



**National  
Urban League**

*Empowering Communities.  
Changing Lives.*

## **Testimony of Joi Chaney**

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**National Urban League**

**U.S. House Committee on House Administration Subcommittee on Elections**

**“A Growing Threat: The Impact of Disinformation Targeted at Communities of Color”**

**April 28, 2022**

Chairman Butterfield, Ranking Member Steil, and Members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on *A Growing Threat: The Impact of Disinformation Targeted at Communities of Color*. My name is Joi Chaney, and I am the Senior Vice President for Policy and Advocacy and the Executive Director of the Washington Bureau at the National Urban League. I bring you greetings on behalf of our President and CEO Marc H. Morial.

The National Urban League is an historic civil rights organization dedicated to advancing civil rights and economic empowerment to elevate the standard of living in historically underserved communities. The National Urban League spearheads the efforts of its 92 local affiliates in 37 states and the District of Columbia through the development of programs, public policy research and advocacy, and providing direct services that impact and improve the lives of more than 2 million people annually nationwide.

In our work, the National Urban League has found an increasing number of disinformation campaigns that directly target Black communities and the civil rights that have long been fought for by the Urban League movement. Further, these disinformation attacks on Black communities are also a broader attack on our democracy and a threat to the national security of this nation.

It has been widely reported and confirmed that the Russian government interfered in our 2016 presidential election and Black Americans were fiercely targeted in their disinformation campaign. In some ways, Russia’s actions were successful in sowing social and political discord by exploiting the pre-existing fissures and bigotries in our nation, our inability to adequately address historic and present-day racial and economic inequities in our country, and our government’s struggle to find consensus on how to regulate an ever evolving and powerful technology ecosystem.

The Senate Intelligence Committee’s investigation into Russian interference “found that no single group of Americans was targeted by IRA information operatives more than African-

Americans.”<sup>1</sup> And over the last several years, many contributors to the National Urban League’s *State of Black America* report have noted the tactics Russia used to target Black voters with election disinformation, which we have submitted for the record. For example, the Russian government created inauthentic social media accounts posing as Black influencers in an attempt to dissuade Black voters from participating in the 2016 presidential election. Additionally, leading up to the 2016 election, a meme that read “avoid the line – vote from home. Text ‘Hillary’ to 59925,” targeted Black and Latinx voters on Facebook and Twitter. Leading up to the 2016 election, Black audiences were targeted by the Russian IRA and accounted for over 38% of U.S. focused ads purchased. In addition to tactics from the Russian government, it was reported that 3.5 million Black Americans were categorized by Donald Trump’s campaign as “deterrence” voters or voters they wanted to keep away from the ballot box in 2020.

These election disinformation tactics could lead to even more extreme consequences into 2022 as several states have adopted new draconian laws creating new barriers for Black voters to cast their ballot. It is worth noting that in 2021 alone, 34 laws were passed in 19 states that restrict access to voting, but more 400 bills were introduced in 49 states showing the extreme interest in making it difficult for people to vote. Moreover, these bills do not just target all voters, they target voters of color and other vulnerable populations. Past experience has taught us that this will be accompanied by a rise in online disinformation also targeting these communities, confusing voters about when and how to cast a ballot and spreading outright falsehoods aimed at suppressing voter turnout and increasing distrust in government institutions and each other.

Moreover, disinformation targeted towards Black communities does not just occur within the vacuum of election cycles. It is prevalent throughout our political and social discourse with the intention of keeping our communities from achieving equal opportunity, economic empowerment, and justice and it has increased exponentially over the last several years. We have also seen disinformation surrounding the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent racial justice protests, the Covid-19 pandemic, and even reparations.

As President Obama stated following his recent address at Stanford University: “Disinformation is nothing new. Inflammatory rhetoric that contributes to divisions in our society did not start with tech or media companies. And some of what we are seeing now is an inevitable consequence of new technology.”<sup>2</sup> The National Urban League agrees with President Obama, and we also believe there are solutions we can implement to combat this growing threat.

First, there must be whole-of-government and whole-of nation-responses, including civil society and corporations, that work collaboratively to combat disinformation campaigns. These

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Senate. Select Committee on Intelligence. *Russian Active Measures Campaigns and Interference in the 2016 U.S. Election Volume 2: Russia’s Use of Social Media with Additional News*. 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. [https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Report\\_Volume2.pdf](https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Report_Volume2.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *A Country in Crisis: How Disinformation Online is Dividing the Nation Before the Subcomm. on Consumer Protection and Commerce*, 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. 4-5 (2020) (statement of Spencer Overton, President, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and Professor of Law, George Washington Law School). <https://www.congress.gov/116/meeting/house/110832/witnesses/HHRG-116-IF17-Wstate-OvertonS-20200624.pdf>; Philip N. Howard ET AL., Computational Propaganda Research Project: The IRA, Social Media, and Political Polarization in the United States, 2012-2018 <https://demtech.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/93/2018/12/IRA-Report-2018.pdf>

conversations must be informed by discussions with the organizations that represent communities that are most impacted by disinformation.

Second, social media companies need to play a proactive role in curbing disinformation – not just during election period. Social media companies must strongly enforce civic integrity policies and close loopholes that allow bad actors to spread disinformation. There must be changes to algorithms that do not allow for harmful, sensationalized content as a means of generating engagement. One piece of that puzzle is company ownership. The National Urban League was dismayed to see Twitter’s board accepted Elon Musk’s offer to buy the company. As we wrote in our letter to Twitter last week, we know that transitioning ownership to Mr. Musk and shielding the company from any oversight would have grave implications for the civil rights protections that are so important to our constituencies. We were also alarmed to see negotiations transpire without proper consideration and input from civil rights organizations.

Third, we need legislation that increases transparency into how algorithms operate, particularly websites’ content amplification practices, and transparency about content moderation practices. It is also imperative to have comprehensive privacy legislation with provisions that limit the amount of data companies can collect that could inevitably prevent bad actors from using that data to nefariously target Black communities.

Finally, we need comprehensive voting rights legislation that allows voters to safely and freely cast their ballots, prevents voter intimidation, and combats election sabotage. With each day, more and more threats take root to target our nation’s democracy, so time is of the essence to prevent irreparable damage to the franchise in advance of the next election. This legislation would fight back against these attacks and ensure the ability of every American to participate in safe, accessible, and transparent elections.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today and I look forward to answering your questions.

**Attachments:**

- 2018 State of Black America:
  - [New Era, Same Struggle: Confronting Fresh and Familiar Challenges in the Digital Age](#)
- 2019 State of Black America:
  - [Countering Authoritarian Interference in Democracies](#)
  - [Race, Lies and Social Media: How Russia Manipulated Race in America and Interfered in the 2016 Elections](#)
- 2020 State of Black America:
  - [The Vote and the Virus: Inoculating the Election From Disease and Disinformation](#)
  - [Pandemic Precautions: How to Protect the 2020 Election Inside and Outside Polling Places](#)
- 2022 State of Black America:
  - [Executive Summary Report](#)

## **New Era, Same Struggle: Confronting Fresh and Familiar Challenges in the Digital Age**



**Congressman Cedric L. Richmond** (<http://soba.iamempowered.com/rep-cedric-l-richmond>)

Chairman, Congressional Black Caucus; Louisiana – 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District

Twitter: [@RepRichmond](https://twitter.com/RepRichmond)

Technological advancements have created numerous economic and social opportunities—and ancillary challenges. This Congress, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), has been focused on finding ways to advance the former and address the latter. We want to make sure that African Americans and other marginalized communities aren't left behind in a nation and world that are becoming increasingly connected.

### **Economic Challenges and Opportunities**

The digitization of the global economy is transforming our nation's workforce. One of the issues the CBC has been examining with stakeholders is the "future of work," looking at how technology is changing workforce demands and what needs to be done to ensure African Americans are prepared for the jobs of the future. Part of this discussion has involved expanding access to STEM education and job training programs in both rural communities and inner cities. In addition, closing the digital divide that exists in these communities and exploring job opportunities in the cyber workforce are crucial as the internet of things creates more connected devices—and vulnerabilities.

Another part of this discussion has involved identifying new industries that could increase economic activity in the African-American community. One such industry is financial technology or "FinTech," which seeks to better deliver financial services (e.g., online banking) through the use of technology (e.g., smartphones). The CBC has been fighting to ensure that growth in this emerging sector is equally shared, particularly in traditionally underserved communities.

The CBC has also been fighting to ensure that new technologies are not being developed with implicit bias built into the codes on which they operate to ensure that the automatic decisions these technologies make are not harmful to African-American consumers. As these technologies develop, the CBC is exploring the potential role of the federal government in preventing potential bad actors from using FinTech to exploit vulnerable consumers through predatory lending practices.

Finally, the CBC has been pushing our nation's corporations in and outside of the technology industry to diversify their boards, c-suites, workforce, and suppliers. In fact, before corporations sit down with the CBC, we ask them for a detailed analysis of their diversity numbers. Promoting diversity at all levels of corporate America will help ensure companies make informed decisions about the demands of an increasingly diverse consumer base. In addition to being the right thing to do, diversity is good for business.

The CBC will continue to fight for policies that empower African Americans to compete in the global economy.

### **Social Challenges and Opportunities**

Technological advancements have created social challenges and opportunities as well. This is especially

true when it comes to voting rights. While technology is being used in some states to automatically register residents to vote or to make it easier for them to do so, it has also been used by foreign powers to undermine our elections.

In October, the CBC met with Facebook about ads Russia purchased on the platform to exploit racial divisions in the United States, which included a targeted attack on Black Lives Matter that, at times, characterized the group as violent. During the meeting, the CBC expressed to Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg in no uncertain terms that these racially divisive ads are completely unacceptable. According to a 2018 Pew Research Center survey, Facebook is the primary social media platform for most Americans, with almost 70 percent of U.S. adults reporting that they are Facebook users. We impressed upon Sandberg that to whom much is given, much is required. The messages and images posted on Facebook impact not only the country, but the world; and Facebook has a responsibility to ensure that our enemies aren't using its platform to incite racial violence and determine the leader of the free world.

Finally, we told Sandberg that the company's lack of diversity might have prevented them from recognizing the problem sooner. Perhaps if Facebook had more African Americans conducting content analysis, someone would have noticed sooner that these ads were not what they seemed. Moreover, if Facebook had more African Americans in leadership positions, someone would have recognized that the company's own content review policies admittedly failed to protect African-American users from being targeted on their platform. The CBC continues to engage Facebook and other social media companies to hold them accountable for the impact of their platforms on the African-American community.

Although the CBC is working hard to address these 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges, we have not taken our eyes off challenges unaddressed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: pervasive voter suppression efforts, increasingly segregated public schools, and the broken criminal justice system. The CBC, also known as the conscience of the Congress since its establishment in 1971, will continue to inject moral leadership in Congress by identifying and addressing issues that affect African Americans and other marginalized communities now and in the decades to come. We will not surrender in the ongoing battle to advance African-American interests, from the halls of Congress, to the court rooms, and the board rooms.

**National Urban League (<http://nul.org>)**

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## Countering Authoritarian Interference in Democracies



Authored by -

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In January 2017, the Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA) released “Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections,” its report evaluating Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. The report provided a strategic autopsy which explored the mechanics and escalation of cyber-espionage and covert operations orchestrated by a Russian-controlled propaganda apparatus.

In 2018, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, an organization that conducts research and analysis on transatlantic issues, published “Policy Blueprint for Countering Authoritarian Interference in Democracies,” presenting the multi-institutional implications of social media chicanery.

After analyzing the contents of the two documents, I have identified six key themes which threaten our fealty to the spirit of democracy and social justice. Additionally, these tactics seek to establish an authoritarian-democratic, white supremacist regime by manipulating and dismantling access to the electoral process.

