

# NEWS RELEASE



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**\*\*\*TODAY – VIRTUAL TOWN HALL AT 2:00 P.M. ET\*\*\***

## **NALEO Educational Fund, NLCET, and NHLEA Join Together to Call for Safe, Accessible Elections Amid COVID-19**

*National Latino organizations release set of six principles to help ensure full access to the ballot box for Latino voters in 2020*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – In light of the upcoming 2020 Presidential election taking place during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund, alongside and as part of the National Latino Civic Engagement Table (NLCET) and National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLEA), released a statement and [six principles](#) on changes to election policies and practices that are required so that Latino voters have the ability to participate and access the ballot box as fully as possible.

“Election 2020 will take place in a dramatically different public health environment than any other Presidential election in our nation’s history,” said Arturo Vargas, CEO of NALEO Educational Fund. “As the second-largest population group in the United States, Latinos must be able to fully participate in our democracy so that it remains responsive to the full ensemble of the American electorate,” Vargas continued.

### **Summary of Principles**

With COVID-19 disproportionately affecting Latinos, policymakers and administrators must consider the Latino community’s safety, experiences, and perspectives when evaluating any changes to election procedures and practices. To help accomplish this goal and prevent new barriers to casting ballots, the NLCET and NHLEA have put forward these [six principles](#) so that our democracy can be responsive to all Americans with safety and accessibility at the forefront of any policy changes related to voting.

#### **1. 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.

## **2. 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.

## **3. 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.

## **4. 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.

## **5. 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.

## **6. 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.

“We are facing a pandemic that is decimating our community and an economy that is bleeding jobs for Latinos and people of color,” said Hector Sanchez Barba, Executive Director and CEO of Mi Familia Vota Education Fund. “There is a hunger for systemic change right now, and we are going to take advantage of this moment to fight for our country. While we have noticed an increase in people looking to register to vote to do something about what is happening, we must continue to educate and fight for our communities' right to vote. These Policy Principles we are unveiling today will provide much-needed guidance for all of our Latino field teams and national organizations who are fighting to ensure that Latinos are able to exercise their constitutional right to vote,” Sanchez Barba continued.

“Hispanic Federation is proud to join with our NLCET and NHLA partners to advocate for policies that protect access to the ballot box for as many people as possible this November,” said Laura M. Esquivel, Vice President, Federal Policy and Advocacy, Hispanic Federation. “Latino communities are already among the hardest hit during this health pandemic, suffering staggering job losses and higher than average rates of COVID-19 infection and death. We must not allow the challenge of administering elections during this public health crisis to result in policies that create barriers to Latinos accessing the ballot box, making their voices heard, or getting their votes counted this November,” Esquivel continued.

"Latinos are poised, once more, to have a decisive impact on the elections in November," said Thomas A. Saenz, NHLA Chair and MALDEF President and General Counsel. "But we can only realize that potential if our nation respects these critical principles of our democracy, in order to secure and facilitate the meaningful involvement of every Latino voter across the nation," Saenz continued.

"Our joint recommendations are designed to ensure that the path to the voting booth remains unimpeded. This means eligible Americans have the information, assistance, and tools they need to register and vote, and states and localities the support and accountability necessary to ensure voters can participate safely," said Clarissa Martinez-de-Castro, UnidosUS Deputy Vice President for Policy & Advocacy. "UnidosUS works through policy and programs to grow the Hispanic electorate and ensure our democracy reflects all its people because too often, we have seen changes made to election processes adversely impact Latinos. We will be working with our sister organizations at the federal and state levels to advance these measures and ensure that voters are able to cast their votes without undue risk to themselves or their families and to have their vote counted," de-Castro continued.

"Civic engagement is critical to the successful empowerment of the Latino community. Latino voters will play an increasingly decisive role in the Presidential election," said Jose Perez, Deputy General Counsel, LatinoJustice PRLDEF. "Through our combined efforts and partnerships, LatinoJustice and our National Latino Civic Engagement Table partners are all committed to expanding and mobilizing Latinos to have a real impact on the ballot box this November," continued Perez.

## **Virtual Town Hall**

Thursday, July 16, 2020 – 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. ET/11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. PT

The NLCET and NHLA will hold a [Facebook Live virtual town hall](#) on these [principles](#) moderated by Juliana Cabrales, Director of Civic Engagement – Programs & Mid-Atlantic, NALEO Educational Fund. The town hall, "Protecting Democracy: Latino Voting Amid COVID-19," will host the following NLCET panelists: Laura Esquivel, Director of National Advocacy, Hispanic Federation; Jose Perez, Deputy General Counsel, LatinoJustice PRLDEF; Thomas A. Saenz, President and General Counsel, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund; Hector Sanchez Barba, Executive Director and CEO, Mi Familia Vota; Arturo Vargas, Chief Executive Officer, NALEO Educational Fund; and Clarissa Martínez-de-Castro, Deputy Vice President, Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation, UnidosUS.

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### ***About NALEO Educational Fund***

*NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-partisan, non-profit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.*

### ***About the NLCET***

*The National Latino Civic Engagement Table (NLCET) was formed in 2011 by the nation's leading Latino nonprofit advocacy and civil rights organizations working on 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, Voto Latino Foundation, and UnidosUS.*

***About NHLA***

*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.*