Haitians and a history of U.S. mistreatment

The inhumane treatment of thousands of Haitian migrants encamped and stuck at the U.S.-Mexico border on the Rio Grande near Del Rio, Texas, is just the latest example of the double standard employed by this country regarding Black immigrants.

In recent months, we — the United States — have welcomed thousands of white-looking refugees from war-torn Afghanistan. We have put Brown children from Central America in cages in Texas immigration centers after separating them from their parents. And now we are putting Black migrants from Haiti on planes and sending them back to a nation wracked by poverty, damaged by earthquakes and rocked by political turmoil and instability as highlighted by the assassination of its president during a coup attempt in July.

Where is the compassionate immigration policy and treatment President Biden claimed he would institute following the out and out cruelty exerted by the former Trump administration?

The photos and videos of U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents on horseback using their long reins and mounts to chase, intimidate, control and reportedly whip Haitians carrying their possessions on foot through water and rocky terrain conjured images of America's horrific past of using slave patrols and the Ku Klux Klan to terrorize African-Americans.

'This cruelty is utterly sickening ... and all too familiar to those who are aware of America's ugly history," national NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson said in a statement this week. "No person fleeing poverty and hunger should be treated in this

Mr. Johnson called for the Biden administration to grant temporary protected status to those seeking refuge. And he called for the deplorable actions of the U.S. border patrol agents to be investigated and the agents reprimanded.

We wholeheartedly concur. There is no reason, justification or excuse for the mistreatment of the Haitians migrants, many of whom left Haiti after the devastating 2010 earthquake to find work in Brazil, Chile and Central America. But with opportunities drying up in those nations after the need for cheap labor expired and the pandemic set in, many of the Haitians headed to Mexico to gain entry into the United States after President Biden took office and pledged to undertake a more humanitarian approach to immigration.

According to published reports, many of the migrants have family in the United States. According to 2019 Census data, more than 1 million Haitians call the United States home, with large settlements in south Florida, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago and Detroit and growing communities in North Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas.

Recognizing the growing instability in Haiti, President Biden in May granted temporary protected status to about 150,000 Haitians already living in the United States. But it did nothing to help the thousands who fled Haiti in the wake of the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse and the 7.2-magnitude earthquake that shook that nation in mid-August.

And now, we find it deplorable that the United States is expelling the Haitians at the Texas border by the planeload and returning them to their homeland on the grounds of public health under a U.S. policy known as Title 42.

The NAACP and 343 other civil rights and advocacy organizations have appealed to President Biden to halt the deportations. According to Human Rights Watch, documents the organization obtained show that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security warned that migrants and asylum seekers returned to Haiti may face harm, including "violent crime, kidnapping, political crisis and civil unrest.'

The organization also said that medical experts for the Department of Homeland Security filed a disclosure condemning the Title 42 policy in May, saying it "lacked a valid public health justification."

Human Rights Watch called the expulsions of Haitians "discriminatory and abusive."

"This violent treatment of Haitians at the border is just the latest example of racially discriminatory, abusive and illegal U.S. border policies that are returning people to harm and humanitarian disaster," stated Alison Parker, U.S. managing director of Human Rights Watch.

While U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas announced after traveling to Del Rio this week that the agency is undertaking a disciplinary investigation into the treatment of the Haitian migrants there, we don't believe that is enough.

We join with others in calling for President Biden to publicly condemn the actions of the border patrol agents and to go on record saying such behavior will be cause for termination.

We also call on the Biden administration to confront, address and overhaul the racially discriminatory immigration policies. including Title 42, and biased enforcement that historically have plagued our nation.

Right now, we take small solace in the monumental task of Vice President Kamala Harris, who earlier this year was directed by President Biden to oversee efforts to address the root causes of migration into the United States from Central America. While she has pledged this nation's aid in creating jobs and stability to help people feel secure in their homelands and lessen the pressures leading to migration, we hope Haiti can be added to her list for

The United States owes a big debt to Haiti going back centuries, but instead, we have a history of mistreatment toward Haiti and

Haitians came to our shores to help fight off the British in the 1770s during our war for independence. And even after Haitians won their independence from colonial power France in 1804, the United States government never recognized the Black nation until 1862, when we were in the throes of our own Civil War over slavery.

