

Failures in Washington Lead Maryland Church to Announce Lockout

Build Back Better (BBB) and Voting Rights on Life Support

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Rev. Delman Coates, Ph.D., Senior Pastor of Mt. Ennon Baptist Church in Clinton, MD, and the church's Executive Council voted unanimously to institute a "lockout" of all federal elected officials that have blocked passage of federal legislation that would expand and protect voting rights and legislation that would provide funding for jobs,



Dr. Coates Leading DC Rally

health care, childcare, and protect the environment. The church's leadership believes that there are two fundamental and interrelated pillars in America: (1) the right to vote AND (2) adequate funding for public priorities. The lockout seeks to change the rules that result in failed policy.

In the wake of the failure to pass meaningful voting rights legislation and the apparent breakdown of negotiations to pass the Build Back Better agenda, church officials are greatly concerned about the state of democracy in America. "We witnessed unprecedented voter turnout in the 2020 election and in the Georgia runoff in January 2021; and yet, the White House and Congress have failed to deliver on the promises made to the American people, says Rev. Coates. This has happened because leaders in Washington, both Democrats and Republicans, are relying on outdated legislative and budgetary rules like the filibuster and 'PAYGO' that have their antecedents in segregation and were designed to restrict rather than expand access to the ballot and the budget.

Opponents of racial progress have always relied on such rules to deny this access to all Americans. The pretextual basis for the filibuster and 'pay-for' budget rules is to further white (male) minority rule in America at a time of increasing racial diversity. We have seen members of Congress waive the filibuster and ignore their avowed concern about the deficit when they want. So don't tell us that it can't be done now."

The lockout will prohibit any federal politician who does not support both the abolition of the filibuster AND 'pay-as-you-go' budget rules from speaking or being recognized in any way at any religious service during and after the national commemoration and celebration of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "These rules are anti-democratic and create the predicate for those who oppose progress to mask their intentions under the guise of 'bipartisanship' and 'fiscal responsibility.' This is bigger than the actions of two senators," says, Rev. Coates. He continues, "The White House and congressional leadership are equally responsible for perpetuating procedural and budgetary rules like the filibuster and 'PAYGO' that were designed to exclude people of color from voting and to restrict public spending on the priorities desperately needed by the most vulnerable among us. It is our moral imperative to stand up and stand against the forces that seek to undermine our place in society."

As an extension of the lockout, the church's leadership plans to launch a national, grassroots voter mobilization effort designed to increase civic engagement. "We are tired of being taken for granted. In the past, we have supported politicians who, in turn, did not support us. That's over. It is time for politicians to understand that they work for us. We don't work for them. The lockout is about changing the way we interface with elected officials by establishing the terms and conditions upon which we will support them when we grant them access to our community. If they don't support us our agenda, we will not support theirs," says Rev. Coates.

Walter Harvey, Chair of the Deacons Ministry, asserts, "The time has come for us to stop granting access to politicians without conditions. The sustainability of our communities, the strength of our families, and the future for our children depends upon protecting voting rights and providing adequate funding for the things we need, and the filibuster and 'PAYGO' budget rules prevent that."

Rev. Coates says, "the keys to unlocking the lockout" are (1) ending the filibuster, and (2) ending "PAYGO" rules that place false constraints on federal spending for public priorities. He continues, "This lockout is no different from what the religious right has done in the past by establishing the specific policy outcomes they want in exchange for access to their constituency and their support. They have had lockout of progressive thought and politicians for 50 years, and what we are seeing today in Congress and the Supreme Court are, in part, the result of that conservative activism. Progressive faith leaders have failed to attach access and our support to specific policy demands, and as a result we give our votes away to politicians and a political party that take us for granted. This ends today. It is our hope that other leaders and institutions will join the lockout so that we can create a national model for changing the way we engage with those seeking our support. We cannot and do not want to use our churches to endorse political candidates, but we can establish the basis for them to endorse us."

Rev. Delman Coates, Ph.D. is the Senior Pastor of Mt. Ennon Baptist Church in Clinton, MD & the Special Liaison to the Presiding Bishop for Government Affairs of the Full Gospel Church Fellowship International

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