

COUNT EVERY HERO

OPERATION PROTECT DEMOCRACY

July 12, 2021

Dear Veterans and Current Senators of the United States Congress:

Senator Tom Cotton, US Army (R-AR)
Senator Tammy Duckworth, US Army (D-IL)
Senator Joni Ernst, US Army (R-IA)
Senator Jim Inhofe, US Army (R-OK)
Senator Roger Marshall, US Army (R-KA)
Senator Mitch McConnell, US Army (R-KY)
Senator Ed Markey, US Army (D-MA)
Senator Jack Reed, US Army (D-RI)
Senator Richard Blumenthal, US Marine Corps (D-CT)
Senator Dan Sullivan, US Marine Corps (R-AK)
Senator Todd Young, US Marine Corps (R-IN)
Senator Tom Carper, US Navy (D-DE)
Senator Mark Kelly, US Navy (D-AZ)
Senator Gary Peters, US Navy (D-MI)
Senator Rick Scott, US Navy (R-FL)
Senator Lindsey Graham, US Air Force (R-SC)
Senator Roger Wicker, US Air Force (R-MS)

We are sending this letter to all of the current U.S. senators who have served in uniform because we believe the seventeen of you are uniquely qualified to address the issue of electoral reform - and positioned to do something about it. As former national security and defense leaders who have served under Democratic and Republican administrations, we write to express our growing concern about threats - both internal and external - to our democracy and urge you to make the protection of our electoral process your top priority.

We are the co-chairs of Count Every Hero, a cross-partisan coalition of military veterans and citizens who are committed to ensuring every service member's right to vote is protected and their votes tallied. For the 2020 election, we reached more than 5.2 million people with the support of more than 70 retired generals and admirals.

We are continuing our mission as engaged citizens with Operation Protect Democracy, a new Count Every Hero campaign focused on reforming our electoral system.

We believe that legislation on electoral reform should embody these six principles:

Operation Protect Democracy Principles

1. Elections free of foreign interference
2. Equal access to the polls for all eligible voters
3. Accountability of elected officials
4. All American voters directing our country's future, not only an elite few
5. Transparency and effective oversight of the electoral system
6. Civic literacy to build an informed, engaged, and expanded electorate

We strongly agree with Senator Manchin that this issue requires bipartisan debate and resolution.

Among the many worthy electoral reform issues being discussed, we know from experience that absentee voting is a great tool in helping Americans exercise their right to vote - especially service members deployed and stationed around the world, and those with mobility issues like our elderly and combat wounded veterans. Expanding and standardizing this military-proven voting model would benefit all American citizens.

As national security leaders, we are also concerned about the security of future elections. The most recent Office of the Director of National Intelligence Report of January 7, 2021 detailed key foreign actors' intentions, namely Russia, China, and Iran's efforts to influence or interfere with the 2020 US federal elections and to undermine confidence in our electoral process. Legislation that protects our electoral process from foreign interference must be a top priority, regardless of party label. Our national security depends on it.

We encourage you to consider our principles when determining your position on electoral reform legislation. As veterans, we urge you to take the lead in advancing the debate and ensuring electoral reform is passed this Congress.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us. Our bonds transcend politics. Together, we can find the higher ground and protect the voting rights of all Americans.

The Honorable Sean O'Keefe
69th Secretary of the Navy

The Honorable Louis Caldera
17th Secretary of the Army

The Honorable Deborah Lee James
23rd Secretary of the Air Force

General George Casey, USA (ret.)
36th Chief of Staff of the Army

General John Jumper, USAF (ret.)
17th Chief of Staff of the Air Force

Admiral Steve Abbot, USN (ret.)
Former Deputy Commander in Chief
U.S. European Command

Admiral James Loy, USCG (ret.)
Former acting Secretary of Homeland Security

General Anthony Zinni, USMC (ret.)
Former Commander,
U.S. Central Command
Chair, Count Every Hero