



The Leadership
Conference

ALL **VOTING**
IS **LOCAL**

AND STILL
I VOTE

July 2020

The Fight for the

Right to Vote

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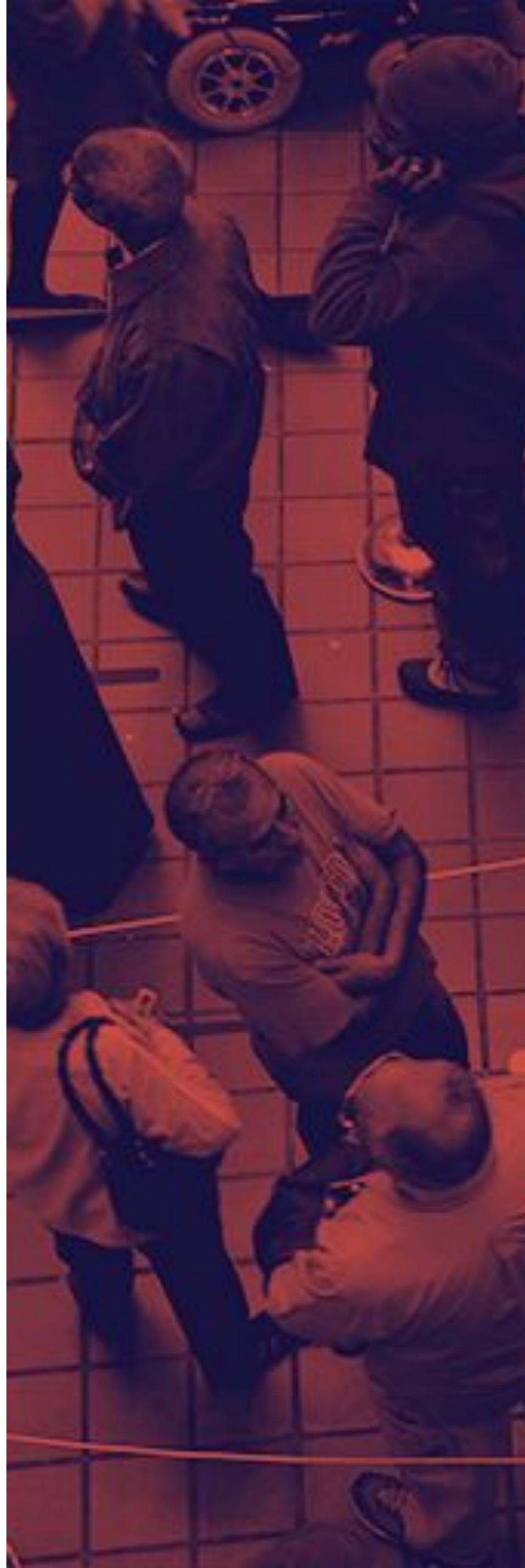
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (The Leadership Conference) is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States. Through advocacy and outreach to targeted constituencies, The Leadership Conference works toward the goal of a more open and just society — an America as good as its ideals.

The Leadership Conference was founded in 1950 and has coordinated national lobbying efforts on behalf of every major civil rights law since 1957. We work to build public will for federal policies that promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States.

And Still I Vote¹ is a campaign powered by The Leadership Conference and All Voting is Local². It is a national call to action for people to take back the power of the vote. Together, we work to eliminate needless and discriminatory barriers to voting before they happen and to build a democracy that works for us all. With our coalition partners, we inform the public, decision-makers, and the media about barriers to voting and advocate for policies that expand the right to vote, especially in communities of color.

¹ And Still I Vote: <https://andstillivote.org/>

² All Voting is Local: <https://allvotingislocal.org/>



Introduction

Voting is the language of American democracy. The ability to participate in civic life, to have a voice in choosing the elected officials whose decisions impact our lives, families, and communities is at the core of what it means to be American. However, not all Americans are able to fully participate. For generations, people of color have fought against a myriad of discriminatory barriers to the ballot. From poll taxes to Jim Crow laws to voter suppression, these barriers continue to wrongfully deny voters access to the polls — including low-income people, seniors, veterans, and college students. Approximately 17 million people were purged from voter rolls between 2016 and 2018 alone, in parts of the country that have demonstrated histories of racial discrimination and voter suppression.³

Despite Black people being forced to engage in daunting and unfair tasks to exercise their constitutional right to vote, including counting how many jelly beans were in the jar, how many bubbles were in a bar of soap, or reciting the entire preamble of the United States Constitution, it is because of the continued persistence and sacrifice of the Black community that America made historic strides in voting.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed to ensure that state and local governments do not deny American citizens the equal right to vote based on their race, color, or membership in a minority language group.⁴ Despite these expansions and efforts to make the voting process more inclusive, discriminatory barriers persist in the form of laws limiting voter access, hour long lines at polls, broken and dysfunctional equipment, and lack of properly trained election administrators. Yet another danger in the age of social media are targeted misinformation campaigns that continue to undermine election integrity. And due to a lack

of action to protect voters against COVID-19, far too many people have already been forced to choose between their health and their right to vote. These are all forms of modern voter suppression that must be dismantled.

There is no better time than now to join the fight to protect and expand the right to vote for every American. With so much at stake, 2020 will prove to be the election of a lifetime. We need grassroots leaders and advocates around the country to continue to raise their voices and take action.

