

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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PUBLISHER

Marc H. Morial

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Tara Thomas

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Teresa Candori

RESEARCH PARTNER

Brennan Center for Justice

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Michael Tomlin-Crutchfield

SENIOR EDITOR

Dr. Silas Lee

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Rhonda Spears Bell

DESIGN

Untuck

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.

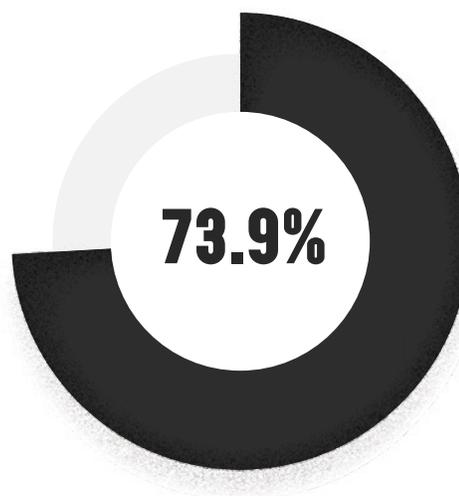
IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THERE'S BEEN MUCH IMPROVEMENT IN THE EQUALITY INDEX. WHAT'S THE POINT?

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

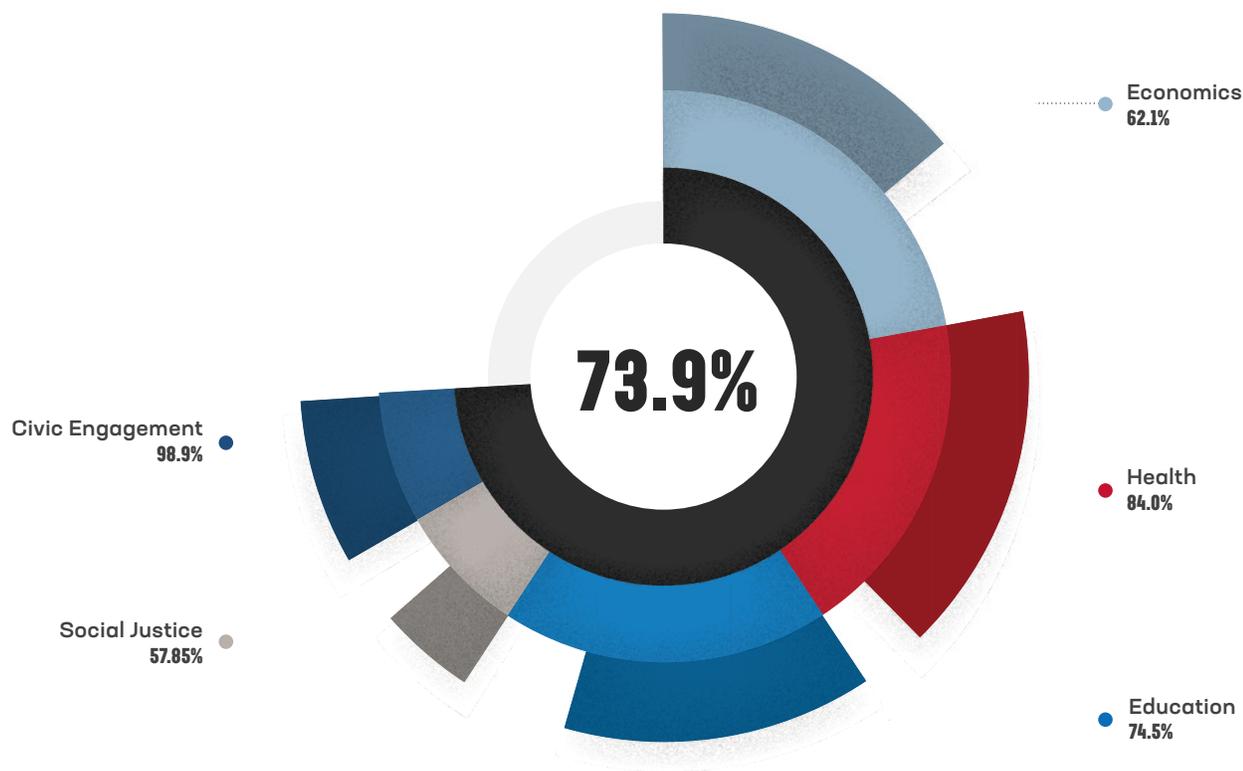


EQUALITY INDEX BREAKDOWN

Key / Weighted Index Categories

- **Economics**
30%
- **Health**
25%
- **Education**
25%
- **Social Justice**
10%
- **Civic Engagement**
10%

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 “breathtaking 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.

