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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 Jersey Institute for 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