The voting rights movement of the 1960s was successful because people came together, fought, and demanded change. Today, we again find ourselves in an all hands on deck moment.

The Leadership Conference and the And Still I Vote campaign created this toolkit to provide advocates with tools and resources to join the fight to protect and expand the right to vote for every American. This toolkit covers a wide range of information including: messaging guidance for speaking out against voter suppression, communication templates to engage and put pressure on your elected officials, ways to get involved on social media, and much more.

How to use this toolkit. This toolkit is designed into four sections so you can easily find and quickly access the background information and history of voting rights in America, key talking and messaging points for advocates, social media guidance, and an appendix with supplemental resources and a list of helpful websites, hotlines, and organizations.

Throughout the toolkit, you will find footnotes that include other helpful information and resources that can boost your advocacy.

³ Voter Purge Rates Remain High, Analysis Finds <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/voter-purge-rates-remain-high-analysis-finds>

⁴ Voting Rights Act <https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/ensure-every-american-can-vote/voting-reform/voting-rights-act>



The Problem

What are the current problems that voters, especially voters of color, face today? What does the data say about our need to do better as a nation to protect the rights of voters?

This section is meant to inform advocates about the ways that America is moving backwards in protecting the right to vote. It includes examples of barriers to the ballot so advocates can have a better understanding of voter suppression today and what we are collectively working to dismantle.

1788: The United States Constitution is ratified. There is no mention of who is eligible to vote, leaving it up to each state. Commonly, property-owning white men are granted this right. Some Black men who owned land are also allowed to vote.

1790: George Washington signs the Naturalization Act, limiting citizen to “free white persons.”⁵ This law also creates a demographic category of “aliens ineligible for citizenship” that would make it difficult for immigrants to secure voting rights.

1790-1856: States create exclusions based on race, revoking suffrage for the few Black voters.⁶ Over the same period, states eliminate the property requirement, paving way for the nation’s first major expansion of voting rights — to all white men.⁷

1848: Women gather at the Seneca Falls Convention in New York to call for women’s equality. The conference names suffrage as one of their 11 resolutions. Notably, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Frederick Douglass speak in support of the resolution.⁸

1865-1870: The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments are passed following the Civil War. These amendments, respectively, eliminate slavery, create citizenship for Black Americans, and grant suffrage for all races. Once these laws are on the books, states quickly begin to undermine them. For almost a century, states implement poll taxes, literacy tests, and absurd requirements to inhibit African-Americans from registering to vote. Additionally, those attempting to register or vote often face violence and intimidation.⁹

1872: Susan B. Anthony and Sojourner Truth attempt to vote in the presidential election.¹⁰ Both are denied access to the polls, and Anthony is arrested.¹¹

1876: In *Elk v. Wilkins*, the Supreme Court ruled Native Americans born on reservations cannot qualify as citizens, and therefore, cannot vote.¹²

1882-1925: Congress passes a series of laws that define citizenship for Native Americans and people of Asian descent. These pieces of legislation and corresponding Supreme Court decisions restrict access to voting rights.^{13 14}

1890: Wyoming becomes the first state to grant women the right to vote. The measure passed following lobbying and activism from many women around the territory-turned-state.¹⁵

1898: In *Williams v. Mississippi*, the Supreme Court unanimously finds that Mississippi’s restrictive voting measures (e.g. poll tax and literacy tests) are not unconstitutional because discrimination is not in the law but in the implementation by bureaucrats. This ruling leads other southern states to adopt the Mississippi Plan as a blueprint for how to legally suppress the vote.¹⁶

1920: The Nineteenth Amendment goes into effect, and all women are eligible to vote in elections on both the state and federal levels. The racial barriers of the time mean this amendment is mostly a win for white women.

1924: The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 grants citizenship to Native Americans. However, legal interpretations of this bill inhibit full voting rights since Native Americans do not pay property tax, a loophole that disenfranchises Native Americans.¹⁷

⁵ Nationality Act of 1790: <https://immigrationhistory.org/item/1790-nationality-act/>

⁶ Expanding Voting Rights Race Exclusions, 1790-1850: <https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/race.pdf>

⁷ Expanding Voting Rights-Property Requirements for Suffrage, 1790-1850: https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/property_0.pdf

⁸ Seneca Falls Convention: <https://www.history.com/topics/womens-rights/seneca-falls-convention>

⁹ The Voting Rights Act of 1965: A Step Towards Equality: <http://advocatingvotingrights.weebly.com/undermining-the-15th-amendment.html>

¹⁰ These 19 Black Women Fought for Voting Rights: <http://hnn.us/article/174263>

¹¹ Mr. Beverly Jones - Susan B. Anthony at the Voting Polls, 1872: <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/eyewitness/html.php?section=3>

¹² *Elk v. Wilkins* (1884): <https://immigrationhistory.org/item/elk-v-wilkins/>

¹³ U.S. Immigration Timeline: <https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/immigration-united-states-timeline>

¹⁴ How U.S. Immigration Laws and Rules have Changed Through History: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/30/how-u-s-immigration-laws-and-rules-have-changed-through-history/>

¹⁵ Wyoming and the 19th Amendment: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/wyoming-women-s-history.htm>

¹⁶ *Williams v. Mississippi*: <https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/williams-v-mississippi/>

¹⁷ On this Day, all Indians Made United States Citizens: <https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/on-this-day-in-1924-all-indians-made-united-states-citizens>

1947: Like many Marines who fought in World War II, Miguel Trujillo returns home and is denied his right to vote because he did not pay state property tax. Trujillo sues the state and won, setting the legal precedent for all Native Americans to no longer be denied suffrage on these grounds.¹⁸

1964: Efforts to register voters and change laws are epitomized by the Mississippi Summer Project. Organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, or SNCC - pronounced "SNICK (SNCC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), thousands of volunteers worked to register as many Black voters as possible. By the end of the summer, more than a thousand volunteers were arrested, dozens had been beaten, and six were killed.

