

Faithful Democracy: Restoring the Voters Covenant

Living into our call to the prophetic pursuit of justice, equality, and the common good, the Faithful Democracy Coalition comes together in 2020 for a restoration of our nation's founding principles. The faith community affirms that every human being is a person of dignity and worth. In a secular democracy, fair and just democratic systems are central to the assertion of that dignity and worth.

Free of cynicism and ever-hopeful, the faith community holds firm to our trust in the spirit of self-governance and the strength of our aspirational founding principles. However, we move into the election season with concerns about the wellbeing of our national body politic.

Our nation is segmented into those who are "worthy" of a voice in our political system and those who are not. Democratic systems are used to perpetuate systemic racism and silence the voices of the marginalized, particularly poor people and people of color. Our democratic processes have been corrupted at every level: through voter suppression and intimidation; outsized financial contributions from anonymous donors and corporate interests; gerrymandering; and foreign actors hijacking public discourse in bad faith.

We call on our elected officials to heed the government's sacred responsibility to:

- the common good rather than special interests;
- the equality of citizens and the need to protect the disempowered from the powerful; and
- the danger of public cynicism and the erosion of trust in public authorities, honesty, and accountability.

The faith community has a distinctive role in the public debate as the moral conscience of the state, and so we call our elected leaders to an examination of conscience.

Our Constitution asserts this nation's covenant with the People: that "no state shall...abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States" (14th Amendment). More specifically, "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude" (15th Amendment). A democratic system that suppresses the vote of any U.S. citizens is unconstitutional.

Voting is a core means of political expression on the part of citizens and demands fair and reliable democratic processes. Each election, we call on people of faith to cast their votes according to their conscience. We now call on the federal government to repair our democratic systems and restore the voice and vote of all citizens in the United States.

People of faith and conscience demand free and honest elections to determine the will of the people.

It is immoral and contrary to a healthy democracy when...

...corporations are given the rights of people and allowed to finance campaigns as a form of free expression. *Secret special interest money has poured into influencing elections and drowned out the voices of actual voters. The temptation to use money to buy unjust favors is a moral matter for the religious community, and moneyed interests have undue influence on our elected leaders.*

...there are no protections from racially discriminatory voting rules that prevent citizens from voting. *Currently, state and local laws cannot be challenged until after the votes have been counted and the election is called. The Voting Rights Act must be fully restored to protect voters' rights before an election takes place, especially voters of color whose voices have historically been suppressed.*

...voter disenfranchisement is clearly rooted in racist policies and history. *Formerly incarcerated citizens are disenfranchised even after serving their time. These populations deserve equal voting rights and representation, like all other citizens of the United States.*

...trust in our democratic systems is dwindling. *Evidence of orchestrated attempts by outside parties to covertly interfere in our nation's elections has sown discord among the populace and deepened political divisions. When our elected leaders fail to provide the needed resources to secure future elections from predicted hacking, they invite interference by nefarious actors. Confusing electoral outcomes could sow further discord and potentially threaten an orderly and peaceful transition of power.*

...leaders in power wield that power to manipulate and diminish the representation of some citizens over others. *Gerrymandering primarily restricts and curtails the voice of communities of color by undermining their political expression, thus depriving them of their right to participate equally in elections. Residents of the District of Columbia are delegated to second-class citizenship without voting representation in Congress.*

Additionally, we urge Congress to restore the well-being of our democracy by:

- ✓ *Ensuring the accessibility of polling locations (ex. locations, hours, advertising),*
- ✓ *Expanding voters' options to cast their ballot (ex. early voting, absentee voting, and vote-by-mail),*
- ✓ *Making registration a seamless process (ex. registering on Election Day, banning discriminatory voter roll purges, and automatic registration),*
- ✓ *Implementing policies that incentivize electoral participation (ex. multilingual ballots and Election Day holiday).*