



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

ADOPTED POLICIES ON ELECTIONS AND VOTING RIGHTS

In Support of Local Control Over Elections

Adopted at the 94th Annual Meeting in 2026

WHEREAS, voting is essential to maintaining and preserving our democracy and one of the most important rights and responsibilities that U.S. citizens have; and

WHEREAS, the United States Constitution gives the power to regulate the time, place, and manner of elections to states and localities, with a limited role for Congress in setting rules for federal elections; and

WHEREAS, city and county governments are the backbone of election administration in the United States and administer federal elections often with limited to no financial support from the federal government; and

WHEREAS, mayors stand ready and willing to work with federal leadership to craft commonsense rules to ensure all elections are secure, accessible, and trusted, but reject federal efforts to dictate unfunded mandates to their cities; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution gives no power to the federal executive branch to draft election policy or impose election rules or regulations on states and localities,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors calls on the federal government to adhere to the Constitution and respect the role of cities in election administration and to consult and collaborate with mayors on the development of any election policies, including full funding to cities and states for their implementation.

Preserving Our Democracy and Assuring the Ability of Cities to Keep Their Residents Safe and Make Sure Their Rights are Protected

Adopted at the 91st Annual Meeting in 2023

WHEREAS, in recent years many state legislatures have taken actions that preempt local laws and have reduced the ability of cities to keep their residents safe and make sure their rights are protected; and

WHEREAS, many these actions are directed squarely at the diverse population of our cities; and

WHEREAS, many of these actions constitute an outright attack on our democracy; and

WHEREAS, these actions have included preempting local gun safety ordinances, local actions aimed at protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ residents, local voting policies and practices aimed at making it easier to vote and increasing both voter registration and voter turnout, and other local ordinances or actions aimed at keeping residents safe and protecting their rights; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, 45 states prohibited local governments from passing an ordinance related to certain aspects of firearms regulation, and the six most common areas of firearm regulation explicitly preempted were possession, transfer, sale, ammunition, ownership, and transportation; and 20 states imposed penalties on local government for regulating firearms and the most common penalty, civil liability, is present in 18 states and this punitive preemption targets local elected officials in an effort to deter action and deny them the full weight of their offices as representatives of their communities; and

WHEREAS, the Missouri legislature is undertaking an effort to take over the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, which city leaders believe would insert more politics into public safety and make the City less safe, less accountable, and less able to serve and protect the City's highest priority, its residents; and

WHEREAS, the Mississippi legislature recently enacted legislation expanding state control over local policing and local criminal court matters in Jackson, the state's largest city which happens to have, the highest percentage of Black residents of any major U.S. city; and

WHEREAS, in response to an unprecedented number of voters (particularly Black and brown voters) participating in the 2020 election, Georgia enacted legislation that reduced the number of ballot boxes in communities of color, limited voting hours, added additional voter ID requirements, and made it illegal to provide those waiting in line with food or water, among other measures; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, the Texas legislature passed and the Governor signed bills limiting citizens' capacity to vote and expanding protection for partisan "poll watchers," volunteers deployed by major parties to observe the voting and vote counting processes, which many people consider the presence of poll watchers to be a form of voter intimidation, and also limiting mail-in voting and early voting hours and restricted in-person voter assistance for people with disabilities or those requiring support in the voting process; and

WHEREAS, since 2018, LGBTQ+ people have been under a coordinated attack in state legislatures across the country and these legislative assaults have rapidly increased each year, with more than 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills introduced so far this year, many of which target transgender youth, including dozens of dangerous and discriminatory bills threatening to prevent them from receiving life-saving health care, and many of those bills involve preemption by banning or threatening punitive action against schools and local governments that otherwise want to protect LGBTQ+ people from discrimination; and