1964: The 24th Amendment passes and prohibits the use of a poll tax.

1965: The Voting Rights Act passes. This landmark bill makes it illegal to impose discriminatory measures on who can vote, reversing what was implemented in the Mississippi Plan. The legislation also provides enforcement mechanisms for the federal government to ensure states comply with the law.

1971: The 26th Amendment passes and lowers the voting age to 18 for all elections. Momentum for this amendment gained traction as many Vietnam War protestors pushed for the change because 18-year-olds could be drafted and fight in the war.

1975: An addition to the Voting Rights Act requires certain jurisdictions to include materials in languages other than English at polling sites. This amendment expands voter accessibility to those who cannot speak or read English.

2006: The Voting Rights Act was amended in 1970, 1975, 1982, 1992, and 2006. On May 2, 2006, Representative Sensenbrenner introduced the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006. The 2006 VRA reauthorization passed with overwhelming bipartisan support.

2013: In *Shelby County v. Holder*, 5 Justices of the United States Supreme Court ended the powerful preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act that required oversight of states with continued and pernicious histories of racial discrimination at the ballot box. Since this ruling, dozens of states have imposed new restrictions on voting, such as enacting restrictive voter-ID laws, purging voters from the rolls, and cutting back early voting. And more than 1,600 polling locations were closed,²² creating obstacles to voting access for millions of voters, especially voters of color.

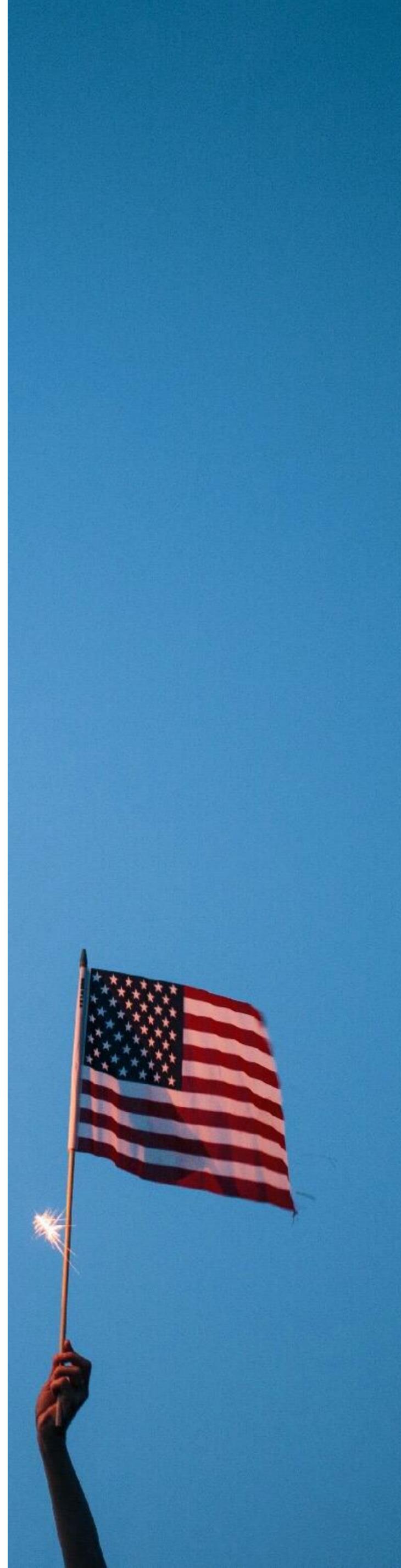
¹⁸ Trujillo v. Garley: The Struggle for Native American Voting Rights: <https://www.intermountainhistories.org/items/show/251>

¹⁹ Freedom Summer: <https://snccdigital.org/events/freedom-summer/>

²⁰ The 26th Amendment: <https://www.history.com/topics/united-states-constitution/the-26th-amendment>

²¹ Voting Rights Act: <http://www.avoiceline.org/voting/timeline.html>

²² Democracy Diverted: Polling Place Closures and the Right to Vote: <https://civilrights.org/democracy-diverted/>



The Problems that Still Remain

Although the United States has made strides to expand the right to vote, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to ensure every eligible person can register to vote and cast a ballot that counts. Today, the rights of marginalized communities are still under attack. In every corner of our country, policymakers have put up discriminatory barriers to the ballot that shut marginalized groups out of our democracy.

