**Communications Goal**

The For the People Act (H.R. 1) ushers in a new vision for democracy in America. Our primary goal is to **center a racial justice/civil rights frame in the democracy reform conversation around the For the People Act (H.R. 1)**, which will enable us to both expand the franchise for marginalized communities and build greater public will for restoring the Voting Rights Act. In all our messaging, *we must make clear that the two bills (H.R. 1 and VRAA) are the transformational democracy reform agenda we need.*

**Message Frames**

* **Our democracy works best when everyone, no matter who they are or what their color, can fully participate**. Civil rights advocates have always fought for free, fair, and accessible elections because there have always been wealthy elites and bigoted people who rig the system against the rest of us. It’s long past time to build a 21st century democracy that is representative of and responsive to our growing, diverse nation. The For the People Act and forthcoming legislation that will restore and update the Voting Rights Act puts the government back in the hands of the people.
  + [Add any data, stories, facts about the need to protect voting rights, address election administration issues, and/or broader democracy reform efforts. Example below:]
  + Since 2010, 25 states passed laws restricting the vote, including laws making it harder for citizens to register, cutbacks on early voting, and restrictive voter ID.[[1]](#footnote-2)
  + In 2016 alone, 14 states had new restrictive voting laws in place for the first time in a presidential election. In 2018, six states had new restrictive laws in place. [[2]](#footnote-3)
* **We must have a democracy that works for all of us if we want to make progress on issues of racial justice** like educational equity, justice system reform, and immigrants’ rights. [Fill in or swap in any issue you want here]. When our democracy is in peril, so too are our civil rights. H.R. 1 will add millions of voters to the rolls by streamlining registration, making our elections more secure, and making voting more accessible so every eligible voter can cast a ballot, and have it counted. Restoring and updating the Voting Rights Act will ensure that voters can access the ballot free from discrimination. Building a government that is representative of all the people will help us to address our country’s challenges in a way that benefits us all.
  + [Add any data, stories, facts about your issue of choice.]
* **Congress must deliver on our entire democracy reform agenda.** Voters turned out in record numbers during the 2018 midterm election and cast their ballots for democracy reform. Voters have made it clear they want reform that makes voting more accessible and eliminates unnecessary, racist barriers to the ballot box. Congress must now deliver. That means passing the For the People Act and restoring the Voting Rights Act, which will ensure that we have the tools we need to address racial discrimination in voting.
  + [Use any example of voters casting ballots for democracy reform and voting rights from 2018. Examples below:]
  + Florida voters restored voting rights to 1.4 million voters with felony convictions.
  + Nevada voters cast their ballot for automatic voter registration.
  + Michigan voters cast a ballot for a suite of reforms including same-day and automatic voter registration.

**If you get questions about McConnell’s opposition to H.R. 1 or any question that suggests that the bill is a Democratic partisan power grab, it’s important to not let him change the terms of the debate. Stay on message and pivot back to our core message frames. Here’s a suggested pivot:**

“Every member of Congress should be safeguarding our democracy. There is nothing in this bill that should worry any member of Congress who is committed to that responsibility. It is no surprise that Senator McConnell, who has mastered the art of rigging our democracy for his own ends, would trash H.R. 1. [Avoid using the term “partisan” when describing McConnell’s machinations]. He is perhaps the most notorious example of how wealthy elites have rigged the system against the rest of us. [If you want to use an example of his machinations here, plenty to choose from.] H.R. 1 will add millions of voters to the rolls by streamlining registration, making our elections more secure, and making voting more accessible so every eligible voter can cast a ballot, and have it counted. That is something all of us should want if we truly want to live in a democracy that works for all of us.”

**If you get questions about campaign finance reform or money in politics, it’s important to reinforce that all three sections of the bill are essential to the overall democracy reform project even as you emphasize your focus on voting. Here’s a suggested pivot:**

“The campaign finance reform and money in politics pieces are vital. It is incredibly important that our elected officials are representing the interests of the people, not those with the most wealth, power or privilege. That’s why the voting pieces are really at the core of this fight because fundamentally we must have a system that allows every eligible voter to cast a ballot. That means ensuring free, fair and accessible elections for all, regardless of a person’s identity or the color of their skin. Until every single person’s vote is cast and counted equally, we still have work to do.”

**If you get questions about ethics reform, it’s important to reinforce that all three sections of the bill are essential to the overall democracy reform project even as you emphasize your focus on voting. Here’s a suggested pivot:**

“Ethics reform is an incredibly important piece in strengthening the accountability and integrity of our democracy. But what will ultimately build people’s trust in our system is protecting their right to fully participate in it, free from discrimination and intimidation. Democracy reform is about protecting every person’s right to make their voice heard. Until we achieve that for everyone, our representatives can’t possibly reflect the will of the people.”

1. <https://www.brennancenter.org/new-voting-restrictions-america> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)