



## **Senator Laphonza Butler on Democracy and Freedom**

During her tenure in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, Senator Laphonza Butler has championed policies aimed at ensuring a robust and inclusive democracy that is accessible to all, regardless of background or circumstance. She has worked to safeguard voting rights, improve election integrity, and encourage civic engagement. Senator Butler's leadership has been particularly crucial at a time when democratic norms face unprecedented challenges, from voter suppression efforts to the impact of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI). She has approached these issues with a combination of innovative policy-making and grassroots engagement, showing that the fight for democracy requires both systemic reform and direct dialogue with the communities most affected.

### **Key Legislative Accomplishments**

Senator Butler introduced and supported key legislation aimed at empowering voters, protecting election integrity, and promoting civic engagement. Each bill she championed reflected a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges facing modern democracy:

- ***High School Voter Empowerment Act (S. 4211)***: Senator Butler [introduced this bill](#) aimed at [increasing civic participation among young voters](#) by promoting civics education and encouraging high schools to conduct voter registration drives. The legislation would allow schools to collaborate with state election officials to use voting machines for student government elections, providing students with hands-on experience in the voting process. Senator Butler's initiative would not only **educate the next generation of voters but also help to cultivate a lifelong habit of civic engagement**. The bill has garnered support from organizations such as Common Cause, the ACLU, and the League of Women Voters, highlighting its broad appeal.
- ***Preparing Election Administrators for AI Act (S. 3897)***: Senator Butler secured a key amendment to this legislation aimed at providing election officials with guidelines on the use and risks of artificial intelligence (AI). The amendment would require the Election Assistance Commission, in collaboration with the National Institute for Standards and Technology, to conduct a study on AI's impact during the 2024 election cycle and use the outcomes of that study to inform guidelines for election officials. The amended bill would **ensure that democratic processes remain transparent and secure in the digital age**.
- ***Next Step Home Act (S. 4217)***: Senator Butler introduced this bill to restore voting rights to those who have reentered society under the First Step Act, a criminal justice reform law which promotes rehabilitation and reduce recidivism. With 4.6 million Americans currently disenfranchised due to felony convictions, Senator Butler's legislation would **address a significant gap in voter inclusivity and promote the reintegration of**

**citizens into democratic processes.** By partnering with organizations like the Brennan Center and the Anti-Recidivism Coalition, she has worked to ensure that every American can have a voice in elections, regardless of past mistakes.

- ***Youth Climate Leadership Act (S. 4189):*** Senator Butler [introduced this legislation](#) to require federal agencies to include young people’s voices in decision-making, which will **increase opportunities for the next generation of leaders to meet the real challenges** posed by climate change and other human-made environmental issues. Sierra Club, Environmental Defense Fund, Earth Justice, League of Conservation Voters, and California Environmental Voters endorsed the legislation.

### **Notable Committee Work and Hearings**

Senator Butler’s work in the Judiciary and Rules Committees has been instrumental in shaping policies to guarantee free and fair democratic processes. She has used her committee positions to bring critical issues to the forefront, ensuring that Congress remains vigilant in protecting fundamental rights:

- ***Senate Judiciary Committee:*** As Chair of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Senator Butler **brought Congress closer to the people it serves** by hosting field hearings in Alabama and Arizona. These hearings drew national attention to issues of voting discrimination and the complexities of abortion laws post-Dobbs and allowed her to **engage directly with communities that have been most affected by recent legal changes.**

Her field hearing in Selma, Alabama, titled [“Modern-Day Voting Discrimination in Alabama,”](#) shed light on the systemic disenfranchisement of Black voters. She highlighted the historical and ongoing barriers to voting, including voter ID laws and polling place closures, reinforcing the need for robust federal protections.

Her field hearing in Phoenix, Arizona, titled [“Chaos and Confusion: Examining the Patchwork of Abortion Restrictions Across America Since Dobbs,”](#) underscored how restrictive abortion laws disproportionately impact communities of color.

- ***Senate Rules Committee:*** Senator Butler’s involvement in the Rules Committee has been critical in addressing the mechanics of election administration. She focused on issues such as the impact of restrictive voting laws, threats against election workers, and the need for consistent federal standards to safeguard elections. Her efforts have been aimed at **ensuring that every vote counts and that election officials have the resources they need to run smooth, fair elections.**

### **Cosponsorships and Resolutions**

Senator Butler has cosponsored multiple bills that align with her vision of a more equitable democracy. Notable among these are the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, aimed at restoring critical safeguards of the Voting Rights Act, and the Freedom to Vote Act, which

would enhance ballot access and campaign finance transparency. Additionally, she introduced resolutions such as the [National Girls and Women in Sports Day](#), honoring women's achievements in sports and promoting gender equity, reflecting her broader commitment to fairness and inclusivity.