Moving Backwards Over the Last Decade:

- **200** restrictive voting bills introduced in **40 states**
- Largest rollback of voting rights in a century
- **25** new voting laws on the books
- Disproportionately impacts voters of color

We're witnessing attacks on voting rights on all fronts and in all branches of government, which is why we, advocates, must continue putting pressure on elected officials to execute policies that do not put people's civil and human rights at risk.

JUDICIAL BRANCH

For years, courts at all levels have played a role in turning back voting rights protections and green lighting voter purges, restrictive voter ID laws, and other ploys to deny voters access to the polls.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

We have seen a lack of voting rights enforcement by the Department of Justice and a continued false narrative from the White House promoting rigged elections and misinformation about vote by mail. These campaigns are clearly designed to deter and intimidate people from participating in our elections.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

In state legislatures across the country, we have seen a flood of restrictive voting policies like strict voter ID laws, restrictions on voter registration, and cuts to early voting. At the federal level, we have seen key voting bills pass in the House of Representatives to expand access, like HR 1, For the People Act,²³ and HR 4, the Voting Rights Advancement Act.²⁴ However, the Republican-controlled Senate refuses to act.

²³ HR 1, For the People Act Text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/1/text>

²⁴ HR 4, The Voting Rights Advancements Act Text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4>

Barriers to the Ballot

COVID-19 has exacerbated barriers to the ballot — exposing long-standing cracks in our system. We cannot continue to ignore these issues. We must act now! While the following list is not exhaustive, it highlights some of the most prevalent barriers to the ballot in 2020 that must be addressed so that all Americans can cast a ballot that counts.

Barriers to the Ballot in 2020

- COVID-19
- Getting and staying on the rolls — voter registration and voter purges
- Voter ID and Proof of Citizenship requirements
- Moving/consolidation and closure of polling places
- Accessibility issues
- Criminal record exclusions
- Online voter suppression (misinformation and disinformation)
- Voter challenges and intimidation at the polls
- Counting the ballots — provisional and absentee ballots





Messaging

How do advocates talk about protecting voting rights for all Americans, especially communities of color?

This section of the toolkit outlines how to create messaging that resonates with the public and moves them to action. We want to highlight key messages for the public to ensure that everyone's voice is heard no matter socioeconomic status, race, sexual orientation, disability, age, and so on.

Communication Goals



The And Still I Vote campaign is working to bring awareness to the ways some policymakers are erecting barriers that make it harder for Americans to access the ballot, highlighting the experiences of the people most affected by those barriers and encouraging everyone to help break down those barriers before the 2020 election. Our primary goal is to **shine a spotlight and activate our audiences²⁵ to fight against discriminatory barriers to the ballot in their local communities.**

Say This:

- “Barrier to the ballot”
- “Discriminatory barriers”
- “Needless barriers”

Not This:

- “Voter suppression”

But Why?

- The term does not help most listeners understand the problem and frames a story in a losing argument.²⁶

Message Frames



NOTE: Feel free to use these suggested frames and insert your own language.

Our democracy works best when everyone can fully participate. There is much work to do to make sure every voter can make their voice heard. In every corner of the country policymakers have created barriers that make it harder for voters to cast a ballot, from closing of polling places in Black and low-income communities to making polling places inaccessible for voters with disabilities. [SWAP]. We must hold the policymakers undermining the integrity of our elections in [STATE] accountable by shining a light on these discriminatory barriers that most often affect the people who can least afford to fight back against them. You can help people in your community by telling your story at [WEBSITE].

It’s up to us to create a democracy where every eligible voter can cast a ballot, and have it counted. Unless we act now, millions of Americans will be denied the right to vote in the next election. Today, state and local officials quietly make decisions that determine who gets to vote and who doesn't, like purging voters from the rolls [SWAP]. Too many times, voters only find out after it’s too late to solve it. We cannot let decision makers continue to undermine the integrity of our democracy. If voters cannot trust that their voices will be heard, then our leaders have failed them. To protect our rights, we must speak out about the ways officials in [STATE] are creating discriminatory barriers to the ballot. You can help keep them accountable by sharing the information at [WEBSITE] with your community.

²⁵ Impacted communities: Black, Brown, AAPI and Native American/indigenous, low-income voters, Progressives in the south + battlegrounds, Others historically & currently disenfranchised (e.g., students, young people, people with disabilities). Advocates: Coalition/partners, People who care, but not yet outraged

²⁶ From ReThink Media: <https://rethinkmedia.org/blog/roadmap-victory-how-we-will-change-conversation-around-voting-rights>

Message Frames Continued

When we restore integrity to our elections, we restore people's faith in our democracy.

Our leaders have failed to make our elections free, fair, and accessible by putting in place discriminatory barriers on people's right to vote. We know they are targeting the people who have been historically shut out of our elections. An attack on anyone's right to vote hurts democracy for all of us. We are better off when we allow all eligible voters to get involved in the process, and we must call out the ways in which officials have failed to do that. You can help return faith in our democracy by sharing the experiences of people in your community at [\[WEBSITE\]](#).

HOW TO TALK ABOUT VOTER SUPPRESSION²⁷

Lead with values: Free and fair, voice, accessibility, integrity, freedom, equality, responsibility.

Offer pro-voter solutions that will help us achieve a democracy as good as its ideals.

Identify the actors who erect barriers that create a discriminatory voting system (regardless of intent).

Meet people where they are: remind them that integrity means fairness as much as security.

BUT WHY?

