



March 17, 2020

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Vanita Gupta

Dear Members of Congress, Governors, and State Election Officials:

The co-chairs of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' Voting Rights Task Force, and undersigned organizations, write to urge Congress and *all* state elections officials to adopt and fund a number of key policies to ensure both the public's safety and the orderly conduct of the 2020 primary and general elections in light of the current threat posed by COVID-19.

We recognize the gravity of the circumstances, and fully appreciate the work federal, state, and local officials have undertaken in the past few weeks to protect the public from this pandemic. Lives are at stake, and as government officials respond with decisive action, they must also preserve our democratic systems. We propose a number of steps elections officials must take so that remaining primaries, and the general election on November 3, 2020, occur without causing undue risk to public health or disenfranchising any eligible voter. Officials must take into consideration accessibility for voters who have historically faced barriers to the ballot including Black, Latino, Asian, and Native American voters; voters with disabilities; and students. The following recommendations, which are detailed more fully by the [Brennan Center for Justice](#), must be adopted – and adopted quickly – to ensure that voting in America in 2020 remains fair, accessible, and safe.

Voter Registration:

- Accessible online voter registration (OVR) should be available in all states. OVR systems must be assessed and bolstered now to ensure they can accommodate a surge and are fully accessible to all voters; all states that don't yet have the system in place should work now to set up online voter registration. This will be the safest method by which citizens register to vote.
- Allow same-day voter registration for all voters in this election.
- States must also extend voter registration deadlines in light of likely curtailment of government services and other potential online breakdowns.

Early In-Person Voting:

- States should expand early voting options and allow at least two weeks of early in-person voting to reduce long lines and administrative stress on Election Day. Once doing so, elections administrators must educate the public about these options and urge them to come in early; such announcements benefit all.
- Early voting sites should follow the same procedures outlined for polling places which we have detailed below.

Voting by Mail:

- Mail-in ballot options should be made available to *all registered voters* (not just those on absentee voter lists). All voters should have ballots mailed to them and be provided with a list of options as to how to cast their completed ballots (including pre-paid postage for mail return).
- Given that mail-in voting may be the only option for people who need assistance, or who are immune-compromised, to cast a ballot, states must allow voters who cannot vote in person – particularly people with disabilities, illness, or language assistance needs – to obtain assistance completing and submitting ballots from individuals they designate.
- Options for requesting, receiving, and returning mail-in ballots should be expanded, while maintaining the security of the voting system. States should offer multiple methods of requesting mail-in ballots, including online, in person, by phone, and by mail. Secure options for returning ballots should be expanded and deadlines for mail-in ballots to be requested and returned should be relaxed.

Polling Place Adjustments:

- Jurisdictions with polling places must follow public health guidelines while continuing to provide voting services at these sites. In-person voting is essential given that many people (including Native American tribes living on tribal lands) do not have access to mail voting. Denying these in-person voting options in some circumstances amounts to a violation of federal voting rights law.
- State and local officials must make any necessary modifications regarding polling place site determinations and administration of those locations. When considering such modifications, election administration officials must identify locations that both protect vulnerable communities and ensure that Black, Latino, Asian, and Native American racial and language minority voters, voters with disabilities, and students have the access they need to cast their vote.
- Jurisdictions should prepare for a surge in provisional voting due to delays in the processing of voter registration applications, voter confusion resulting from polling place closures and consolidations, and unfamiliarity with absentee voting.
- Polling places must be adequately sanitized to prevent transmission of the virus, and should follow [guidance](#) issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (including requiring sick poll workers to stay home, regularly cleaning frequently touched surfaces, disinfecting potentially contaminated surfaces, such as voting machines and other equipment, and frequent hand washing and sanitizing).
- Polling places should be reconfigured in order to adhere to “social distancing” protocol, creating additional space between voting booths, poll workers, and voters standing in line.

Voter Education and Combating Misinformation:

- States must undertake aggressive voter education campaigns as they make necessary changes to their policies and practices, and must additionally counter any disinformation (intentional or not) with facts and accurate information.

If states and localities act swiftly, we can create an elections system that operates safely, efficiently, and accessible to all. Under no circumstances should the November general election be canceled or postponed, as that date is mandated by federal law. Indeed, the very purpose of these policy recommendations is to provide guidance on how each state can administer their elections without disenfranchising any of our fellow citizens.

