



February 2, 2022

Dear Evanston and North Community,
I wanted to offer a few updates as we begin the second month of 2022.

On behalf of the Evanston/North Shore NAACP, welcome to the month of February that has been designated as Black History Month. As every Black person knows, Black History is never relegated to a single month. Our history is to be learned, lifted and celebrated twelve months out of the year. It is certainly beautiful to have a targeted month to share the contributions of those out of the African Diaspora. But it is equally important for us to celebrate each day of the year, even as we celebrate the contributions of others in our nation.

As we begin February 2022, there is a weight, a somberness and burden that lies on the topography of our nation. While COVID continues to rage among us, it is not just this global pandemic that is creating pressure points and boiling our blood with anger and unease. It is the overt and blatant racism that has crept out of hidden lairs where it festered for 50 years or more. The Voting Rights Bill of 1965 was perhaps, the landmark piece of federal legislation in the United States that prohibited racial discrimination in voting. It outlawed discrimination practices that had been adopted after Reconstruction. Keep in mind, those voting rights were guaranteed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments that were introduced nearly 100 years earlier. Currently, voting rights are now under significant threat through an “unprecedented surge of legislation to impose new restrictions.” Last year more than 440 bills with measures to restrict voting access were introduced in 49 states. Thirty-four of these bills became law in 19 states. There are restrictions on mail-in voting. There are new

requirements including identification requirements for voters both when they request and return a ballot. Georgia now prohibits providing food or water to people standing in line to vote. Many states are seeking to exert control over who runs elections and counts, pushing to give such control to Republican led state legislatures rather than the non-partisan Board of Electors that has been doing the job already.

Supporters of Voting Rights have introduced federal legislation to fight against these changes. **The Freedom to Vote Act** will overhaul rules for federal elections and set a baseline for voter access. Fifteen days of early voting would be required to be offered in each state, same day voter registration and ballot drop boxes would also be enacted. Also, intentional removal of election officers without cause would not be permitted. In addition, **The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act** would restore key provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. This would identify places of repeated evidence of voting discrimination to get changes to elections approved by the federal government.

Presently, a longstanding rule in the Senate called a filibuster, has prevented necessary movement with both proposed voting acts. The filibuster requires 60 votes to move legislation to a final vote. The Senate is locked at 50-50 with the deciding vote going to Vice President Kamala Harris. A majority vote can change the filibuster. However, two Democrats Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona support leaving the filibuster in place.

All of this portends to the deleterious and fragile state of the United States of America. This “crackdown” on the right to vote (which is really a subversive and racist action especially aimed at black and brown voters) and a debilitating and crushing movement to push racial inequality in every sector are both reasons why our Evanston/North Shore NAACP, along with all branches and chapters of the NAACP, must thrive, educate and lead. Our advocacy has never been more important. Just today (February 2nd) fourteen historically black colleges and universities received bomb threats that portend to murder and mayhem. Such threats must be fully pursued by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and any person or group who has issued these threats must be apprehended, arrested and tried for felony crimes.

Local boards of education throughout the United States are being threatened by white groups of parents and

residents, who are fighting all things “equity” and critical race theory which are intended to elevate black and brown students towards achievement and success. Local, state and federally elected officials are publicly sharing statements and words of division, hatred and discrimination to feed their “base” of supporters. All of this is reprehensible and completely unacceptable. In addition, the same continuing problems of egregious disparity in health care, racism in law enforcement actions, the wealth gap between white and black families, housing inequities and environmental issues continues to weigh against black and brown families in the United States.

We appeal to our members and supporters to join our branch, participate in one of our standing committees, use your position and voice, and advocate for a community and nation that is fully committed to a society of inclusivity, equity and complete civil and human rights, for all. We cannot, and we must not, accept anything less.

Rev. Dr. Michael Nabors President
Evanston/North Shore NAACP