WHEREAS, since the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which repealed *Roe v. Wade*, at least 14 states have already implemented near-total abortion bans, leaving one in three American women without access to safe, legal abortion care and state legislatures across the country have introduced hundreds of bills to include medically unnecessary restrictions that limit access to abortion care; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee has taken aim directly at local governments in this area by enacting legislation that prohibits them from providing insurance to municipal employees that covers abortion, or from creating funding sources for people to travel to another state to obtain a legal abortion,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors registers its strong opposition to all efforts by state governments to restrict the ability of cities to keep their residents safe and make sure their rights are protected; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors considers these state efforts as an attack on our democracy, on home rule, and on the rights of city residents and their elected representatives to manage the affairs and assets of their municipality; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors pledges to undertake an all-out campaign to preserve our democracy by bringing visibility to the state preemption of local laws that cities have enacted to keep their residents safe and make sure their rights are protected and to develop and implement a strategy to reverse the current trend in state enactment of racist and punitive legislation directed at our cities and our residents.

In Support of Voting Rights

Adopted at the 89th Annual Meeting in 2021

WHEREAS, voting is essential to maintaining and preserving democracy and of the most important rights and responsibilities that U.S. citizens have; and

WHEREAS, American democracy is stronger when all eligible voters participate in elections; and

WHEREAS, everyone's vote matters, regardless of who you are, where you live, or what party you belong to; and

WHEREAS, our vote can be our choice; and

WHEREAS, voting rights around the country are under historic attack; and

WHEREAS, the fight against restrictive voting measures is the most significant test of our democracy we've seen for decades; and

WHEREAS, since January 1, 2021, at least 18 states have passed laws that restrict access to the ballot according to the Brennan Center; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. House of Representatives has passed H.R. 1, the For the People Act, the most significant voting rights and democracy reform passed in more than a century, but the Senate has failed to take up this critical legislation; and

WHEREAS, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would restore a provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that was gutted by the Supreme Court in 2013,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges Congress to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which is meaningful legislation protecting voting rights including the right to vote, the procedure of voting and democracy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges the Senate to pass H.R. 1, For the People Act without delay; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors objects to any effort to restrict voting, especially those being pushed by state legislatures nationwide.

In Support of Safe and Accessible Elections

Adopted at the 88th Annual Meeting in 2020

WHEREAS, voting is a Constitutional right, the foundation of our democracy, and a primary civic duty of all eligible Americans; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented public health crisis, which has created challenges and uncertainty around our local, state, and national electoral processes; and

WHEREAS, several state primary elections have already been disrupted in 2020, and, according to an April survey conducted by Pew Research, two-thirds of Americans expect the 2020 presidential election could likely be disrupted, if our country is still contending with the coronavirus pandemic this fall; and

WHEREAS, a significant majority of Americans support absentee voting, automatic voter registration, and other efforts to make voting safer and more accessible during this crisis; and

WHEREAS, national, state and local program activities have been effective in automating voter registration, increasing awareness of elections, and increasing turnout among eligible U.S. voters; and

WHEREAS, 31 Republican, Democratic, and Independent member mayors of The United States Conference of Mayors have been selected as Founding Mayors of Civic Cities initiative, a non-partisan effort created by When We All Vote to increase voter participation in our communities and address safety concerns; and

WHEREAS, Congressional lawmakers have affirmed the need for state and local leaders to protect their elections from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic by allocating additional funds in bipartisan legislation, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors supports national efforts to increase voter participation and safeguard the integrity of our electoral system; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges election administrators and partners in federal, state, and county government to provide safe voting options, including vote-by-mail, in order to ensure that we protect the health of all eligible Americans who wish to exercise their right to vote in 2020, especially for populations that are vulnerable to coronavirus including senior, disabled, and immunocompromised Americans.

In Support of Voting by Mail

Adopted at the 88th Annual Meeting in 2020

WHEREAS, voting is essential to maintaining and preserving our democracy and one of the most important rights and responsibilities that U.S. citizens have; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has already caused major disruptions in our elections system and likely will cause additional disruptions and requiring citizens to vote in person or making it difficult for them to obtain absentee ballots may jeopardize public health overall and the individual health of those citizens; and

WHEREAS, states began passing absentee ballot laws for civilians in the late 1800s; in the 1980s, California became the first state to allow eligible voters to request absentee ballots for any reason at all, including their own convenience; and by 2018, 27 states had adopted no-excuse absentee laws; and

