



NLCET and NHLA Principles for Holding Safe, Accessible 2020 Elections During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Our nation is conducting its 2020 elections in a dramatically different public health environment than any Presidential election in our nation's history. Many states and localities have issued orders or guidance that set forth the circumstances under which residents should leave their homes, as well as safeguards on how residents should interact with each other, such as physical distancing or wearing masks. While states and localities may change these directives, it is likely that they will be in place in some form at least through the end of 2020.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, election officials and other policymakers are proposing significant changes in election practices and procedures, many of which could have a significant impact on the ability of Latinos to cast ballots in Election 2020. Moreover, data analyses by Latino Decisions, UCLA's Latino Policy and Politics Initiative, the Centers for Disease Control and other entities suggest that COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting Latinos and African Americans, and Pew Research Survey data indicate that Latinos are more likely than Americans overall to see coronavirus as a major threat to their health and finances.

For our democracy to remain responsive to all of the nation's electorate, it is critical that Latinos can fully participate in Election 2020 in a safe and accessible manner and without new barriers to voting. Thus, any public dialogues about how to administer the 2020 elections must take into consideration the perspectives and needs of the Latino community. To help accomplish this goal, the National Latino Civic Engagement Table and the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda have articulated the following principles for holding elections during the COVID-19 pandemic. These principles are also endorsed by the other undersigned individuals and organizations.

We recommend the following principles guide advocacy on national and local legislative and administrative proposals for changes in election policies and practices in order to ensure Latino voters have the ability to participate and access the ballot box as fully as possible:

Full range of options for voting: Latino voters must have access to multiple means of casting ballots, including universal absentee voting, and in-person early and Election Day voting. This is critical to help ensure that as many people as possible can vote without encountering a crowd or extended exposure to persons outside their household.

Language Accessibility: Election administrators must ensure full compliance with federal and state language assistance requirements for limited-English proficient voters, which includes providing early and vote-by-mail voters with as much access to in-language materials and language assistance as in-person voters enjoy.

Geographic Accessibility and Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities: Voting locations must be accessible to Latino communities, particularly for those less likely to use absentee voting and most likely to need or simply to want to vote in person. In addition, the entire electoral process, including registration and voting, must be fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

Eliminate unfair obstacles to voting: Election administrators must change policies that create unfair obstacles to Latino voting, and implement practices that provide the best possible assistance to voters who face the greatest challenges in navigating the electoral process.

Robust and comprehensive voter education: Election administrators must expand and diversify public education campaigns to the greatest extent of their capacity, taking care to provide simple, accurate, accessible, bilingual information and guidance to voters about their voting options. Social media companies should work to eliminate voter registration and election-related disinformation from their platforms.

Federal support to states and localities: The federal government must provide financial support to states and localities to meet the costs of adapting election modalities to be safe and fully accessible, including support for voter education.

The National Latino Civic Engagement Table (NLCET) was formed in 2011 by the nation's leading Latino nonprofit advocacy and civil rights organizations working toward civic engagement. The National Latino Civic Engagement Table consists of the Hispanic Federation, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), Latino Victory Foundation, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund), Mi Familia Vota Education Fund (MFVEF), National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund, and UnidosUS. The National Latino Civic Engagement Table is nation's leading Latino organizations to galvanize and motivate millions of Latinos ahead of the 2016 elections.

National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA) is a coalition of more than 40 of the nation's most prominent Latino advocacy organizations. Collectively, NHLA leads advocacy on the pressing civil rights and policy issues affecting the 58 million Latinos living in the United States. NHLA strives to increase Latino visibility and leverages its efforts to build a stronger Latino influence in our country's affairs.

