Business Letter to Congress in Support of Voting Rights

July 14, 2021

Honorable Members of Congress:

As a 25-year-old in the spring of 1965, John Lewis, your friend and former colleague, then the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, led a march of over 600 people across the Edmund Pettus Bridge to secure the equal right to vote in this country. Fortified with an uncommon courage and an unwavering conviction that America could still fulfill its highest ideals, he was met that day with a force that left him and other marchers bloodied but they remained determined. In the months that followed, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 with the strongest protections against voter discrimination in American history, altering how elections would be run in this nation for the next five decades.

In the 2020 election, Americans came together to work the polls, get out the vote, and cast their ballots in spite of the pandemic, achieving historic levels of voter participation. The business community is proud of our role in encouraging our employees, customers, and communities to exercise their right to vote and have a say in our government. Widespread civic engagement is essential to a stable society and robust economy. Our democracy is strongest, as Congressman Lewis knew, when we all can vote.

At the same time, the election highlighted deep inequities in how our elections are run. Despite decades of progress, impediments to exercising the right to vote persist in many states, especially for communities of color. We need federal protections to safeguard this fundamental right for all Americans.

To this end, the undersigned group of U.S. employers urges Congress to address these problems through legislation amending the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Last Congress, the House of Representatives passed the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. We support the ongoing work of both the House and the Senate to enact legislation amending the Voting Rights Act this Congress.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965, long considered the crown jewel of civil rights legislation, contained provisions that prevented the adoption of discriminatory rules that limited access to voting in states with histories of voting discrimination. Those provisions were reauthorized four times by overwhelming bipartisan majorities in the U.S. Congress, and every time the VRA has been reauthorized it has been signed into law by a Republican president. Upon signing the 1982 reauthorization into law, President Reagan said that “Citizens must have complete confidence in the sanctity of their right to vote, and that’s what this legislation is all about. It provides confidence that constitutional guarantees are being upheld and that no vote counts more than another.”
In 2013, the Supreme Court in Shelby County v. Holder struck down those provisions in a 5-to-4 decision as unconstitutional. The effects were immediate. Within days, states formerly covered by the law began passing legislation to make voting more difficult with burdensome voter ID requirements, polling place closures, reductions in early voting, the elimination of same-day voter registration, and purging voter rolls, all of which disproportionately affected communities of color. In handing down its ruling, the Supreme Court invited Congress to update the coverage formula to ensure the law is responsive to current voting conditions. Congressional action on that invitation is long overdue.

Congress needs to amend the Voting Rights Act to restore necessary safeguards by updating the Voting Rights Act’s coverage formula to prevent voting discrimination, as well as establish a more transparent and accountable system for states to report election law changes. Legislation amending the Voting Rights Act must help ensure that voters of color who remain the targets of voter suppression have equal and unfettered access to the democratic process.

Representative John Lewis called the right to vote “the most powerful non-violent tool we have in our democratic society.” He was a fierce advocate of the Voting Rights Advancement Act (HR4) because our country is in an “ongoing struggle to redeem the soul of America, and we’re not there yet.” As we approach the first anniversary of Congressman Lewis’ passing, his life’s work to strengthen American democracy must now be ours.

While each of our companies is unique, we are united in the belief that every American deserves a voice in our democracy. It is our government’s role to ensure voting is accessible to all. We urge Congress to add to the legacy of Representative Lewis by passing Voting Rights Act legislation that assures that every voice is heard.

Respectfully,

Signatory companies & business organizations

**Companies**

- 500 Startups
- Adasina Social Capital
- Airbnb
- Amalgamated Bank
- Amazon.com
- Anji Mountain
- APCO Worldwide
- Apple
- Arcweb Technologies
- Asana
- Aspen Skiing Company
- Avocado Green Brands
- Azavea
- Bad Robot Productions
- Beautycounter
- Beepboop
- Ben & Jerry’s Homemade
- Beneficial State Bank
- Best Buy
- The Blueprint Strategy Group
- Bountiful Books
- Box
- Boyne Resorts
Pinterest
PrivacyWall
Propr Design
Public Good
Puente Strategies
Randa Apparel & Accessories
Raven + Lily
REI Co-op
Reimbursify
RenewComm
Rivanna Natural Designs
RKT Technology
Salesforce
Salt Palm Development
Sameem Afghan
Restaurant
Sealaska Corporation
ServiceNow
Seventh Generation
Shipt
Shoshana Technologies
Sierra Nevada Brewing Co
Sing Out, Louise! Productions
Smilow + Mathiesen
Sony Music Group
Southeast Tourism Society
Square
Starbucks
Taizu
Target
TAXA
Teddy Stratford Apparel
Tesla
Tiffany & Co.
Traditional Medicinals
Trillium Asset Management
Tripadvisor
TSquared Consulting
Uncommon Bold
Under Armour
Unilever USA
Universal Music Group
UserTesting
Vail Resorts
Vault.co
Verify Venture Studio
W.S. Badger Company
Warby Parker
Warner Music Group
Watson Agency
wearwell
Wellington Flowers and More
Whisk: a Sustainable Bakeshop
Xfund
Zillow
Zoom

Business Organizations

Black Economic Alliance
Business for America
Chamber of Progress
Florida For Good
Small Business Majority
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance
Mainstreet Alliance
Indianapolis Urban League
TechNet
T-REX Technology Entrepreneur Center
West Philadelphia Corridor Collaborative