1. *Last Place Aversion*: The absence of oversight in social media and a polarized social environment have become fertile ground for extremists to exploit and manipulate the social divisions and economic anxiety of voters. Since we are living in a contentious and suspicious environment of declining trust for many of the established social institutions, foreign social media interlopers nurtured the fears of citizens who feel that the American Dream of upward mobility has eluded them. The accelerated pace of demographic and cultural changes is perceived as a threat to America’s future and a barrier to opportunities that were once easily accessible to them.
2. *Psychological Suppression*: The tactics utilized by these foreign social media manipulators is what I would describe as political catfishing. In social media, catfishing is a tactic used by predators who create a false persona to entice and entrap readers into a manipulative relationship. For these political tricksters, they adopt the profiles of known personalities and influencers to infect the confidence of voters, thus suppress voter participation and engagement.

By hijacking the mission of activist groups such as Black Lives Matter, elected officials and known personalities, they wove together a digital quilt of misinformation and confusion to depress trust, communication and participation in the political process. This tactic was verified in an investigation by USA Today Network reporters who confirmed that of the 3,500 Facebook ads created by the Internet Research Agency, an internet troll agency based in Russia, 1,950 of those ads made references to race and exploited issues such as the NFL anthem protests. The report also revealed these divisive racial ads averaged 44 per month and increased as the November election approached.

3. *Not Just an American Dilemma*: The article is a warning that foreign interference in elections is not confined to America but a threat to all democracies. Lacking the technical infrastructure and regulation to monitor their nefarious activities, the American electoral process remains exposed to further interference. These manipulators have their sights set on permanently impregnating the foundation of democracy with misinformation and distrust to activate voter suppression and non-participation.

4. *Enhanced Resources*: Curtailing foreign interference will require multi-institutional, public-private coordination and international cooperation and communication. Due to the fact that the international actors perpetuating this interference have unlimited resources, the United States and its allies must strategically commit to a long-term strategy with sufficient financial and technical resources to successfully neutralize this threat.
5. *Voter Fraud Does Not Exist*: The myth of voter fraud is not supported by facts. In “More UFO Sightings Than Voter Fraud,” a March 2012 article in Mother Jones magazine, the author revealed the following:

Between 2000 and 2010, there were:

- 649 million votes cast in general elections;
- 47,000 UFO sightings;
- 441 Americans killed by lightning; and
- 13 credible cases of in-person voter impersonation.

Magnifying the voter fraud theme reinforces the post-slavery doctrine that African Americans are a menace to democracy and, therefore, must be controlled or excluded.

6. *Elections Have Consequences*: Behind the mask of voter suppression exists the toxic drug of paralysis whose goal is to activate indifference and apathy in an attempt to convert the electoral process into a partisan activity for extremists. By restricting voter participation, the antagonists of inclusion fulfill their deceitful goals under the disguise of democracy.

Voter suppression tactics impact more than the results of one election but the implementation of a leadership succession plan and policies contrary to our values and interests as a nation. For example, since taking office, Donald Trump has nominated 177 individuals to federal judgeships, of which 91 have been confirmed to lifetime appointments. Their potential decisions on cases involving voting rights, the environment, sexual assault, consumer protection and criminal justice—to name a few—can have vulgar implications on past progress and protections received for the next 40 to 60 years.

Finally, the continued interference by these authoritarian regimes has severe implications on communities of color and the historically disenfranchised. By suppressing access to one of our basic civil rights, these foreign threats represent what I describe as “digital terrorists”, advocating the divisiveness and vitriol of social and political extremists. They seek to maintain their illusion of demographic and cultural supremacy because of their fear of economic anxiety through psychological intimidation and legislative exclusion.

Stay Woke, America. Vote.

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## Race, Lies and Social Media: How Russia Manipulated Race in America and Interfered in the 2016 Elections



Authored by -

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Have you met Luisa Haynes? She was a prolific force in the #BlackLivesMatter community on Twitter. In just over a year, she amassed more than 50,000 followers; and her outspoken, viral takes on everything from Beyoncé to police brutality earned her hundreds of thousands of retweets and media coverage in more than two dozen prominent news outlets.

She was, on the surface, a symbol of a new generation of Black activists: young, female, and digitally savvy—except—she was fake.

In October 2018, Twitter released data associated with more than 3,000 accounts created by the Internet Research Agency (IRA) based in St. Petersburg, Russia. “Luisa Haynes,” known as @WokeLuisa, was one of many IRA-manufactured accounts that used sock puppet personas to impersonate African Americans, particularly those affiliated with the Black Lives Matter movement. It was part of a far-reaching Russian strategy to manipulate and hijack the legitimate social and political grievances of African Americans.

“Russia was able to influence our election because they figured out that racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and transphobia are America’s Achilles heel,” California senator and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris tweeted in February. She added, “These issues aren’t only civil rights – they’re also a matter of national security.”

While the technology used in Russia’s widespread (and ongoing) information operations may be new, the focus on America’s moral failings—particularly regarding racial inequality—is not. And Harris’s warning that racism is a “matter of national security” is less a revelation than a reminder that America’s internal demons have long been used against it by foreign adversaries.

During the Cold War, U.S. efforts to gain ideological supremacy over the Soviet Union, particularly in the developing world, were constantly undermined by racial strife at home. As the United States attempted to extoll the virtues of liberal democracy, Soviet propagandists needed only to point to Birmingham and Little Rock as proof positive of the hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy of America, and, by extension, the system itself. There was no need for distortion or disinformation; images of Bull Connor, German shepherds, and fire hoses turned against Black protestors spoke for themselves.

But the Soviet state also used segregation and racial violence in America for its own benefit. Whenever the United States admonished the Soviet Union for civil rights abuses, the Soviets were able to deflect criticism by pointing back at America’s segregationist policies. This rhetorical tactic, commonly known as “whataboutism,” was so pervasive that the Kremlin’s oft-used rebuttal – “And you are lynching Negroes” – became a satirical witticism in the Soviet Union.

The reputational damage caused by Jim Crow injustices and racial violence was not lost on American officials. Former President Dwight Eisenhower—a man hardly known for progressive racial views—noted in his memoir that there was a fear that stilted progress on civil rights “could continue to feed the mill of Soviet propagandists who by word and picture were telling the world of the ‘racial terror’ in the United

States.” Regardless of its intent, Soviet propaganda therefore had an unintended consequence—it expedited progress on civil rights reforms in the 1950s and 1960s.

Modern Russia’s exploitation of contemporary social justice struggles portends no such progress. As in the past, Russian operatives are playing on divisions of America’s own creation. But while the Soviet Union certainly attempted to exacerbate race relations in the United States through so-called “active measures” (perhaps most infamously during the 1984 Olympics, when the KGB forged threatening letters purportedly sent by the KKK to African and Asian athletes), their ability to infiltrate or impersonate genuine activist communities was limited. Today, that is no longer the case.

The anonymity and audience segmentation baked into online social networks has allowed Russia’s online provocateurs to nimbly insinuate themselves into Black activist communities, where they can, in their own words, “effectively aggravate the conflict between minorities and the rest of the population.” As social media analyst Justin Hendrix has observed, an effect of Russia’s exploitation of authentic movements is that “civil rights groups—already beleaguered by the fight against an onslaught of regressive policies of domestic politicians—must also now fight well-funded state actors who seek to use their interests as leverage in a broader campaign to destabilize the West.”

It is also important to remember that Russian trolls lurk on the other side of the debate, helping to stoke the racist, toxic vitriol directed at Black activists. Black activists are, therefore, caught in a vice grip of deception, with Russian trolls working from within and without to undermine their interests.

Kate Starbird, a researcher at the University of Washington, illustrated this point in a recent study that found that inauthentic Russian troll accounts were not only deeply embedded in authentic online Twitter conversations related to the #BlackLivesMatter and #BlueLivesMatter movements, but they were often the most polarizing voices in those debates. Motivated by social division rather than social justice, these imposter accounts worked the margins, manufacturing consensus for partisan viewpoints while simultaneously pushing their own strategic objectives. Starbird and her team noted, for example, that purported Black Lives Matter personas created by the IRA were consistently critical of Hillary Clinton and encouraged others in the community not to vote for her (or vote at all). This finding mirrors a report (<http://stoponlinevaw.com/media/report-facebook-ads-that-targeted-voters-centered-on-black-american-culture/>) from the social justice watchdog group Stop Online Violence Against Women (SOVAW), which noted that IRA purchased Facebook ads targeted at Black Americans had “the explicit goal of suppressing voter turnout.” These Russian efforts intensified a point of friction within pro-#BlackLivesMatter clusters, highlighting the very real potential for manipulated conversations to prompt fragmentation within activist movements—not to mention the possibility that it depressed the Black vote.

The ability of foreign actors to look, act, and speak like the online communities they target creates the obvious potential for manipulation. At the same time, genuine activists may, in fact, be best positioned to recognize and ferret out the imposters in their midst. For example, in the aftermath of the killing of Philando Castille, an unarmed Black man shot to death by a police officer in Minnesota, Black Lives Matter activists flagged what turned out to be a Russian-operated, faux-BLM Facebook page as suspicious due to its use of the slogan “Don’t Shoot”—a phrase that many genuine activists had long since abandoned.

Those subtle inconsistencies are less likely to be noticed by those outside of Black activist circles, meaning that content seeded by IRA trolls posing as Black activists may have a more profound impact on broader public perceptions and opinions. This is especially problematic given that Russian internet trolls often engage in a form of digital blackface, painting grossly stereotypical portrayals of the African Americans whose personas and vernacular they co-opt. These caricatures are not only offensive and demeaning, they can discredit the legitimacy of the causes they claim to support. By promoting viewpoints that seek to generate polarization rather than reasoned debate, Russian trolls can skew the perception of critics and potential supporters alike, particularly when those opinions—like Luisa Haynes’—find their way into mainstream media outlets.

A less explored—yet perhaps more problematic—outcome is the potential for real or perceived foreign interference to be used to discredit authentic opinions and movements. Authentic Black activists have expressed concern, for example, that engagement with specific hashtags that have been hijacked by inauthentic accounts have led to them being incorrectly labelled “**Russian bots**.” This not only damages freedom of expression, it also creates a perverse incentive for bad actors—Russians or otherwise—to openly interfere with causes they seek to derail. If all one needs to discredit a movement is the mere specter of foreign “support,” it will create an all-too-easy mechanism for foreign actors to inflict further damage on our democracy.

It is, therefore, essential that we address the problem of foreign manipulation without the unintended consequence of inflicting further harm on the activists and issues they have targeted. We must also not lose sight of the fact that despite the very real threat of foreign interference, social media can be, and has been, a tool to empower historically marginalized communities and individuals. Finally, we must recognize the lessons of history and understand that, as a society, we are only vulnerable to external interference when we ourselves are divided.

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## The Vote and the Virus: Inoculating the Election From Disease and Disinformation



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**DAVID LEVINE**

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The memes circulated around Facebook and Twitter, promising voters a more streamlined option to participate in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

“Avoid the line – vote from home. Text ‘Hillary’ to 59925,” read one post, seemingly aimed at Black and Latino voters. It bore all the hallmarks of an official Clinton campaign ad.

The text-your-vote campaign was, of course, a hoax. It was a digital upgrade to a decades-long, if not, centuries-old effort to disenfranchise minority voters via disinformation – the intentional dissemination of false or misleading information – about how, when, and where to vote. In 2016, these hoaxes were aided and abetted by Russian internet trolls whose systematic [attempts \(http://soba.iamempowered.com/race-lies-and-social-media-how-russia-manipulated-race-america-and-interfered-2016-elections\)](http://soba.iamempowered.com/race-lies-and-social-media-how-russia-manipulated-race-america-and-interfered-2016-elections) to suppress the Black vote were motivated by geopolitical rather than political objectives.

As disruptive as these ploys were, their impact was **likely minimal**. Apart from the unexpected outcome and unprecedented foreign interference, the administration of the 2016 presidential election was **fairly routine (http://www.legendsvote.org/wp-content/uploads/MIT-Charles-Stewart-Voter-Turnout-Study-2016.pdf)**. In the final analysis, relatively few voters had reason to actively seek out and, therefore, come in contact with falsified voting information. And those who did were unlikely to be persuaded to change their long-established voting habits.

