

March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Dear Legislative Leadership:

The late Congressman John Lewis (Feb. 21, 1940 - July 17, 2020) said, **“my dear friends: your vote is precious, almost sacred. It is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have to create a more perfect union.”**

Despite this powerful legacy too many states across the country are attempting to roll back voting rights and protections—Connecticut must lead the way in protecting and expanding the freedom to vote. But as the Center for Public Integrity observed in 2020, Connecticut has among the most restrictive voting laws outside of the south. We therefore urge all members of the Connecticut General Assembly to support an ambitious freedom to vote legislative agenda that must be prioritized as early as possible this legislative session, including:

1. Legislation to **Ban Foreign Spending on State Ballot Referendums** —such as on the Nov. 8, 2022 ballot question where voters will decide if our state will finally allow early voting.
2. Legislation to enact a **Connecticut Voting Rights Act** to give Black, Brown and other voters of color additional protections against voter suppression.
3. Legislation to enact **A Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) Bill** to create a task force to study the implementation of RCV for state, federal and municipal elections in Connecticut.

Connecticut voters have the historic opportunity on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022 to vote YES on the statewide ballot question to finally allow early voting—thereby joining the 44 other states across the country that already benefit from early voting. But first, the General Assembly must close a huge loophole in state law that currently allows foreign individuals and entities to spend foreign funds to influence the outcome of our state and local ballot referendums.

The General Assembly needs to enact a specific law to prohibit contributions or expenditures by foreign nationals or entities on ballot measures in Connecticut. **The question on Connecticut’s November 8, 2022 statewide ballot where voters will decide if our state will finally allow Early Voting could become a target of anti-democratic foreign actors.** We cannot allow this to happen.

Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 9-620c now sets the following limit: “A political committee formed solely to aid or promote the success or defeat of a referendum

question shall not receive contributions from a national committee or from a committee of a candidate for federal or out-of-state office.” **But it is silent on funds from foreign sources.** Safeguarding our state ballot referendums from potential anti-democratic foreign actors is a commonsense reform that must be enacted immediately.

**Early voting** is a simple step that would make our voting process more accessible while helping to cut down on Election Day lines. For many working families, getting to the polls on Election Day is no easy task, forcing some to choose between family and work obligations and their civic duty. With early voting, they would no longer be forced to make that choice.

It’s also time for Connecticut to pass **A Connecticut Voting Rights Act to give Black, Brown and other voters of color additional protections against voter suppression.**

To this day, Black, Brown and other voters of color in Connecticut routinely encounter long lines and other obstacles when voting. In 2020, the Center for Public Integrity observed that Connecticut voters still “face some of the biggest obstacles outside of the south.”

Now is also the time to enact a **Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) bill to create a task force to study the implementation of RCV** for state, federal and municipal elections in Connecticut. In a typical election, voters cast ballots for one candidate, and the candidate with the most votes wins, even if a majority prefer other candidates. With Ranked Choice Voting, voters rank candidates in the order they prefer them, marking the ballot for their 1st choice, and if they wish, for their 2nd and 3rd choices, and so on.

A candidate wins if they receive a majority of first-choice votes, just the same as a plurality election. If no candidate gets more than 50% of first-choice votes, the last-place candidate is eliminated, and the second choices of that candidate’s voters are transferred to the remaining candidates. This process continues until one candidate receives more than 50% of the vote.

**Connecticut voters deserve the absolute best version of democracy;** that’s why we—a coalition of good government groups and other organizations who share this vision—are writing today **to strongly urge our legislative leaders to prioritize these three freedom to vote reforms** from day one of the 2022 regular legislative session.

Sincerely,

Action Together Connecticut  
Action Together New Haven County

Action Together Northern Fairfield County  
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. - Connecticut Chapters  
American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Connecticut  
Black and Brown United in Action  
BLM 860  
Bridgeport Generation Now Votes  
Collaborative Center for Justice  
Common Cause in Connecticut  
Communications Workers of America Local 1298  
Congregation Mishkan Israel  
Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges  
Connecticut AFL-CIO  
Connecticut Alliance for Retired Americans  
Connecticut Citizen Action Group  
Connecticut Federation of Democratic Women  
Connecticut League of Conservation Voters  
Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)  
Connecticut Working Families  
ConnPIRG  
ConnPIRG Students  
CT Black Women  
CT Shoreline Indivisible  
Danbury Area Justice Network  
DEMOCRACY Women in Action  
East Lyme Democratic Town Committee  
Generation Change CT  
Greater New Haven NAACP  
Hamden Action Now  
Hamden Democratic Town Committee  
Hamden Progressive Action Network (HamPAN)  
Hartford Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.  
Hartford Votes~Hartford Vota Coalition  
Heritage Village Democratic Club  
Hispanic Federation Connecticut State Office  
ICT4 (Indivisible CT District 4)  
Individual Democracy Activists  
Indivisible Stamford  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 1228  
League of Women Voters of Connecticut  
League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford  
Make Voting Easy - CT  
Medicare for All CT  
Moral Monday CT

Nancy A Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work, UConn School of Social Work  
National Lawyers Guild Chapter at Yale Law School  
New Haven Peoples Center  
New Haven Rising!  
Norwalk Women Who Vote  
Old Lyme Democratic Town Committee  
PAN34  
Politica CT  
Power Up Manchester  
Progressive Women of Greater Hartford  
ReSisters  
SEIU - CT State Council  
SEIU 32BJ  
SEIU CSEA Local 2001  
SEIU District 1199NE  
Sierra Club Connecticut  
Social Action Council, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury  
The Unrig Bridgeport Coalition  
Unitarian Society of New Haven UU the Vote Team  
Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut  
Urban Concepts, Inc.  
UU the Vote CT  
Varick Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church  
Voter Choice Connecticut  
Waterbury Muslims  
Western Connecticut Action Network  
Windham Willimantic Branch NAACP  
Workers United Laundry, Distribution and Food Service Joint Board SEIU  
YWCA Greenwich  
YWCA New Britain