

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 10, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write today to respectfully request that you bestow the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Julian Bond for his tireless work and significant contributions to our nation as a prominent voice for equality and civil rights.

Julian Bond embodies everything it means to be an American hero. On multiple occasions, he put his life and reputation on the line to fight for what he believed in and to make America a more just place for minorities, women and members of the LGBTQ+ community. As a founding member of the Student Non-Violence Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Julian Bond gave a voice to young Black people who wanted to be a part of the civil rights movement. Through SNCC, Mr. Bond fought for civil rights by organizing protests and playing a major role in the Black voter registration drives in the South. Despite three members of SNCC being killed by the Ku Klux Klan during the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964, Mr. Bond was never afraid to stand up for what he thought was right.

Mr. Bond's courage persisted through his career. In 1965, Mr. Bond was elected as a Representative in the Georgia House of Representatives; however, following a SNCC statement opposing the Vietnam War, Mr. Bond's soon-to-be colleagues threatened to deny his seat unless he disavowed the civil rights group. Despite mounting pressure, Mr. Bond stood by his beliefs and refused. In response, an ad hoc Special Committee was formed to reelect Mr. Bond. After winning the special election, the Georgia Legislature again voted to bar him from taking his rightful seat. The challenge was eventually taken to the Supreme Court in *Bond v. Floyd*, which unanimously ruled the Georgia House of Representatives must respect Mr. Bond's first amendment rights and allow him to take the seat he had earned twice over.

Mr. Bond went on to serve four terms in the House from 1967 to 1975 and six terms in the Georgia Senate from 1975 to 1987. However, Mr. Bond's impactful leadership record does not end with the Georgia Senate. He also served as the president of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) from its founding in 1971 to 1979. During his tenure at the SPLC, Mr. Bond partnered with communities to bolster intersectional movements, combat white supremacy and advocate for human rights in the South; after his presidency, he served as a member of its board of directors. After completing his presidency at the SPLC, and the Georgia legislature, he was

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appointed chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1998 and served in this esteemed position until 2009.

Mr. Bond did not use his voice for Black Americans alone. He advocated for equal treatment of women as well as members of the LGBTQ+ community. It is important to note that he was an advocate for equal rights regardless of sexual orientation long before many others, further establishing himself as a true champion of justice and equality.

Julian Bond dedicated his life to leaving America better than he found it. Throughout his career he was tested and challenged by those who violently disagreed with him, but he never backed down. Julian Bond was the epitome of grace under fire. He listened and he respected others but he never capitulated to injustice or hate. The high honor of the Presidential Medal of Freedom is reserved for those who make significant contributions to the national interests of the United States, and Mr. Bond did just that through his tireless work.

I, along with my esteemed colleague, the late, distinguished, civil rights leader Congressman John Lewis, wrote to President Barack Obama on two different occasions, once in November of 2013, and once in May 2016 asking him to recognize Mr. Bond with this high honor. Both letters are enclosed. Thank you for your attention in this important matter.

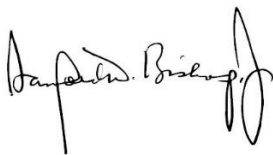
Sincerely,



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson Jr
Member of Congress



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress

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_____/s/_____
Bennie Thompson
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Nikema Williams
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
André Carson
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Karen Bassy
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Jesús G. “Chuy” García
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Cori Bush
Member of Congress