

Free and Fair Elections

We as United Methodists have long stood for free and fair elections as a basic human right.

Generations of advocates fought with their blood, sweat and tears to expand the right to vote beyond the original electorate of land-owning white men. And despite constitutional guarantees, this right to vote continues to be under attack by ever-shifting tactics that suppress voter turnout and disenfranchise communities of color.

A fair and inclusive democracy is about dignity for all. Casting a ballot is an act of faith, a prayer intended for the common good. Common sense reforms that modernize voter registration, provide for transparency in financing campaigns, and uphold ethics provisions build up trust and hope in our communities.

We call for Congress to stand with the people by passing the For the People Act to protect voting rights.

2016 Book of Discipline and Book of Resolutions

Free and Fair Elections

Social Principles, 164.A “Basic Freedoms and Human Rights”

“We hold governments responsible for the protection of the rights of the people to free and fair elections...The form and the leaders of all governments should be determined by exercise of the right to vote guaranteed to all adult citizens.”

Voting Rights and Racism

Social Principles, 162.A “Rights of Racial and Ethnic Persons”

“We further assert the right of historically underrepresented racial and ethnic persons...to nondiscrimination in voting” including “access to public accommodations,”

Book of Resolutions, 3378: “Racism and Economic Justice Against People of Color”

The United Methodist Church calls for a vision of beloved community founded on economic and racial justice. The vision includes among many things, “re-instating and strengthening voting rights protections,” in light of continued systemic racism that threatens to undermine provisions for fair and free elections for all citizens.

Book of Resolutions, 3379: “Stop Criminalizing Communities of Color in the United States”

The United Methodist Church calls on local and national governments to restore the full citizenship rights, including the right to vote, to U.S. citizens with felony convictions.

Campaign Finance Reform

Book of Resolutions 5071: “Electoral Campaign Finance Reform”

“Campaign finance reform is a moral matter for the religious community. The temptation to buy favors is an ancient and unjust one addressed often in Scripture. The prophet Amos thundered against those merchants in Israel who ‘have sold the innocent for silver, and those in need for a pair of sandals...and push the afflicted out of the way...’ (Amos 2:6-7).

We commend those politicians of all parties who are working to achieve real campaign financing reform.

We call upon all United Methodists to work within their own countries to build support for measures that would end the flood of special-interest monies to political campaigns and restore integrity to decision making.”

On the Filibuster

- Note that the Social Principles do not take a position on the filibuster.
- The hope is that legislative procedure will not be a barrier to the passage of S.1. For the People Act.

Take Action

- **Sample language for calling or writing Senators:**
- People of faith see fair representation, voting rights and accountability for elected leaders as moral issues of utmost importance. Common sense reforms that modernize voter registration for all, provide for transparency in financing campaigns, and uphold ethics provisions will help us restore faith in election integrity. My faith tells me that a fair and inclusive democracy is about dignity for all. I ask that you support the passage of legislation that upholds and makes available free and transparent access for citizens to exercise their right to vote, works for real campaign finance reform, and restores integrity and standards for the work of public officials across U.S. government.

Further Resources

Article by United Methodist pastor on impact of voting rights restrictions in Georgia:

<https://www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/thirst-quenchers-1316>

Church and Society's discussion of "Suppressed: The Right to Vote" (2020)

https://youtu.be/j7BGto_vmTk

UMC Issue Page on Free and Fair Elections

www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/civil-and-human-rights/free-and-fair-elections