



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 9, 2021

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### **Wisconsin Faith Leaders Stand Up Against Voter Suppression**

*"The vote is precious. It is almost sacred. It is the most powerful non-violent tool we have in a democracy." – Rep. John Lewis*

As people of faith, we have always held the right to vote as a sacred obligation. Because of our deep commitment to democracy, faith communities across the country mobilized their members in 2020 to help make sure every eligible voter was able to cast their vote. This work paid off as we saw the greatest voter turnout nationwide in US history.

This turnout was a great victory for democracy. Sadly, that victory is now at risk, as anti-democratic forces in our state houses are doing all they can to restrict people's ability to vote. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, as of May 14, legislators have introduced 389 bills with restrictive provisions in 48 states. (<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-may-2021>) Thirteen such bills are currently being proposed in our state legislature which will create steep barriers to exercising the right to vote.

Some of the more egregious elements in these bills include forbidding the Wisconsin Election Commission from sending out absentee ballot applications to every voter, as they did for the November election. They include forbidding more than one dropbox in every community, regardless of the size of the community, and the dropbox must be attached to the building where the city clerk's office is located.

Employees in nursing homes are forbidden from helping residents to vote, and the family of residents must be notified whenever special voting deputies come to the facility to register voters. Elderly, disabled, and indefinitely confined voters no longer would be able to request an absentee ballot for all upcoming elections, but have to make the request and provide ID for each and every election. Anyone indefinitely confined would need to affirm their status under oath, and if they are under 65, the sworn statement has to be signed by their health care provider.

Further, anyone who identified as indefinitely confined between March 12, 2020 and November 3, 2020 would lose that status and have to reapply.

These are just a few of the many anti-democratic, anti-voter bills being proposed.

As faith leaders, we rise in opposition to these bills and in support of the following principles:

- The right to vote is a sacred, inviolable right of American citizens.
- Our democracy is strongest when we have the greatest level of participation by our citizens in a representative government.
- We are committed to encouraging our congregants to exercise their right to vote.
- Safe and secure options to vote are vital to ensuring voter participation.
- Government must support equitable access to the ballot to ensure that all eligible voters can exercise their rights.
- Government must avoid actions that reduce participation in elections – particularly among historically disenfranchised communities, persons with disabilities, older adults, racial minorities, rural and low-income voters.
- Government has a responsibility to continuously improve and strengthen election administration, because public faith in the security and integrity of our elections is fundamental.
- Election laws must be developed in a bipartisan fashion to preserve public confidence in our elections and to preserve the values of democracy.

Our nation is strongest when we stand together. We call on our elected officials to adopt these principles as they proceed in the spirit of inclusion and equality.

**Addendum:** The organizers of this event are aware that some amendments have been introduced on some of the bills that, if passed, would affect a few of the specific critiques above. These include:

—“Employees in nursing homes are forbidden from helping residents to vote.”

-- "Elderly, disabled, and indefinitely confined voters no longer would be able to request an absentee ballot for all upcoming elections, but have to make the request and provide ID for each and every election."

-- Those who are indefinitely confined and are under 65, would need to provide a sworn statement that has to be signed by their health care provider.”

These modifications are not nearly sufficient to alter our opposition to these anti-voter bills.

## **SIGNATORIES:**

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ESTHER of the Fox Valley  
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Madison Christian Community  
Pastors United  
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Progressive Baptist Church  
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