The United States has never given Haiti the respect or aid it deserves. We have treated the nation with hostility and domination, including an invasion in 1914 that precipitated a military occupation lasting until 1934.

The U.S. military occupied Haiti again in 1994, when that nation's democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, returned from exile after fleeing a coup by the Haitian military. When he was re-elected in 2000, the U.S. military worked with the Haitian military to forcibly remove him from office and send him into exile once again — in South Africa.

In the 1990s, we also banned Haitian immigrants from entering the United States and put many Haitian refugees, including pregnant women and children, in a prison camp on the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, because they allegedly had the virus that

We are mistreating Haitian migrants again in Del Rio at the

It is time the United States ends its racially charged and illegal policies and tactics against the poor and Black nation and its people. Our energies should be used to build, not to destroy.

We must demand change from our government when it comes to dealing with Haiti and its people.

Big Blue liriope in Church Hill



Pass the Freedom to Vote Act

Republican-controlled state legislatures have imposed new voting restrictions. They are getting ready to create more safe congressional seats for Republicans through abusive partisan redistricting. They are

undermining faith in elections with false claims about election fraud and demands for fake "audits.'

The good news is that there is new

momentum in Congress and a new bill to protect our democracy. We need to get it passed.

The new Freedom to Vote Act would protect the right to vote, end unfair partisan gerrymandering and shine a light on the flood of dark money that allows billionaires to buy our elections in secret. It includes key sections of the earlier For the People Act, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives but was blocked in the U.S. Senate by Republican

Record fires in Oregon and

California. Floods in Houston

storms in Texas. Droughts

across much of the west. Flash

floods in England and Germany.

Blinding dust storms in China.

One hundred year cyclones

but in the United States and

across the world, the toll in lives

and destruction is growing in

storms of biblical proportion.

The poorest peoples and the

poorest nations are most at

risk, but no one is insulated

against the impact. The wealthy

on Lake Tahoe are evacuated

in the face of unprecedented

wildfires. Texan oilmen struggle

when record winter storms shut

down the electric system. Wall

Street bankers are hit with floods

sweeping through subways and

supplies and prices will be hit.

Millions will be displaced.

There is no longer any doubt

about the reality of global

warming, the dangers of it or

the causes of it. Republicans

who for years scorned the reality

of global warming — Donald

Trump dubbed it a "Chinese

hoax" — now accept that it is

real. Corrupted scientists paid

by oil companies that argued

the crisis wasn't manmade, now

quietly reverse their opinions.

Now the only question is: What

will we do in the face of what

the United Nations warns is

literally an existential threat?

have done, but we can alter

how bad the future becomes.

We can move to sustainable

We can't undo what we

As the storms increase, food

devastate Fiji

and Indone-

sia. Deadly

droughts

across sub-

Saharan Af-

rica. Wildfires

in Greece and

not over yet,

The year is

Italy.

streets.

The Freedom to Vote Act also addresses one of the worst things about some of the new voter suppression laws: Provisions that give state officials the power to override voters and overturn election results.

There are other good things in the bill. It would make Election

Ben Jealous

Day a federal holiday. Every state would have automatic voter registration, early voting and drop box accessibility. These would be major advances in making voting more accessible to everyone.

Voting rights advocates are rallying support for the Freedom to Vote Act. One of the sponsors, Democratic Sen. Joe Machin of West Virginia, worked hard to come up with a bill that he could support. He still hopes to get some Republican senators to join him.

That is an uphill battle. Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has signaled

Global warming is real

make production and housing

and New York. Deadly winter and transport more energy ef- and the economy, when in fact,

new ways to generate or save

the United Nations issued what

it called a "code red for human-

ity." The change must take place

Jesse L. Jackson Sr.

over the next decade or we will

seed calamities too horrible to

imagine. Already this year, the

town of Lytton, British Colum-

bia, in Canada was erased by

heat so extreme — temperatures

reached 121 degrees — that it

literally went up in smoke and

ness, the moral courage and

the popular demand to meet

this clear, present and growing

Congress will face yet one

more skirmish in this struggle

between the blind and the aware,

the corrupt and the alarmed, the

powers that be and the powers

that must be. Democrats in the

House of Representatives and

the U.S. Senate are now work-

ing to draft and to pass the core

elements of President Biden's

major investments in address-

ing climate change — mass

transit, electric cars, rebuilding

housing, solar and wind energy,

an end to fossil fuel subsidies,

modernizing the electric grid,

creating a civilian climate corps

that can enlist the energy of the

young to retrofit houses and

the existence of the threat and

admit that it is manmade in

origin. Now they argue that

it is too costly to do anything

about it. They raise alarms that

developing new energy and

Republicans no longer deny

plant trees and much more.

