



July 6, 2017

Dear Secretary of State:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (“The Leadership Conference”), a diverse coalition of more than 200 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, and the undersigned allied groups, we write to condemn and oppose the data request by President Trump’s advisory commission (the “commission”). We applaud the principled actions that many Secretaries of State and election administrators have taken to reject the commission’s request for sensitive information about voters, and we urge those that have not yet responded to carefully consider any future responses to the commission.

We strongly believe that the commission’s request is an unprecedented overreach and a brazen assault on the founding principles of our democracy. We have three overarching concerns. First, we are concerned that this commission is laying the groundwork for potential voter suppression by the wrongful removal of eligible voters, including Black, Hispanic, Native American, older, and student voters, from the rolls through the problematic process known as Crosscheck. Second, the creation of a national database of voters’ detailed information raises serious privacy concerns. And finally, at a time when the focus should be addressing the possibility of past and continued Russian interference, including cyberattacks in the 2016 elections, the creation of a national database raises significant national security concerns.

The right to vote is a sacred right. It is the right that protects all other rights and ensures that our elected leaders are accountable to the citizens they represent. Our country has made great strides to increase access to the ballot throughout its history, and you play a fundamental role in the free and fair administration of our electoral process.

As reported, Kansas Secretary of State Kobach sent you a letter last week requesting that you provide sensitive voter roll data, including the names, addresses, dates of birth, political party affiliation, past voter history, and even partial Social Security numbers of registered voters in your state. That letter is merely a request and given the fact there are no guarantees about how this data would be used or even secured, no one should feel compelled to cooperate.

We were heartened that this request rightly [drew swift and bipartisan condemnation](#) across the country in large part because of serious questions about the legality of releasing this personal information. Member organizations of The Leadership Conference, and others, have filed multiple legal challenges to this request, alleging possible violations of numerous federal laws, and constitutional violations. Depending on how states respond to the commission’s request, additional legal challenges could be pursued under state laws as well.

Although disgraceful, the commission’s actions are unfortunately not surprising, given the individuals leading the effort and their longstanding pursuits of voter suppression in the

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name of phantom voter fraud. As Governor of Indiana, Vice President Pence supported voter suppression tactics, including undermining voter registration drives and pushing extreme voter ID laws. Secretary Kobach also has a long record of discriminatory and regressive actions on voting rights. His unrepentant attempts to suppress voting have led to thousands of voters being wrongly removed from the rolls and barred from exercising their democratic right. And just last week, President Trump appointed Hans von Spakovsky to the commission. Mr. von Spakovsky's troubling support for voter suppression led not only to a public rebuke from career Justice Department attorneys but also to the U.S. Senate refusing to confirm his nomination to the Federal Election Commission.

Many Secretaries of State and election administrators have rightly characterized the commission's data request as ["disingenuous," "repugnant," a "waste of taxpayer money," and "a tool to commit large-scale voter suppression."](#) As you prepare to join your fellow Secretaries of State later this week at the National Association of Secretaries of State summer conference, we respectfully request that you join your colleagues in expressing collective opposition to the commission and its data request. At a time when barely half of eligible voters exercise the franchise, we should instead be taking every possible step to remove barriers to voting in America.

Our democracy is stronger when more, not fewer, citizens are involved in the electoral process. If the right to vote is denied, we will fail our democracy and it will not survive. Secretaries of State and election administrators have the mission and responsibility to ensure access to the ballot by upholding the guarantees of our laws and Constitution. All Secretaries of State and election administrators should stand united in protecting the voting rights of our nation's citizens and rejecting the commission's outrageous request.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
Access Democracy  
Advancement Project  
AFSCME  
Alliance for Justice  
American Association for Justice  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Ethical Union  
American Federation of Labor-Congress of industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)  
American Federation of Teachers  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)  
Andrew Goodman Foundation  
Anti-Defamation League  
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC  
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote  
Bend the Arc Jewish Action  
Brennan Center for Justice  
Center for American Progress  
Center for Community Change  
Center for Media and Democracy

Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Color of Change  
Common Cause  
Common Cause Illinois  
Communications Workers of America  
Contra Costa MoveOn  
Crescent City Media Group  
Daily Kos  
Democracy 21  
Democracy Initiative  
Democratic Women in Action  
Demos  
Equal Justice Society  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Equality California  
Every Voice  
Fair Elections Legal Network  
Friends of the Earth U.S.  
The Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda  
Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches  
Hindu American Foundation  
Hip Hop Caucus  
Human Rights Campaign  
Institute for Science and Human Values  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Lambda Legal  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
League of Women Voters of the United States  
Main Street Alliance  
MALDEF  
Money Out People In Coalition  
MOVI (Money Out Voters In)  
Muslim Advocates  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
NAACP  
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.  
National Action Network  
National Association of Human Rights Workers  
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund  
National Bar Association  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Congress of American Indians  
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)

National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)  
National Education Association  
National Employment Law Project  
National Hispanic Media Coalition  
National Low Income Housing Coalition  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Women's Law Center  
Native American Rights Fund  
Nebraskans for Civic Reform  
New Jersey Institute for Social Justice  
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates  
Occupy Bergen County (New Jersey)  
Ohio Voter Rights Coalition  
One Wisconsin Now  
PC(USA) Washington Office of Public Witness  
Peace Action  
People For the American Way  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
PolicyLink  
Presbyterian Feminist Agenda Network  
Public Citizen  
Rock the Vote  
San Francisco Democratic Women in Action  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
State Voices  
Transformative Justice Coalition  
U.S. National Committee for UN Women  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
Universal Health Care Action Network (UHCAN)  
Voices for Progress  
The Voter Participation Center  
Voting Rights Institute  
Women's Intercultural Network (WIN)  
YWCA USA