In times of crisis, our nation comes together for the sake of the country and our collective communities. We are in a state of national crisis now; that is why it's all the more important that we band together to safeguard both our health and our democracy. We must not sacrifice one for the other.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
18 Million Rising
9to5, National Association of Working Women
A. Philip Randolph Institute
ACCESS
ACLU of Alabama
ACLU of Georgia
Action Group Network
Advancement Project
African American Ministers In Action
AFSCME
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
Alliance for Youth Action
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Federation of Teachers
American Friends Service Committee
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Andrew Goodman Foundation
Anti-Defamation League
APAPA TX
APIA Vote-MI
Arab American Institute (AAI)
AREAA DC Metro Chapter
Arizona Coalition for Change
Asian American Federation (AAF)
Asian American Federation of Florida - South Region
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)
Asian Community Development Council (ACDC)
Asian Law Alliance
Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS)
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)
Asian Services in Action, Inc. (ASIA, Inc.)
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
AZ APIAVote Table
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Big Bend Voting Rights Project
Black Voters Matter Fund
Black Women for Wellness Action Project
Black Women's Health Imperative
Brady
Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law
Campaign Legal Center
Center for American Progress
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Media and Democracy
Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists
Center for Southeast Asians
Church World Service
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Coalition on Human Needs
Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy and Research Organization (CLLARO)
Common Cause Florida
Common Cause Texas
Community Change/Community Change Action
Constitutional Accountability Center
Defending Rights & Dissent
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, inc.
DemCast USA
Democracy 21
Democracy Initiative
Demos
Disability Rights Florida
EARLY - Missouri
Economic Policy Institute
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)

End Citizens United Action Fund
Engage Miami
Equal Justice Society
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality Ohio
Fair Elections Center
Fair Fight Action
Faith in Public Life
Faithful America
Fix Democracy First
Florida Asian Services
Florida Asian Women Alliance
Florida Chinese Federation
Florida State National Council of Jewish Women
Franciscan Action Network
Free Speech For People
Georgia Alliance for Social Justice
Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda
Georgia NAACP
Girls Inc.
Government Information Watch
Greater Miami Section of National Council of Jewish Women
Greenpeace USA
Greenville Branch NAACP #5522
Hispanic Federation
Hmong American Partnership
Hmong American Women's Association
Hmong National Development
Houston Area Urban League
Human Rights Campaign
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
Indian American Coalition of Texas
Indivisible Georgia Coalition
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America
(UAW)
Japanese American Citizens League
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jobs With Justice
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Lambda Legal
Latino Community Fund of Washington State
Latino Victory Project
LatinoJustice PRLDEF

League of Conservation Voters
League of Women Voters of US
Legal Aid at Work
Maine Conservation Voters
Matthew Shepard Foundation
MECHA
Michigan League of Conservation Voters Ed Fund
Milwaukee Consortium for Hmong Health, Inc.
MinKwon Center for Community Action
Muslim Advocates
NANAY
NANAY CEDC
NAPAFASA
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Human Rights Workers
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of Social Workers, Michigan Chapter
National Black Caucus of State Caucuses
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Congress of American Indians
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland and Columbus sections
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Education Association
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA)
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Immigration Law Center
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
National Lawyers Guild
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE
National Urban League Young Professionals
National Women's Law Center
Native American Rights Fund

NELP Action Fund
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New American Leaders Action Fund
New Georgia Project
New Voices for Reproductive Justice
North Carolina Asian Americans Together (NCAAT)
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
OCA South Florida Chapter
Office of Public Witness
People For the American Way
PFLAG National
Planned Parenthood Action Fund
Poder Latinx
PolicyLink
Poligon Education Fund
Pride at Work
Progress Florida
Progressive Turnout Project
Protect Democracy
Public Citizen
RepresentUs
Restaurant Opportunities Centers United
SEAMAAC, Inc.
SEIU
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
SisterLove
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Southern Center for Human Rights
SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW!, inc.
SPLC Action Fund
Supermajority Education Fund
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Tash
The Arc of the United States
The Restaurant Opportunities Center United
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Transformative Justice Coalition
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Mine Workers of America
Village of Oak Park
Voice of Vietnamese Americans

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Voices for Progress
Voting Rights Lab
Voto Latino
Wisconsin Democracy Campaign
Wisconsin Voices
Women With A Vision, Inc.
YWCA Southeast Wisconsin
YWCA USA