Central to that are the first

Build Back Better Plan.

During the next few weeks,

Can we summon the aware-

was reduced to ashes.

threat to our lives?

In its last authoritative report,

energy or more.

and efficient energy systems, electric cars and retrofitting

ficient, replant forests, invent the transition to sustainable

that no Republican senators will support this compromise. And he will use the Senate's filibuster rules to prevent the Senate from passing election protections that are supported by huge majorities of the American people — something he already has done with the For the People Act.

Ideally, voting rights should be a nonpartisan issue. Congress repeatedly passed extensions of the Voting Rights Act that were signed by Republican presidents. But right wing politicians and judges have spent years trying to undermine the Voting Rights Act in the name of "states' rights" or "state sovereignty."

With help from right wing justices on the Supreme Court, states have imposed all kinds of new voting restrictions in recent years. The number of new restrictive voting laws jumped massively after former President Trump was defeated in last year's presidential election. Grassroots organizing helped drive strong turnout among Black voters in key states, and Republicans have decided to respond by making

homes will somehow hurt jobs

energy will be a source of new

demand, new invention and new

would surely benefit if it became

the leader in the new green

technologies that surely will

drive growth markets across the

world. Plus, with their leaders

convinced they will benefit

politically if President Biden

fails, Republicans have lined

up unanimously to oppose the

Biden plan. So, making progress

on climate depends completely

between the two parties, and

Republicans unanimously op-

posed, Democrats must vote

unanimously so Vice President

Kamala Harris can break the

tie to pass a budget bill that

would contain the first major

investments in dealing with

calling in their chips. When

a politician like U.S. Sen. Joe

Manchin, a Democrat from West

Virginia, says he needs "greater

clarity" and won't support the

Biden plan, particularly its mea-

sures designed to accelerate the

transition to renewable energy

by utility companies, he isn't

confused; he is compromised.

confusing, secret and arcane. It

seldom generates headlines or

attention. But right now, in the

next few weeks, this Congress

will decide if we take the first

steps to address a threat already

taking a rising toll in lives

and destruction. The interests

invested in stopping change

are mobilized. The only hope

is that we the people rise up

to demand the change that is

president of the national Rain-

The writer is founder and

desperately needed.

bow PUSH Coalition.

The legislative process is

Deep-pocket donors are

With the Senate split 50-50

Moreover, the United States

jobs and growth.

on Democrats.

climate change.

it harder for people to register and vote. That makes it clear that the new voter suppression rules have nothing to do with "election integrity" and everything to do with maintaining power at all costs.

The U.S. Constitution very clearly gives the federal government the right to step in when states undermine democracy with restrictive and discriminatory voting rules. That's what Congress did more than 50 years ago when it passed the Voting Rights Act.

President Biden and Democratic leaders in the U.S. Senate must do whatever it takes to pass the Freedom to Vote Act. With democracy and voting rights at stake, we cannot let Jim Crowera filibuster rules in the U.S. Senate have the final word.

The writer, a former national president and chief executive officer of the NAACP, serves as president of People for the American Way.

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> > Distribution GouffyStyle LLC

Richmond Free Press is published weekly by Paradigm Communications,

Copies of the Richmond Free Press (one copy per person) are free of charge at outlets in the Richmond area. Back copies are available at the Free Press office at \$3 per copy. Bulk orders can be made prior to any upcoming edition at special rates.

A Publication of PARADIGM COMMUNICATIONS, INC. 422 East Franklin Street Richmond, VA 23219 Telephone (804) 644-0496

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The Free Press welcomes letters

A6

November 4-6, 2021

True test comes the day after

A wise person once said that the true measure of character is not what happens when you win, but what you do when you lose.

