

May 11, 2020

Congress Must Act to Ensure a Free, Fair and Safe Election

Dear Member of Congress:

We believe that each person, and therefore each voter, is made in the image of God and that any effort to discourage or suppress their vote assaults their human dignity and undermines our democracy. The right to vote and people's ability to exercise that right is fundamental to the health and integrity of our democracy and country. As Christian leaders who represent and lead a broad cross-section of the church across the country, we also believe that voting is a sacred right and commitment, particularly given our nation's long struggle to extend the right to vote to every eligible citizen regardless of factors such as race and gender.

We are writing to urge you to include at least \$4 billion in additional funding and adopt a number of key policy measures in the upcoming Coronavirus economic stimulus legislation in order to ensure both the public's safety and an inclusive and fair voting process for the 2020 primary and general elections. We believe that this forthcoming bill must help ensure that our nation can move forward with a free, fair and safe election in November. In particular, in light of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, it is imperative that every state in the nation has both the resources and proper mandate to put in place measures and policies that will enable a free, fair, and safe election, including: 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. This will require bold leadership, sound coordination and building new capacity. Any delay will risk losing valuable months, making these critical changes less effective, and in some cases impossible to put in place in time for November.

In addition to making mail in ballots universally available, we recognize that there will still be a critical need for safe, expanded in-person voting. We hope that additional funds will be used to help recruit and pay for a surge of poll workers who will be desperately needed due to the increased risk that COVID-19 poses to the elderly population that disproportionately serves in these roles. Additional poll workers would prevent the long lines for three hours or more that we have witnessed in the Wisconsin primary elections. We are prepared to mobilize our churches in this critical recruitment effort. We must learn hard lessons from the recent Wisconsin primary, which must not be repeated in other primaries or the general election. No citizen should have to choose between their health and the exercise of their democratic right to vote.

Providing the necessary resources, leadership, and policies to enable every eligible citizen to exercise their fundamental right to vote must be a bipartisan priority and nonpartisan issue. The COVID-19 crisis has the potential to unite and bring out the best in our nation or to further divide and separate us. Our congregations and communities are anxious to work with you and support you in prioritizing this funding and these key policy measures so that our nation can come through this crisis stronger and more united.

Prayerfully,

Rev. Eddy Alemán, General Secretary, Reformed Church in America

Rev. Dr. Paul Baxley, Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Rev. Traci Blackmon, Associate General Minister of Justice & Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ
Dr. Amos Brown, Chairman, Social, Civic, and Political Commission, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.
Ms. Jacqueline L. Burton, President, Conference of National Black Churches
Galen Carey, Vice President, Government Relations, National Association of Evangelicals
Bishop Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop, The Episcopal Church
Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director, American Baptist Home Mission Societies
Bishop Reginald T. Jackson, Presiding Prelate, Sixth Episcopal District AME Church
Dr. Walter Kim, President, National Association of Evangelicals
Rev. Teresa Hord Owens, General Minister and President, Disciples of Christ
Stephen K. Reeves, Associate Coordinator of Partnerships & Advocacy, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Rev. Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Chair, Conference of National Black Churches
Rev. Gabriel Salguero, President, The National Latino Evangelical Coalition
Rev. Dr. T. DeWitt Smith, Jr., Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network
Bishop Talbert W. Swan, II, Advisor, Social Justice Public Policy, Church of God in Christ
Rev. Adam Taylor, Executive Director, Sojourners
Dr. Rev. Leslie Copeland-Tune, Chief Operating Officer, National Council of Churches
Rev. Jim Wallis, Founder and President, Sojourners
Colin P. Watson, Sr., acting Executive Director, Christian Reformed Church National Association
Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, President, Skinner Leadership Institute and Co-Convener, African-American Clergy Network
Jim Winkler, General Secretary, National Council of Churches