



June 20, 2024

CNN, 250 Marietta St NW
Atlanta, GA, 30313

Dear Mark Thompson, CNN Leadership, Jake Tapper, and Dana Bash,

We, the undersigned members of the [Declaration for American Democracy](#) (DFAD) coalition, which includes 260+ organizations from the labor, civil rights, environmental, faith, social justice, reproductive rights, and many other communities, representing tens of millions of Americans, **strongly urge CNN to include the state of U.S. democracy as a central issue in the upcoming presidential debate.**

Democracy is under threat and front of mind for voters across the political spectrum. In recent years, we've seen a rise in political violence and misinformation surrounding our elections and a surge of restrictive anti-voter legislation passed in states across the country. And now, we're seeing the consequences in both policy and public opinion.

[Voters in 21 states will face new voting restrictions in the upcoming general election](#) that didn't exist in previous mid-term or presidential elections. At the same time, we're seeing a growing [racial turnout gap](#) in the years following the Supreme Court's *Shelby v Holder* decision which gutted key provisions in the Voting Rights Act.

Additionally, a recent survey by the Brennan Center found that [38% of local election officials experienced threats, harassment, or abuse for doing their jobs](#), and an [NBC Meet the Press poll](#) taken in May of 2024 revealed that over 50% of voters in swing states are concerned of political violence related to the U.S. election. In Michigan, [recent polling](#) shows that trust in our democracy is declining.

Poll after poll reveals that Americans across party lines are deeply concerned about the state of U.S. democracy. In particular, a [CBS/YouGov](#) poll taken earlier this year found that **half of likely voters were more concerned about the U.S. having a functioning democracy than they were about the U.S. having a strong economy.**

None of this is surprising given how a functioning democracy is essential for making progress on

issues Americans care about, and is essential to ensuring the stability of our country and government.

That's why we're urging the CNN network and you, as the debate moderators, to make democracy a central issue in the upcoming debate. To make an informed decision in November, the American people must hear each candidate's clear positions on democracy, including how they will support the rule of law and a peaceful transfer of power.

Additionally, candidates must be asked to share their perspectives on ways to improve the political franchise, including proposed solutions for tackling problems like big money in politics, extreme partisan gerrymandering, voter suppression, and more. **These issues matter to everyday Americans.**

It is also essential that the debate moderators challenge falsehoods relating to U.S. elections that may emerge throughout the debate. It is CNN's responsibility to the electorate to correct any false claims related to our election that may be introduced throughout the debate.

The backdrop of the debate is itself a symbolic reminder of threats facing U.S. democracy: This is the first Presidential election since the violent insurrection of January 6th, where our nation bore witness to a direct attack on our Capitol and the peaceful transfer of power. Georgia was just one of the many states that passed extreme anti-voter laws, including the 2021 ban on residents passing out water to voters in line at the polls.

Democracy was a defining issue in the [2022 midterm elections](#) and all indicators show it will once again be a defining issue in the 2024 presidential contest. We urge you to ask serious questions about where the candidates stand on the threats facing U.S. democracy, and to encourage them to share their positions clearly on issues regarding the integrity of U.S. elections.

Signed,

20/20 Vision

American Federal of Teachers

All About the Ballots

Center for American Progress

Center for Common Ground

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)

Clean Elections Texas

Common Cause

Common Defense

Communications Workers of America

Defend the Vote

DemCast USA

Democracy 21

Democracy Matters

Democracy SENTRY

End Citizens United // Let America Vote Action Fund

Fair Fight Action

Fix Democracy First

Fourth Branch Action

Generation Vote

Get Money Out -- Maryland

Indivisible

League of Women Voters Education Fund

Missouri Voter Protection Coalition

MOVI, Money Out Voters In

Mulhauser and Associates

N.C. For the People Action

National Voter Corps

New American Leaders Action Fund

Oregonizers

People For the American Way

People Power United

Project On Government Oversight

Protect Democracy

Public Citizen

Public Wise

RepresentUs

Rise Up WV

Secure Elections Network

Stand Up America

The Workers Circle

WALKING TO FIX OUR DEMOCRACY