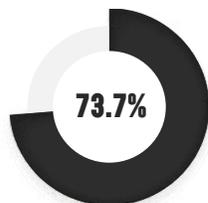
President & Founder of the Women's Institute for Science, Equity and Race



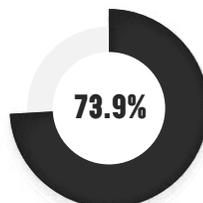
We entered 2022 with bated breath. Would this be the year that the pandemic will end and our lives return to normal? For Black America, a return to normal is an America where measures of well-being too often find Black Americans at or near the bottom. A return to normal means the inequality in education, 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

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

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.



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.

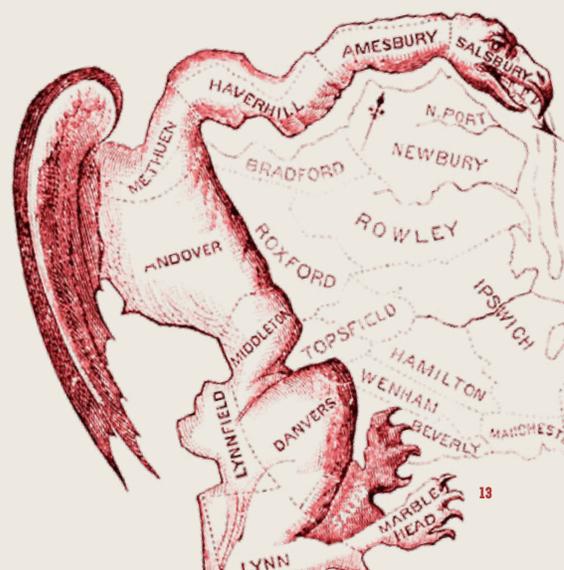


PEOPLE OF COLOR MADE UP

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.



