

June 18, 2020

**Re: ACLU Urges Cosponsorship of the VoteSafe Act, S. 3725**

Dear Senator:

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) strongly urges you to cosponsor S. 3725, the VoteSafe Act, introduced by Senator Kamala Harris, a bill that safeguards Americans' ability to vote during the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge Congress either to pass it as a freestanding bill, or include its provisions in the next COVID-19 relief package.



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The bill is limited to address the impact of COVID-19 on the 2020 elections. It sets **baseline federal standards** and provides the funding necessary to ensure Americans can vote safely and freely. These baseline rules include (i) the option to vote absentee by mail and (ii) a minimum early in-person voting period of 20 days. These reasonable, uniform standards are **only applicable to the 2020 elections** and would apply for all eligible voters. The bill also provides \$2.5 billion in funding to help states implement these requirements.

In addition to providing minimum federal standards to ensure people can vote safely during the pandemic, the bill also provides an additional \$2.5 billion in discretionary grant incentives for states to increase the safety, security, and accessibility of voting. The additional grant funding gives states the necessary flexibility to address the specific needs of their voters by improving voting processes and technologies, upgrading voter registration options, undertaking public education campaigns about new procedures, and ameliorating burdens faced by voters facing the greatest impediments to voting safely, such as voters with disabilities, language minority voters, and Native American, Alaska Native, and rural voters.

Polling on this issue consistently makes clear that Americans broadly support the availability of both no-excuse absentee voting by mail and expanded in-person voting options during the pandemic regardless of party affiliation.<sup>1</sup> Since the ACLU first called for congressional action in March, we have witnessed another calamitous primary election take place, this time in Georgia. With reports of thousands of voters never receiving their absentee ballots, hours-long lines at the polls, inadequate poll worker training to operate the new voting systems, and equipment and technological failures, the Georgia primary is the

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Kahn, *Most Americans, Unlike Trump, Want Mail-In Ballots for November if Coronavirus Threatens: Reuters/Ipsos Poll*, REUTERS (Apr. 7, 2020), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-poll/most-americans-unlike-trump-want-mail-in-ballots-for-november-if-coronavirus-threatens-reuters-ipsos-poll-idUSKBN21P3G0>.

latest in a series of postponed or chaotic elections that have occurred during this highly consequential election cycle.<sup>2</sup> Many states and counties are still unprepared to address the seismic shift in election administration necessary to ensure the 2020 elections can proceed safely during the pandemic, without diminishing the fundamental right to vote. They need federal leadership and resources to help protect voters.

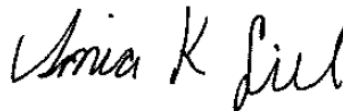
It is critical that Congress provides the electoral framework and funding necessary for state officials to address the unprecedented challenges facing voters, poll workers, and election administrators during the COVID-19 pandemic. The VoteSafe Act would ensure that Americans can participate in our democracy on a full and equal basis at the ballot box, without having to choose between casting their ballots and protecting their health.

Please contact Lauren Moore at [Lauren.Moore@harris.senate.gov](mailto:Lauren.Moore@harris.senate.gov) to cosponsor S. 3725. If you have any questions about the ACLU's endorsement of the VoteSafe Act, please contact me at [sgill@aclu.org](mailto:sgill@aclu.org).

Sincerely,



Ronald Newman  
National Political Director  
National Political Advocacy Department



Sonia Gill  
Senior Legislative Counsel  
National Political Advocacy Department

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Niesse and Alan Judd, *Election fiasco reveals flaws with Georgia's new voting system*, THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION (Jun. 13, 2020), <https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/election-fiasco-reveals-flaws-with-georgia-new-voting-system/FoZjtLGPYccOrHzXHiPbDL/>; Pam Fessler, *Chaos In Primary Elections Raises Fears For November*, NPR (Jun. 15, 2020), <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/15/876474124/chaos-in-primary-elections-raises-fears-for-november>.