For Virginia Democrats, the coming days and weeks will reveal their true mettle after Tuesday night's stunning defeat of former Gov. Terry R. McAuliffe, Delegate Hala S. Ayala and Attorney General Mark R. Herring in the contest for the state's top three offices and in races for a continued majority in the House of Delegates.

The watershed gains of 2017 and 2019 that led to Democratic control of the governorship and the statehouse for the first time in more than 20 vears are now water under the bridge. Virginians woke up Nov. 3 to find that Republican Glenn A. Youngkin, Winsome E. Sears and Delegate Jason S. Miyares will be the next governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general, respectively, and that Republicans will hold a majority in the 100member House of Delegates.

Make no mistake: When Mr. Youngkin, a Trump acolyte, took the stage shortly after 1 a.m. Wednesday to declare victory and said, "We will change the trajectory of this Commonwealth and we will start that transformation on Day 1," he was not kidding.

We may not recognize Virginia in the next few years with a Republican governor who has pledged to start shifting public dollars to charter schools; eliminate any COVID-19 vaccination and mask mandates; block any teaching of America's true racist history from the classroom, along with books by authors who make white children and their parents uncomfortable; protect police officers from prosecution; and dismantle abortion rights.

Despite being a political neophyte, Mr. Youngkin had the skill to keep poisonous former President Trump physically out of Virginia, even as he capitalized on Mr. Trump's many verbal endorsements and used racially tinged rhetoric to energize his base.

The big questions now: What will Mr. Trump expect in return for his support? And what will Gov.-elect Youngkin be prepared to deliver? We shudder to think how that will play out.

Certainly, this sudden political shift in Virginia has Democrats shaken and fearful. More than 1.3 million people who voted for Mr. McAuliffe are uncertain now about the future. The pundits, party echelon and commentators reinforce that apprehension by looking to tag who and what are responsible for such a miserable loss.

We believe, however, that this is neither the time for blame nor tears. Rather, what is needed now is a clear-eyed and honest evaluation of how Democrats lost this election and a game plan for how to proceed. Whether it is litigation to protect voting rights, women's rights and education from the coming GOP assaults, or isolation by the slim majority of Democrats who will still hold the power in the state Senate to block offensive pieces of legislation, we have got to be ready.

This is a time to be strategic, to use the best minds and the best methods to prepare for what is coming and to take action defensively and offensively to keep Virginia moving—even slowly—in an inclusive, progressive and positive direction.

This is where the real work begins, and the true people of character and leadership will rise to the top.

No dice

We are disappointed that Richmond voters did not approve the referendum for a casino within the city.

We believe Urban One and its leaders, Alfred C. Liggins III and Cathy Hughes, offered a solid plan and exciting vision with their proposed ONE Casino + Resort for Richmond's South Side.

Unfortunately, a majority of Richmond voters were not on board with the vision. And the effort to bring the privately funded development and jobs, along with financial benefit, to the city has been sidelined for now.

We hope Mr. Liggins and Mrs. Hughes will not give up on Richmond. We believe a casino may be in the cards in the future. And although the campaign was an expensive one, we hope Urban One will regroup and renew their efforts for a casino project — and get the green light from voters in the months ahead.

Brownie bites on South Side



Déjà vu for 2022?

It was great to see former President Obama in Richmond campaigning with former governor and Democratic gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe on Oct. 23. He reminded me of a college pep rally cheerleader in some ways, encouraging people to get out and vote for

Mr. McAuliffe and do it now since Virginia has early vot-

The cheerleader description is not meant to be disparaging. Except for

the gray hair he joked about, President Obama appeared youthful and energized as he moved around the stage, voice booming. He also seemed wise as he talked about what is at stake in Virginia, nothing less than our democracy.

Virginia went blue in 2020, with President Biden carrying the state by 10 points. Since then, though, President Biden's approval ratings have plummeted. If Democrats lose governor's races in Virginia and New Jersey on Nov. 2, that may bode ill for 2022 congressional elections.