Facts don't motivate people. Present a vision that is pro-voter, leading with policy technicalities or voter suppression puts us in the defensive.

When we paint a picture of how our democracy should look, we must also paint the path to get there, through pro-voter policies that answer their hopes and concerns.

Most people see voting as an individual choice, so we must reinforce how the choices of leaders affect them and make it clear that the intent of the leader is irrelevant.

We must show the full context of what integrity means. Safeguarding the integrity of our elections means protection from hacking as well as making sure everyone can participate.

²⁷ Adapted from ReThink Media: <https://rethinkmedia.org/blog/roadmap-victory-how-we-will-change-conversation-around-voting-rights>



Message Frames Continued

HOW TO TALK ABOUT VOTER SUPPRESSION²⁷

If you use the term “voter suppression,” do so sparingly and ALWAYS give examples of what you mean.

BUT WHY?

The best examples are:

- Closing polling places in Black and Native American communities.
- Long lines at the polls.
- Overly restrictive voter ID laws.
- Denying the right to vote to people in jails who are eligible.
- Purging voters from voter rolls.
- Making it harder to register people to vote.



Advocating for Voter Protection

What are specific actions advocates can take to continue fighting for the right to vote for all?

This section of the toolkit provides a list of immediate steps that advocates can push elected officials and key decision makers to take as they work to protect people's right to vote during the pandemic. Whether you are texting with friends, tweeting as an organization, submitting a letter to your community newspaper, or have a standing phone bank, you can advocate for the 10 actions we're recommending in this section.

10 Actions Elected Officials Can Take Now to Protect the Vote During the Pandemic

Sign up at AndStillVote.org ²⁸ to get the latest on voting and to take action now by sending an email to your elected officials demanding the following measures to ensure safe, fair, and accessible elections.

- 1 Voter registration:** If your state has online voter registration (OVR), make sure officials have the proper tools and resources needed to effectively administer OVR and handle a surge in traffic to the website. Due to COVID-19, in-person options to register to vote may be scaled back and access to a working online registration system is more critical than ever.
- 2 Voter registration:** State officials to increase staffing to handle a surge in registration and disruptions to normal processes. If your state has same day registration, officials should prepare for an even greater surge to accommodate voters who were unable to register in advance due to government office closures.
- 3 Registration Deadlines:** States officials should prepare to extend voter registration deadlines in light of government office shutdowns, online access difficulties, and breakdowns in other voter registration systems.²⁹
- 4 Registration Deadlines:** State officials should also offer a provisional ballot to a voter who affirms she submitted her registration on time and count all provisional ballots cast even when the voter's registration was not timely due to mail delivery delays.
- 5 Voting by mail:** State officials should cover the cost of returning ballot applications and ballots — and at a minimum send a mail ballot application with prepaid postage to every registered voter and/or conduct digital outreach if available online.

²⁸ And Still I Vote: <https://andstillvote.org/>

²⁹ Adapted from Brennan Center: *How to Protect the 2020 Vote from the Coronavirus*
<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/policy-solutions/how-protect-2020-vote-coronavirus>



- 6** **Voting by mail:** State officials should offer voters multiple ways to return their ballots, including widely available and well-marked ballot return drop boxes.
- 7** **Voting by mail:** State officials should establish — and train on — uniform standards so that mail ballots are not rejected based on technical defects that do not substantially relate to ensuring that the ballot was actually completed and cast by the voter. This should include protocols for ensuring that a voter’s ballot does not get thrown out for a mismatched signature, and that officials contact voters through multiple means and give them an opportunity to “cure” their ballots.
- 8** **Voting in person:** State officials should offer at least two weeks of early voting/in-person absentee voting including at least one weekend. Early voting sites should be accessible for people with disabilities and also located in communities of color and close to public transportation.
- 9** **Voting in person:** Maintain safe in-person polling locations and resource each polling place with an adequate number of voting machines, paper ballots, and poll workers — including by rededicating state workers to serve as poll workers — so that no voter has to wait longer than 30 minutes to vote. Election Day polling places should be accessible for people with disabilities. Elected officials also need to provide all poll workers with the proper personal protective equipment to ensure that they — and voters — are safe.
- 10** **Voter Education:** Election officials should take steps now to educate the voters they serve about how they’re protecting their right to vote during this critical year. That means multimedia voter education campaigns including by text and through social media to tell voters about new opportunities to vote in light of the pandemic, any deadline changes, and how they’re keeping polling places safe.

What Is an Op-Ed? Why Is it an Important Advocacy Tactic?

One common advocacy tool are op-eds, which appear in the opinion section of a print or online publication.

An op-ed (short for opposite the editorial) is typically 500 to 750 words — and takes a specific position on a recent issue, event, article, or story. Authors of op-eds are generally experts or otherwise credible community members who have direct experience and expertise with the issue at hand. An op-ed can include a call to target decision-makers or the community at large.

A Few Tips:

- Be sure to include community anecdotes and statistics.
- Select the best author for your purpose and audience: Is it a voter who was turned away from the polls? Maybe a parent working two jobs who needs to vote-by-mail during this time? Or a new voter who is also a caretaker?
- Stay away from jargon. You're trying to get your point across to the general population, not people who are engaged in this work daily like you are, so stay away from technical speak and don't assume people know specifics.
- Be sure the individual voice comes through. Include a personal perspective and story that others will identify with.
- Think local! If your audience reads local news, a placement in a national or even a statewide publication might not be strategic.
- If you are writing for an organization, be sure you double check your c3/c4 guidelines before you begin to draft.
- Think about blogs! You can also use the template below to draft a blog entry to reach your audience.