WHEREAS, since California instituted no-excuse absentee voting, ten states have allowed all residents to request an absentee ballot for every election and voters in these states make significant use of absentee ballots: In 2018, the Election Administration and Voters Survey, conducted by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, reported that 68 percent of voters in states with permanent absentee laws voted with an absentee ballot; and

WHEREAS, currently five states - Oregon, Washington, Utah, Colorado, and Hawaii - have gone a step further and sent ballots to all voters; a few other states have all-mail voting in smaller jurisdictions; and California has been gradually rolling out all mail voting; and

WHEREAS, The United States Conference of Mayors recognizes that voting by mail is a trend that is growing in this country, that instances of voter fraud involving it are rare, and that in this time of COVID-19 it provides a way for citizens to exercise their constitutional rights and responsibilities without endangering their health and that of their communities,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors strongly encourages the federal government, and states and localities to expand opportunities for vote by mail in advance of the November 3, 2020 national election and thereafter.

Voting Rights

Adopted at the 49th Annual Meeting in 1981

WHEREAS, voting is a fundamental right of all citizens in this country, guaranteed by the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, and is the underpinning of our democratic system of government; and

WHEREAS, prior to passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, thousands of citizens were disenfranchised because of their skin color, language or religion; and

WHEREAS, the Voting Rights Act requires that certain state and local governments preclear any new changes in election procedures with the Justice Department or the U.S. District Court (Section 5) and that certain states and localities provide English language assistance to Spanish-speaking voters; and

WHEREAS, HR3112 and S895, currently pending in the Congress, would extend these temporary provisions to 1992; and

WHEREAS, over 800 changes in election laws have been blocked under Section 5 provisions to prevent certain redistricting, at-large elections, annexations and other changes which would have had the effect of discriminating against minorities; and

WHEREAS, there is a continued need for the protections afforded by the Voting Rights Act,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the U.S. Conference of Mayors reaffirms its strong commitment to voting rights and supports quick reenactment of the Voting Rights Act through 1992, to ensure non-discrimination in all voting and election procedures.

Registration of Young People as Voters

Adopted at the 48th Annual Meeting in 1980

WHEREAS, one of the primary purposes of education in both public and private elementary and secondary school systems historically has been to provide young people with the skills and interest to become active and contributing citizens in the governments of our cities, counties, states, and nation; and

WHEREAS, the basis of becoming such an active and contributing citizen is in the exercise of one's right to vote; and

WHEREAS, recent analysis of elections at the city, county, state, and national level suggest that the exercise of this right by our young people is declining at an alarming rate; and

WHEREAS, a decline in voter participation by our nation's young people poses a serious threat to the ability of our cities, counties, states, and nation to incorporate the ideas and to respond to the needs of all segments in our population; and

WHEREAS, the organizational and educational mechanism of our school systems continue to provide a natural focus for our efforts to reverse this decline and to insure that our young people continue to play an active role in the future of our communities,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that The U.S. Conference of Mayors hereby encourages programs which would provide that every young person eligible to receive a high school degree and who is eligible to vote would be encouraged to register to vote.

Voting Rights

Adopted at the 38th Annual Meeting in 1970

WHEREAS, the voting rights of every American citizen are guaranteed under the Constitution and the protection of these rights is essential to the preservation of our form of government; and

WHEREAS, in 1965 the Congress of the United States passed the Voting Rights Act to insure that these rights would be delivered to all citizens, regardless of race, creed or national origin; and

WHEREAS, the enforcement of the Voting Rights Act has resulted in the delivery of this right to millions of citizens for the first time; and

WHEREAS, this act must now be extended by the Congress and any weakening of its provisions could seriously jeopardize rights that have been safeguarded; and

WHEREAS, the United States Senate has acted to strengthen the Voting Rights Act, including an amendment providing for voting rights to be extended to 18-year-olds; and

WHEREAS, the youth of this nation are deeply concerned over the effectiveness of the political system and are entitled to greater participation through their concern and their service to their country,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that The U.S. Conference of Mayors urges the Congress of the United States to adopt the Senate version of the Voting Rights Act, including the provision for the 18-year-old vote.