However, the 2020 presidential election promises to be anything but routine.

The coronavirus has already upended primaries across the country; and while it remains uncertain the extent to which the pandemic will affect how Americans cast their ballots in November, what is certain is that public health concerns will disrupt the status quo, perhaps dramatically so. From a public information perspective, this is highly problematic. One of the time-tested truisms of disinformation is that it thrives in times of uncertainty when there is both a large demand for information and a short supply of available facts. Thus, any change to standard voting procedures, however reasonable, necessary, or life-saving, will create a potentially nightmarish scenario where the increased demand for up-to-date information is met with a manipulated supply meant to misinform parts of the electorate.

In a best-case scenario, the pandemic settles down over the next few months, and the country holds a relatively standard November election. There is a dramatic increase in voting by mail, which allows voters to more easily cast ballots in a way that can maintain social distancing. Voters who prefer to vote in person, or are not able to mail in a ballot, have a reasonable number of early voting and election-day options to ensure fair, safe, and secure elections. And any election changes made in response to COVID-19 are shared with the public by trusted sources well in advance of the election to help prevent voters from relying on inaccurate information.

In one worst-case scenario, the general election unfolds much like Wisconsin's April 7 primary. There, state leaders refused to act early to find a solution and, instead, held in-person voting in the middle of the coronavirus outbreak without adequate safeguards. Public health authorities recommended against in-person voting; yet, there was no statewide absentee mail-ballot effort, there were not enough poll workers, and there were dueling court cases sowing confusion about absentee voting, which contributed to thousands of missing or nullified ballots. In Milwaukee, where roughly 4 in 10 residents are Black, officials closed all but five of the city's 180 polling places, forcing thousands of voters to congregate at a handful of voting sites. These circumstances undoubtedly forced many voters to make a needlessly impossible choice: risk their health—and possibly their lives—to cast their ballot or stay at home and forfeit their vote.

In another worst-case scenario, the general election plays out similarly to Georgia's June 9 primary. After twice postponing its primary due to the coronavirus, Georgia, unlike Wisconsin, substantially modified its election processes to account for the virus. Georgia took the unprecedented step of mailing out absentee ballot applications to 6.9 million active registered voters. However, issues with the absentee voting process, polling place shortages, inadequate poll worker training, and the state's new voting system contributed to a chaotic Election Day. Voters in parts of metro Atlanta – especially in predominantly Black communities – waited in lines upwards of four hours as election officials conducted an election with fewer voting machines, fewer polling places, and fewer experienced poll workers.

If there is reason for optimism, it is perhaps that the failings noted not just in Georgia and Wisconsin, but in primaries across the country, can be fixed before November. But even if, through some combination of good fortune and preparation, we were to avoid a worst-case scenario come November, the coronavirus has already crippled a critical component of any fair election: voter registration.

The months-long closings and stay-at-home orders intended to restrict social mixing and slow the spread of COVID-19 have made it more difficult to register new voters. Ordinarily, as the general election period takes off, there are large voter-registration efforts, much of it in-person. Additionally, in states that don't allow online voter registration, such as Texas and New Hampshire, voters are generally required to register in-person. With many government offices currently closed or open for limited hours, there is concern that many people won't be able to vote in November simply because they're not going to be registered in time.

Limited voter registration will affect millions of Americans, but none more so than young people, naturalized immigrants, and communities of color. The challenges of registering these historically underrepresented and disenfranchised communities during a pandemic may be further compounded by bad actors—foreign and domestic—working to suppress the vote by spreading registration-related disinformation meant to keep eligible citizens away from the polls in November. A malicious actor could promise voters a more streamlined way to register to vote that doesn't exist, such as registering by text or tweet. Or alternatively, a bad actor could falsely claim that a voter registration deadline has been extended due to the pandemic.

Finally, there is also the threat of post-election disinformation. In alarming previews, we have seen American elected officials, as well as foreign adversaries, question the security of mail-in voting, seeding the ground for future disinformation campaigns.

Fast forward to the evening of November 3, 2020. There is a distinct possibility that only partial results will be released on election night, and the urban centers of some large metropolitan areas will be slower to count their ballots. In an information vacuum, it is not hard to imagine one presidential candidate declaring

victory while claiming voter fraud is endemic in absentee ballots. If the other candidate is declared the winner after the popular vote count, you would have two competing claims to victory and two competing slates of electors sent to the Electoral College. **False claims** of widespread voter fraud would assuredly reach a fever pitch.

Taken together, the disinformation threats before, during, and after the election are so dizzying in scale and scope that they may seem insurmountable. While it is true that disinformation thrives in the absence of trusted information, there are concrete steps we can take to build community resilience against this pending threat.

First, there is no need to try to stamp out each and every disinformation fire—numerous **studies** have shown it to be counterproductive. Instead, we must flood the information sphere with enough consistent, credible messaging that voters are effectively immunized from falsehoods. Arming voters with accurate information and investing in media and digital literacy will protect them against existing and future disinformation threats. Activists and community leaders should, therefore, focus less on debunking falsehoods, an inherently slow and reactionary process, and more on “**prebunking**,” a proactive and preemptive process by which people are inoculated against disinformation before ever being exposed to it.

Of course, in the 2020 election context, “prebunking” will be most effective if local, state, and federal officials responsibly plan for coronavirus contingencies well in advance of the election. The best laid strategies of elected officials will also require the input of trusted local leaders. These leaders best understand their communities’ specific characteristics and vulnerabilities and can ensure that accurate information reaches their slice of the voting public. From places of worship and education to businesses and social organizations, many of the real-world institutions communities rely on for trusted information have shuttered. During our new normal, particularly in Black communities where voter suppression runs rampant, it is especially important for activists to follow in the **words** (<http://soba.iamempowered.com/where-my-voters-meeting-young-voters-intersection-adversity-and-action>) of Hip Hop Caucus President Reverend Lennox Yearwood and “engage people where they are.” Right now, that means over the telephone, on social media, and in other online communities.

For many, digital activism is second nature. But for those who traditionally rely on in-person mobilization efforts, it is imperative that they rapidly adapt their outreach to the demands of the virtual world. While this does not require technical sophistication, it does require regular engagement. Like traditional door-knocking efforts, online outreach is a numbers game; local leaders should, therefore, treat their social media feeds as they would a neighborhood canvass—the more they post, the more chances they have of reaching and safeguarding voters.

For many Americans, COVID-19 has created new and unprecedented challenges to voting. It remains an ugly stain on our nation’s history that, for many African Americans, facing obstacles and challenges to their right to vote is nothing new. As we look ahead to one of the most consequential presidential elections in our nation’s history, we must prepare to protect every vote despite the pandemic. Given the well-documented pattern of voter disenfranchisement in Black communities, it is clear that a race-neutral approach will neither repair previous damage nor protect these vulnerable votes now. During these uncertain times, elected officials and leaders must commit to stop the spread of disinformation and ensure that all eligible Americans are free to safely carry out this sacred and consequential right.

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## Pandemic Precautions: How to Protect the 2020 Election Inside and Outside Polling Places



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**LAWRENCE NORDEN**

Director, Brennan Center for Justice Election Reform Program

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**GOWRI RAMACHANDRAN**

Counsel, Brennan Center for Justice

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Four years ago, the Russian government interfered in American elections. They stole information from campaigns, posed as Americans spreading divisive rhetoric, and attacked election infrastructure. Black voters were heavily targeted, not just as part of the American electorate, but as a specific focus of the interference.<sup>[1]</sup> In fact, the Senate Intelligence Committee’s investigation into Russian interference “found that no single group of Americans was targeted by IRA information operatives more than African-Americans.”<sup>[2]</sup>

Operatives linked to the Russian government created social media accounts that focused on “issues of sensitivity to the African-American community.” They also promoted items that expressly featured “voter suppressive content intended to dissuade African-American voters from participating in the 2016 presidential election.”<sup>[3]</sup>

We can expect that Black voters will be targeted again in 2020, but we should not assume all attacks will look as they did in 2016.

Indeed, the Senate Intelligence Committee has warned that the infrastructure attacks Russian actors attempted in 2016 may have been preparation for a more damaging assault in future elections.<sup>[4]</sup> One area of specific concern must be the protection of the election infrastructure used to register voters and cast votes. We know that Russian government agents attempted to learn about election systems, sent election observers to polling places, and targeted election system vendors.<sup>[5]</sup> They also targeted voter registration databases, perhaps to plan an attack in which “voters arrive at the polls and find that their names had been removed from the rolls.”<sup>[6]</sup> Attacks on election infrastructure could be targeted at voters with specific political affiliations, living in certain neighborhoods, or with names that are common among certain racial or ethnic groups.

Voters need not despair, however. Many state and local election officials have taken crucial steps to improve security against these sorts of attacks or to make systems of democracy more resilient if attacks do occur, such as replacing paperless voting equipment with paper ballots. Unlike paperless systems, paper ballots can be audited to check whether the machine-tabulated vote counts match up with what humans hand counting the votes would find.<sup>[7]</sup> Officials can also require polling places to keep emergency paper ballots on hand in case of machine or printer failure<sup>[8]</sup> in order to avoid long lines. And, they can require

plenty of provisional ballots for voters. If there are problems with or cyberattacks on registration databases that make it unclear who is eligible to vote, provisional ballots could be counted later once the eligibility questions are resolved.<sup>[9]</sup> All of these fail-safe plans are important even if there is no attack on our elections, as long lines, failing machines, and poor election administration disenfranchise voters, especially African American voters.<sup>[10]</sup>

Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic presents new challenges, especially for Black people, who are testing positive and dying from the virus at higher rates than other groups.<sup>[11]</sup> Increasing access to vote-by-mail is one piece of what must be done to ensure voters can exercise their rights to vote without risking their health. Making it simple to vote by mail not only ensures that voters can cast ballots without risking infection, it also provides a voting method that is resistant to many forms of cyberattack as it uses paper ballots that can be audited. It also avoids the problem of malfunctioning voting machines or electronic pollbooks in polling places and the accompanying long lines.

But mail ballot systems themselves need upgrades to ensure that they work well for all voters. Studies of mail ballots in California and Florida have shown that voters of color and young voters do not have their votes counted as often as white and older voters.<sup>[12]</sup> To fix these disparities, officials should focus on voter education efforts that teach people how to obtain a mail ballot. And election officials should send an application to all those who have not applied for a ballot so they can request one. Postage should be covered, and there should also be convenient drop off options, such as secure drop boxes.<sup>[13]</sup> Placing drop boxes throughout a jurisdiction can be particularly helpful for voters who receive their ballots close to Election Day, giving them the peace of mind that their ballot was returned in time instead of having them stick it in the mail and wondering whether or not their vote will be counted.<sup>[14]</sup> Finally, if officials check a voter's signature to see whether it matches the signature on record, the rules of the locality must be applied fairly. No ballot should be rejected without first notifying the voter and giving him or her a simple way to fix the problem. Without following up on missing and mismatched signatures, officials have no way of knowing whether, as is often the case, a voter's signature has simply changed over time or whether a malicious actor has stolen the voter's ballot.

While voting by mail can protect us from foreign interference or other manipulation to a certain degree, it is not without its shortcomings. Ineffective mail delivery is more common in minority communities.<sup>[15]</sup> Moreover, as we saw recently in Wisconsin<sup>[16]</sup> and Georgia,<sup>[17]</sup> mailed ballots do not always reach voters by election day. A cyberattack on the registration system could exacerbate this problem, causing mail ballots to be sent to the wrong addresses or to never be sent at all. And furthermore, some voters with disabilities cannot vote privately using a mail ballot.

These challenges are a key reason why in-person voting options must also be available for voters, and those options must be healthy and safe. Officials must provide appropriate protective equipment, such as masks for poll workers and voters, as well as enough space for voters to keep their distance from each other. Once again, resiliency measures, like having plenty of paper ballots on hand so voters can avoid exposure to infection in long lines, are crucial.

