

September 22, 2021

Dear Members of Congress:

The undersigned organizations, on behalf of the millions of Americans our groups collectively represent, write to urge you to support and pass the Protecting Our Democracy Act.

For decades, congressional authority has been undermined by the executive branch, diminishing the ability of Congress to fulfill its constitutional duties, to protect the rule of law, and to hold all presidents accountable for overreaches and abuses of power. The last time Congress passed significant reform to protect our democracy from abuses of executive power was after the Watergate scandal. The time has come for new guardrails to reassert Congress' role as a coequal branch of government.

Today, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle and in both chambers have an interest in restoring the checks and balances entrusted to them in our Constitution. The Protecting Our Democracy Act would do just that by restoring the powers the Founders vested in the legislative branch to serve as a check on the executive without infringing upon the president's constitutional powers.

Among other reforms, this historic bill would:

Strengthen Congress's ability to oversee the executive branch by fortifying congressional subpoena power by providing expedited consideration of subpoena enforcement by courts, so the executive branch cannot run out the clock on congressional oversight;

Ensure inspectors general are qualified and empowered to hold federal agencies accountable without fear of reprisal by requiring the president to have "good cause" for removing an inspector general and enhancing reporting requirements when there is a vacancy;

Ensure whistleblowers can continue shining light on corruption and abuses of power that betray the public trust by enhancing protections against retaliation, providing legal defenses for whistleblowers against civil and criminal liability, and allowing whistleblowers to have their day in court;

Reinforce Congress's constitutional powers over spending and the power of the purse by requiring the Office of Management and Budget to make public basic information about the management of federal funds, and reporting to Congress to ensure those funds are spent in accordance with the law;

Prevent political interference with the U.S. Department of Justice by putting a permanent, statutory requirement in place that will ensure transparency and accountability related to their communications with the White House;

Strengthen the Hatch Act to protect federal agencies from being used for political purposes and ensure senior political appointees are held accountable under the law the same way other federal employees are.

Prevent abuse of the president's pardon power by increasing transparency of the pardon process, prohibiting self-pardons by the president, and clarifying that pardons are "official acts" for the purposes of federal bribery statute;

Provide for enforcement of the domestic and foreign Emoluments Clauses of the Constitution, to prevent a president from profiting from payments by foreign or domestic governments; and

Secure our elections from foreign interference, by ensuring political campaigns are informed of the laws banning foreign interference and are prepared to comply and report any attempts of foreign interference.

In this perilous moment for our republic, we believe it should be a top priority for this Congress to repair our democracy, including ensuring that no future president is permitted to abuse the power of their office.

If enacted, the Protecting Our Democracy Act would protect against future presidential abuses of power, restore the integrity of our democratic institutions, and ensure transparency from the chief executive.

Given the urgency of this crisis and for these reasons, we call on you to swiftly pass this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

20/20 Vision

Academics Stand Against Poverty

Accountability Lab

Affiliation of Christian Engineers

American Oversight

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.

Arab American Institute (AAI)

Asian Law Alliance

Asian Pacific American Labor alliance, AFL-CIO

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Beyond Pesticides

Blacks in Law Enforcement of America

Blue Wave Postcard Movement

Brave New Films

Brennan Center for Justice
Campaign Legal Center
Center for American Progress
Center for Common Ground
Center for International Environmental Law
Center for International Policy
Center for Media and Democracy
Center for Progressive Reform
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Clean Elections Texas
Coalition of Labor Union Women, AFL-CIO
Columbia Legal Services
Common Cause
Communications Workers of America
Community Research
Community Science Institute
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety
Constitutional Alliance
Consumer Action
Corruption kills
Council for a Livable World
CovertAction Magazine
Demand Progress
DemCast USA
Democracy 21
Democracy Fund Voice
Democracy Matters
Demos
Disaster Accountability Project
Eco-Justice Collaborative
End Citizens United//Let America Vote Action Fund
Equal Justice Society
Equal Rights Advocates
Essential Information
Faith in Public Life
Fix Democracy First
Fix the Court
Food & Water Watch
Franciscan Action Network
Free Speech Coalition, Inc.
Free Speech For People
Geos Institute
Global Integrity
Government Accountability Project

Government Information Watch
Green Delaware
Greenpeace USA
Hanford Challenge
Heart of America NW
Hip Hop Caucus
Human Environmental and Leadership Prevalent Center (HELP Center)
Indivisible
Information Trust
Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection, Georgetown Law
International Association of Whistleblowers
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Iowa Institute for Public Accountability
Keep Our Republic
Kentucky Environmental Foundation
Kentucky Resources Council, Inc.
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
League of Women Voters of the United States
Mainers for Accountable Leadership
Michiganders for Fair and Transparent Elections
Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action
MoneyOutVA
Mormon Women for Ethical Government
MoveOn
Muslim American Law Enforcement Association (MALEA)
National Center for Health Research
National Council for Occupational Safety and Health
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Organization for Women
National Security Counselors
National Voter Corps
National Whistleblower Center/Whistleblower Network News
National Workrights Institute
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New American Leaders Action Fund
New Moral Majority
Niskanen Center
No More Guantánamos
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
Open The Government
Our Bodies Ourselves
Pax Christi USA

People For the American Way
People's Parity Project
PRESS4WORD2020
Professional Managers Association
Project Blueprint
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
Protect All Children's Environment
Protect Democracy
Public Citizen
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
Public Justice Center
Republicans for the Rule of Law
Rock the Vote
RootsAction.org
S.T.O.P. - The Surveillance Technology Oversight Project
Secure Elections Network
Senior Executives Association
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change
Sierra Club
SocioEnergetics Foundation
Sojourners
Stand Up America
Stand Up Republic
Strategies for Justice, BWMP LLC
Sustainable Energy & Economy Network
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
The Digital Democracy Project
The Ecotopian Society
The National Air Disaster Foundation
The National Vote
The Press Freedom Defense Fund of First Look Institute
The Rutherford Institute
The Shalom Center
The Signals Network
The Workers Circle
Transparency International — U.S. Office
Truckers Justice Center
Tully Center for Free Speech
Un-PAC
Union of Concerned Scientists
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
UNITED SIKHS
Voices for Progress
VoteVets

Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
Whistleblowers of America
Win Without War
Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom US
Workplace Fairness
Worksafe
X-Lab