Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

February 26, 2019

Dear Chairwoman Lofgren, Ranking Member Davis, and Members of the Committee on House Administration:

On behalf of Common Cause’s 1.2 million members around the country, we strongly urge you to vote “yes” on H.R. 1, the For the People Act, when it is considered by the Committee. We also urge you to reject any amendments that would weaken the bill.

The For the People Act is the boldest and most comprehensive democracy reform package introduced in Congress since the Watergate era. It contains policies that would significantly reduce the influence of big money in politics, enhance the right to vote for all Americans, stop partisan gerrymandering, and strengthen ethics rules to ensure that public officials are working in the public interest.

We now face a democracy crisis with many similarities to the Watergate era, and H.R. 1 is a comprehensive and effective solution to address the rampant corruption, conflicts of interest, and abuses of power that have significantly worsened in the last two years under the Trump administration. The timing of this legislation has never been more important as Americans grow more frustrated and cynical about our state of politics. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have called, written, and visited the offices of their Members of Congress about H.R. 1 to demand an end to the abuses of power and corruption in the current administration.

The For the People Act represents a down payment to the American people in answer to their full-throated demands for change. It contains many bold reforms, such as small-donor matching fund systems, automatic voter registration, and independent redistricting commissions, that have passed with strong bipartisan support at the state and local level, to help empower the voices of everyday Americans. More than two-dozen blue, red, and purple states and localities passed pro-democracy reform initiatives in November 2018, often with strong, bipartisan support. Only in Washington, D.C., are any of these pro-democracy reforms seen as partisan.

Many democracy reform champions in Congress have worked for months, if not years, to develop H.R. 1. Common Cause especially wants to thank House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for her dedication to prioritizing democracy reform issues, Congressman John Sarbanes, leader of the House Democracy
Since 1970, Common Cause has been working to hold power accountable through lobbying, litigation, and organizing. Our non-partisan, pro-democracy work has helped pass hundreds of reforms at the federal, state, and local levels. We now have 30 state chapters and more than 1.2 million members around the country who are working to strengthen our democracy.

Reform Task Force, for championing this reform package, and Chairwoman Lofgren for advancing H.R. 1 through the legislative process and being an outspoken leader for everyday Americans.

You can be on the correct side of history and support reforms that strengthen our democracy and empower the voices of all Americans, or you can be on the side of the status quo and turn a blind eye to conflicts of interest, corruption, and abuse of power. For nearly 50 years, Common Cause has helped bring to public attention the ethical lapses of leaders in both political parties in states and in Washington, D.C. It’s a Republican in the White House now, but in five, 10, or 50 years, there might be a Democrat in the White House who engages in significant ethics abuses and undermines the rule of law. It’s past time for Congress to enact strong ethics and other democracy reform laws because no American is above the law, not even the President.

Sincerely,

Aaron Scherb
Director of Legislative Affairs
Common Cause

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