



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, February 26, 2023

Honoring Those Who Made It Possible for Everyone to Vote

This may be the end of Black History Month, but it is not the end “to honor those that fought for equal and fair voting rights for everyone. It is because of the courageous activism of Black leaders throughout U.S. history that we have equal rights to vote our morals to protect Creation.

The **Voting Rights Act of 1965** was a landmark legislation that outlawed the discriminatory voting practices adopted in many southern states after the Civil War, where voter suppression methods- such as grandfather clauses, literacy tests, poll taxes, and other obstacles- had virtually eliminated the Black vote and held Black registrants and voter turnout at a staggeringly low number.

We'd like to honor the many black activist leaders that made this act possible, such as **Amelia Boynton Robinson**, called the **matriarch of the voting rights movement**, who was a Civil Rights activist, educator, political leader, and catalyst for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and **Frederick Douglass**, who became a **voting rights activist** and supported the rights for everyone, no matter their race or gender, to vote.

We also acknowledge modern-day activists such as **Rep. Donald McEachin** (VA), who went to seminary school, but spent his life as a dedicated public servant who led efforts to promote equality and protect our environment. He **co-authored the Environmental Justice Act** before his passing last year, an important bill that did not pass, but parts of which were included in other legislation that IPL is still working to pass in his legacy.

Something important that all these leaders had in common was devotion to their faiths. As people of faith and conscience, we know that we have a moral responsibility to protect Creation, and one of the best ways we can do that is to **vote for pro-climate solutions in our local, state, and federal elections...**” (Susan Stephenson, *Interfaith Power & Light*, February 17, 2023)

A case before the Supreme Court now threatens voting rights. On December 7, 2022, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in **Moore v. Harper**, a North Carolina congressional gerrymandering case. North Carolina's legislative leaders are appealing a ruling from the North Carolina Supreme Court striking down the state's congressional map as an extreme partisan gerrymander.

“If the court sides with state lawmakers in *Moore*, the result could have far-reaching impacts. State courts, governors, and redistricting commissions could also lose their power to invalidate, veto, or draw congressional maps.... **In the end, it is our democracy that stands to lose if the power to set election rules is unconstrained by the rule of law and constitutional checks and balances.**” (Ari Savitzky and Kristi Graunke, *American Civil Liberties Union*, December 6, 2022) The Supreme Court files its written opinion within 90 days of the oral argument.