

April 20, 2021

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley,

We believe all Americans of goodwill can agree we must do everything possible to both expand access to voting and protect the integrity of our elections in order to ensure that everyone's vote counts. That is our birthright as Americans. And that is true no matter what our individual political beliefs may be.

The fight to ensure every American's right to vote has been a long and costly battle dating back long before any of us were born. The policy differences of today pale in comparison to what was overcome by the noble generations that preceded us. To compare today's policy differences with the literal life and death struggle of previous generations is to diminish those heroes' struggle, sacrifice, and enormous accomplishments. It is past time for today's generation to come together in an honest, civil, and straightforward way to protect these shared values of voter access and election integrity. It should be easy to vote and hard to cheat.

Sadly, the public discourse about Georgia's new voting reforms has not been civil, fair, nor honest. Politically motivated attacks against the new law have generated much heat, but little light.

We do not challenge the goodwill of the vast majority of the participants in this needlessly overwrought drama playing out. But we take great issue with the manner in which opponents of these reforms have operated.

It has become clear that even well-intentioned critics of the law simply have no idea what the law is. It is clear they have no idea how favorably Georgia's new law compares with most other states – including President Biden's home state of Delaware. And it is clear they have no idea that a majority of Black voters across the country support the key provision under attack by critics – the simple requirement that voters be able to identify themselves when voting. [link to

survey] This is the same simple requirement needed to pick up baseball tickets or board a plane - activities hardly as important as voting.

Instead, critics of the law have substituted passion for reason, hysteria for judgment. They have launched a despicable smear campaign against supporters of the law and economic reprisals against the state of Georgia – punishing the very people they claim to champion. They have tarred with the brush of racism people whose only sin is a desire for confidence in our elections.

It's time to end these campaigns of misinformation, division, and hate. People of goodwill must find ways to expand voter access for all Americans, strengthen the security and integrity of our election process, and do so in a way that sees civil, respectful discourse between those who disagree.

We, along with dozens of other black pastors and civic leaders in Georgia fully understand and support the state's new election integrity law – a law that will help rebuild voter confidence, and make sure every vote counts. Those who have been deceived by a political campaign to discredit the new law and punish the state of Georgia, should stop, take a step back, and understand the real agenda here.

The real agenda behind these attacks on Georgia's new election law and the smears against supporters of voter identification is to create the political environment for a sweeping new power grab by folks in Washington. Of course, all of this is being done under the guise of expanding voting access. The reality is it is an unprecedented attempt to take control of our elections, and have taxpayers pay for political campaigns. Yes, tucked into the mammoth 800-page bill HR1 is a little provision where taxpayers will be forced to subsidize the campaigns of the very politicians now supporting HR1. What a massive conflict of interest.

The effect of this takeover will be to strip states of the power to ensure the integrity of our elections through voter identification and other measures which have proven time and again to prevent or catch election fraud. You need only look at recent election fraud cases in North Carolina and New Jersey to see how serious a problem our country could face if these vital protections become outlawed.

There is no inherent conflict between making it easy to vote and hard to cheat. Those who tell you that one must be prioritized over the other are either misinformed or not being honest with voters.

The struggle to provide fair, honest elections and uncompromised voter access has lasted for generations and we respect those sincerely involved in this struggle. But we can't be naïve about

what is at stake. Political agendas that have nothing to do with enhancing election security and voter access are involved. If we sincerely hope to make it easier for all Americans to vote and harder for those who want to cheat, attacking the people of Georgia is not a solution. We believe Georgia's new election law is a proper, honest step in reforming the election process and restoring voter confidence. We welcome an honest discussion about it but reject the politics of personal destruction and division practiced by its critics. We trust the people of Georgia agree.

Hon. Kay James

President, Heritage Foundation

Hon. Ken Blackwell

Former Ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Commission

Mr. Bob Woodson

Civil Rights Leader

President, Woodson Center

Mr. Clarence Henderson

Civil Rights Icon

Chairman, North Carolina Martin Luther King Jr. Commission

Dr. Alveda King

Civil Rights Leader

President, Alveda King Ministries

Mr. Chris Arps

President, America for Citizen Voting

Hon. Jennifer Carol

Florida's 18th Lieutenant Governor

Hon. Curtis Hill

Indiana's 43rd Attorney General

Mr. Niger Innis

National Spokesperson, Congress on Racial Equality

Bishop EW Jackson

President, S.T.A.N.D

Mr. Raynard Jackson

Founder, Black Americans for a Better Future

Mr. Diante Johnson

President, Black Conservative Federation

Hon. Vernon Jones

Former State Representative, Georgia

Mr. Michael Lancaster

Director, Frederick Douglass Foundation, Georgia

Mr. Bruce LeVell

Former Small Business Administration Advocate, Region 4

Rev. Dean Nelson

Commissioner, Frederick Douglass Bicentennial Commission

Hon. Mark Robinson

Lieutenant Governor, North Carolina

Ms. Star Parker

President

Center for Urban Renewal and Education

Bishop Aubrey Shines

Founder, Conservative Clergy of Color

Dr. Carol Swain

Former Professor of Law, Vanderbilt University

Col. Allen West

Chairman, Texas GOP

CC: Majority Leader Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
Senator Patrick Leahy
Senator Marsha Blackburn

Senator Richard Blumenthal
Senator Corey Booker
Senator Chris Coons
Senator John Cornyn
Senator Tom Cotton
Senator Ted Cruz
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Lindsey Graham
Senator Josh Hawley
Senator Mazie Hirono
Senator John Kennedy
Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator Mike Lee
Senator Jon Ossoff
Senator Alex Padilla
Senator Ben Sasse
Senator Thom Tillis
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse