratic system subjugates deeply held, age-old values to the profit motive.

People of faith know that Washington is not representing their best interests when millions of Americans who are eligible to vote cannot do so because they are not registered, voter ID laws are used as a tool to suppress the vote, millions of Americans are disenfranchised due to a felony conviction, and a number of states are improperly purging eligible voters from the registration rolls.

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/campaign-wire-2018-midterms/card/1537810213>

People of faith know that Washington is not representing their best interests when congressional districts are drawn to achieve highly partisan results at the expense of fair representation for citizens.

People of faith know that Washington is not representing their best interests when ethics rules governing our highest leaders and decision-makers are deeply flawed and are not subject to proper oversight and enforcement.

People of faith know that Washington is more accountable to corporate interests than to the public when they can spend huge sums of money influencing our elections and our government.

People of faith know that we can't fix the issues that the faith community cares about the most - such as poverty, immigration, climate change, and health care - until we fix our democracy. To that end, the undersigned national faith organizations support H.R.1, *The For the People Act*.

- We applaud efforts to reform our election processes and our governing politics so that the interests of all are served, not just those with money.
- We support attempts to restore ethical norms which inhibit self-interested corruption on the part of lawmakers.
- We support provisions that enhance the influence of low-income and middle-income people on policymaking through their vote and their engagement in the civic body.
- We support campaign finance reforms that sustain and encourage elected officials to serve their constituents and to legislate on behalf of the common good.
- We embrace reforms that favor accountability and transparency in our government and in our lawmakers' decision-making.

We recognize the historic opportunity our country faces to repair our political system and, as people of faith, we are hopeful in the possibility of renewal. We urge Congress to seize this moment by moving immediately on a single package of comprehensive democracy reforms.

Sincerely,

African American Ministers In Action

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Faith in Action

Franciscan Action Network

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Islamic Society of North America

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

National Council of Jewish Women

NETWORK Lobby

Pax Christi USA

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

Unitarian Universalist Association

