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AAJC

**Interim President and CEO**  
Wade Henderson

February 2, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
22 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer:

**Re: We Must Remain Focused on the Fight Against Racial Discrimination in Voting**

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 230 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, and the **53 undersigned organizations**, we write to thank you for your leadership — and your colleagues' support both in the House and Senate — in pushing forward critical federal voting rights protections, and to urge you to remain extremely focused in the weeks ahead on the core issue of racial discrimination in voting.

First, we want to acknowledge and commend your steadfast leadership in pushing the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act to the Senate floor. We thank you for using every tool at your disposal to secure a substantive, public debate among U.S. senators on critical federal voting rights protections — the first to occur since the *Shelby County v. Holder* decision gutted the Voting Rights Act nearly nine years ago.

We also deeply appreciate your decision to call a vote on whether to allow an often-amended procedural rule to stand in the way of the voting rights protections that voters of color need and deserve — forcing each U.S. senator to make a legacy-defining choice and showing the nation who is on the right side of history. Several senators spoke eloquently and passionately about the current existential threats to our democracy and Congress's urgent constitutional responsibility to meet these threats with federal legislation.

This debate and vote mark progress on our journey towards becoming a truly inclusive, multiracial democracy. Yet we have far to go, and we must fight on. As John Lewis said: "Never give up, never give in, never give out." We know that you and your colleagues are actively considering what comes next for voting rights and pro-democracy reforms in the Senate. We appreciate your commitment to keeping the Senate and the nation laser-focused on this issue in the coming weeks despite a challenging Senate calendar. This is simply too important to move past.

As you consider next steps, we urge you to remain focused on the urgent threat of racial discrimination in voting. People of color made their voices heard in record numbers in the

2020 election, and the result has been a swift and sustained backlash to ensure that they can never again exercise their full voice and power. Voters of color are facing the greatest threat to voting rights since Jim Crow, and this threat is targeted. From questions about the vote count in communities of color to the January 6th insurrection — just one day after Georgia elected its first Black and Jewish U.S. senators — to the rash of voter suppression laws in the states, including efforts to replace nonpartisan election officials especially in communities of color, the urgent threats to our democracy are rooted in racism. As civil rights and community leaders have said many times, we cannot out-organize or litigate past attacks on our freedom to vote. Therefore, we must have a legislative solution, and that solution must address racial discrimination head on.

The conversations regarding reforms to the Electoral Count Act (ECA) are needed and welcome, but they simply are not adequate to meet the current moment. We should certainly make sure that votes duly cast are reflected in the ultimate presidential count. But we also must address the discriminatory barriers to the ballot that prevent votes from even being cast, or we will retreat and retrench from our aspirations as a multiracial democracy — just as we did after Reconstruction.

Moreover, we must ensure that any revised legislation also includes components of the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act that are necessary to address the problems faced by eligible voters in their attempts to cast votes and have those votes counted. Further, while seeking narrow reforms that can garner 60 votes is useful, we must continue the conversation — in the Senate and across the country — about the imperative to no longer allow an arcane rule with a racist history to block urgently needed protections for the freedom to vote.

Thank you again for your tremendous leadership, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the U.S. Senate fulfills its constitutional responsibility to protect and preserve the freedom to vote. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Jesselyn McCurdy, executive vice president of The Leadership Conference, at [mccurdy@civilrights.org](mailto:mccurdy@civilrights.org).

Sincerely,  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
ACCESS  
A. Philip Randolph Institute  
AFL-CIO  
Alliance for Youth Action  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Humanist Association  
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC  
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Brennan Center for Justice  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
Common Cause  
DemCast USA  
Democracy 21  
Democracy Initiative  
Demos  
End Citizens United / Let America Vote Action Fund  
Fair Fight Action  
Feminist Majority Foundation  
GLSEN  
Human Rights Campaign  
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement  
Lambda Legal  
League of Conservation Voters  
League of Women Voters of the United States  
NAACP  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)  
National Action Network  
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National CAPACD - National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of Negro Women  
National Fair Housing Alliance  
New Georgia Project Action Fund  
Our Vote Texas  
Oxfam America  
People For the American Way  
PFLAG National  
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights  
SEIU  
Sojourners  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
State Voices  
The Andrew Goodman Foundation  
The Arc of the U.S.  
The League of Women Voters of the United States  
Voter Participation Center

cc: U.S. Senate