Democrats already hold a very narrow margin in the House of Representatives. Historical patterns suggest that the president's party is likely to lose seats in midterm elections. If Democrats lose more than four seats, they lose control of the House. The 2022 electoral outcomes hinge on turnout, which is why redistricting is a matter of extreme concern and why the voter suppression measures Republicans are introducing in state after state may influence electoral outcomes. Voter turnout will

Julianne Malveaux

make the difference between whether Democrats can maintain majorities in the House and Senate, but Democratic enthusiasm, over the top in 2020, may be muted in 2022.

President Biden made big promises during the 2020 campaign. Among other things, he told Black voters that he had our backs. What can activists tell Black voters in 2022? Will people who yearn for economic security, better jobs and voting rights be satisfied if all President Biden and his team can say is "We tried"?

Republican intransigence and the rigidity of Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kvrsten Sinema of Arizona have resulted in alterations to President Biden's ambitious Build Back Better legislation. The free community college proposal already has been withdrawn. Will voters

them to vote in 2022?

President Obama came into office in 2009 with lots of legislative ideas. He pushed the Affordable Care Act hard and it passed, expanding health care opportunities for tens of millions of our citizens. But he advocated for that legislation during a recession when many people were more eager for jobs than for health care. The two go together, but jobs are a priority in the middle of a recession. The result? Flawed Republican messaging, combined with general electoral malaise, turned a Democratic Congress into a Republican one.

President Obama spent the next two years fighting folks who promised to make him a one-term president. He got much less done than he might have, and Republicans set the stage by their opposition for the victory of the 45th president.

That former president would love to make a comeback, and although Republicans know better, many are rallying around him. Will the 2022 elections set the stage for a recidivist comeback?

Our nation seems hopelessly divided. Republicans are increasingly extremists and Democrats are both apathetic and estranged. Progressive Democrats have allowed the great to get in the way of the good, insisting on

be left with enough to motivate things that have no possibility of passing in the Senate, tanking legislation before it is even introduced.

Progressives aren't entirely wrong to insist on a higher minimum wage, expanded health care, child tax credits and economic relief. Still, politics is the art of compromise. How do we compromise on our fundamental rights, like our voting rights? Bravo to President Biden for backing off his embrace of the filibuster, but have his comments—and not actionsbeen too little, too late?

If the electorate is not motivated by these first months of the Biden administration, will they be inclined to vote in 2022? If they aren't, we are dealing with 2010 déjà vu. And if that déjà vu returns the former grafter and morally bankrupt president to office, the entire nation will suffer.

The writer is an economist, author and dean of the College of Ethnic Studies at Cal State University, Los Angeles.

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Distribution GouffyStyle LLC

Richmond Free Press is published weekly by Paradigm Communications,

Copies of the Richmond Free Press (one copy per person) are free of charge at outlets in the Richmond area. Back copies are available at the Free Press office at \$3 per copy. Bulk orders can be made prior to any upcoming edition at special rates.

A Publication of PARADIGM COMMUNICATIONS, INC. 422 East Franklin Street Richmond, VA 23219 Telephone (804) 644-0496

VERIFIED AUDIT CIRCUIT ATTOM







can state legislators have been busy imposing new voting restrictions and devising corrupt redistricting schemes to give their party more power than they could win under a fair system. Republicans in the U.S. Senate

protected that wrongdoing again in October by using filibuster rules to stop federal voting rights legislation from coming up for debate.

This is political obstruction of justice, and

President Biden and Senate Democrats must not allow it to stand. One day before Senate Re-

publicans made it clear that they have no interest in protecting the right to vote or a healthy democracy, 25 religious and civil rights leaders and voting rights activists were arrested in front of the White House. Hundreds more joined us in solidarity as we marched, sang, prayed and demanded stronger leadership from President Biden.

We know that President Biden is a supporter of voting rights. His stirring speech at the National Constitution Center called voting rights the test of our time and brought moral clarity to our cause.

Now we need presidential action that matches the urgency of President Biden's words and the urgency of our time.

In the eight years since the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the federal Voting Rights Act, dozbarriers that target voters who are Black, brown, female and young. A flurry of new laws was introduced this year after record voter turnout contributed to the defeat of President Trump and the loss of Republican control in the Senate.

