



March 17, 2020

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Asian Americans Advancing Justice |  
AAJC

**Policy and Enforcement**

**Committee Chair**

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Anti-Defamation League

**President & CEO**

**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  
ACLU of Kansas  
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 Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations  
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  
Fix: League of Women Voters (need to correct there was a typo)  
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  
Leadership Now Project  
League of Conservation Voters  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
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  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
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 Bar Association  
National Black Caucus of State Caucuses  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Law and Economic Justice  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
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)  
Northwest Kenyan Community Association  
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  
Protect Democracy  
Public Citizen  
RepresentUs  
Restaurant Opportunities Centers United  
SEAMAAC, Inc.  
SEIU  
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)  
SisterLove  
SMART Elections  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center  
Southern Center for Human Rights  
SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW!, inc.  
SPLC Action Fund  
Supermajority Education Fund  
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  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
UnidosUS  
Union for Reform Judaism  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Mine Workers of America  
United Steelworkers  
Village of Oak Park  
Voice of Vietnamese Americans  
Voices for Progress  
Voting Rights Lab  
Voto Latino  
Wisconsin Democracy Campaign  
Wisconsin Voices  
Women With A Vision, Inc.  
YWCA Southeast Wisconsin  
YWCA USA

\*\* Signers updated as of March 18, 2020.