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Voting Rights Groups: Elections Must Proceed While States Protect Public Health

WASHINGTON – The co-chairs of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights Voting Rights Task Force *and other organizations* issued the following statement on the state of Louisiana’s decision to postpone its presidential primary, originally scheduled for April 4, until June 20:

“The current Coronavirus pandemic presents tremendous challenges to local authorities as they plan for upcoming primary elections – challenges that we are confident they can meet. We all agree that the safety and health of the public is paramount, but steps can, and must be taken to protect voters and poll workers while also ensuring that the democratic process marches ahead.

“Sudden changes to election times, locations, and more have been proven to create barriers to, and in some instances the denial of, citizens their right to vote. We are concerned about the impact of the decision of the state of Louisiana to move the date of its primary elections. We applaud the approach taken by election officials in Ohio, Arizona, Florida and Illinois to hold their primary elections on March 17th, with proper public health safety measures in place

“The November election is quickly approaching, and it is imperative that the federal government provide the necessary funding and guidance for states to prepare and ensure there are no barriers to the ballot due to COVID-19. All states should have contingency plans in place for additional voting options for the general election that will be held on November 3. Under no circumstances should the November general election be canceled or postponed, as that date is mandated by federal law. Our democracy and our elections have endured in other times of crisis, and we shall again.”

This statement is signed by the following groups (this list will continue to be updated):

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
ACLU of Wisconsin
African American Ministers In Action
AFT
Alianza For Progress
Alliance for Youth Action
American Association of People with Disabilities
Arab American Institute
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta
Balsz Elementary School District
Black Youth Vote
Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law
Campaign Legal Center
Center for American Progress
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Popular Democracy
Chispa Arizona
CLASP
Clean Elections Texas
Coalition on Human Needs
Common Cause GA
Common Cause/NY
Community Change
CPC - Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc.
Democracy Initiative
Demos
Detroit Branch NAACP
EARLY MO
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
End Citizens United
Engage Miami
Equal Justice Society
Equality California
Fair Elections Center
FairVote
Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials (GALEO)
GLSEN
Greenpeace USA
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights Campaign
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reroductive Justice Agenda
Indivisible
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)
Lambda Legal
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
League of Conservation Voters
Mi Familia Vota
Michigan League of Conservation Voters
Michigan Voices
Misión Boricua
Movement Advancement Project
Muslim Public Affairs Council
NAACP

NALEO Educational Fund
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Health Law Program
National Immigration Law Center
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Law Center
Native American Rights Fund
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Next Up Oregon
North Carolina Asian Americans Together
Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy
One Arizona
People For the American Way
People's Action
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
PolicyLink
Pride at Work
Progress Now Arizona
Progressive Turnout Project
SHK Global Health
Sierra Club
Silver State Equality-Nevada
Southern Poverty Law Center
Stand Up America
State Voices
Texas Progressive Action Network
The Black Sex Worker Collective
The Breakthrough Way
The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls
The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
UnidosUS
Union of Concerned Scientists' Center for Science and Democracy
United We Dream
Verified Voting
Voices for Progress
We Are All America

Women Employed
YWCA USA

*Co-chair of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights Voting Rights Task Force

BACKGROUND

The groups recommend that states with upcoming primary elections take the following steps to ensure that voters can participate in a safe and fair manner:

- Follow [CDC guidelines](#) and the [U.S. Election Assistance Commission](#) resources for election polling locations
- Take steps to sanitize polling locations, and voting machines through additional cleaning measures and provision of hand sanitizer to voters and officials
- Close polling locations in high-risk locations (i.e., assisted living facilities)
- Encourage and provide a means for all voters to cast a mail-in ballot, and make it easier to do so
- Prepare for higher rates of mail-in ballot requests and usage
- Engage in direct voter contact with those impacted by poll closures

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 220 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States. The Leadership Conference works toward an America as good as its ideals. For more information on The Leadership Conference and its member organizations, visit www.civilrights.org.