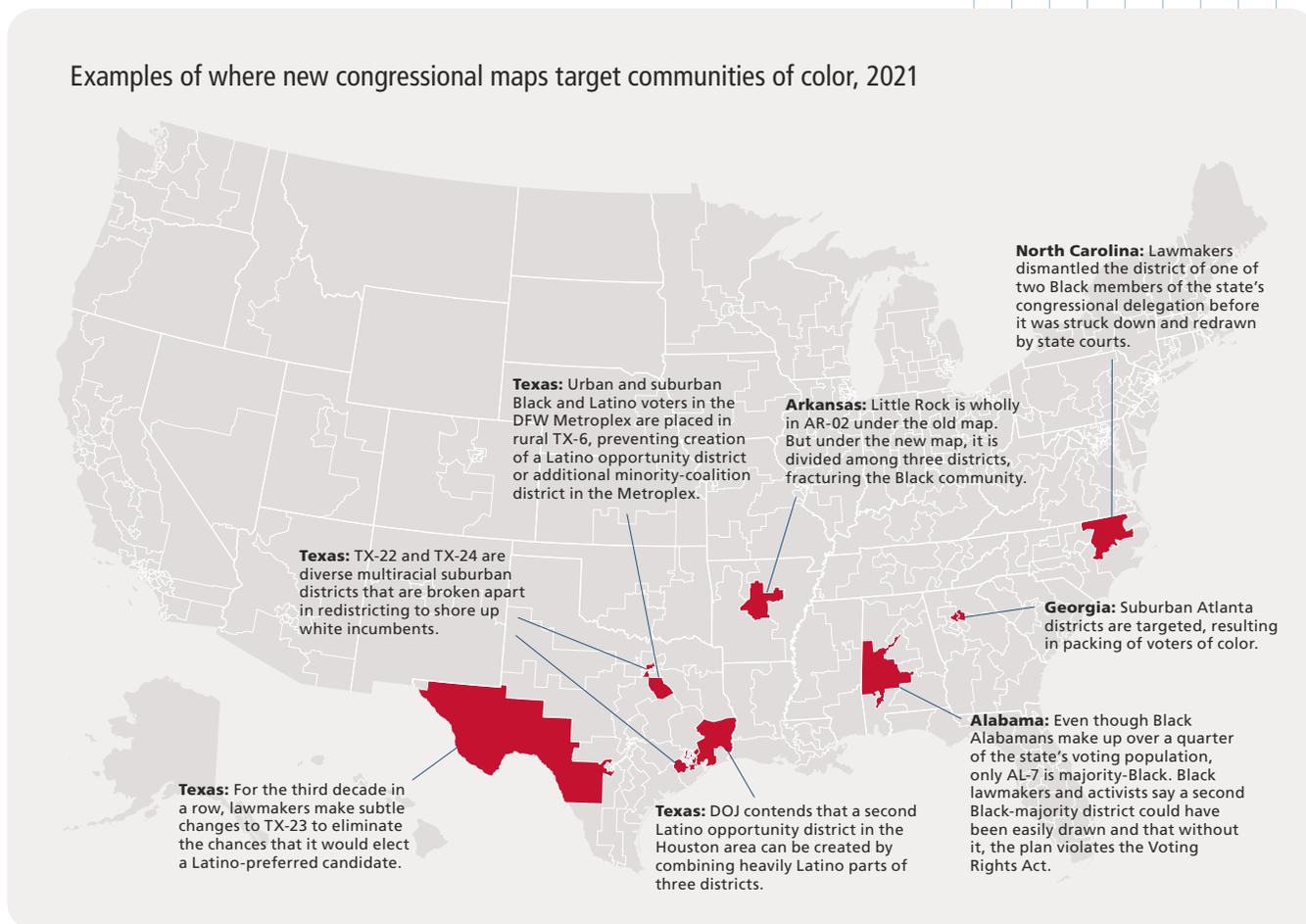
BLOCKING THE BALLOT BOX

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.

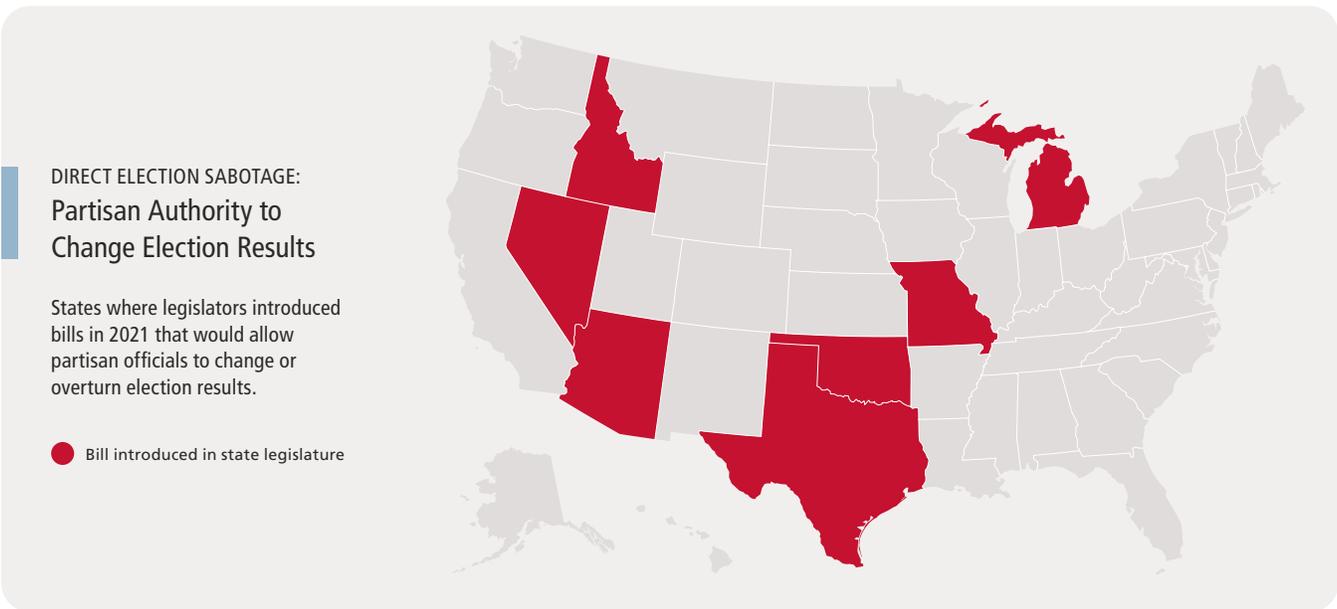
STEP 1 DISCREDIT THE VOTE

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](#).