Wisconsin's April 2020 primary showed what can happen if officials lack the time, resources, or political support to prepare for an election during the coronavirus. From the delays in mail ballots reaching voters to a lack of in-person polling places in Milwaukee, the state's experience should serve as a nation-wide warning. Local authorities must begin to put measures in place that ensure that everyone who wants to exercise the right to vote during these unprecedented times can.

Officials across the country have already been preparing for a November election that is both threatened by foreign interference and may see a historic turnout.<sup>[18]</sup> Now, they must do so in the face of a contemporary menace: a global pandemic. To protect the vote, election officials must implement resiliency plans that can help recover lost or suppressed votes in case of an attack or malfunction. Priority must also be given to establishing a transparent and trustworthy vote-by-mail system and providing in-person voting options that follow health and government guidelines. With these initiatives, our nation can respond to this year's public

health crisis and execute an election that is fair, secure, and safe.

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# UNDER SIEGE

THE PLOT TO DESTROY DEMOCRACY



## ABOUT THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

The National Urban League is a historic civil rights and urban advocacy organization. Driven to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and justice for our nation's marginalized populations, the National Urban League works toward economic empowerment and the elevation of the standard of living in historically underserved urban communities.

Founded in 1910 and headquartered in New York City, the National Urban League has improved the lives of more than 2 million people each year nationwide through direct service programs run by 91 affiliates serving 300 communities in 36 states and the District of Columbia.

The National Urban League also conducts public policy research and advocacy work from its Washington, D.C., bureau. The National Urban League is a BBB-accredited organization and has earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, placing it in the top 10% of all U.S. charities for adhering to good governance, fiscal responsibility, and other best practices.

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## ABOUT THE STATE OF BLACK AMERICA®

### THE *STATE OF BLACK AMERICA*® IS THE SIGNATURE REPORTING OF THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE.

When the National Urban League produced the first *The State of Black America*® in 1976, the report captured the plight of a people who had been victims of systemic racism since arriving on the shores of this nation.

More than a century after enslaved people were freed at the end of the civil war, the political leadership in this country had failed to help Black Americans secure equal rights entitled to all Americans. Politicians, including the President, had also failed to adequately capture and address the systemic barriers to equitable employment, health, housing, education, social justice, civic participation, and economic opportunity. Out of this, the *State of Black America* was born.

In the 46th edition of the *State of Black America*®, *Under Siege: the Plot to Destroy Democracy*, we are again raising the alarm about the outlook for Black and Brown people. Political forces have launched an all-out assault on voting rights that disproportionately affects the communities that we serve.

Never has the fragility of our Democracy been more exposed than it is today. Fueled by “The Big Lie,” that there was mass voter fraud in the 2020 election, state legislatures are restricting voting access in districts with large populations of African Americans and other people of color. Some states are taking measures even further by actively targeting election oversight roles held by people of color.

State legislatures are introducing and passing legislation that enacts strict voter ID laws and threatens to end all forms of early voting to disenfranchise voters. Partisan lawmakers are redrawing Congressional maps districts to reduce the number of Congressional seats held by people of color.

The Brennan Center for Justice paints a clear picture of where bills have been introduced and laws have been passed to give partisan lawmakers the power to control the outcome of our elections. The visuals also track states that have introduced new Congressional maps that disproportionately impact Black and Brown communities.

This year’s report includes essays from members of Congress, civil rights champions, community activists, and esteemed academics. The words from our contributing authors provide insight into how to restore honor to our Democratic process, describe the power the judiciary and grassroots organizers have to protect voting rights, and reflect on the year that followed the deadly insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021.

It is our ardent responsibility to ensure that America remains a Democratic nation for the benefit of all instead of a nation governed by a few.

To access the 2022 *State of Black America* suite of offerings—including author essays, data, expert analysis, and a ready-for-download version of this executive summary—head to the *State of Black America* website.

STATEOFBLACKAMERICA.ORG

Scan to read the full report!



# EQUALITY INDEX™

## WHY DOES THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE PUBLISH AN EQUALITY INDEX?

Economic empowerment is the central theme of the National Urban League's mission. The Equality Index gives us a way to document progress toward this mission for Black Americans relative to whites.

## WHAT IS THE EQUALITY INDEX TRYING TO DO?

The Equality Index uses pie charts to show how well Black Americans are doing in comparison to whites when it comes to their economic status, their health, their education, social justice, and civic engagement. The Equality Index measures the share of that pie which Black Americans get. Whites are used as the benchmark because the history of race in America has created advantages for whites that continue to persist in many of the outcomes being measured.

## THE 2022 EQUALITY INDEX OF BLACK AMERICA IS 73.9%. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

That means that rather than having a whole pie (100%), which would mean full equality with whites in 2022, African Americans are missing about 26% of the pie.

## HOW IS THE EQUALITY INDEX CALCULATED?

The categories that make up the Equality Index are: economics, health, education, social justice and civic engagement. In each category, we use nationally representative statistics to calculate a sub-index that captures how well Black Americans are doing relative to whites. Each category is weighted based on the importance that we give to each. The weighted average of all five categories is then calculated to get the total Equality Index.

## IS IT POSSIBLE TO SEE HOW WELL BLACK AMERICANS ARE DOING IN EACH OF THE CATEGORIES?

Yes. We show this in the tables included with the Equality Index. We estimate an index for each category that can be interpreted in the same way as the total Equality Index. So, an index of 62.1% for the economics category for 2022 means that Black Americans are missing over a third of the economics mini-pie. Figure 1 summarizes the total 2022 Equality Index and the sub-index in each category.

## IS IT POSSIBLE TO SEE HOW WELL BLACK AMERICANS ARE DOING OVER TIME?

Yes. The National Urban League has published the Equality Index of Black America and all the variables used to calculate it since 2005.

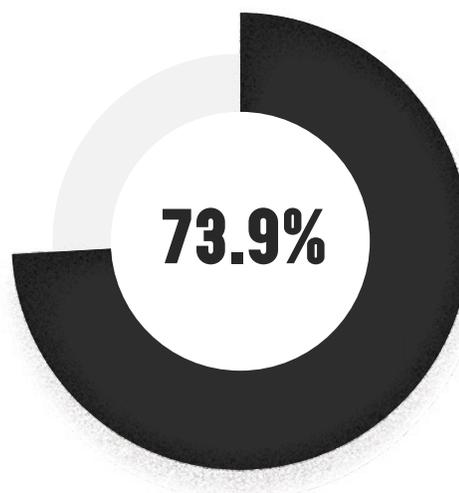
## IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THERE'S BEEN MUCH IMPROVEMENT IN THE EQUALITY INDEX. WHAT'S THE POINT?

The Equality Index is made up of a lot of different parts. Improvements in one area are sometimes offset by losses in another area, leaving the overall index unchanged. Change often happens slowly. The Equality Index offers solid evidence of just how slowly it happens, making the index an indispensable tool for shaping the policies needed in the ongoing fight against inequality.

## NOT ALL BLACK AMERICANS ARE DOING POORLY AND NOT ALL WHITES ARE DOING WELL. WHY DOESN'T THE EQUALITY INDEX CAPTURE CLASS DIFFERENCES?

The Equality Index was created to capture racial inequality. Most of the data points are reported as averages for Black Americans and whites. An average is the easiest way to summarize a large amount of information, but can mask class differences within each group. While the Equality Index does not detail class differences, it does highlight regional differences in racial inequality through our rankings of metro area unemployment and income inequality (not included this year but available for prior years).

# THE 2022 BLACK-WHITE INDEX

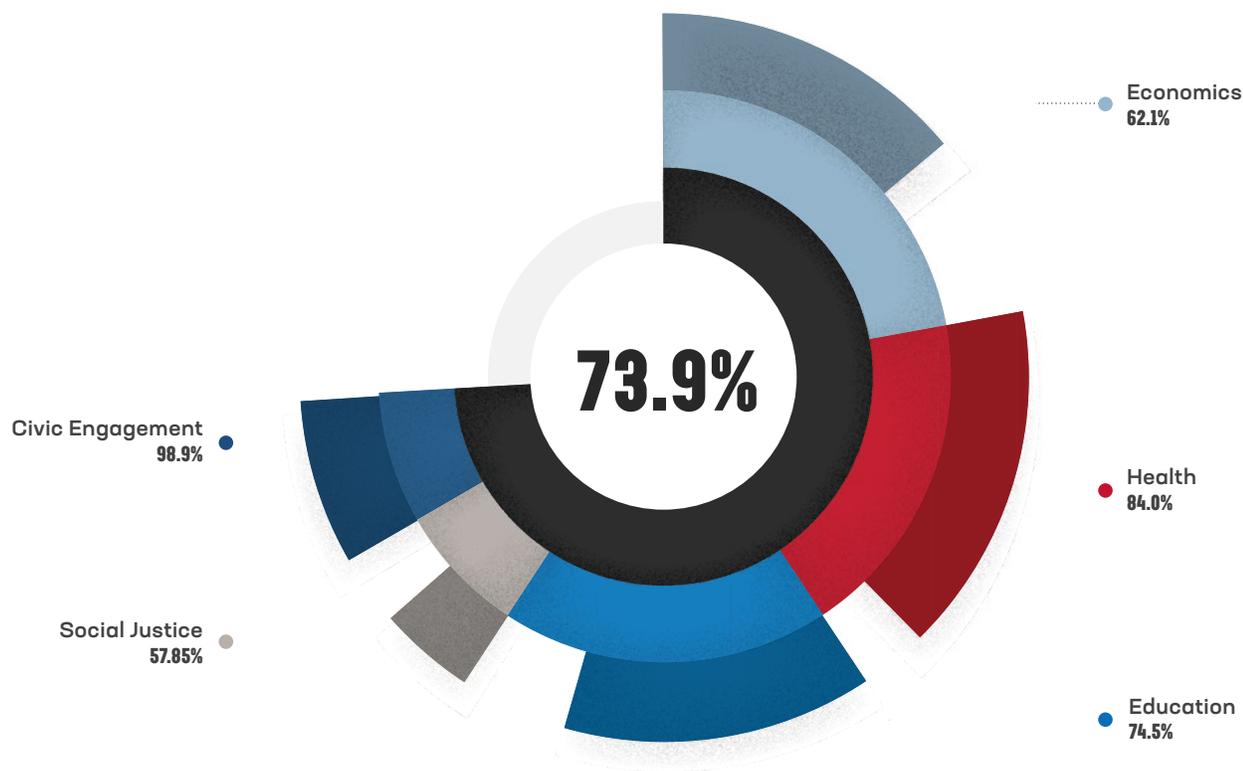


## EQUALITY INDEX BREAKDOWN

Key / Weighted Index Categories



Figure 1. Black-White Equality Index Broken Down by Category



\*The Social Justice indicator had older data in 2020 and therefore all the weight in the "Equality Before the Law" subcategory was placed on one indicator: Mean Incarceration Rate. In the 2022 version, we expanded and updated the list of indicators. In this version we include statistics around encounters with law enforcement and the use of force. With the inclusion of the additional indicators and re-weighting the social justice indicator has gone up but the comparison is not apples to apples. The conclusion is that the Social Justice pillar is still by far the weakest pillar for Black Americans and shows extreme disparities.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

# MARC H. MORIAL



BY MARC H. MORIAL

President & CEO,  
National Urban League

**Bragging to donors that her organization secretly drafted voter suppression bills for state legislatures, using operatives to disguise the source and create a “grassroots vibe,” Heritage Action for America Executive Director Jessica Anderson gushed, “Honestly, nobody even noticed.”**

The burden of these laws—strict photo ID requirements, the elimination or restriction of Sunday voting, voting by mail and early voting, and the closing of polling locations—overwhelmingly falls on Black voters.

State legislators drew new Congressional districts in North Carolina, where people of color made up 90% of the population growth in the last decade. They also eliminated a majority-nonwhite district that had elected a Black member of Congress since 1990 by siphoning 13 percent of the Black population into neighboring districts. The Brennan Center for Justice called the legislators “breathhtaking in their aggressiveness.”