The new wave of voter suppression is a direct response to

Ben Jealous

last year's expansive voter participation. These laws do more than undermine democracy. They defile it. Rather than celebrating efforts to broaden citizen participation, they seek to squelch it. Rather than expand the franchise, they seek to narrow it.

The Freedom to Vote Act would reverse many of the new anti-voter laws. It would expand access to voting by mail and early voting, make voter registration automatic and make Election Day a federal holiday. Together, these measures will increase access to voting for working people, Black and brown voters, women and people with disabilities. The bill also will end abusive partisan redistricting and help stop billionaires from buying our elections.

All 50 Senate Democrats support the Freedom to Vote Act, as does Vice President Kamala Harris, our nation's first woman vice president, who is prepared to cast the 51st vote. But Senate Republican Leader Mitch Mc-Connell has demanded that his colleagues keep that vote from happening. They are preventing ing realized. With voter suppression and

partisan redistricting threatening nextyear's elections, we don't have time to wait. The Freedom to Vote Act must become law now. President Biden must use all

his personal influence and the power of his office to protect voting rights. He must publicly call on Senate Democrats not to let Republicans resort to the tactics of Jim Crow and succeed in blocking voting rights protections for our generation. Those of us who have gath-

ered at the White House are keenly aware of the generations of activists who put their bodies on the line to secure and expand the right to vote, including suffragists who faced beatings for having the audacity to demand the right to vote for women, and activists who risked and sometimes gave their lives to protect Black Americans' right to vote. And we know the essential role that presidential leadership has played in overcoming resistance to voting rights. This is a time for the "good

trouble" that the great John Lewis called for at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. We will be back at the White House throughout the fall, in greater numbers, to demand that President Biden do what it takes to get voting rights legislation onto his desk and signed into law this year.

The writer, a former national president and chief executive officer of the NAACP, serves as president of People for the American Way.

The Free Press welcomes letters

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Tone deaf and worse

We were stopped cold by the remarks of the Richmond Marathon's longtime lead coordinator of elite athletes, who, in an interview with the Free Press, offered his thoughts on race organizers not giving prize money to this year's

The coordinator, Thom Suddeth, said in an article published on Page A11 of this week's edition of the Richmond Free Press that while he admires the talents of the elite runners — many of whom are from African nations and regularly sweep the men's and women's first place awards and prize money — the marathon is "basically a homegrown event."

He said the marathon incurs a cost not only by paying the prize money, but also by paying for travel accommodations for the elite runners.

"Another problem is that Richmonders don't know them, can't pronounce their names and they're hard to interview," Mr. Suddeth said.

Say what?

The statement smacks of racism on its face.

And we told Mr. Suddeth that when he telephoned on Monday to try to explain "the context" of his remarks, as he put it.

However, as he tried to explain himself, he only dug himself into an even deeper racial abyss. He talked about how many of the African runners had difficulty talking with the media because they don't speak English, how the Ethiopian runners were "just shy" and how any person or any color is allowed to come and run in the race.

And then he said: "I'm not a racist and what I said wasn't racist. I showed it to one of my best friends, who is Black, and he said..."

"That's classic," we told him before hanging up.

Proximity to blackness, including having Black friends, co-workers or acquaintances, does not immunize white people from having attitudes that are rooted in racism or doing racist things, as John Eligon of The New York Times has so eloquently stated.

Black people are not props to be pulled out to buttress a white person's tired and hollow excuse for a narrow mind and/or poor behavior regarding a Black person or someone of color.

In this case, Mr. Suddeth seemingly views the elite runners from Africa as a problem and may be happy if they don't come to Richmond and suck up the travel money and prize money for what he sees as a local event.

He got his wish. This year, many of the African elite runners did not participate because the prize money wasn't

According to Sports Backers, which organizes the annual event, prize money for the entire event totals \$25,000, with winners of the 26.2-mile headline race receiving only \$2,500. The prize money was eliminated this year, organizers said, because Sports Backers took a "significant financial in 2020 and 2021 because of the pandemic. In order to put on the marathon, it had to reduce costs, and one such reduction was eliminating the prize money.

We get that. But for Mr. Suddeth to speak about the elite athletes as a problem because of language or cultural differences is beyond the pale.

