

Ensure Democracy: More Funding for Accessible, Safe & Fair Elections



Voting is a fundamental principle in our nation. Given social distancing and health concerns, Congress must include funding in the next COVID-19 package for measures that enable voters to cast ballots without risking their health and protect the integrity of elections.

VOTING IS FUNDAMENTAL TO OUR DEMOCRACY

- ▶ Our democracy depends on all eligible citizens having an equal opportunity to vote.
- ▶ Casting a ballot is essential to making our voices heard, and tens of thousands of people have died for this right over the course of our nation’s history.

VOTERS SHOULD NOT EXPECT TO RISK HEALTH AND SAFETY

- ▶ Ensuring safe and accessible methods for all citizens to register to vote is an essential first step.
- ▶ Fewer than 60 years ago, African Americans in the South were forced to risk their lives to vote; we should do everything possible to ensure that no voter’s health or safety is at risk today.
- ▶ Recent primary elections have shown us that many voters are so determined that they are willing to put themselves in harm’s way to vote—but they should not be forced to make that choice.
- ▶ In Wisconsin, lines outside polling locations for the April 7 primary—especially in Milwaukee, where, due to COVID-19, the number of polling places was reduced to five from 180—stretched for blocks. As one voter said, “It feels bad to have to choose between your personal safety and your right to vote.”

SAFEGUARDING VOTERS AND ENSURING INTEGRITY

- ▶ Voting methods should enhance, not decrease, participation.
- ▶ The CARES Act appropriated \$400 million to states for increasing the ability to vote by mail, expanding early voting and online voter registration, and providing more voting facilities and additional poll workers. This was a step in the right direction, but it is not nearly enough.
- ▶ In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, voters will need greatly expanded opportunities to register to vote, and much more access to early in-person voting, vote-by-mail options and protections, safe and viable in-person options, and voter education to inform communities of new practices.
- ▶ Unless we take these steps, many voters—especially those in historically marginalized communities—will not have the opportunity to vote and will not have a say in our democracy.
- ▶ The NEA is part of a broad coalition of groups calling on Congress to provide at least an additional \$4 billion to help states prepare for the 2020 elections.