

SUMMARY: FOR THE PEOPLE ACT (League of Women Voters of the United States)

Voting Rights Reforms

Having voting rights protections and reforms in place would revolutionize our elections and make them more accessible, yield increased turnout, and ultimately elevate the voice of all Americans.

- Automatic Voter Registration (AVR): Simply put, AVR shifts voter registration from an “opt-in” system to a “opt-out” process. Every eligible citizen who interacts with designated government agencies, such as the DMV, a public university, or a social service agency, is automatically registered to vote unless they decline registration. With AVR, we could see as many as 50 million new voters registered.
- Online Voter Registration: The *For the People Act* requires that all states offer online voter registration, which allows voters to register and update their voter information using an online platform. This serves to remove barriers to registration and make the process more accessible.
- Same-Day Registration (SDR): As its name indicates, same-day registration allows any non-registered person who shows up to the polls to vote, to register at the voting site. This creates another way for voters to participate and have their voices heard.

- **Returning Citizens Voting Rights:** The legislation also goes a long way to restoring the voting rights of previously convicted individuals. It ensures that if an individual has completed their sentence and is living in the community, they are eligible to vote in all federal elections. It goes further to require that states provide written notification to individuals when their voting rights have been restored.
- **Reform Voter Purges:** We all want clean voter rolls; however, voter purges are typically a tactic used to further voter suppression. The *For the People Act* ensures that a voter cannot be removed from the rolls simply because they have not voted in an election. It also requires that if a voter is purged, they must receive notice of their removal and be given an opportunity to remedy their registration before being removed.

Money in Politics Protections

Since the Citizens United decision in 2010, politics and elections have become dominated by money, and there has been a push to create more accountability for politicians, big corporations, and donors. The For the People Act helps to return accountability to the process and ensure transparency in campaign finance.

- Donation Transparency: The *For the People Act* will require all groups that spend significant sums on campaigns to disclose the donors who pay for that spending. It also changes the rules governing online campaign ads versus traditional media. Currently, online campaign ads are distinct from traditional media, and thus not accountable to the transparency laws that govern traditional media ads. However, the *For the People Act* requires the transparency laws that apply to traditional media to also apply to online ads. It goes further and requires the largest online platforms, with over 50 million unique visitors per month, to establish a public file of requests to purchase political ads.
- FEC Reform: The Federal Election Commission (FEC) is the department that oversees and enforces campaign finance laws. But for too long it has been hobbled by gridlock and inaction. The *For the People Act* breaks through the gridlock at the agency by reducing the number of commissioners from six to five, with no more than two affiliated with any party, effectively requiring one commissioner to be a tie-breaking independent. In addition, it prevents commissioners from serving beyond their term expiration, to ensure that leadership and membership changes. Finally, it strengthens the FEC's power to investigate alleged campaign finance violations and dismiss frivolous complaints.
- Small Donor Public Financing: Under this program, the donations made by everyday Americans will have more power in the system and increase the voices of individual voters. The

proposed campaign finance systems work by having candidates opt-in once they raise enough small start-up donations to qualify. Donors who give to participating candidates in small amounts will then see their contributions matched by public money. This would match donations of \$1–\$200 to participating congressional candidates at a six-to-one ratio. This means if you give \$20 to a candidate, they will actually receive \$120 from the program. This program will help many first-time candidates, candidates of color, and female candidates, who may not have connections to a big-money network but have a swell of local support. Importantly, this system is not funded by taxpayer money but instead by a nominal surcharge on criminal and civil penalties assessed against corporate wrongdoers.

Redistricting Guidelines

As we enter another redistricting cycle, it is more important than ever to make sure that our maps are being drawn fairly. The For the People Act enacts important changes to the process that ensure this.

- Independent Redistricting Commissions: The default redistricting process has state legislatures controlling the map-drawing process. This breeds unfairness and bias, as the people whose power is determined by maps are charged with drawing them.

However, the *For the People Act* strives to limit the redistricting power of legislatures and requires the creation of Independent Redistricting Commissions.

- Standardized Criteria: The *For the People Act* also puts in place a set of standardized rules that must be followed across America, such as outlawing partisan gerrymandering and protecting communities of interest. Having standardized criteria will ensure that maps are drawn fairly and free of bias.
- Transparency: There are also greater transparency requirements in the bill. It requires that all Independent Redistricting Commission business be done in open public meetings, subject to oversight, with all data and other information made available to the public and all official communications subject to disclosure. The more transparent the process is, the more accountable it is.