

February 2, 2023

Dear members of the Minnesota Senate Elections Committee,

My name is Vicki Lambert, and I am a Deacon in the Episcopal church. I grew up in a rural community and have lived in Red Wing for more than 2 decades. I firmly believe that the best way to protect our democracy is to expand it and this session, Minnesota voters expect our legislators to take action on long overdue legislation.

Expanding democracy means improving voter access to ensure every Minnesotan has the freedom to vote and putting power back in the hands of people by reducing the influence of corporations and wealthy special interests in our elections.

I am also an educator and taught in corrections for 17 years. MN disenfranchises over 60K of our beloved neighbors by preventing them from voting until they get off paper, and this disproportionately impacts Minnesotans of color. I have seen hundreds of boys and men stripped of their dignity in prison. They are often victims of trauma in an unforgiving world. I noticed how they felt so discouraged that they still felt unworthy and disenfranchised because they were not allowed to operate as full citizens once their time of incarceration was served. In my own family, I have seen the negative impact on extended probation. My own family has indicated a disgust with a system which has intentionally excluded him from participating as well as the other negative impacts such as renting and employment. MN has some of the longest sentences in the nation which disproportionately removes tens of thousands of worthy children of God of their fundamental right to vote. Restored people restore communities.

Policies like automatic voter registration, restoring the right to vote to community members on probation or parole, providing translated language resources at the ballot box, strengthening campaign finance disclosure, and modernizing our public finance system are popular with Minnesotans and are the right things to do.

That is why I support the Democracy for the People Act, as it begins to make the promise of democracy real for us all. Everyone's voice deserves to be heard. This one act is the ultimate equalizer providing dignity and redemption. Now is the time.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Vicki Lambert