Leveraging Social Media

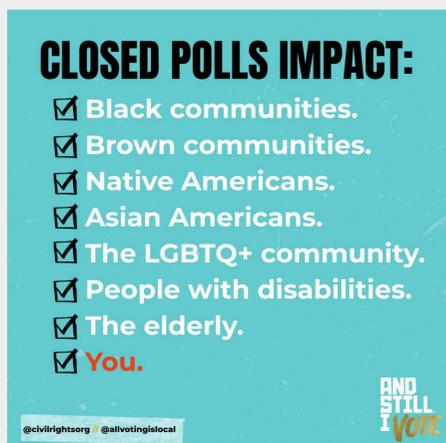
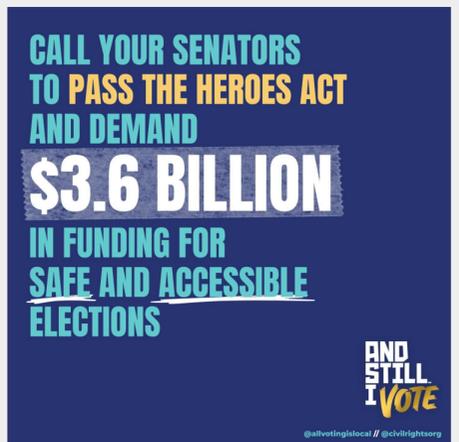
How can advocates leverage social media in the fight for the right to vote?

This section of the toolkit will provide advocates with an overall purpose for using social media as an advocacy tool and how it can be effective in your fight. In addition, this part of the toolkit will also provide shareable graphics and sample social media language that you can use to engage people on social media.

The Power of Social Media

Another important tactic that advocates can use in their fight for protecting the rights of all Americans is social media. Amplifying your message across social platforms is an important part of getting your campaign message out to your target audience. Creating social media posts from your talking points and condensing them into the appropriate character count — and including a call to action — help your audience and those interested in your campaign get involved. Including a hashtag to house your creative information and take the campaign viral spreads your message farther. You can also use social media to put pressure on Congress. We have included some helpful hashtags that you can use to advocate on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

NOTE: You'll need to be sure you are authorized to use c4 content if you decide to use some of these images and selected social media guidance.



Let's be clear: People should be able to exercise their constitutional right to vote and stay healthy, even during a pandemic. We should not have to choose between public health and a functioning democracy. [#ProtectOurVote](#) [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

Our democracy works best when EVERYONE participates. It's policymakers' job to [#ProtectOurVote](#) and to ensure that our systems work, especially when there is a crisis like our current pandemic. [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

SCOTUS gutted the VRA seven years ago, opening the door for officials to discriminate. We can't let them use the pandemic as another tool to take away our vote. Policymakers cannot shirk their duty to get ready for November. We will be safe & healthy. We WILL vote. [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on our elections threatens to further disenfranchise millions of voters. Policymakers must [#ProtectOurVote](#) and make changes to election laws and policies now so all eligible voters can vote and aren't disenfranchised in November. [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

No one should have to choose between their health and their vote. Call your senators NOW (1-888-415-4527) and tell them you support \$3.6 billion in election security funding – and that they need to pass it immediately to [#ProtectOurVote](#). [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

Voters shouldn't have to choose between their health & their vote. Call your senators now (1-888-415-4527). Tell them to [#ProtectOurVote](#) & support \$3.6B in funding for necessary changes to elections systems that allow voters to safely participate in our democracy. [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

Widespread polling place closures. Long lines with hours-long waits. A backlog of absentee ballot requests. Machine breakdowns. Officials from GA to WI failed voters in those elections, and it's a wakeup call for democracy. This can't happen again. [#ProtectOurVote](#) [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

Say it with us: Congress must act NOW to [#ProtectOurVote](#) and provide state and local officials the critical resources to ensure we have safe, fair, and accessible elections in November. Waiting is not an option. [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

Ever since SCOTUS gutted the VRA, states & localities have reverted to discriminatory practices that restrict the voting rights of Black, Brown, Native, and Asian American people and have put up unnecessary roadblocks to the ballot. This has to end. [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#) [#ProtectOurVote](#)

Voting by mail is safe, secure & effective. But state & local communities have been starved of resources to make it easier for voters to get ballots and return them in the mail. Congress must act NOW to ensure states have funding they need so every voice is heard. [#ProtectOurVote](#)

We refuse to choose between our safety and our right to be heard. Every eligible voter must be able to cast a ballot by mail. Tell your state officials to [#ProtectOurVote](#) mail every voter a ballot-with return postage. [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

Our democracy can't wait. Congress has starved state and local communities of the resources they need to run free, fair & accessible elections. We can't allow this in November. Congress must act to ensure every voter in every community can be heard. [#ProtectOurVote](#) [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

In 2020, the fate and future of our democracy hang in the balance. Election fiascos in WI and GA underscored the tremendous need for Congress to provide additional funding to states amidst the worst public health crisis this nation has witnessed. [#ProtectOurVote](#)
[#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

