

Kanawha County Democratic Executive Committee

ELAINE A. HARRIS
CHAIR

Elaine.Harris@kanawhadems.org
www.kanawhadems.org

  @kanawhadems



505 Riverbend Blvd.
St. Albans, WV 25177
Phone: (304) 727-6020

January 12, 2022

The Honorable Joe Manchin
United States Senate
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

VIA EMAIL

Dear Senator Manchin:

First, the Kanawha County Democratic Executive Committee unanimously urges you to support the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act. The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act responds to current events by restoring the full protections of the original, bipartisan Voting Rights Act of 1965, which was last reauthorized by Congress in 2006, when Republicans controlled the Presidency and both houses of Congress.

This Act provides the tools to address discriminatory voter suppression and seeks to protect every Americans' right to vote.

In the past year, nineteen states have passed legislation to stifle Americans' right to vote. In some of these states, these measures: (1) prohibit giving out water or food to voters waiting in long lines to vote; (2) criminalize the actions of poll workers who are simply doing their statutory jobs; (3) criminalize assisting disabled voters; and (4) criminalize advocating for people vote by mail. Further, these laws shorten the window to request or turn in an absentee ballot and reduce the number and hours of polling places, while at the same time increasing the number of voters per precinct. These laws are only intended to disfranchise millions of Americans.

The Committee applauds your efforts to craft the bipartisan Freedom to Vote Act, which if passed, would ensure voters' rights are universally enforced and protected, regulation of partisan gerrymandering and dark money, and the preservation the states' right to enact laws for their respective citizens.

These two pieces of legislation protect God-given rights which are too important to be denied debate and a vote by an intransigent group who will not negotiate or compromise.

Second, the Committee also urges you to support a filibuster carve out or any measure to ensure a vote on these measures without delay or denial. The filibuster was designed to encourage debate, negotiation, and compromise in our democracy. This was the vision of our late great Senator Robert Byrd when he urged the filibuster to be used to craft

bipartisan legislation. Yet, Senator Byrd warned the filibuster should never be used as a tool for pure obstruction of legislation.

Unfortunately, we have seen time and again the filibuster is not being used for constructive purposes. Simply put, you can't play ball if the other team won't play. When the filibuster is being used to obstruct and destruct legislation, it is time to either reform the rule, or establish carve outs for important pieces of legislation like voting rights.

In conclusion, we strongly urge you to remember these pieces of legislation are too important to the integrity of our election, our democracy, and our rights.

We know West Virginia has election laws that protect our right to vote, but your bill plus the John Lewis Voting Rights Enforcement Act will help to safeguard democracy for the entire country.

Sincerely,



Elaine A. Harris, Chair
On behalf of the Membership of
The Kanawha County Democratic Executive Committee