Dear Senator Cardin:

We are writing to express our support for the Democracy Restoration Act (DRA/S.481). We are a broad coalition of current and former election officials from 28 states, representing all levels of the electoral system. As the primary stewards of our federal, state, and local elections, we have dedicated our careers to ensuring that all eligible voters have an equal opportunity to cast a meaningful ballot.

Across the country, millions of otherwise eligible aspiring voters are denied the right to vote due to past convictions, even after they have completed their sentences and returned to their communities. At the same time, a confusing patchwork of laws erroneously disenfranchises even eligible voters. The DRA will create consistency, reduce confusion and de facto disenfranchisement, and uphold the democratic values we aspire to as election officials. Accordingly, we agree that it is crucial that the Senate take swift action on the DRA.

*The DRA will Create Consistency*

Currently, the voting rights of people with convictions vary depending on the states where they live, the offenses they were convicted of, and even the fines and fees that they owe. This variation confuses voters and election officials alike. Voters who were eligible to vote in one state may not be eligible when moving to a new state. Even within a single state, the rules can be complicated. Some states make confusing distinctions between probation and parole, state and federal convictions, or offenses committed on certain dates. And in states that require people to pay outstanding fines and court fees before regaining their eligibility, voters and election officials must often navigate archaic and confusing records systems to even determine how much someone owes. The current patchwork approach to rights restoration confuses voters and election officials alike. The DRA would promote consistency by creating a uniform national standard for federal elections.

*The DRA will Reduce Confusion and De Facto Disenfranchisement*

Felony disenfranchisement laws also create confusion, which can lead to de facto disenfranchisement of otherwise eligible voters. Election officials often lack a consistent means of communicating with the criminal justice system, leaving us in the dark and disenfranchising untold numbers of eligible voters, who refrain from voting out of fear of breaking the law. Indeed, turnout by eligible voters is markedly lower in neighborhoods with high levels of felony disenfranchisement. On the flipside, in extreme cases, these confusing laws can lead to people
inadvertently voting illegally, because both the voter and the relevant election officials were unaware that the person was forbidden from doing so. These laws can even disenfranchise people with no connection to the criminal justice system who happen to share a birthdate and a similar name with someone who does. Enacting the DRA would create a simple rule for federal elections that is easy to administer and promote trust in our elections.

The DRA will Promote the Values we Aspire to as Election Officials

Felony disenfranchisement laws are not just administratively unwieldy—they are inconsistent with the values we aspire to as election officials. These laws send people who are attempting to reintegrate into their communities the message that they are not truly welcome, and in turn undermine faith in our elections system. And as election officials, we are committed to protecting the right to vote and fighting discrimination. Felony disenfranchisement laws have a dark racist history and a significant disparate racial impact that make promoting true equality within our elections system difficult.

As election officials, we believe that our democracy functions best when it is truly open to all. By ending permanent disenfranchisement in federal elections for people with criminal convictions, the DRA would promote consistency, reduce confusion, and help our election system live up to the values we hold dear. Thank you for your advocacy on this issue. We look forward to the DRA becoming law.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Mahoney  
Former Secretary of State, Arizona

Terri Hollingsworth  
Circuit and County Clerk, Pulaski County, Arkansas

Dean C. Logan  
Registrar-Recorder / County Clerk, Los Angeles County, California

Joe Paul Gonzalez  
Clerk, San Benito County, California

Amber McReynolds  
Former Director of Elections, Denver, Colorado

Miles Rapoport  
Former Secretary of the State, Connecticut

Mark S. Earley  
Supervisor of Elections, Leon County, Florida
Ion V. Sancho  
Former Supervisor of Elections, Leon County, Florida

Aaron Ammons  
County Clerk, Champaign County, Illinois

David Orr  
Former County Clerk, Cook County, Illinois

Myla Eldridge  
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Grant Veeder  
Black Hawk County Auditor and Commissioner of Elections, Iowa

Patrick F. Gill  
Woodbury County Commissioner of Elections, Iowa

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Chris Biggs  
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Connor B. Degan  
Town Clerk, Town of Hopkinton, Massachusetts

Leon Wright  
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Joan Anderson Gowe  
Former Secretary of State, Minnesota

Mark Ritchie  
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Toni Johnson  
Chair, Hinds County Election Commission, Mississippi

Sylvester Tate  
Election Commissioner, Noxubee County, Mississippi
Jason Kander  
Former Secretary of State, Missouri

Mike Cooney  
Former Secretary of State and Lt. Governor, Montana

Rina Fontana Moore  
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Alan Cohen  
Democratic Election Commissioner, Madison County, New York

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Ashley Dittus  
Democratic Election Commissioner, Ulster County, New York

Judith Garrison  
Democratic Election Commissioner, Delaware County, New York

Jerry Ryan  
Democratic Election Commissioner, Fulton County, New York

James C. E. Wahls  
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Gary O. Bartlett  
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Tim Burke  
Former Chair, Hamilton County Board of Elections, Ohio

William D. Rich  
Chair, Summit County Board of Elections, Ohio

Michael Zickar  
Commissioner, Wood County Board of Elections, Ohio

Shemia Fagan  
Secretary of State, Oregon

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Former Secretary of State, Oregon
John Lindback  
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Chris Hollins  
Former County Clerk, Harris County, Texas

Isabel Longoria  
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