We need vote-by-mail & expanded early voting & in-person voting options. Unless states offer voters an expanded range of options, millions of people won't have equal access to the ballot box – and the promise of our democracy will not be fulfilled. [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)
[#ProtectOurVote](#)

Rather than asking millions of voters to follow a one-size-fits-all approach to voting, policymakers must [#ProtectOurVote](#) & give voters multiple options for casting a ballot in this year's elections without overly burdensome restrictions. Our democracy is worth it.
[#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

Administering elections during a pandemic is new territory. But we don't have to choose between public health & a functioning democracy. We must ensure everyone stays healthy & ensure everyone can register, cast a ballot, and have that vote counted. [#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)
[#ProtectOurVote](#)

No matter how hard they try to silence us, scare us, suppress us, or erase us – we will rise up to combat voter suppression and fight for free and fair elections for ALL eligible voters. We will never stop working for the democracy we all deserve.
[#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#) [#ProtectOurVote](#)

The actions that lawmakers, state election officials, and all of us take now will determine not just how we weather this storm, but also the kind of democracy we have when it's over. We have to to [#ProtectOurVote](#) and ensure ALL voters can cast a ballot that counts.
[#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#)

Voting is not a partisan issue – it is an American issue. Lawmakers must recognize that the right to vote is the foundation of our democracy – a right that generations of Americans have fought to secure. We must protect it now.
[#ANDSTILLIVOTE](#) [#ProtectOurVote](#)

The situation is simple. If we don't get funding for states to conduct their elections with expanded vote-by-mail, online registration, and early voting – they aren't going to be safe.

Two-thirds of Americans want remote voting options. But Mitch McConnell is blocking what's best for the American people. Call your senator to demand funding for election assistance.

Trump & his allies in Congress are using coronavirus to disenfranchise voters by spreading debunked conspiracy theories about vote-by-mail.

Don't let them.

Call your senator and demand election assistance funding to protect our votes this fall – because Trump is threatening them. [Text MAIL to 21333](#)

Right now, McConnell is blocking \$3.6 billion for early voting, vote-by-mail, and online registration.

It's already passed the House, but McConnell is helping Trump suppress the vote in the middle of a pandemic.

[Text MAIL to 21333](#) to demand your senators protect our election.



Appendix



Op-Ed Example

Here is an example of an Op-ed that you can use as a model to create your own.

Vanita Gupta, president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, was head of the Civil Rights Division at the Justice Department from 2014 to 2017.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross failed a crucial test of leadership this week. Buckling to President Trump, Attorney General Jeff Sessions and their anti-immigrant agenda, Ross agreed to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census, sacrificing the integrity, fairness and accuracy of the count. For the good of our democracy, Congress must overturn his decision.

Ross testified just last week that he was still considering the Justice Department's last-minute, "[very controversial request](#)" (as he put it) to jam an untested, unnecessary question about citizenship status onto the 2020 questionnaire. That request drew intense opposition from a nonpartisan and ideologically broad group of business leaders, state and local officials, social scientists, and civil and human rights advocates who know how much is at stake with a fair and accurate census.

Not only is the constitutionally mandated census central to apportioning political power at every level of our representative form of government, but also the data collected influences the allocation of [more than \\$675 billion](#) in federal funds every year, along with countless policy and investment decisions by government agencies, nonprofit organizations and private enterprise.

The [Supreme Court in 2016 ruled unanimously](#) that "representatives serve all residents, not just those eligible or registered to vote," and the Constitution

makes clear that the census has a clear purpose: to count all U.S. residents, regardless of background, as the basis for the apportionment of political power. The Census Bureau spent most of this decade responding to this mandate, leading painstaking research, technology development and question testing. With their belated interference, Trump and Sessions are upending this meticulous preparation.

The harm from this decision, if it's not reversed, will be expensive and long-lasting. This cavalier action will drive down response rates and drive up costs, as the Census Bureau tries to incorporate this untested question with little time to spare, develop new communications and outreach strategies, plan for the expanded field operation and count the millions of people who will be more reluctant to participate because of the addition of this controversial question.

Even before this disastrous decision, local officials and community leaders were deeply concerned about the difficulty of achieving a robust response in some communities, given a political climate in which immigrants are demonized and families live in fear of loved ones being plucked off the streets and deported. Adding a question about citizenship status into the mix can only heighten suspicions, depress response rates and sabotage the accuracy of the 2020 count. This decision would affect everyone, with communities that are already at greater risk of being under-counted — including people of color, young children, and low-income rural and urban residents — suffering the most.

