



ADVANCING
DEMOCRACY
THROUGH LAW

March 24, 2020

Dear Senator/Representative:

On behalf of the Campaign Legal Center, I am writing to strongly urge you to include in the COVID-19 economic stimulus legislation at least \$2 billion in crucial funding for states to ensure that our election infrastructure is strong and sound for the 2020 primary and general elections. As the coronavirus pandemic grips America, our election infrastructure will be seriously tested. Without immediate federal action, Americans could be put in the position of choosing between public health and a healthy democracy. That should not be the case.

You have the ability to act now to provide the necessary funding to protect ballot access and help state and local election officials prepare to conduct elections safely this fall. Allocating \$2 billion in election-related aid will assist states that are currently unprepared to address the changes caused by the pandemic. **Congress must do everything it can to ensure that Americans will be able to exercise their right to vote.**

COVID-19, like any other pandemic or natural disaster, does not discriminate based on partisanship and does not stop at state boundaries. It affects Americans of all political affiliations in every part of the country—but particularly older Americans, who not only vote at high rates, but routinely make up a disproportionately large percentage of poll workers.

We need not choose between public health and safety and our commitment to free and fair elections: we can have both. These critical reforms will ensure that *all* Americans can safely cast their ballots while following public health guidelines.

Policymakers must act swiftly to set into motion a series of fixes that will give Americans faith that voting will be safe and easy. This includes:

- expanding ballot access, including the option to use no-excuse absentee ballots or vote-by-mail;
- extending online registration and online absentee ballot requests;
- spreading in-person voting over several days to allow people to avoid long lines and congested polling locations, minimizing vulnerability to both voters and poll workers;

-correcting flawed “signature match” policies in which voters’ ballots can be rejected due to innocuous mistakes, by providing voters with notice of any technical errors with their ballots and an opportunity to remedy those errors.

Including at least \$2 billion will ensure states have the resources to give every voter the option to vote from home or to safely cast an in-person ballot if they so choose. The pandemic now makes it likely that the number of votes cast by mail will skyrocket. Without safeguards to provide voters with key information, notice of potential issues with their absentee ballots, and the opportunity to fix those issues, we risk potentially disenfranchising hundreds of thousands of eligible voters due solely to technical issues and mistakes. This can easily be avoided with sufficient resources and time to prepare.

States can be afforded the flexibility to design the mail balloting systems that best suit their circumstances as long as they meet the goal of providing citizens safe access to the ballot in times of crisis. Congress must act now – every day of preparation for voting in November is crucial.

CLC urges you to appropriate the needed funding and adopt key policy measures to ensure Americans’ safety and a fair voting process for the 2020 elections. The choices you make today will determine how we weather the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic as well as the health of our democracy. Now is the time to take action.

Thank you for your attention to this crucial matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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