



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

### ***Secure, Safe, and Auditable: Protecting the Integrity of the 2020 Elections***

**August 4, 2020**

We are less than 100 days away from the election, and House Democrats are working hard to persuade Senate leadership to provide additional election assistance to help States administer safe, secure, and auditable elections during the COVID-19 pandemic. This hearing could not come at a more appropriate time.

Last week, we celebrated the life of Congressman John Lewis. As we mourned our loss, we grappled with the tremendous task of how best to honor his legacy. In his final days, Congressman Lewis committed a lifetime of fighting for justice to parting advice to guide us through this turbulent time. He challenged to us to stand up to injustice. He called on each of us to use our talents to build a better country than the one we inherited. And he reminded us that “Democracy is not a state. It’s an act.”

This November, our nation will participate in an election that will look like no other in our history. The COVID-19 pandemic will demand that we adapt our voting procedures to ensure that no American must choose between exercising their democratic right to vote and protecting their health.

At the same time, we must defend our democracy against adversaries who will use our differences of opinion to sow irreparable divisions among us. We must remain vigilant in defending the truth and keep the public informed to deny our adversaries the opportunity to fill information vacuums with lies. Now more than ever, we each have a role to play in defending our democracy.

As Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, I have fought to protect the voting rights of all Americans and secure funding to help State and local election officials replace outdated, unsecure election equipment. Last March, the House passed H.R. 1, which included The Election Security Act, which would provide funding to states to improve election security and direct a whole of government response to counter foreign influence campaigns aimed at undermining confidence in our democratic institutions.

On May 15, the House passed the HEROES Act, which would provide \$3.6 billion to help States navigate the challenges associated with administering November elections during the COVID-19 pandemic. That is in addition to the \$800 million already made available this year. Both bills are languishing in the Senate.

The recent COVID-19 relief package proposed by the Senate majority provides no resources to help states defray the costs of administering federal elections. As my Senate colleagues post their tributes to Congressman Lewis, I call on them to remember the cause that was so dear to him – access to the ballot box – and fight to include necessary voting reforms and the funding to implement them in the next COVID-19 package.

Our State officials must adapt by changing outdated voting rules that prohibit no-excuse absentee voting and early voting, both of which would reduce lines and crowding, making it safer to vote. The public also has a role to play. They must seek out reliable sources of accurate information and engage in the election process. The integrity of the November elections depends on whole of nation commitment to our democracy.

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Media contact: Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978