Op-Ed Example Continued

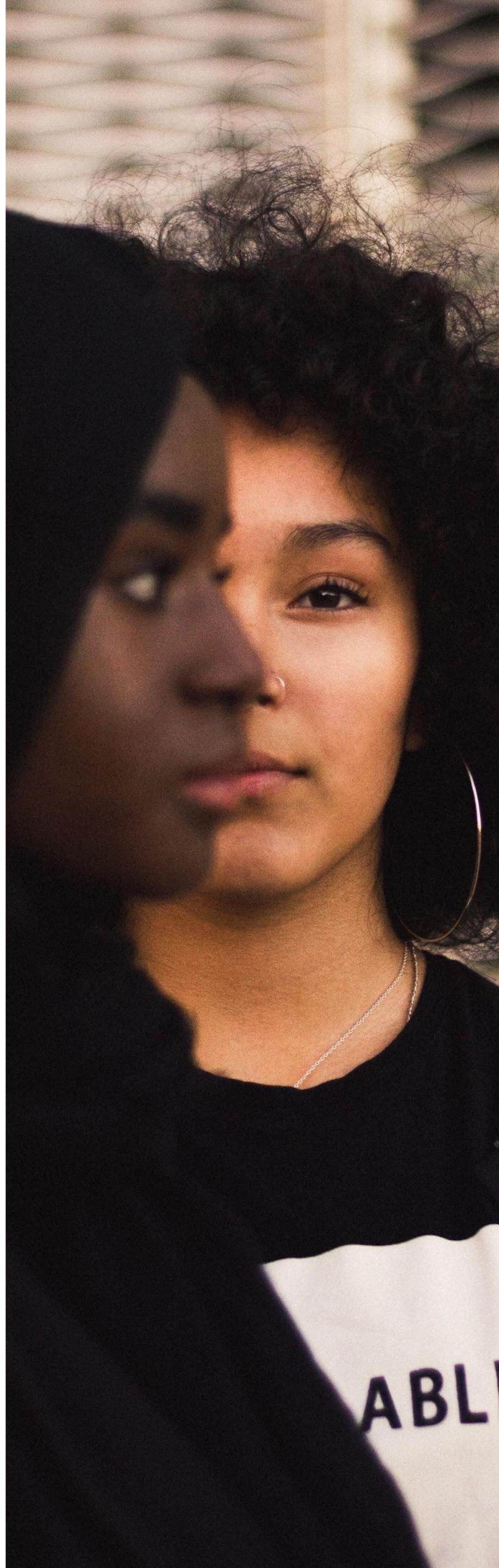
What is the benefit here? The false justification offered by Sessions and his Justice Department, and repeated in [Ross's decision memo](#), is that this question is critical for Voting Rights Act enforcement. That argument is a bitter lie, laced with cruel irony. Consider that this is the same Sessions who has called the Voting Rights Act “[intrusive](#)” and has shown no compunction in [flouting](#) voting rights enshrined in law.

During the final years of the Obama administration, I was the Justice Department official responsible for overseeing voting rights enforcement. I know firsthand that data from the ongoing American Community Survey was sufficient for us to do our work. Rigorous enforcement of the Voting Rights Act has never required the addition of a citizenship question on the census form sent to all households. In fact, the census has not collected citizenship data from every household since the enactment of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. The last time this question was asked of everyone, this country was in a pre-civil rights era when communities of color were systematically undercounted and underrepresented. The Trump-Sessions-Ross argument is a red herring.

But these arguments should sound familiar. The notorious Kris Kobach and other advocates for voter suppression laws have pushed this question before — spurring legitimate suspicion from public officials and other stakeholders who wonder why the Trump administration would seek to undermine an accurate 2020 Census. The Trump campaign and Republican National Committee validated those suspicions last week by baring their partisan, nativist intentions in a fundraising email forecasting this decision, telling recipients “[the President wants to know if you're on his side.](#)”

There should be no “side” when it comes to the census; it is foundational to our representative form of government. Civil rights advocates are preparing litigation. [California](#) has already filed a lawsuit, and New York has announced plans to lead a multistate legal effort to oppose this move. Members of Congress are also weighing in, because they can undo this.

The census is a sacred trust. The goal of an accurate count has been, and should remain, a nonpartisan one. Our democracy depends on it.



Resource Websites, Hotlines, and Organizations

Here is a list of organizations fighting to protect the rights of voters and hotlines to call to get additional resources and information.

Voting Resources:

Vote 411: www.vote411.org

Safe Voting Now: www.safevotingnow.org

Vote.org: www.vote.org

US Vote Foundation:
www.usvotefoundation.org

Turbo Vote: www.turbovote.org

Election Protection:

866-Our-Vote

Hotlines – *ask questions or report problems*

English: 866-OUR-VOTE – Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

Spanish/English: 888-VE-Y-VOTA – NALEO Educational Fund

Arabic/English: 844-YALLA-US – Arab American Institute (AAI),

Asian Languages/English: 888-API-VOTE – APIAVote & Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC)

Digital outreach tools: www.866ourvote.org, @866ourVote, and [facebook.com/866OurVote](https://www.facebook.com/866OurVote).

State based election information and FAQ’s.

Supplemental Resources

Messaging

Voting and COVID-19 Messaging

<http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/voting/Voting-COVID-Messaging.pdf>

Summary of Existing Voting Rights Research on “Voter Suppression”

<http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/voting/Memo-Voting-Rights-Research-Summary.pdf>

Advocacy

Vote by Mail: The Facts

<https://letamericavote.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/FactsAboutVBM.pdf>

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Request³⁰

Learn how to file a FOIA request here:
<https://www.foia.gov/how-to.html>

³⁰ FOIA has provided the public the right to request access to records from any federal agency because federal agencies are required to disclose any information requested under the FOIA unless it falls under one of the nine exemptions. These [exemptions](#) protect interests such as personal privacy, national security, and law enforcement.



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