

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 31, 2023

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**CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AND CONNECTICUT LEGISLATORS CALL FOR
PASSAGE OF A STATE VOTING RIGHTS ACT**

HARTFORD, CT - Today, lawmakers from the Connecticut General Assembly and civil rights, labor, grassroots, and faith-based organizations joined together in calling for the passage of the Connecticut Voting Rights Act (CTVRA). By enacting this landmark bill, Connecticut would join California, Oregon, Washington, Virginia, and New York as states with their own voting rights acts to bolster protections against discriminatory barriers that would infringe upon the ability to exercise the fundamental right to vote.

In conjunction with today's press conference, 50 organizations, including the ACLU of Connecticut, the Legal Defense Fund, Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause in Connecticut, Connecticut NAACP State Conference, Hispanic Federation, LatinoJustice PRLDEF, and the League of Women Voters of Connecticut, sent a letter to Connecticut's legislative leadership and Governor Ned Lamont encouraging them to prioritize and pass the CTVRA this session.

"As voter rights are under attack nationally, I will do everything in my power to ensure that the people of Connecticut have their voting rights protected. And that's what this bill will do," said state **Senator Mae Flexer**, who is **Senate Chair of the legislature's Government Administration and Elections Committee**.

"The right to vote is one of the most sacred American rights, enshrined in both our federal and state constitutions," said **Representative Matt Blumenthal**, **House Chair of the legislature's Government Administration and Elections Committee**. "As politicians across the country work to limit people's access to the franchise, this legislation will help ensure every Connecticut voter's voice is heard. I look forward to helping fight to pass its protections into law."

"I look forward to passing this long-overdue legislation to protect Connecticut residents' voting rights," said **Senator Matt Lesser**. "We need consistent application of the laws across all 169

towns and the other protections the Connecticut Voting Rights Act will provide. I have introduced this legislation in each of the last three years and look forward to working with advocates, legislative leaders and Secretary of the State Thomas to see it pass into law.”

“Across the country, voting rights are under attack,” said **Representative Hubert D. Delany III**. “One of my legislative priorities this session is to solidify protections for all voters in Connecticut, particularly ones who live in marginalized communities. A true democracy does not exist if there is a discrepancy in access to voting. Unfortunately, the safeguards in the Voting Rights Act of 1965 are still needed, and I hope Connecticut sets an example that other states will use as a model.”

“I fully support legislation to remove barriers that would expand access to vote in our state,” said **Representative Geraldo Reyes Jr.** “I believe everyone, especially Black and Latino voters, should have more opportunities to cast a ballot. Voting rights are the bedrock of our democracy, and we need reforms to ensure that citizens are engaged at the polls.”

“My colleagues in the House and Senate have proposed legislation to identify, challenge, and remedy election administration laws, practices, or procedures, that may impair protected class voting rights,” said **Representative Corey Paris**. “It’s our absolute duty to enshrine this core guaranteed freedom for every citizen in our state, in an effort to be a model for the rest of the nation. In passing CT Voting Rights legislation, Connecticut would join five other states, including our neighbors in New York, by ensuring that voting rights are not infringed upon.”

“We are living in challenging times where our residents struggle to put food on the table and a roof over their heads,” said **Representative Jane Garibay**. “Many work two jobs, don’t have easy access to transportation or child care and have obligations. It is the job of the people who represent them to make sure all residents have the opportunity to vote.”

“Everyone should have equal opportunities to cast their ballots and vote how they wish,” said **Senator Saud Anwar**. “The Voting Rights Act will move our state forward and preserve this right for all residents. This is a commendable effort and I plan to help Connecticut become the sixth state with this legislation in place.”

“Having grown up in France, I consider our voting system antiquated and lacking in protections for citizens voting rights,” said **Representative David Michel**. “I have introduced several bills for election reform in the last 5 years and am excited to support and fight to boost electors’ voting rights in our state, once again!”

“In light of previous elections, now is the time for Connecticut to step-up and adopt a Voting Rights Act. Voting is a fundamental right, and yet far too many of us face obstacles when

heading to the polls. We must do all we can to increase voter accessibility as it is the only way to ensure that every person may cast their votes safely and fairly. I remain committed to passing a Voting Rights Act and will continue the fight for you and your vote because your vote holds power,” said **Representative Maryam Khan**.

“For far too long, Connecticut has been a laggard in voting rights, with the net effect of especially preventing Black and Puerto Rican voters from accessing the ballot box. The Connecticut Voting Rights Act is a chance for our state to advance racial justice and to make voting more fair, equal, and accessible for all voters,” said **Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel for the ACLU of Connecticut**.

“2023 is a historic opportunity for Connecticut,” said **Steven Lance, Policy Counsel at the Legal Defense Fund**. “This session presents Connecticut the opportunity to join the growing number of states leading the nation to protect the voting rights of all voters in the state. We are eager to work with the General Assembly and Governor Lamont to ensure that the Connecticut Voting Rights Act is enacted and fully funded.”

“At a time when states around the country are curtailing our communities' voting rights and restricting the freedom to vote, it's essential that the Connecticut Voting Rights Act is passed and implemented,” said **Fulvia Vargas-De León, Senior Counsel at LatinoJustice PRLDEF**. The CTVRA will take on archaic practices that have for decades created unjust barriers for people of color and which dilute our communities' power at the polls. LatinoJustice urges state legislators and the governor to support this important piece of legislation that will strengthen citizens' access to the ballot box and protect voters from intimidation and discriminatory rules.”

