



American Ethical Union

Inspiring Ethical Communities

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Defending the Right to Vote

A Resolution submitted to the
American Ethical Union

By the
Susquehanna Valley Ethical Society

Revised
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Preamble

The integrity of representative elections as guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States is the most vital pillar of our democracy. This element of democratic process is essential to a humane social order that respects the worth of persons and their right to participate in their own governance. Attempts to limit the right to vote and to add barriers to the free exercise of that right can erode citizen confidence that their elected officials can represent and act upon the will of the people. When the voices of the People are silenced, our Democracy perishes.

Rationale

WHEREAS voter suppression tactics, such as unconstitutional and blatantly biased purges of the voter rolls and onerous identification requirements, have been practiced in multiple jurisdictions in an effort to suppress the participation of minority, elder, and naturalized citizens; and

WHEREAS the American Ethical Union, on July 1, 2015, affirmed in its Resolution on Criminal Justice that “[p]eople who have committed a crime have the same human worth as all people and are entitled to dignity and access to employment, housing, voting rights, and cultural participation”; and

WHEREAS only 14 states and the District of Columbia currently automatically restore voting rights upon release from prison; and the policy of criminal disenfranchisement is a relic of Jim Crow-era efforts to disenfranchise Black Americans; and research shows that Black citizens are disenfranchised at roughly four times the rate of all other Americans; and, there is, moreover no

criminal justice rationale for disenfranchising people after they have been released from prison; and leading law enforcement organizations in fact see voting rights as a pillar of successful reentry, as it encourages full reintegration into the community; and

WHEREAS restrictive and cryptic voter registration processes, including criminalization of minor and clerical errors, have served to hamper efforts to make voter registration available to all citizens, especially in the absence of efforts by local and state governments to provide accessible and accurate voter registration information to all their citizens; and

WHEREAS access to polls has been restricted by various and changing limitations on early voting periods, by reduced availability of polling places in minority neighborhoods and college campuses, by policies that prevent working citizens from being able to go to the polls during working hours; and

WHEREAS gerrymandering for partisan benefit is practiced in several states by representatives of both major political parties, with the result of disenfranchising the majority of the voters in those states, denying them full and proper representation in the halls of government; and

WHEREAS the American Ethical Union declared on June 30, 2011, that the 2010 Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* was “inconsistent with established law and common sense and that the consequences of the Court’s holding will enable monied special interest groups to manipulate public policy with devastating effects on the citizens of the States and our American democracy as we know it”; and

WHEREAS the influence of money, due to the *Citizens United* decision and other such like decisions and laws, has indeed distorted the electoral process and served to overwhelm the will of the people; and

WHEREAS recent actions by foreign governments have been revealed as direct and indirect attempts to interfere in the outcome of US elections, including the use of social media to promote racist and bigoted divisions in our society, the intrusion into government databases that include citizens’ private information, the use of stolen documents to attempt to sway public opinion about candidates.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

That we, the American Ethical Union, speak to this resolution and stand up for a democracy that protects our values and our constitutional right to cast our vote;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

THAT we, the American Ethical Union, join with allied organizations at all levels to educate the American Public regarding the incremental erosion of our voting rights and the path it follows toward suppression of our democratic values; AND

THAT we be a voice for formerly incarcerated members of our society in support of their voting rights being restored after they are released from prison, including support for criminal justice reform that eliminates disenfranchisement as a post-prison penalty; AND

THAT we support our right to vote by becoming voter registrars, becoming election workers, supporting non-partisan get-out-the-vote efforts, and voting our values; AND

THAT we support efforts to make voting easier for working Americans, including increasing increased periods for early voting with evening and Saturday hours, increased ballot boxes in precincts with heavy participation, paid leave for voting, a national holiday for Election Day, increased support for infrequent voters to encourage their engagement with our democracy; AND

THAT we support evidence-based strategies for drawing legislative districts at all levels in order to promote fair and balanced elections without favor to any party, perceived "race," or ethnic group; AND

THAT we renew our efforts to counter the influence of money in our elections, including elimination of corporate donations to candidates, increased public financing of election campaigns, support for balanced news coverage of candidates and issues; stronger enforcement of election laws that promote transparency and inclusion; AND

THAT we support efforts to strengthen the security of our electronic voting systems from domestic and foreign intrusion so that the American people can trust this most fundamental element of our democracy in its accuracy as a reflection of the will of the people; AND MOREOVER

THAT we promote and celebrate in the year 2020 the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution that granted women the right to vote; AND

THAT our support and effort should include educating ourselves and our communities about these issues and means to address them, actively serving in programs that forward our democracy, and demonstrating our commitment to our democracy through, when necessary and effective, civil disobedience; AND

BE IT AFFIRMED THAT we, the American Ethical Union, call all Ethical Humanists and Progressive citizens to take personal and collective action to reclaim our Democracy by affirming our shared commitment to Democratic Process as essential to a humane social order which respects the worth of all persons and therefore requires a fair and just process, which elicits and allows a greater expression of human capacities.