

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	Arcweb Technologies	Ben & Jerry’s Homemade
Adasina Social Capital	Asana	Beneficial State Bank
Airbnb	Aspen Skiing Company	Best Buy
Amalgamated Bank	Avocado Green Brands	The Blueprint Strategy Group
Amazon.com	Azavea	Bountiful Books
Anji Mountain	Bad Robot Productions	Box
APCO Worldwide	Beautycounter	Boyne Resorts
Apple	Beepboop	

Burton	Eventbrite	L. M. Lewis Consulting
Capricorn Investment Group	Facebook	Leading Change Consulting & Coaching
CareHero	Flex Fusion Studios	Legacy Vacation Resorts
CareVet	For the Win	Levi Strauss & Co.
Chicory Wealth	Good Energy Guild	Lime
Cisco	Google	Litwin Law
Clif Bar & Company	Greenlight Financial Technology	Live Well Brands
Clover Sonoma	H&M USA	LM Studio
The Collab Lab	Hannon Armstrong	Lyft
Commercial Property Services	Harry's	M1PR
Compose[d]	Heart Centered Psychotherapy	Macy's
Countable	Herra Productions	Mailchimp
CREDO Mobile	The Hershey Company	Mars, Incorporated
CredSpark	HigherRing	MegaFood
Cummins	Hims & Hers	Microsoft Corporation
CustomerCount	HP	Mighty Cricket
Danone North America	Ibis Communications	MobiusVP
Dave Gragg Agency	IKEA U.S.	MOM's Organic Market
Direct Agents	Impax Asset Management	Mondelez International
Doing Good Works	Infosys	MPAC Healthcare
DoorDash	Initiate Government Solutions	Namaste Solar
Dr. Bronner's	Intel Corporation	Nerdy Diva
DSM North America	Invitae	Nestlé USA
ECOS	Jonathan Rose Companies	Nextdoor
Edelman	Juniper Networks	Oak Street Health
Edthena	JustLaws	Okta
Empowered Education	Keap Co.	Optimize International
Encore Renewable Energy	KEEN	Patagonia
Etsy	Key Medium	PayPal
		PepsiCo, Inc.

Pinterest	Shoshana Technologies	TSquared Consulting
PrivacyWall	Sierra Nevada Brewing Co	Uncommon Bold
Propr Design	Sing Out, Louise! Productions	Under Armour
Public Good	Smilow + Mathiesen	Unilever USA
Puente Strategies	Sony Music Group	Universal Music Group
Randa Apparel & Accessories	Southeast Tourism Society	UserTesting
Raven + Lily	Square	Vail Resorts
REI Co-op	Starbucks	Vault.co
Reimbursify	Taizu	Verify Venture Studio
RenewComm	Target	W.S. Badger Company
Rivanna Natural Designs	TAXA	Warby Parker
RKT Technology	Teddy Stratford Apparel	Warner Music Group
Salesforce	Tesla	Watson Agency
Salt Palm Development	Tiffany & Co.	wearwell
Sameem Afghan Restaurant	Traditional Medicinals	Wellington Flowers and More
Sealaska Corporation	Trillium Asset Management	Whisk: a Sustainable Bakeshop
ServiceNow	Tripadvisor	Xfund
Seventh Generation		Zillow
Shipt		Zoom

Business Organizations

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