



Launch Extensive Voter Communications Program around Online Registration and Mail Voting

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Election officials and policymakers are responding to the threat of COVID-19 by rapidly expanding voter access to mail-in ballots, which will dramatically reduce the need for voters and poll workers to enter into close physical proximity on Election Day. States and local jurisdictions are removing barriers to mail-in voting by eliminating excuse requirements for absentee ballots, opening new ballot drop-off locations, extending deadlines for requesting and sending back mail-in ballots, and/or automatically mailing ballots to all registered voters — all critically important steps in protecting public health while safeguarding our nation's most precious accountability mechanism. But these changes will only be fully effective if voters are aware of them.

Robust voter education is essential to ensuring all Americans stay safe and engaged in the 2020 election cycle.

Unfortunately, many Americans are uninformed about the voting laws in their jurisdiction — even those that have been in place for years. For instance, in states without early voting, more than four in ten people erroneously believe that they can vote in the days leading up to the election. Similarly, the plurality of Americans living in states with same-day voter registration **incorrectly believe they must be registered before Election Day** in order to vote.

To address the pressing issue of voter education, policymakers should embrace the recommendations of the National Vote at Home Institute. These include advising eligible voters to register to vote and/or update their address well in advance of the election; sending notices to voters through multiple channels, including “snail mail,” print media, and digital; and mailing clear voter instructions alongside their ballots, so voters can ensure their ballot will be counted. This education plan should be developed and launched well in advance of the general election. Doing so will help elections departments spread incoming voter registration forms and ballot requests over a longer period of time and reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks. Finally, communications should be conducted in partnership with local voter education groups, who can customize messaging and outreach strategies to specific audiences.