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March 22, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
S-230, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
S-221, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority  
Leader Schumer:

The co-chairs of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' Voting Rights Task  
Force, write to urge Congress to appropriate at least \$2 billion and to adopt a number of key  
policy measures in the upcoming Coronavirus economic stimulus legislation that would  
ensure both the public's safety and an inclusive and fair voting process for 2020 primary and  
general elections. The implementation of comprehensive policies that expand voter  
registration, in-person early voting, no-excuse absentee voting by mail, voter education, and  
safe in-person voting on Election Day, is critical to assisting states' preparation for  
upcoming elections, given the severe and ongoing threat posed by COVID-19. Today, we  
write to urge immediate funding of these policies both through appropriations and  
authorization legislation.

Congress must act now to provide funding and policy mandates so that all states and the  
District of Columbia are sufficiently prepared to administer an election that both protects the  
American public and also enables full participation by all eligible citizens, even – and  
especially – during a time of national crisis. As outlined in our [March 17, 2020 letter](#), any  
package addressing election assistance must require that states adopt a number of practices  
including the following:

- an extended early in-person voting period (allowing citizens to vote over an expanded  
period rather than in a cluster on Election Day),
- no-excuse absentee voting-by-mail (including a number of options through which to  
request and return ballots),
- expanded voter registration options (including online voter registration and same-day  
voter registration),

- prohibition of polling place adjustments that disproportionately impact vulnerable populations such as people of color, limited-English proficient citizens, people with disabilities, and students,
- voter education (informing the public of new practices and immediately quashing disinformation as it arises).

Any legislative package on elections must include these reforms and practices if it is to be maximally effective. 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.

Voting rights experts have now determined – in consultation with state elections officials – that the required changes will necessitate an appropriation of at least \$2 billion to the fifty states, territories, and the District of Columbia. Most of that amount would provide states the resources they need to establish an effective vote-by-mail program well in advance of the general election, but funding would also ensure states take measures to safeguard in-person voting and secure voter registration methods. Please refer to the Brennan Center’s [Estimated Costs of Election Resiliency Measures](#) for a detailed break-down.

Congress must include this level of funding in its next legislative response to COVID-19. Action to safeguard our elections must be taken, and it must be taken swiftly. As advised by the [Imperial College COVID-19 Response Team](#), the very entity prompting [White House action](#) in response to COVID-19, “[in] the ... US context, [viral] suppression will minimally require a combination of social distancing of the entire population, home isolation of cases and household quarantine of their family members ... the major challenge of suppression is that this type of intensive intervention package – or something equivalently effective at reducing transmission – will need to be maintained until a vaccine becomes available (potentially 18 months or more) – given that we predict that transmission will quickly rebound if interventions are relaxed.” By necessity, this means elected officials must provide increased options and funding to allow people to exercise their fundamental right to vote in 2020.

The only way we, as Americans, will curb the spread of this deadly virus and maintain an uncompromised health system is if we act together. And we must act for the collective good, maintaining safe social distancing for many months to come. Our system for conducting elections – the country’s most consequential collective activity – must be adjusted and improved for the sake of our public health and democracy alike. Now is the time for Congress to unite across differences to make sound policy choices that provide funds and voting policy guidelines that ensure equal access and participation. We do not have to, and indeed we must not, choose between public health and a functioning democracy.

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.  
9to5, National Association of Working Women

A. Philip Randolph Institute  
Addiction Connections Resource  
Advancement Project, National  
AFL-CIO American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations  
America Forward  
American Association of People with Disabilities  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Friends Service Committee  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)  
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)  
Andrew Goodman Foundation  
Anti-Defamation League  
Arab American Institute (AAI)  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC  
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote  
Association of People Supporting Employment First  
Bend the Arc Jewish Action  
Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law  
Campaign Legal Center  
Center for American Progress  
Center for Constitutional Rights  
Center for Disability Rights  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Center for Popular Democracy  
Center for Public Representation  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington  
Clean Elections Texas  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Coalition to Preserve, Protect & Defend  
Common Cause  
Connecticut Citizen Action Group  
Corazón Latino  
Crescent City Media Group/Center for Civic Action  
DC Vote  
Defending Rights & Dissent  
DemCastUSA  
Democracy 21  
Democracy Initiative  
Democracy Matters  
Demos

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund  
Doctors for America - Maryland Chapter  
End Citizens United Action Fund  
Fair Elections Center  
FairVote  
Faith in Texas  
First Parish in Concord MA UU - Racial Justice Action Group  
Fix Democracy First  
Free Speech For People  
Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials (GALEO)  
Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda  
Girls Inc.  
Government Information Watch  
Greenpeace USA  
Hindu American Foundation  
Hip Hop Caucus  
Hispanic Federation  
Human Rights Campaign  
Human Rights Watch  
Indivisible  
Indivisible Kansas City  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Kansas Coalition for Citizen Participation  
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.  
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement  
Lambda Legal  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Leadership Now Project  
League of Conservation Voters  
League of Women Voters of the United States  
League of Women Voters of Wisconsin  
Let America Vote  
Mainers for Accountable Leadership  
MapLight  
Metcalf Park Community Bridges, INC  
Missouri Voter Protection Coalition  
MomsRising  
Movement Alliance Project (formerly Media Mobilizing Project)  
Muslim Advocates  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
NAACP

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Alliance of HUD Tenants  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Bar Association  
National CAPACD - Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development  
National Center for Law and Economic Justice  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Center for Youth Law  
National Congress of American Indians  
National Council of Churches  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Down Syndrome Congress  
National Education Association  
National Education Association  
National Employment Law Project  
National Fair Housing Alliance  
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty  
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Urban League  
National Women's Law Center  
Network of Spiritual Progressives  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
New Profit  
NextGen America  
North Dakotans for Public Integrity  
Open Primaries  
Patriotic Millionaires  
Peace Action  
People For the American Way  
PFLAG National  
Planned Parenthood Action Fund  
Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness  
Pride at Work  
Progressive Turnout Project  
Protect Democracy  
Public Citizen  
Reclaim Our Democracy

RepresentUs  
RESULTS  
SEIU  
Sierra Club  
South Asian Network (SAN)  
Stand Up America  
State Voices  
Student Debt Crisis  
Texas Civil Rights Project  
Texas Progressive Action Network  
The Democratic Coalition  
The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)  
Transformative Justice Coalition  
UnidosUS (formerly National Council of La Raza)  
United Mine Workers of America  
Verified Voting  
Voices for Progress  
Voter Participation Center / Center for Voter Information  
Voto Latino  
WAVE Educational Fund  
We All Rise  
YWCA USA