



A Common Thread

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It was incredibly difficult to decide what topic to focus on when writing this piece. June is Pride Month, Gun Violence Awareness Month, and Torture Awareness Month. On June 19th we celebrate Juneteenth, June 20th is World Refugee Day, and June 24th marks the anniversary of the Dobbs decision that effectively overturned the constitutional right to an abortion. You can see the dilemma in trying to pick just one of these important topics. There is, however, a common thread that allows us to have greater impact in the work for justice on each of these issues.

The widespread wave of attacks on the LGBTQ+ community in state legislatures across the country, the seemingly endless examples of tragic loss of life to gun violence, the restricting of bodily autonomy, and the attempts to erase critical learning in school systems to favor a Euro-centric, incomplete version of history are all examples of the extreme voices of a few having say over the many. And it doesn't take much investigation into the long history of voter suppression and discrimination in this country to see how we got here. Only when everyone is given fair representation in the voting booth can we have a democracy that represents and responds to all of us.

Last week, we celebrated a surprising ruling from SCOTUS that struck down an electoral map from Alabama that would have discriminated against Black voters. This was a major success in the struggle for voting rights, but we are still working with a weakened version of the Voting Rights Act because of another decision from the court. Since the 2013 [Shelby County v. Holder](#) decision, we actually have less voting rights than the decades before. In recent years, we have seen an increase in legislation that specifically increases barriers to voting for Black, Indigenous, young, and new Americans.

For years, UCC advocates have been pushing for passage of the Freedom

to Vote Act, and there are hopes that this critical legislation may be introduced again soon to Congress. If passed, the [Freedom to Vote Act](#) would be the most consequential voting rights and anti-corruption bill in more than half a century. The proposed legislation would protect the right to vote, end partisan gerrymandering, and decrease the power of wealthy special interest groups. It passed the House in 2019 and 2021, and we can get it passed again, with our advocacy and action. You can call on your legislators to support an introduce the legislation with the UCC Washington D.C. Office's [action alert here](#).

In addition to advocating for voting rights legislation, and critically important, is engaging and empowering those in our communities to exercise their right to vote. Before we know it, we'll be entering into a presidential election year and there are plenty of state and local elections between now and then. The [UCC's Our Faith Our Vote Campaign](#) is a great place to start for resources and ways to get involved in your congregation and community.

For people of faith, nonpartisan election engagement and public policy advocacy are ways of living out our commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves and to center the wellbeing of the most vulnerable. As so many of us face legislative attacks on aspects of our identities, affirming access to the ballot can feel like affirming the dignity of each person. Our voice is our vote, and our vote is sacred and must be heard. So, as we continue our advocacy on LGBTQ+ rights, racial justice, abortion access, an end to gun violence, and more, may we also feel the pull of a common thread and be loud in our advocacy for a democracy that represents us all.

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