

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 17, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Leader McCarthy, and Leader McConnell:

When President Lyndon B. Johnson transmitted a draft of the Voting Rights Act to the House of Representatives, he asserted that it would “help rid the Nation of racial discrimination in every aspect of the electoral process and thereby insure the right of all to vote.” As we look back on that quote today, 56 years later, we reflect not just on the positive impact this legislation has had on individual Americans’ ability to exercise their most fundamental right – the right to vote – and the strength of our democracy writ large, but on the important work still have to do to realize that promise of ensuring the right of all to vote.

Since enactment, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 has been reauthorized and amended five times with large, bipartisan majorities. Most recently, The Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 passed the United States Senate 98-0 without a single dissenting vote. Protecting Americans’ access to democracy has not been a partisan issue for the past 56 years, and we must not allow it to become one now.

As you know, in 2013, the Supreme Court ruled in *Shelby v. Holder* that Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, which determines which states and localities must get pre-clearance from the Department of Justice or the court before they make changes to their voting laws, was unconstitutional because it was based on an outdated formula. This decision effectively gutted one of the federal government’s most effective tools to preserve confidence in our nation’s elections, and we are seeing the results manifest themselves in state legislatures across the country.

Inaction is not an option. Congress must come together – just as we have done time and again – to reaffirm our longstanding bipartisan commitment to free, accessible, and secure elections for all. We urge you to join us in calling for the bipartisan reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act through regular order. We can do this. We must do this.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Manchin III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

U.S. Senator Joe Manchin III

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa Murkowski". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski