



Alliance for Peacebuilding

February 16, 2022

The Honorable Susan E. Rice
Domestic Policy Advisor
White House Domestic Policy Council
1650 17th St NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Jake Sullivan
National Security Advisor
White House National Security Council
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Ambassador Rice and Mr. Sullivan,

The [Alliance for Peacebuilding](#) (AfP), the leading nonpartisan global network of 160+ members working in 181 countries to end violent conflict and build sustainable peace, and the undersigned organizations applaud the Biden Administration's announced [Year of Action](#) following the first Summit for Democracy to "make democracies more responsive and resilient and to build a broader community of partners committed to global democratic renewal." While the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has laid out a series of [signature initiatives](#) to address backsliding democracy globally, the Administration has not announced initiatives to address instability and democratic decline in the United States. **AfP and the undersigned organizations call on President Biden to urgently rebuild and renew American democracy by developing and investing in a [bold new strategy](#) in close consultation with civil society.**

President Biden rightfully [observed](#) that "more than half of all democracies have experienced a decline in at least one aspect of their democracy over the last ten years, including the United States." Leading global peacebuilding and conflict experts agree that U.S. democracy is in peril. ***In a recent survey conducted by AfP one year after the insurrection on January 6th, 73 percent of 160 + senior peacebuilding and conflict experts reported an elevated or extreme risk of politically motivated violence in the United States as we approach the presidential election in 2024.***

Unfortunately, American democracy has been trending downward since 2006. For the fifth consecutive year, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) rated the U.S. "[a flawed democracy](#)" based on electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, democratic political culture, and civil liberties. This year, the U.S. received its lowest score yet from the EIU, and for the first time, International IDEA [added the U.S. to its annual list of "backsliding" democracies](#). Other issues cited by experts and researchers as contributing to this

downward trend include extremely low levels of trust in institutions and political parties, deep dysfunction in the functioning of government, increasing threats to freedom of expression, and toxic polarization.

We urgently call on President Biden to propose new robust spending for a whole-of-society approach in the United States that supports democratic renewal. President Biden stated at the summit that [the passage of a national voting rights legislation](#) was the most important single step needed to bolster the state of U.S. democracy. While critical, only passing federal voting legislation will not address all the conflict dynamics threatening our democracy. A comprehensive strategy in the United States must be similar to USAID's bold new global initiative that focuses on supporting democratic reformers, including fostering the agency of women and girls, strengthening free and independent media, preventing and countering corruption, defending democratic elections, and expanding technology for democracy. A new initiative must have similar programs and specifically address conflict drivers impacting the United States, including systemic racism and toxic polarization, and focus on building social cohesion and preventing and reducing violent domestic extremism.

A new democracy building initiative should receive an initial allocation of at least \$200 million to increase civic education, break down information silos, increase online literacy and prevent disinformation, and protect our electoral system. Existing funding must also dramatically increase to address other threats to U.S. democracy. For example, the **Department of Homeland Security's domestic extremism prevention grants should be doubled to at least \$40 million.** Funding to the **Department of Justice's Community Relations Service should also be increased to \$40 million.** Additionally, the Administration should support, as proposed in the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Programs FY 2022 appropriations bill passed in the House of Representatives, a **new \$30 million grant program to support conflict resolution, mediation, and peacebuilding in local communities.**

The U.S. government cannot rebuild and renew its backsliding democracy alone. U.S. civil society organizations are as integral here at home as they are to the U.S. government's initiatives globally. Therefore, AfP supports the recommendations in the [recent letter](#) signed by over 80 organizations calling on the Biden Administration to establish an interagency task force. This task force must meaningfully and regularly engage civil society through substantive updates and provide opportunities for consultation on the development and implementation of U.S. domestic commitments stemming from the Summit for Democracy and additional vital programs.

To rebuild and renew democracy here at home, the Biden Administration must lead by example by building, implementing, and funding a bold new strategy in close partnership with U.S. civil society organizations. We know we do not have to accept increasing violence and backsliding democracy in the United States. But peace doesn't just happen; we have to build and sustain it.

Our democracy and our future depend on it both at home and globally and the Alliance for Peacebuilding and its members stand ready to work closely with the Administration.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Peacebuilding
The Carter Center
Caux Scholars Program
Common Ground USA at Search for Common Ground
Crossing Party Lines
CS Savoir Vivre
EIHR: The Educators' Institute for Human Rights
Ervin Consulting Group
Ghais Mediation & Facilitation, LLC
Global Mediation Team
The Horizons Project
Ideos Institute
International Youth Foundation
Mediators Beyond Borders International
National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM)
Nonviolent Peaceforce
PartnersGlobal
Peace Direct
Physicians for Peace
School for International Training
Solidarity for the Fight Against Poverty
Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding
UN Association of the National Capital Area
Urban Rural Action
Youth Engaged for Development and Social Progress
Youth for Development and Peace