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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 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’ 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 17, 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.\*

\*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 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](http://www.civilrights.org).*