



February 1, 2022, Orange County, CA – As we recognize **Black History Month** this year, we, the members of Women for American Values and Ethics (WAVE), express our belief in the constitutional right to vote as fundamental and essential to a thriving and inclusive democracy. We honor the lives of those who fought so bravely to secure and protect equal voting rights and ensure accessible and fair elections. WAVE strongly opposes discriminatory and partisan tactics that suppress or deny eligible U.S. citizens the right to vote. This right is sacred, and yet our nation is once again resisting a federal standard to protect voting rights and to prevent discrimination.

Several days ago, Congress failed to pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (VRAA), which would have restored and strengthened the bipartisan Voting Rights Act of 1965. Senate Democrats unanimously supported that legislation and the Freedom to Vote Act, which would have expanded voting rights with measures such as early voting and same-day and online registration. These Acts were considered critical at a time when Republican-led states are attempting to create new barriers to voting with their own legislation. Senate Democrats tried one more approach but could not change procedures that would halt a filibuster and bring the VRAA to the floor for a simple majority vote.

In 2020, for the first time in this nation's history, more than 159 million people voted in a presidential election. That unprecedented turnout appears to have ignited these new threats to limit access to the ballot box. The tactics that are formulating at the state and local levels would make it much harder for some people to vote. We stand for just the opposite. **WAVE encourages all citizens to participate in our sacred civic duty – and privilege – of voting.**

While the current setbacks are disturbing, we cannot become disheartened. We can stay informed and educate our young voters, inspiring them at an earlier age to believe in the power of voting. We can uphold our system, where the oversight of the Registrar of Voters uses longstanding checks and balances to ensure fair elections. We can stand against voter suppression tactics, and work to expand voter access to those who have been left out. We can stand with our many community partners, who are working to oppose attacks on voter registration, unjust voter purges and discriminatory voter ID laws. And we can elect leaders who honor the legacies of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Congressman John Lewis by not simply invoking their words, but by demonstrating real action and effecting real change.