For generations, politicians have used these tactics—voter suppression, gerrymandering, intimidation, and misinformation—to exclude voters of color.

When the U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1787, only land-owning white men were allowed to vote. It wasn't until the 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870 that Black Americans were guaranteed the right to vote, although the rise of Jim Crow restrictions like poll taxes and literacy tests effectively disenfranchised Southern Blacks for most of the next century.

The 19th Amendment in 1920 extended voting rights to women—practically only to white women, until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed most Jim Crow restrictions.

And since the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, the United States has seen a steady rise in disenfranchisement practices giving one party an edge over the other. But never before has the nation seen such an insidious and coordinated campaign to obliterate the very principle of “one person, one vote” from the political process.



AND SINCE THE PASSAGE OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT IN 1965, THE UNITED STATES HAS SEEN A STEADY RISE IN DISENFRANCHISEMENT PRACTICES GIVING ONE PARTY AN EDGE OVER THE OTHER. BUT NEVER BEFORE HAS THE NATION SEEN SUCH AN INSIDIOUS AND COORDINATED CAMPAIGN TO OBLITERATE THE VERY PRINCIPLE OF ‘ONE PERSON, ONE VOTE’ FROM THE POLITICAL PROCESS.



**It is, in every sense of the term, a plot to destroy democracy.**

The current anti-democratic wave began to rise after the 2008 election when Black voting rates matched white voting rates for the first time and helped propel Barack Obama to the White House. It crested in 2013 when the Supreme Court’s *Shelby County v. Holder* decision gutted the Voting Rights Act’s preclearance provision. And it broke against “The Big Lie,” the relentless campaign to sow doubt about the 2020 presidential campaign and illegitimately declare Donald Trump the winner.

Using data and analysis from our research partner, Brennan Center for Justice, this year’s edition of *The State of Black America* clearly outlines how unscrupulous state and federal lawmakers, devious political operatives, and violent extremists are working in concert to disenfranchise, delude, manipulate, and intimidate American voters and establish a one-party rule.

# EQUALITY INDEX™

## AN INTRODUCTION

BY RHONDA VONSHAY SHARPE, Ph.D.

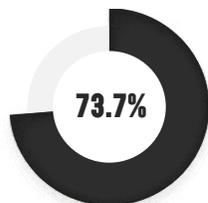
President & Founder of the Women's Institute for Science, Equity and Race



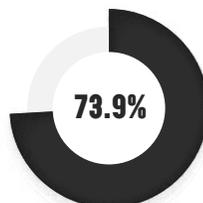
We entered 2022 with bated breath. Would this be the year that the pandemic will end and our lives return to normal? For Black America, a return to normal is an America where measures of well-being too often find Black Americans at or near the bottom. A return to normal means the inequality in education, food and housing security, healthcare, occupation distributions, and wealth that was spotlighted during the pandemic will fade once again into the background.

However, 2022 is a mid-term election year. Politicians whose careers rely on the Black vote will campaign on promises of policies to support voting rights and reduce inequality in education, health, and wealth. For nearly 20 years, the National Urban League Equality Index™ has tracked the progress of public policies and social justice movements in closing the gaps in economic opportunity, education, health, social justice, and civic engagement.

Because of the lag in data collection and analysis, the 2022 Equality Index does not capture the full effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic or the resulting economic recession. Officially, the recession only lasted two months, from February to April 2020. However, the 2022 Equality Index does capture changes in the Black–white disparities during the pandemic for homeownership, unemployment rates, and school enrollment. For these metrics, the 2022 Equality Index illustrates how precarious social and economic gains are for Black Americans. It is also evidence of how vulnerable Black Americans are to economic and public health crises. The Equality Index is an aggregate analysis of centuries of structural racism that can be a starting point for crafting policy to dismantle anti-Black racism in America.



2020



2022

The 2022 Equality Index of Black America stands at 73.9%, an improvement of 0.2 percentage points from the revised 2020 index of 73.7%.

## THE BLACK-WHITE INDEX

The 2022 Equality Index of Black America stands at 73.9%, an improvement of 0.2 percentage points from the revised 2020 index of 73.7%. Revisions to the previous year's index are done for greater comparability across years and reflect data points that have been corrected, removed from the current year's index, or re-weighted so that less emphasis is placed on older data. The stagnation in the Equality Index between 2020 and 2022 reflects gains in the economic area (59.2% to 62.8%) that are nearly offset by declines in education (77.3% to 74.5%) and civic engagement (100% to 98.9%). There were modest improvements in the social justice index (from 57.46% to 57.85%). In general, these improvements reflect data that predates the coronavirus pandemic, recession, and social justice uprisings that hit the country during the first half of 2020. Further, social justice remains the area where we observe the least equality between Blacks and Whites and civic engagement the area with the highest equality. Health equality was essentially unchanged (from 83.8% to 84%).

Because of the lag between data collection and public access, the gains in the Black-White economics index from 2020 to 2022 continue to reflect the economic progress of Black Americans during the longest economic expansion on record, 128 months—June 2009 to February 2020. The improvement in the Black-White economics index was driven mainly by greater equality in Black-White median household incomes—63% in 2022, up from 58% in 2020, and greater equality in the median earnings of Black women—82%, up from 80% in 2020. However, Black men's median weekly earnings decreased from 73% to 72% of White men. The homeownership rate gap also widened, as the Black rate of ownership fell from 61% of the White rate in 2020 to 59% in 2022. There was a narrowing of the poverty rate gap, with the rate of Blacks not in poverty increasing from 39% of the White rate in 2020 to 49% in 2022. Other improvements include less disparity in median home values (from 70% in 2020 to 72% in 2022) and median wealth (from 7% in 2020 to 13% in 2022). The pandemic-induced recession increased unemployment rates across all ethnic and racial groups. As a result, the unemployment rate gap widened, with the rate of African Americans employed falling from 54% of the White rate in 2020 to 51% in 2022, and the rate of Black men employed falling from 50% to 44%.

The increase in the Black-White health index changed very little from 2020 to 2022. But several health categories saw improvements. In the area of mental health, Black students are less likely to consider suicide, as indicated by the index values greater than 100%. For African-American children, there was a narrowing in breastfeeding rates (79% of the White rate in 2020 to 82% in 2022). More Black children had a usual place of health care (60%, up from 57% in 2020), but more of them were uninsured (6%, up from 4.6% in 2020). Meanwhile, the uninsured rate for white children fell from 4.2% in 2020 to 3.8 in 2022, widening the disparity gap by 28 percentage points. Of concern is the increase in the total share of African Americans without health insurance, nearly 15% (up from 9.7% in 2020), widening the Black-White disparity gap by five percentage points.

The death rate of African-American men from prostate cancer nearly tripled, widening the racial equity gap by six percentage points. While the suicide death rate for African-American men decreased to 5.5 per 100,000 (from 11.4 per 100,000 in 2020), the racial equity gap increased. Black girls were twice as likely as White girls to be obese (an index value of 51%). The share of African Americans aged 20 or older diagnosed with diabetes decreased from 32.6% to 12.7%, narrowing the racial equity gap by 26 percentage points. Although there is racial equity in the likelihood of contracting COVID-19 (index value of 100%), African Americans are 2.5 times more likely to be hospitalized and 1.7 times more likely to die than Whites.

The education index fell by 2.6 percentage points from 2020 to 2022, driven in part by a drop in the share of 20- and 21-year-olds enrolled in school for a 14-point increase in the racial equity gap. The racial equality gap closed for primary school enrollment of African-American children aged 3–6 and 16–17, and young adults aged 18–19. The racial equity gap in degrees conferred in computer and information science was closed, bringing the index value to 103% (from 99% in 2020). Eighty-four percent of Black 8th graders have access to the equivalent of high school algebra (index value 98%).

Although the Black-White social justice index changed very little between 2020 and 2022, there were some notable gains and losses. The racial equity gap for firearm related death rates (for all ages) increased by two percentage points. Of great concern is the increased firearm related death rate for boys 1–14, 2.8 per 100,000 (up from 1.5 per 100,000 in 2020), widening the racial equity gap by 33 percentage points. In contrast, firearm related death rates for Black men 45–64 decreased, from 27.5 per 100,000 in 2020 to 24 per 100,000 in 2020, bringing the index value to 100%—equality. African Americans were three times as likely as Whites to be incarcerated after an arrest, widening the racial equity gap by three percentage points. Although the rate for violent crime victimization fell to 17.5 per 1,000 (from 20.4 per 1,000 in 2020), the racial equity gap widened by 28 percentage points.

The decrease in the Black-White civic engagement index reveals less equality in the percentage of people volunteering—an index value of 54%, down from 73% in 2020. African Americans have a relative advantage over Whites in federal executive branch employment—a 2022 index value of 163%, up from 150% in 2020. African Americans remain more likely than Whites to be union members and to be represented by unions. The Union membership index value increased from 109% in 2020 to 112% and being represented by a union rose from 110% in 2020 to 111% in 2022.

The 2022 Equality Index captures areas of our society where Black Americans are thriving at the top of this decade, and areas where we are vulnerable to falling behind in our pursuit of an equitable experience in America. We hope that this can serve as a tool for elected representatives and civil rights leaders to advocate for policies that address system racism and gaps in our political, economic, social justice, education, and healthcare systems.

# THE LEGACY EIGHT

With a nod to the original “Big Six” who organized the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom—

**John Lewis** of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

**Whitney M. Young** of the National Urban League

**A. Philip Randolph** of Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

**Martin Luther King, Jr.** of Southern Christian Leadership Conference

**James Farmer** of CORE

**Roy Wilkins** of NAACP

—the modern-day battle for voting rights and racial justice is being led by “The Legacy Eight”—those organizations whose roots extend back to the Civil Rights Era and who are waging the 21st Century fight for racial justice.



“The Big Six” (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)



National  
Urban League

## NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

Led by **Marc H. Morial** since 2003, National Urban League was founded in 1910 to support Black Americans fleeing the Jim Crow South during the Great Migrations. One of the original “Big Six” organizations of the Civil Rights Movement, National Urban League’s recent voting rights advocacy included a lawsuit against Postmaster General Louis DeJoy over reckless policies implemented in order sabotage mail-in voting in 2020 elections.



NAACP

## NAACP

Another of the original “Big Six” organizations, the NAACP arose in 1909 out of the Niagara Movement and counts W.E.B. DuBois and Ida B. Wells among its founders. Led by **Derrick Johnson** since 2017, NAACP is currently engaged in legal action against voter suppression in Florida and Georgia and challenged Arizona’s restrictive vote-by-mail policies.



LDF  
DEFEND EDUCATE EMPOWER

## NAACP LEGAL DEFENSE FUND (LDF)

Originally the legal arm of the NAACP, the LDF was founded by future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall in 1940 and became totally independent from the NAACP in 1957. Led by **Janai S. Nelson**, who assumed the role of president and director-counsel in 2022, LDF is the nation’s premier legal organization seeking to expand democracy through litigation, advocacy, and public education.



### THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Founded in 1950 by two of the “Big Six,” A. Philip Randolph and Roy Wilkins, along with National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council leader Arnold Aronson, the Leadership Conference works directly with Congress to pass civil and human rights legislation, including the Voting Rights Act. **Maya Wiley** was named president and CEO in 2022.



### NATIONAL ACTION NETWORK

Founded in 1991 by **Reverend Al Sharpton**, who still serves as president, NAN works within the spirit and tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to promote one standard of justice, decency and opportunities for all people. After hundreds of racially-motivated voter suppression proposals flooded into statehouses in response to 2020’s record-high Black voter turnout, NAN worked with the King family’s the Drum Major Institute to organize the multi-city March On For Voting Rights, which focused national attention on the crisis.



### LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS UNDER LAW

After George Wallace “stood in the schoolhouse door” to block integration of the University of Alabama and Medgar Evers fell to an assassin’s bullet all within 24 hours in 1963, President Kennedy called on private lawyers to play a larger role in defending civil rights. The Lawyers’ Committee was the result. **Damon Hewitt** has led the Committee since 2021.



### NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN

Trailblazing educator and activist Mary McLeod Bethune founded the National Council of Negro Women as an umbrella group of organizations working to advance the political and economic successes of Black women. **Dr. Thelma Thomas Daley** was named national president and chair in 2022.



### NATIONAL COALITION ON BLACK CIVIC PARTICIPATION/ BLACK WOMEN’S ROUNDTABLE

Since 1976 the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation has served as an effective convener and facilitator of efforts to address the disenfranchisement of underserved and marginalized communities through civic engagement, particularly Voter Empowerment Organizing and Training. **Melanie Campbell**, who has led the coalition since 2011, convened the Black Women’s Roundtable as the Coalition’s leadership development, mentoring, empowerment, and power-building arm for Black women and girls.

The National Urban League honors and thanks the three dynamic Legacy Eight leaders who stepped down in 2022 after many years of devoted service.

**Wade Henderson** led the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights to national prominence under his stewardship from 1996 to 2016 and stepped in as interim president in 2021. **Sherrilyn Ifill** took the helm of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund six months before the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act in 2013 and steered it through the tumultuous years of the Trump presidency and the twin pandemics of police violence and COVID-19. **Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole**, who made history in 1987 as the first Black woman president of Spelman College, assumed the chair of the National Council of Negro Women in 2018.

In partnership with

**BRENNAN  
CENTER**  
FOR JUSTICE

# OUR RIGHT TO VOTE IS ON THE LINE

THE PLOT TO DESTROY OUR DEMOCRACY:

- ↳ **Tactic #1: Gerrymandering**
- ↳ **Tactic #2: Suppression**
- ↳ **Tactic #3: Election Sabotage**
- ↳ **Tactic #4: Intimidation**



## Tactic #1: Gerrymandering

# STATES ARE DRAWING BATTLELINES

In America, every citizen is entitled to the right to vote. And, within that right, our votes are supposed to be equal. However, 20 states have leveraged census data to redraw congressional maps in the last year alone.

The new maps proposed by Republican state legislatures are no more than modern-day gerrymandering that strips voting power away from communities with Black and Brown voters.



## A PERCEIVED THREAT

Communities of color powered the country’s growth over the last decade—accounting for nearly all population increase for the first time in history. Black, Latino, and Asian households are increasingly moving to suburbs, transforming historically homogenous communities into diverse areas.

As the racial makeup of America’s suburbs continues to evolve, elected representatives should reflect the needs of all their constituents. Unfortunately, due to racially motivated and partisan gerrymandering, people of color are not accurately reflected in the redistricting process.

**Two states that have created a grim framework of gerrymandering are Texas and North Carolina.**

Last decade, North Carolina’s congressional map was a 10–3 gerrymander in favor of Republicans. It was struck down as discriminatory and replaced with an 8–5 map. In 2021, the state gained a congressional seat, fueled by people of color who made up 90% of the state’s population growth. Nonetheless, Republicans drew an 11–3 congressional map likely to eliminate one of the state’s only two Black members of Congress. Proposed state legislative maps could have eliminated a third of Black state senators and a fifth of Black state house members. Both congressional and legislative maps were struck down by state courts as discriminatory, but Republicans continue to try to put skewed maps in place. In Texas, 95% of the state’s population growth was attributable to people of color and those who identify as multiracial. That growth earned the state two additional congressional seats, but communities of color did not see any increased representation. On the contrary, their clout was reduced as they were drawn out of previously competitive districts to add safe white seats.

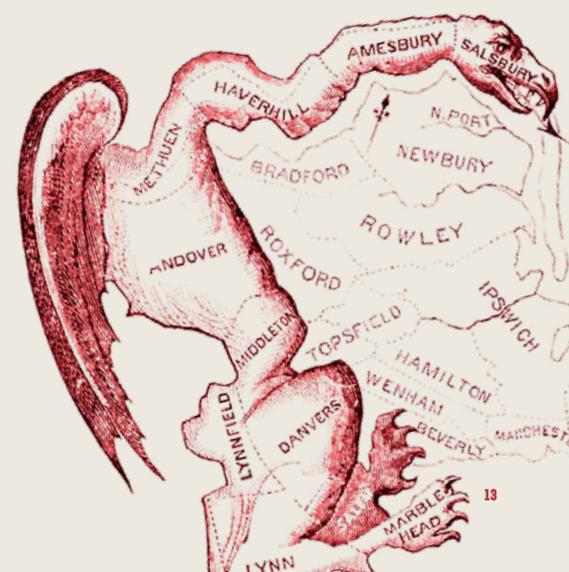
**PEOPLE OF COLOR MADE UP**

**90%** OF POPULATION GROWTH IN NORTH CAROLINA

---

**95%** OF POPULATION GROWTH IN TEXAS

Yet communities of color in these states have seen decreased representation in Congress.



## Tactic #2: Suppression

# VOTING RIGHTS ARE BEING STRIPPED

Historic voter turnout in the 2020 election sparked the beginning of one of the most insidious partisan attacks on voting rights in American history. Fueled by the “Big Lie” and a record number of voters from communities of color using mail-in ballots and early voting, partisan politicians in state legislatures around the country have drafted bills and passed laws making it harder to vote for us all. More suppressive legislation is in the pipeline in 2022.



## BY THE NUMBERS

- Between January 1 and December 7, 2021, **19 states have passed 34 laws** . It is the most significant legislative assault on voting rights since Reconstruction.
- 2022 is already shaping up to be another assault on voting rights as state legislatures in 18 states carried over at least **152 restrictive bills** from the 2021 legislative sessions.
- In addition, in states that allow lawmakers to “pre-file” bills ahead of the next legislative session, at least **96 bills in 12 states** would make it harder for voters to cast a ballot.



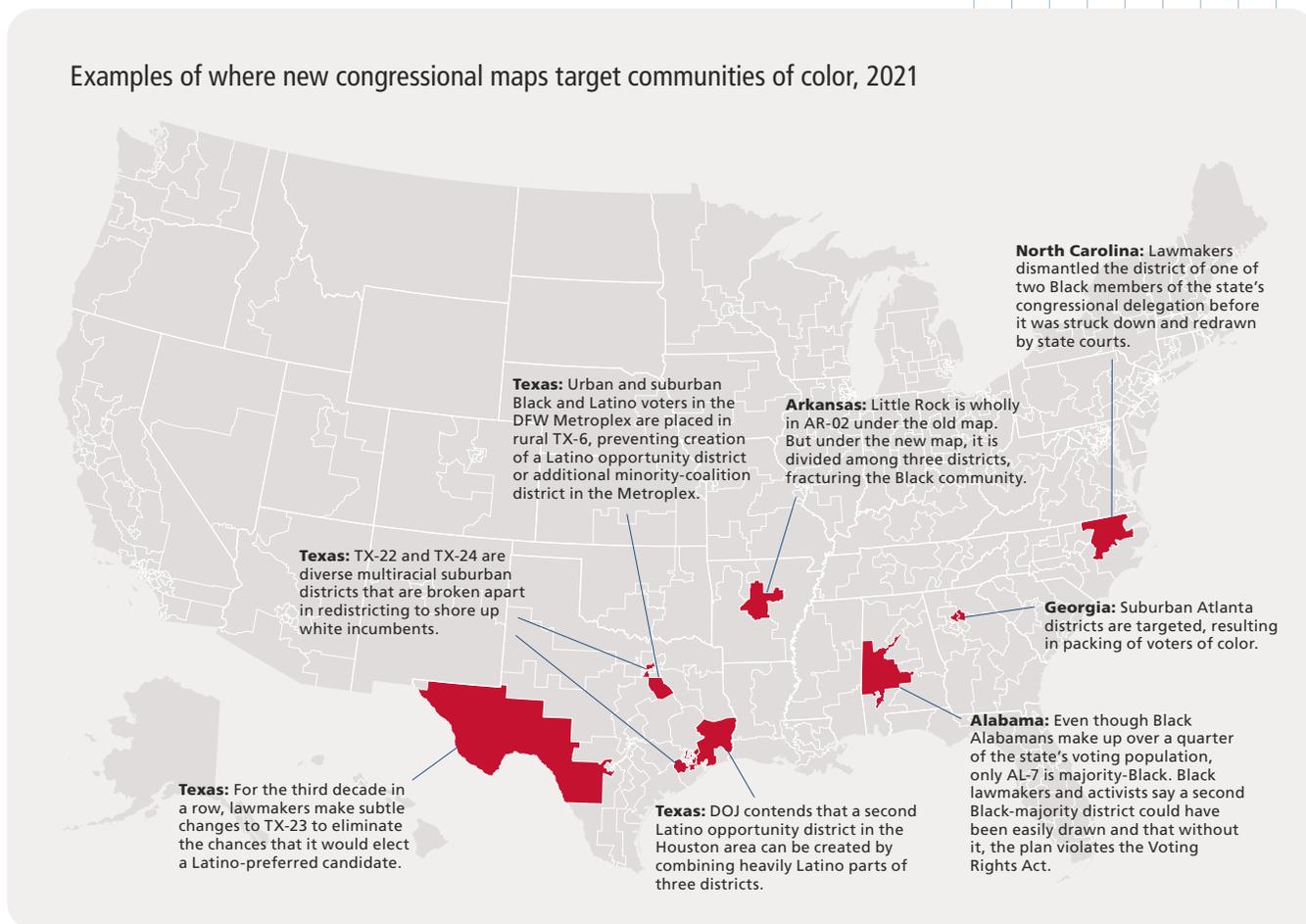
## BLOCKING THE BALLOT BOX

In the 21st century, voter suppression isn't a poll tax or outright racism. It's an insidious, calculated set of tactics that exploit the socioeconomic damage caused by COVID-19 to make voting more difficult in marginalized communities. The laws enacted in 2021 will:

- Shorten the window to apply and deliver mail ballots
- Limit absentee voting lists
- Eliminate or limit sending mail ballot applications to voters who do not request them
- Restrict assistance in returning a voter's mail ballot
- Limit the number, location, or availability of mail ballot drop boxes
- Impose stricter signature requirements for mail ballots
- Impose harsher voter ID requirements
- Expand voter purges or risk faulty voter purges
- Increase barriers for voters with disabilities
- Ban snacks and water to voters waiting in line
- Make voter registration more difficult
- Reduce polling place availability (locations or hours)
- Limit early voting days or hours



## Examples of where new congressional maps target communities of color, 2021



Source: Brennan Center for Justice

## BLACK AND BROWN VOTERS ARE BEING TARGETED

Before 2020, absentee voting was neither controversial nor subject to legislative attack. In fact, Republicans passed no-excuse absentee voting in Georgia in 2005. As recently as 2019, broad bipartisan majorities expanded access to absentee voting in Pennsylvania and elsewhere.

After 2020, the first year that nonwhite voters began relying on mail voting in large numbers, mail voting became the subject of intense and politicized scrutiny across America. In Georgia, for example, nearly 30% of Black voters cast their ballots by mail, compared to 24% of white voters—a reversal from past behaviors. More than 1.3 million Georgians voted absentee.

To give one example of how these voting restrictions pile up, look at some of the measures Georgia took to roll back access to absentee voting this year after a mere 11,779 votes decided the presidential election. After the election, the Georgia legislature has:

- Banned sending unsolicited mail ballot applications.
- Required ID to vote absentee. But 272,000 registered GA voters don't have a driver's license or state ID on record. Black voters, who are 30% of the state's voters, make up 56% of voters without ID.
- Placed severe limits on the number of ballot drop boxes and the hours and locations. In 2020, there were 111 drop boxes in the four counties surrounding Atlanta, used by over 305,000 voters. In the future, there will likely be no more than 23, and only during working hours.
- Essentially banned the provision of food and drinks to voters waiting in line to vote. Latino and Black voters were twice as likely as white voters to report particularly long wait times.



### Tactic #3: Election Sabotage

## HOW TO STEAL AN ELECTION —

## THE PLOT TO OVERTURN ELECTIONS

The Stop the Steal movement isn't a slogan or a fad. Instead, it's a calculated push to delegitimize the voices and votes of people of color across this country.