Richmond touts itself as a cosmopolitan, international city, welcoming guests from all corners of the globe to enjoy a range of events — from the Richmond Marathon to grand film, music and food festivals and cycling competitions — either as participants or tourists.

We'd like to believe that Richmond has grown beyond a city of huckleberries with small-town views. Event organizers, such as Sports Backers and their cadre of staff and volunteers can't afford to take the city a huge step backward in time and mindset to view these attractions as best only for local crowds and local participants.

If Mr. Suddeth, the lead coordinator for the elite athletes. sees language as a barrier to athletes' engagement with the media and others, then we are certain volunteers who live within Metro Richmond would happily step forward to help translate.

Metro Richmond is the third most populous metro area in Virginia, with residents settling here from a host of nations. Our area public school districts have thousands of students for whom English is not their primary language. Assistance for COVID-19 vaccinations is available in more than 100 different languages. So help is available for Mr. Suddeth and Sport Backers to enhance the overall experience for elite athletes who are not fluent in English.

What Mr. Suddeth really pointed out in his statement is that he, and maybe others like him, have a problem not the athletes.

Sports Backers also sought to distance itself from Mr. Suddeth and his narrow thinking.

Pete Woody, Sports Backers' public relations and communications manager, sent the following unsolicited statement to the Free Press:

"Thom Suddeth was not involved in the process that led to this decision (to eliminate prize money). He is a volunteer and when he spoke to the Free Press, he was speaking on behalf of himself and not Sports Backers or the Richmond Marathon. His views do not reflect those of Sports Backers or the Richmond Marathon. In everything we do, from youth running programs to community fitness initiatives, to training teams and events like the Richmond Marathon, we aim to create an open and welcoming environment for participants of all abilities and backgrounds."

We get it. But Mr. Suddeth and volunteers and staff like him are in positions of responsibility and bring their attitudes and beliefs with them when they interact with the public, the media and the special elite runners from other parts of the globe.

If Mr. Suddeth and others like him are the face of the marathon — and, by extension, the face of the city — then perhaps it's time for a makeover.

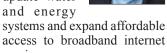
NIghttime foliage in Henrico



Investing in people and communities

President Biden and the Democratic Congress have come through with a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package—something the previous president repeatedly promised but never delivered.

The plan will bring much-needed investments to American communities to fix roads and bridges, update water and energy



Now Congress needs to address equally urgent needs to shore up the social safety net by passing President Biden's Build Back Better plan.

There's a lot to cheer about in the infrastructure bill. It includes \$40 billion to repair and replace bridges. And there's \$1 billion devoted to reconnecting communities, mostly in Black neighborhoods that were divided and disrupted by racist decisions about where to route highways and other public infrastructure. It also includes the largest federal investment ever in public transit.

So far, so good. But the plan that passed forests and wetlands.

How much do your senators

care about voter suppression?

How committed are they to

our most sacred constitutional

right? What have they done,

and what are they willing to

card answers those questions.

Our Vote Initiative and the

National Council of Negro

Women, the Scorecard provides

civil rights advocates and their

supporters with clear insights

into the voting patterns of their

facing our nation at this mo-

ment than the preservation of

democracy. History will judge

every member of the U.S.

Senate on their commitment

to democratic principles. The

Civil Rights Scorecard is not

just a measure of each senator's

voting record, it is a measure

of their character, their integrity

The grades are based on

senators' votes on the American

Rescue Plan Act, the John R.

and their patriotism.

There is no greater crisis

Senate delegations.

The Civil Rights Score-

Released last week by the

do, to defend it?

National Ur-

ban League,

along with the

NAACP, the

National Ac-

tion Network,

the National

Coalition of

Black Civic

Participation,

Fighting for

Congress was a watered-down version of the Biden administration's original American Jobs Plan. And there's a lot that it doesn't address. That's why Congress needs to pass the Build Back Better legislation. It is an investment in us.

It will make free preschool

Ben Jealous

available to all 3- and 4-yearolds. And it will make the largest investment in child care in our country's history, helping most families save more than half their child care spending.

It will lower the cost of prescription drugs and make affordable care more available for older people and people with disabilities in their homes and support the workers who take care of them.

