

Social Justice Committee proposal to Hebrew Tabernacle Board

Resolution on Voting Rights and Civil Rights

We at Hebrew Tabernacle endorse this campaign and these principles from the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism: The Reform Jewish Movement's 2022 Every Voice, Every Vote Campaign is a nonpartisan effort, grounded in our Jewish values and commitment to racial justice, to strengthen our democracy by encouraging and protecting voter participation. As Reform Jews, we believe democracy is strongest when the electorate reflects the population – and it suffers when citizens are shut out from the democratic process. Voting is how we determine our future. It is how we fulfill the Talmudic teaching that a ruler is not to be appointed unless the community is first consulted. It is our prayer. It is our voice.

Why We Care about Civil Rights & Voting Rights

The Sage Hillel taught "Al tifros min hatzibur, do not separate yourself from the community" (Pirke Avot 2:5). Moreover, it is our responsibility to play an active role in our community and choosing its leaders. Rabbi Yitzhak taught that "A ruler is not to be appointed unless the community is first consulted" (Babylonian Talmud Berachot 55a). Rabbi Yitzhak further explained that in the Torah, Bezalel could be chosen to build the Tabernacle only with the community's approval. This deeply embedded ethic of political participation has guided Jews to enthusiastically participate in the American electoral process.

Jews played an active role in the dramatic civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, a movement that ultimately granted citizens of color access to the franchise. Given our longstanding commitment to the civil rights struggle, we are alarmed by ongoing voter suppression and disenfranchisement, which disproportionately impacts Voters of Color. It is our duty to ensure all voters can safely and freely cast our ballots so that every voice is heard and that our elections reflect the will of the people. Only through national standards for voting access can we make the promise of democracy real for us all.

As Reform Jews, we must heed the teachings of our tradition that speak to the dangers of mixing money and politics and recognize the distorting effect that money can have on a leader's ability to govern fairly. We are reminded of this teaching from Deuteronomy 16:19, "You shall not judge unfairly: you shall know no partiality; you shall not take gifts, for gifts blind the eyes of the discerning and upset the plea of the just." We are commanded to stand up for the widow, the poor, the orphan, and the stranger. In a system that allows for disproportionate power of money, it is these groups who are ignored and who suffer the most.

Reform Judaism's Partners in this work include Reclaim Our Vote (Center for Common Ground), NAACP, Mi Familia Vota, and Black Voters Matter. **Hebrew Tabernacle members have been working with Reclaim Our Vote** which is a campaign of the Center for Common Ground a non-partisan 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of the Reclaim Our Vote campaign is to empower under-represented voters to fully participate in elections. To support that mission they provide voter education on how to monitor voter registration status, find voting locations (vote centers, dropboxes and voting precincts) as well as county contacts for local boards of elections or registrars, and they build technology to support communities in this work long-term.