

June 16, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

On behalf of the undersigned unions and labor organizations representing millions of workers from all backgrounds across the United States, we write to urge Congress to act swiftly to pass legislation that ensures every eligible voter is able to participate in the 2020 elections amid COVID-19 and that future elections are resilient to national emergencies - including natural disasters and pandemics.

During this time of recurring social and economic disparities laid bare as a result of this pandemic, the urgency for legislation to protect and expand voting rights is also coupled with the moment of national mourning of racial injustices and the widespread mobilization against it. Voting rights and the fight for racial justice are deeply interconnected.

The Labor Movement has long served as a bridge, not just between Black, Brown, White, and AAPI communities but among fair access to the ballot box and equal justice for all. From the strength of our generational collective solidarity, working people from all backgrounds have been able to win higher wages, better benefits, and safer workplaces that they deserve. Together, unions create safer workplaces and ensure that working families earn a good living and have a good life.

Across the country a multi-cultural mosaic of everyday Americans of all races, genders, and ages peacefully took to the streets demanding that Black Lives Matter and should be reaffirmed in fair and equitable policies that address disparities and promote justice. Just like the history from previous decades, we've become all too acquainted with the how unjust and oppressive policies, like the voter suppression tactics renewed in many states after the 2013 *Shelby v. Holder* decision disenfranchised many citizens by inhibiting communities of color full access to the ballot box. We see this in the Georgia primary elections that had voters in communities of color waiting in lines for hours and reports of the failures of new machine technology throughout the state leading to calls for investigation. This all was happening as COVID-19 continues to disproportionately impact the health and livelihoods of people of color, who are one the most disenfranchised demographic of voters.

The U.S. Congress has the opportunity to stand with the American people in this time of great unrest and uncertainty by immediately passing legislation that would provide states with the resources to administer the 2020 elections in a safe, fair, and accessible manner during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is imperative that states are able to offer voters a range of options through which to submit completed ballots, in order to have equal access to the ballot box and the promise of a government that reflects and addresses the needs of all people. These solutions must include the following:

- Expanding online voter registration options (given how many government agencies that register voters are closed);
- Extending early voting periods to prevent lines and crowded polling places where people could be exposed to the virus;
- Establishing safe and sanitized in-person polling places that adhere to CDC guidance;
- Increasing vote-by-mail administered under these conditions:
 - Postage must be free or prepaid by the government;
 - Ballots postmarked on or before Election Day must count; and
 - Signature matching laws need to be reformed to provide notice to voters of any problems with their ballot and an opportunity to address any alleged inconsistencies; and
- Implementing best practices with states and local jurisdictions for election security that acknowledges local needs and ensure the 2020 election is protected from any foreign or domestic threats.

The challenges of COVID-19 and the calls to make bold changes to the institutions of our society must start with ensuring that no voter should have to choose between their health or participating in our democracy. And true recovery from the trifecta that currently confronts us including racial, economic and health justice requires bold legislative action that advances a democracy that works for all. Labor leaders know that you cannot achieve economic and health justice without racial justice. This reflects our persistence in our fight for working families no matter their place or station in life, and why we are still committed to tackling these and other issues for communities nation-wide. But, we also know that the fight to advance change is foundational to protecting the right to vote, which is the best of our nation's democratic values.

Please take the immediate necessary steps to pass vital legislation to ensure that all voters have access to the ballot box during the 2020 elections, so that our nation will remain a functioning democracy advancing justice for all people.

Sincerely,

Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI)
American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU)
Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)
Communication Workers of America (CWA)
International Assoc. of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)
International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE)
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)
Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO
National Association of Government Employees, SEIU (NAGE)
National Education Association (NEA)
National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE)
Pride at Work
Transport Workers Union of America (TWU)
United Auto Workers (UAW)
United Food and Commercial Workers International Labor Union (UFCW)
United Steelworkers (USW)

cc: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives
Members of the U.S. Senate