“We have waited too long for legislation at the federal and state levels protecting and advancing the fundamental right to vote,” said **Scot X. Esdaile, President of the Connecticut NAACP State Conference**. “Now is the time for action, and Connecticut is the place. We look forward to working with our elected representatives to implement this powerful legislation and demonstrate principled leadership on democracy and racial justice for the rest of this country to follow.”

“For more than three decades, Hispanic Federation has been on the ground registering Latino voters and empowering them with the resources they need to participate in our democracy. But we cannot do this work on our own. To truly chip away at systemic barriers, we need legislation that will protect our right to vote by combating discrimination and expanding culturally competent outreach,” said **Yanidsi Velez, New England regional director at Hispanic Federation**. “That is why we're proud to join civil rights groups, nonprofit partners, and advocates to finally pass legislation that would accomplish this. The Connecticut Voting Rights Act would transform our democracy and ensure that Latinos – the fastest growing voter block in the state and in the nation – and all communities can exercise their right to vote free of

discrimination. We urge legislators to swiftly pass this legislation to strengthen our democracy and empower the communities across Connecticut.”

“It will be ten long years in June since the Supreme Court gutted key provisions of the federal Voting Rights Act. In the absence of Senate action to fix the law, it’s time for the states to act instead,” said **Cheri Quickmire, Executive Director of Common Cause in Connecticut**. “For democracy to work for us all, it must include us all—no matter our race, age, background or zip code. By passing this bill, our General Assembly will ensure that every Connecticut voter’s freedom to vote is protected, even if U.S. senators continue to block action at the federal level.”

“Voting is the Cornerstone of our democracy,” said **Dori Dumas, President of the Greater New Haven NAACP**. “Voting is our basic fundamental right. We must secure access to the ballot box for every citizen. The NAACP, and other civil right activists marched, were beaten and some paid the ultimate price of dying so that black and brown people could vote. We stand on their shoulders, and we demand that we have full protection of voting rights, and that every citizen has access and expanded opportunities to vote. Connecticut, the time is now, we need to take the lead and pass the Voting Rights Act. Voting shapes our daily lives, it is our voice and our power, and we must remove barriers and ensure that every citizen can easily exercise their right to vote.”

“In Bridgeport, we know firsthand about voter intimidation, misinformation, and discrimination,” said **Gemeem Davis, President & Co-Director of Bridgeport Generation Now Votes**. “No one in Connecticut’s democracy should ever feel entitled to abuse voters for their own partisan gain. In order to create an inclusive, multiracial democracy in our state, we need real, structural change and this legislation will help us achieve our collective goal.”

“If we are to have a government ‘of the people, by the people, and for the people’ there must be minimum basic guidelines to ensure that every eligible voter has equal access to the ballot, regardless of where you live—be it a large city or a small town—and regardless of economic status, language, or skin color,” said **Laura Smits, President of the League of Women Voters of Connecticut**. “We are glad to sign on in support of this legislation and join other voting rights and social justice organizations to make this a reality, at least in Connecticut.”

“At its core, voter suppression is white supremacy, and this act is a crucial step in the fight against legalized racism and discrimination in our elections,” said **Tom Swan, Executive Director of Connecticut Citizen Action Group**. “The Connecticut Voting Rights Act provides the tools we need to address these discriminatory practices and seeks to protect all our citizens’ right to vote.”

“Connecticut has the opportunity to be a leader in this country in maintaining this form of representative republic/democracy where access to the vote is central,” said **Bishop John**

Selders, Co-Founder of Moral Monday CT. “The Connecticut Voting Rights Act, when passed this legislative session, will ensure this inherent right.”

“It’s past due that our country lives up to its promise that each citizen should have an opportunity to be heard in our democracy, and time to end discriminatory voting rules that infringe upon the freedom to vote. Thankfully, Connecticut lawmakers are taking the first step today by introducing the Voting Rights Act,” said **Reggie Thedford, Stand Up America’s Deputy Political Director.** “We applaud the many state organizations and advocates that have been fighting for this legislation for years and look forward to supporting them as the bill makes its way through the legislature and to the governor’s desk.”

“The right to vote is a basic American freedom that every citizen should have equal access to. Sadly, Black Americans and other communities of color face significant barriers to the ballot box that persist to this day,” said **Paul Smith, Senior Vice President of Campaign Legal Center.** “The Connecticut Voting Rights Act is an important tool that will help prevent voter discrimination and strengthen our democracy.”

“DEMOCRACY Women In Action, in the Lower CT River Valley, was founded to protect and preserve the values, traditions, and institutions of liberal democracy,” asserts **Claire Walsh, Chair of DWA.** “Voting is the hallmark of our democracy and we must do everything we can to expand access to the vote, and to stand up to those who are intent on developing discriminatory barriers which impact on our most vulnerable. When we protect the vote, and make it more accessible, we are strengthening our democracy. We are happy to support the Connecticut Voting Rights Act and urge passage of the bill.”

“The Connecticut Voting Rights Act is an important step toward ensuring that all Connecticut residents are able to exercise their right to vote,” said **Avery Gilbert, Clinical Lecturer for the Yale Law School Strategic Advocacy Clinic.** “We urge the General Assembly and Governor Lamont to pass and sign this bill into law and continue working to expand access to the ballot for citizens who have been historically excluded from the franchise.”

“It has been a long time coming but we do resolve to put in place the proper legislation that will assure voting access and protection from discriminatory practices for the sake of Democracy in this State,” said **Leah Ralls, President of the Windham/Willimantic Branch NAACP.** “Let us model the Democratic principles of an inclusionary process for all to see.”

More information about the CTVRA is available [here](#).

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