



Mayor Mattie Parker's Response

From: **Mayor Mattie** <MayorMattie@fortworthtexas.gov>
Date: Wed, Jan 12, 2022 at 4:51 PM
Subject: From Mattie
To: ftw.naacp.info@gmail.com <ftw.naacp.info@gmail.com>

NAACP Board of Directors,

I am in receipt of your statement on voter's rights and I hear your concerns. I feel your frustration. Over the past week, I have spoken to many stakeholders from all corners of our community and we all agree on one thing - our community is experiencing alarming and swelling tension. I fear that any public back-and-forth will only further divide us, which is beneficial to no one.

Below I have included a more detailed explanation for my decision not to sign the advocacy letter. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to listen further and discuss ways to bring healing to our community, knowing that there are forthcoming challenges that we will be facing together.

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Recently, I was asked to sign on to a U.S. Conference of Mayors letter that asserted full support of two bills, the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, named for a civil rights icon who worked tirelessly to expand civil liberties in our country.

Collectively, these bills are over 1,000 pages long and contain significant changes to our election system. Understanding the power of the organization's collective voice, I know I have a great responsibility to be intentional about decisions on whether to sign or not sign a letter. **I want to make clear that I have an unwavering commitment to protecting free, fair elections and the rights of voters in this country and in our community.**

These specific bills go far beyond that intent, leaving me unable to sign on to a letter of complete support. In retrospect, when first asked about this decision, I should have been clearer about where I stand on these incredibly nuanced, complex pieces of legislation.

As currently proposed, these bills would centralize election decisions in Washington D.C. and limit local oversight, including reviving a preclearance process conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice almost identical to the one established in the 1965 Voting Rights Act. A renewed preclearance process will face significant legal barriers and works against the idea that to best meet the voting needs of our communities, the responsibility and direction must continue to lie with states working closely with local leadership.

The Freedom to Vote Act is a far-reaching bill that contains numerous and significant election law changes that would directly impact our local elections. Some of those notable changes

include: a removal of state autonomy in how elections are conducted, the creation of a system of taxpayer-funded political campaigning for congressional candidates, and creating a partisan imbalance in the Federal Election Commission by changing the number of Commissioners from six to five.

Despite these issues, I do believe in our federal lawmakers' ability to work together to find better legislation to promote voting rights.

I agree with my fellow Councilmembers that we should continue to work to protect free, fair elections. This effort is foundational to our democracy, and the immense responsibility of protecting the vote is beyond party or politics. The most important thing I can do as Mayor is encourage every single voter to vote in every election, especially in a city with historically low voter turnout.

I appreciate the dialogue this has created among our Council, and I look forward to focusing on the numerous issues impacting Fort Worth residents that we have the power and responsibility to tackle together.

- Mattie