It also will be the biggest investment in our history in addressing climate change - in ways that will create a lot of new green energy jobs, like installing solar panels and improving the energy efficiency of buildings.

It would create a new Civilian Climate Corps to put 300,000 young people to work on projects that will address the impact of climate change, like restoring

Senators graded on

defending voting rights

Lewis Voting Rights Advance-

ment Act and the For the People

Act, along with each senator's

stance on the filibuster – a

once-rare procedure that has

been weaponized to block major

legislation, including voting

"the divide between the 51st

and 60th vote in the Senate is

unbridgeable with the Senate

Marc H. Morial

point for each "yes" vote on

the three bills, and zero points

for a "no" vote, abstention or

which comprised 50 percent of

their overall score, was worth

three points for abolishing the

filibuster, two for reforming it,

one for willingness to change it

and zero for retaining the fili-

to 3 earned an "A" grade; those

with a score of 1 to 2 earned

an "I" for "incomplete," and

those with a score of 0.9 or

voting rights because every

other right stems directly from

it. Without the right to vote, we

have no say. No voice. No seat

at the table to determine public

policy on policing, education

The Scorecard focused on

lower earned an "F."

Senators with a score of 2.1

buster as it currently exists.

Their stance on the filibuster,

not voting.

Senators were awarded one

split along partisan lines."

As the Scorecard notes,

rights protection bills.

The Biden administration has been negotiating with members of Congress on the details of the plan and the amount of funding that will be committed to making it effective. The White House is confident that its current framework — and a budget of \$1.75 trillion over 10 years — will make it through the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate in the coming weeks.

And it's all paid for, with higher taxes on the wealthiest Americans and big corporations. Nobody making less than \$400,000 a year will see their taxes go up. Many middle class families will get a tax cut.

The infrastructure bill and Build Back Better legislation will help individuals and communities across the country in rural America, inner cities and suburbs. That's the kind of progress that will make people's lives better. That's the kind of progress that will make people feel it was worth their time and effort to help elect President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris and a Democratic majority in Congress.

And that brings us to the next essential piece of legislation that the White House and Congress must get signed into law this year: Voting rights legislation. The Freedom to Vote Act and

"A law is unjust if it is in-

flicted on a minority that, as a

result of being denied the right

to vote, had no part in enact-

ing or devising the law," Dr.

Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote

in "Letter from a Birmingham

cey Abrams of Georgia ex-

pounded on this reality in her

book, "Our Time Is Now:

Power, Purpose and the Fight

for a Fair America." In it,

she wrote: "As millions are

stripped of their rights, we live

out the policy consequences,

from lethal pollution running

through poor communities to

kindergartners practicing ac-

tive shooter drills taught with

the seams. It is crumbling before

our eyes. The Scorecard is a

clanging alarm, alerting every

member of the U.S. Senate that

we expect them to honor their

constitutional duty and to do

everything in their power to

protect democracy, including

abolishing or reforming the

card at https://naacp.org/re-

sources/civil-rights-scorecard-r

eport?eType=EmailBlastConte

nt&eId=2a47325f-932b-441e-

chief executive officer of the

National Urban League.

The writer is president and

8e70-6d2693e24893

Find the Civil Rights Score-

Our democracy is cracking at

nursery rhymes."

filibuster.

Voting rights advocate Sta-

Jail.'

the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act are urgently needed to overturn state restrictions on voting and to protect our democracy from state voter suppression laws, corrupt redistricting and billionaires buying our elections.

The president and congressional leaders deserve credit for devoting countless hours to the hard negotiating and willingness to make difficult compromises that were necessary to pass the infrastructure bill, and that soon will bring us the important investments in Build Back Better.

Our democracy deserves the same investment of time, energy and political will.

The writer, a former national president and chief executive officer of the NAACP, serves as president of People for the American Way.

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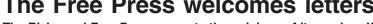
Richmond Free Press is published weekly by Paradigm Communications,

Copies of the Richmond Free Press (one copy per person) are free of charge at outlets in the Richmond area. Back copies are available at the Free Press office at \$3 per copy. Bulk orders can

be made prior to any upcoming edition at special rates. A Publication of PARADIGM COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

422 East Franklin Street Richmond, VA 23219 Telephone (804) 644-0496

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