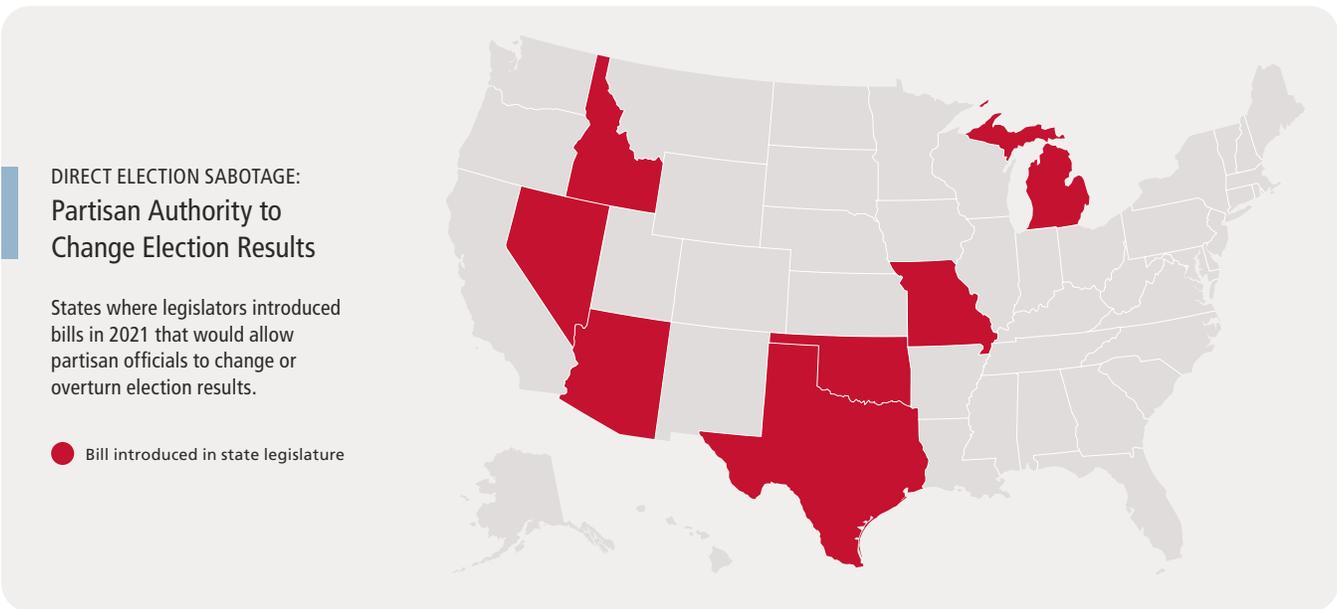
### STEP 1 DISCREDIT THE VOTE

After record turnout of Black and Brown voters through mail-in and absentee voting, voices from the right have falsely called our turnout voter fraud. In at least five states—Michigan, Wisconsin, Arizona, Pennsylvania, and Texas—officials have conducted illegitimate partisan reviews of the 2020 election results.

### STEP 2 INTRODUCE NEW OUTCOMES

The Stop the Steal "audits" are based on conspiracy theories and lies, but that hasn't stopped state legislatures from leveraging them to question election fairness.

Although the partisan review in Arizona [reaffirmed](#) President Biden's [victory](#) in the state's largest county, it has been used to sow doubt on the election's fairness and promote vote suppression legislation [based on misinformation](#).

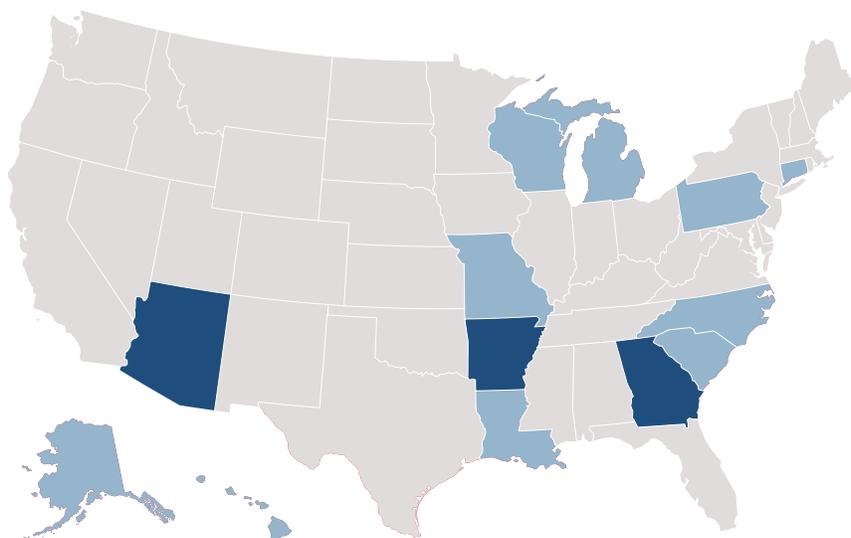


Source: Brennan Center for Justice

**INDIRECT ELECTION SABOTAGE:  
Partisan Control of  
Election Administration  
and Vote Counting**

States where legislators passed or considered bills in 2021 that would allow political partisans to seize control of certain aspects of election administration typically handled by professional election personnel.

- Bill introduced in state legislature
- Bill passed by state legislature



Source: Brennan Center for Justice

**STEP 3 BLOCK THE BALLOT BOX**

The racist assault on our vote reached a dangerous tipping point in 2021 as state legislatures brazely introduced at least 10 bills in seven states during the 2021 legislative session that would have directly empowered partisan officials to reject or overturn election results.

- In 2021, at least three states have passed bills, and at least 10 more have considered bills that would sabotage the democratic process in more indirect ways. And so far in 2022, legislators in at least 13 states have introduced bills to undermine the democratic process. These bills allow political partisans to seize control of certain aspects of election administration typically handled by professional election personnel. This makes it easier for partisans to accomplish what some attempted unsuccessfully in 2020—throwing out legitimate votes.
- Georgia’s new law allows the state to remove county election officials if they find “nonfeasance, malfeasance, or gross negligence.” After the 2020 election, at least 10 county board of election members were, or are, likely to be removed using new laws passed by the state legislature. At least five of them were people of color, and most were Democrats.

**STEP 4 ESTABLISH A ONE-PARTY RULE**

There are several efforts to recruit rogue election officials to facilitate conspiracy theories and advance the goals of election deniers.

At least 21 candidates running for secretary of state and 24 running for governor back President Trump’s false claims that the 2020 election was illegitimate. In Pennsylvania, election deniers have recruited their followers to run for local positions that oversee polling places and vote counting. Money is pouring into election official races featuring election deniers: in the six states that had the closest vote margins in 2020, the amount of campaign contributions is more than three times higher than at this point in the 2018 election cycle, and eight times higher than 2014.

Our elections are at risk when officials who espouse misinformation and dangerous beliefs hold positions in election administration.

For example, in Colorado, a county clerk with connections to prominent election conspiracy theorists gave unauthorized access to the county’s voting systems, which allowed an unauthorized person to copy the voting machine hard drives and disseminate sensitive information to the public. Authorities began to investigate the matter last fall. In the following months, the clerk was indicted on state criminal charges and announced that she will run for Colorado secretary of state.

We must pass legislation that strengthens voting rights and puts the checks in place to maintain the integrity of our electoral process. Otherwise, states may allow bad actors to take office and rewrite history with racist rhetoric, lies, and dangerous conspiracy theories.

## Tactic #4: Intimidation

### ELECTION OFFICIALS UNDER ATTACK

Election officials are facing violent threats for carrying out their duties and upholding the legitimacy of the 2020 election. These threats reached an alarming level in 2020 and continued in 2021.

- Election officials worked tirelessly to administer the 2020 election in the face of unprecedented circumstances. Government officials and election experts [described](#) the 2020 election as the “most secure” election in American history. [Rather than](#) being celebrated for their heroic efforts, election officials have been subjected to an unprecedented level of threat and intimidation.
- According to a recent survey, [nearly one in three](#) local election officials know of at least one election worker who has left their job at least in part because of fears for their safety, increased threats, or intimidation, and nearly one in five had their lives or their families’ lives threatened in 2020 because of their jobs.
- Numerous election officials and workers from diverse metropolitan communities [reported](#) threats of violence against them and their family members, including elderly parents and children. Some election workers reported that the persistent harassment compelled them to flee their homes and hire counselors for their traumatized children. The threats were particularly graphic for women and election workers of color and often laced with racist and gendered insults. Three in five local election officials are concerned that threats and harassment will make it harder to retain or recruit election workers going forward.

**1 in 4**

local election officials are concerned about being assaulted on the job.

**1 in 6**

local election officials have personally experienced threats.

### ELECTION OFFICIALS FACE PRESSURE FROM PARTISAN ACTORS TO THWART THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS TO ADVANCE PARTY INTERESTS.

In [at least 17 states](#), legislators introduced bills that increase partisan power to control or punish officials. Alabama, Arizona, Iowa, and Texas considered bills aimed at coercing election officials through the threat of criminal and civil penalties. Florida, Georgia, and Texas introduced bills that would empower partisan poll watchers at the expense of election workers. These bills have the double-pronged effect of threatening election officials and increasing the risk of partisan sabotage of election outcomes.

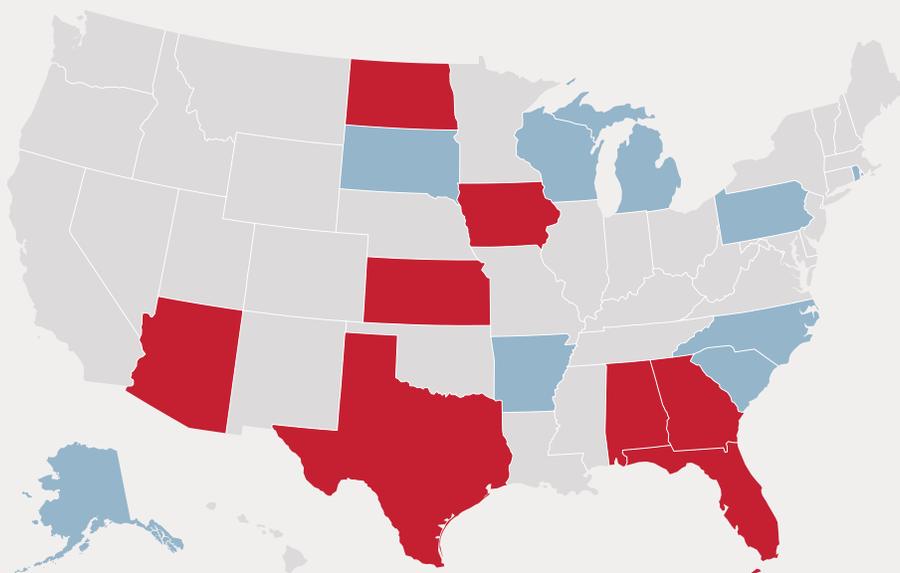
- Election officials have reported many instances of partisan actors [attempting to interfere with elections](#) and pressuring officials to favor candidates of a particular party. The most well-known and flagrant instance of this was when President Trump pressured Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to “find 11,780 votes... because we won the state” in a [recorded phone call](#). Raffensperger refused to do this, and the legislature removed him as Chair of the State Board of Elections. In Nevada, the Republican Secretary of State [was censured by her own party](#) for telling the truth: that the 2020 election in Nevada was free and fair. Nearly three times as many local election officials are very worried about interference by political leaders as they were before 2020.



**CONTROLLING OFFICIALS AS  
ELECTION SABOTAGE:  
Partisan Power to Control  
or Punish Election Officials**

States where legislators passed or considered bills in 2021 that permit partisan punishment of election officials and increase the power of partisan poll watchers.

- Bill introduced in state legislature
- Bill passed by state legislature



Source: Brennan Center for Justice

**ELECTION WORKERS ARE RESIGNING  
AND RETIRING AT ALARMING RATES.**

This underscores the difficulties they have faced over the past year and exposes a new threat to our democratic system.