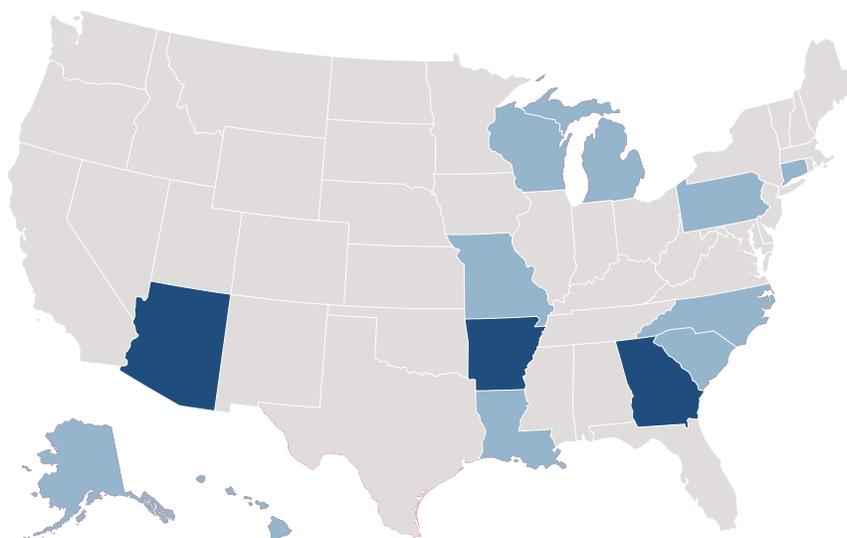


Source: Brennan Center for Justice

**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 brazenly 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.

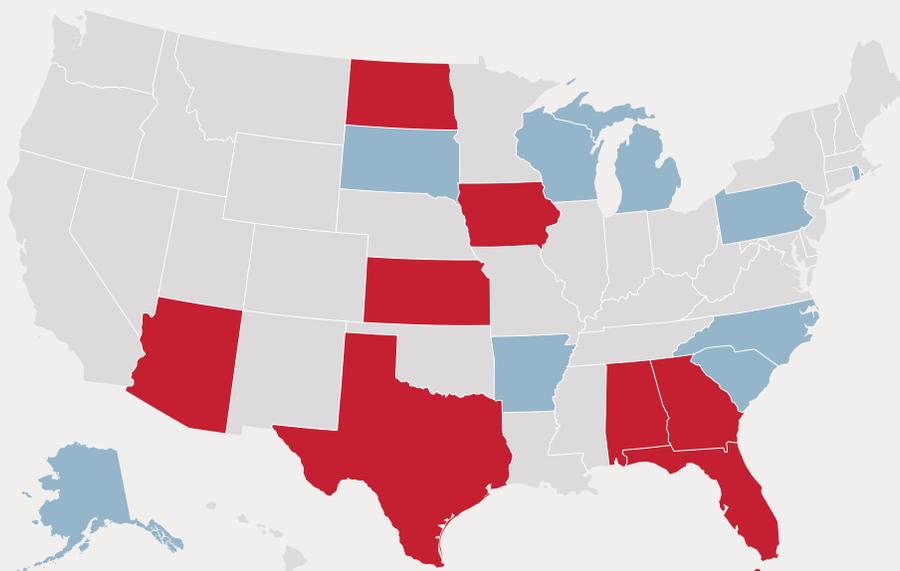
- Election officials have reported many instances of partisan actors [attempting to interfere with elections](#) and pressuring officials to favor candidates of a particular party. The most well-known and flagrant instance of this was when President Trump pressured Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger 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

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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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URBAN LEAGUE AS WE CONTINUE TO
ADVANCE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS
TO EMPOWER AFRICAN AMERICAN AND
OTHER URBAN COMMUNITIES.**

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80 PINE STREET, 9TH FLOOR | NEW YORK, NY 10005 | WWW.NUL.ORG