Large numbers [↗](#) of election officials have resigned [in the past year ↗](#), and it appears this may only be the tip of the iceberg. One in five local election officials are “very” or “somewhat” unlikely to continue serving through 2024. The primary reasons they plan to leave their jobs are politicians’ attacks on the system, stress, and retirement plans. Almost 35 percent of local election officials are [eligible to retire ↗](#) by the 2024 election. It is not clear who will replace them, nor whether those willing to take the job in the future will share the commitment to free and fair elections or if they will be sympathetic to election sabotage efforts.

**1 in 5**

local election officials are “very” or “somewhat” unlikely to continue serving through 2024.

# CONTRIBUTORS



**SEAN MORALES-DOYLE**  
Acting Director, Voting Rights, Democracy, Brennan Center for Justice

## A Blueprint for Fighting Disenfranchisement: Voting Restoration

Voting Restoration Disenfranchisement tells voters they are unwelcome; that they do not have a full stake in their communities; that they are second-class citizens. It tells them their voices do not matter. When rights restoration is framed in these terms, voters across the political spectrum support the reform.”



**DAMON HEWITT**  
President & Executive Director, Lawyer’s Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

## Choosing Democracy: The Importance of Federal Courts in Protect Voting Rights

Although the federal judiciary has proven to be a fickle friend to voting rights, civil rights advocates cannot give up on it as a source of justice. As much as we know we cannot litigate our way past voter suppression; we cannot legislate and organize our way past it, either. We need all approaches. And that means having a fair shot at litigation before the federal courts. This is important ground we must not cede.”

## THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE’S COMMITMENT TO REBUILDING AMERICA POST COVID-19



**DR. SILAS LEE**  
Pollster, Trial Consultant, & Sociologist

## COVID-19 & the Urban League Movement

An analysis of data from public opinion surveys and research institutions reveals how the pandemic elevated entrenched disparities in already fragile social and economic groups. COVID-19 had a multiplier effect on financially stressed African Americans and families of color because many lacked the financial and social capital to absorb the prolonged economic turbulence caused by the virus.”



**SENATOR CHUCK SCHUMER**  
Majority Leader of the United States Senate, D-NY

## Restoring Honor to the U.S. Senate

The lessons of history are clear: when elected officials have to take a stand, when they have to go on record and show the American people where they are on the issues, then the right side of history ultimately prevails. I believe the same will hold true in this fight to protect our Democracy. The forces that oppose democracy today are strong, but as we’ve seen in recent history, the resolve of the American people is stronger.”



**CONGRESSMAN  
BENNIE THOMPSON**  
D-MS 2nd District

**January 6th: Protecting the Future of our Democracy After a Historic Attack on our Capitol**

One of the things that concerns me most in the aftermath of January 6th is that the lies that led up to the violence of that day haven't gone away. Before Donald Trump lost the 2020 election, he worked for months to sow distrust in our election systems, casting doubt on the legitimacy of important tools for voter access such as drop boxes and vote-by-mail. That misinformation contributed to the violence of January 6th. As Chairman of the Select Committee investigating January 6th, I'm leading the effort to make legislative recommendations to help make sure nothing like that day ever happens again.



**NSÉ UFOT**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
The New Georgia Project

**Protecting the Right to Vote Requires a Massive Movement That Centers Black Political Power**

The failed January Senate vote on federal voting rights legislation clarified for the rest of the country what many of us already knew. It showed us who is willing to center our rights and who still cleaves to a racist status quo. Who insists that they are on our side even as they demand that Black America continue to work with a political party that barely believes in our right to exist—much less wield actual power. But, most importantly, it showed us the limits of what our current elected leaders in Washington are able, or in some cases, willing, to do for us."



**CONGRESSWOMAN  
MAXINE WATERS**  
D-CA 43rd District

**Our Nation's Housing Crisis Is a Threat to Our Democracy**

What history tells us is something that civil rights movement leaders before us knew all too well: the struggle for democracy in America is directly linked to the fight for fair and affordable housing. We've watched Republican-led state legislatures implement and strengthen prohibitive voter ID laws that disproportionately impact people of color, including those experiencing homelessness who don't have a permanent, fixed address or the required personal documentation to vote. As Chairwoman of the House Committee on Financial Services, I will never stop fighting to preserve our country's democracy and to secure fair and affordable housing for all."

**PLUS REMARKS FROM:**



**KAMALA HARRIS**  
Vice President of the  
United States

HOW TO

# RECLAIM YOUR VOTE

## Recent attacks on voting rights include:

- Changes to polling locations
- Reducing the number of places to vote
- Voter ID laws
- Limiting early voting
- Obstructing “Souls to the Polls” Sundays
- Reducing voting by mail and more with the goal to suppress OUR Voice and OUR Vote by subverting our democracy

Here are five steps you and your family can take to Reclaim Your Vote. Protect your vote and spread the word in your community.

## STEP 1

### ↳ CHECK YOUR REGISTRATION STATUS

First, check your voter registration status on our Reclaim Your Vote page using the QR code.

## STEP 2

### ↳ KNOW THE VOTER ID LAWS IN YOUR STATE

Every state has a different rule on voter identification. Some accept state and college IDs, others only accept valid driver’s licenses, and some require ID to vote in person. Learn about your local voter ID laws on our Reclaim Your Vote page using the QR code.

Voter ID laws can change, depending on the state. If you have any questions, you should contact your local election official.

## STEP 3

### ↳ KNOW WHERE YOU VOTE

Some states have also made recent changes to polling locations. Find your polling place on our Reclaim Your Vote page using the QR code.

## STEP 4

### ↳ MAKE A PLAN: KNOW BEFORE YOU VOTE

Did you know that some states use paper ballots instead of electronic ballots? Unfortunately, both require standing in line at a polling place, and some states have moved to eliminate or restrict voting by mail, making it more difficult to cast your ballot.

This is crucial information depending on how many polling stations are in your district, including unforeseen circumstances. For example, polling machines occasionally malfunction, polling hours may vary, and there may be long lines to cast your vote, among other issues. Therefore, the best way to prepare is to develop a plan for voting in your district well in advance.

## STEP 5

### ↳ RECLAIM YOUR VOTE IN EVERY ELECTION

The coordinated effort to suppress the vote can be overcome by reclaiming your vote. By voting in every federal, state, and local election, you have a say in who gets elected, and, by extension, you have a say in what becomes law. This is how you Reclaim Your Vote.

Find a local election in your state on our Reclaim Your Vote page using the QR code.



Scan to **Reclaim Your Vote!**

# AFFILIATES

**Akron, Ohio**

Akron Community Service Center & Urban League

**Alexandria, Virginia**

Northern Virginia Urban League

**Alton, Illinois**

Madison County Urban League

**Atlanta, Georgia**

Urban League of Greater Atlanta

**Aurora, Illinois**

Quad County Urban League

**Austin, Texas**

Austin Area Urban League

**Baltimore, Maryland**

Greater Baltimore Urban League

**Battle Creek, Michigan**

Southwestern Michigan Urban League

**Binghamton, New York**

Broome County Urban League

**Birmingham, Alabama**

Birmingham Urban League

**Boston, Massachusetts**

Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts

**Buffalo, New York**

Buffalo Urban League

**Canton, Ohio**

Greater Stark County Urban League, Inc.

**Charleston, South Carolina**

Charleston Trident Urban League

**Charlotte, North Carolina**

Urban League of Central Carolinas, Inc.

**Chattanooga, Tennessee**

Urban League of Greater Chattanooga, Inc.

**Chicago, Illinois**

Chicago Urban League

**Cincinnati, Ohio**

Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio

**Cleveland, Ohio**

Urban League of Greater Cleveland

**Columbia, South Carolina**

Columbia Urban League

**Columbus, Georgia**

Urban League of Greater Columbus, Inc

**Columbus, Ohio**

Columbus Urban League

**Denver, Colorado**

Urban League of Metropolitan Denver

**Detroit, Michigan**

Urban League of Detroit & Southeastern Michigan

**Elizabeth, New Jersey**

Urban League of Union County

**Elyria, Ohio**

Lorain County Urban League

**Englewood, New Jersey**

Urban League for Bergen County

**Farrell, Pennsylvania**

Shenango Valley Urban League

**Flint, Michigan**

Urban League of Flint

**Fort Lauderdale, Florida**

Urban League of Broward County

**Fort Wayne, Indiana**

Fort Wayne Urban League

**Gary, Indiana**

Urban League of Northwest Indiana, Inc.

**Grand Rapids, Michigan**

Grand Rapids Urban League

**Greenville, South Carolina**

Urban League of the Upstate, Inc.

**Hartford, Connecticut**

Urban League of Greater Hartford

**Houston, Texas**

Houston Area Urban League

**Indianapolis, Indiana**

Indianapolis Urban League

**Jackson, Mississippi**

Mississippi Urban League

**Jacksonville, Florida**

Jacksonville Urban League

**Jersey City, New Jersey**

Urban League of Hudson County

**Kansas City, Missouri**

Urban League of Greater Kansas City

**Knoxville, Tennessee**

Knoxville Area Urban League

**Las Vegas, Nevada**

Las Vegas-Clark County Urban League

**Lexington, Kentucky**

Urban League of Lexington-Fayette County

**Little Rock, Arkansas**

The Urban League of the State of Arkansas

**Long Island, New York**

Urban League of Long Island, Inc.

**Los Angeles, California**

Los Angeles Urban League

**Louisville, Kentucky**

Louisville Urban League

**Madison, Wisconsin**

Urban League of Greater Madison

**Memphis, Tennessee**

Memphis Urban League

**Miami, Florida**

Urban League of Greater Miami

**Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

Milwaukee Urban League

**Minneapolis, Minnesota**

Minneapolis Urban League

**Morristown, New Jersey**

Morris County Urban League

**Nashville, Tennessee**

Urban League of Middle Tennessee

**New Orleans, Louisiana**

Urban League of Louisiana

**New York, New York**

New York Urban League

**Newark New Jersey**

Urban League of Essex County

**Norfolk, Virginia**

Urban League of Hampton Roads, Inc.

**Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**

Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City

**Omaha, Nebraska**

Urban League of Nebraska, Inc.

**Orlando, Florida**

Central Florida Urban League

**Peoria, Illinois**

Tri-County Urban League

**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

Urban League of Philadelphia

**Phoenix, Arizona**

Greater Phoenix Urban League

**Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**

Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh

**Portland, Oregon**

Urban League of Portland

**Providence, Rhode Island**

Urban League of Rhode Island, Inc.

**Racine, Wisconsin**

Urban League of Racine & Kenosha, Inc.

**Rochester, New York**

Urban League of Rochester

**Sacramento, California**

Greater Sacramento Urban League

**Saint Louis, Missouri**

Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis

**Saint Petersburg, Florida**

Pinellas County Urban League

**San Diego, California**

Urban League of San Diego County

**San Francisco, California**

Urban League of the Greater San Francisco Bay Area

**Seattle, Washington**

Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle

**Springfield, Illinois**

Springfield Urban League, Inc.

**Springfield, Massachusetts**

Urban League of Springfield

**Stamford, Connecticut**

Urban League of Southern Connecticut

**Tacoma, Washington**

Tacoma Urban League

**Tallahassee, Florida**

Tallahassee Urban League

**Tampa, Florida**

Urban League of Hillsborough County, Inc.

**Tucson, Arizona**

Tucson Urban League

**Tulsa, Oklahoma**

Metropolitan Tulsa Urban League

**Warren, Ohio**

Greater Warren-Youngstown Urban League

**Washington, D.C.**

Greater Washington Urban League

**West Palm Beach, Florida**

Urban League of Palm Beach County, Inc.

**White Plains, New York**

Urban League of Westchester County

**Wichita, Kansas**

Urban League of Kansas, Inc.

**Wilmington, Delaware**

Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League

**Winston-Salem, North Carolina**

Winston-Salem Urban League

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