

# #VOTE YOUR HOPE



**S O C I A L   J U S T I C E   I N I T I A T I V E**

## **RESOURCE BOOK**

**National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.**

**Dr. Jerry Young, President**

**Social Justice Commission**

**Dr. Bruce D. Datcher, Chairman**

# President Jerry Young's Perspective



Medgar Evers, the martyr and civil rights icon from Jackson, MS, once said, (from the perspective of racial and political reform), "Our only hope is to vote." Therefore, our urgent call is to vote in numbers like never before. We must be committed to ensuring that all persons of age are not only registered to vote, but are educated, have access to, and exercise that fought for and died for right to let our voices be heard through the power of the vote. We must be informed of and involved in the political process so that we make wise decisions and elect persons who have the interest and fortitude to be men and women of moral integrity, conviction and character.

For the past three months, the Social Justice Ad Hoc Committee of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. has been actively involved in producing this resource book to provide information on voter education, voter registration and voter access to encourage voter participation, not only on the national level but on the state, local and city levels.

**WE REALLY  
NEED TO VOTE  
OUR HOPE!**

## Purpose Statement

This commission shall help facilitate, correlate, and disseminate to the constituent churches in an expeditious manner various information and/or data regarding all civic, social and political concerns (local, state, national, and international) deemed necessary and appropriate by the leadership of National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

This commission will provide the constituent churches with pertinent and relevant information regarding social, political and governmental issues relative to the community in general and the African American community in particular.

This commission will promote a change in policies, procedures, processes, structures, institutions, and functions to insure that they work for the common good of all mankind in recognition of the Imago Dei (the image of God).

## Social Justice Initiative 4 Areas of Concentration

1. Voter Education | 2. Voter Registration | 3. Voter Access | 4. Voter Participation

### Voter Education

#### BACKGROUND

Successful voter registration drives do not necessarily guarantee great turnout at the polls. However, the mobilization and partnering of community grassroots organizations and local churches can serve as an effective way to motivate people to vote by educating them on the political process, the candidates, and the campaign issues, particularly as they relate to their own lives. Voter education events can include the following: candidate debates, issue-based forums, flyers, email communications, and political fairs.

According to TIME Magazine, in the 2016 elections, the 102.7 million no-show voters outnumbered the 62.9 million who voted for DONALD TRUMP and the 65.8 million who voted for HILLARY CLINTON. Year after year, eligible voters choose not to engage in their civic duty for various reasons.

We believe that the “ground game” is also important in educating voters. Hence, persons should be identified in each state, particularly the swing states, who have the respect, savvy, and organizational skills to “rally the troops on the ground” with “point persons” for “certain sections” of each swing state to make sure African Americans vote in larger numbers this year, particularly in the following states: Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Mississippi. A slogan such as “With 10 We Can Win” can be beneficial in encouraging persons to register to vote and turn out to vote. Each state MUST be organized and equipped with information on the issues at hand and the candidates who are running. Therefore, local pastors and churches must be trained and instructed on procedures and methods.

## **WHEN & HOW TO VOTE & WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR**

A primary component of educating voters is to ensure they are well-equipped with information needed to register to vote and prior to casting a ballot.

### **Voter ID Laws in Each State, Particularly in the Swing States**

- For example, thirty-six states have identification requirements at the polls. (Birth certificates, passports, social security cards, etc.)
- Some states have strict photo ID laws, under which voters must present one of a limited set of forms of government-issued photo ID in order to cast a regular ballot – no exceptions.
- Voter ID laws have been estimated by the U.S. Government Accountability Office to reduce voter turnout by 2-3 percentage points, translating to tens of thousands of votes lost in a single state.
- Over 21 million U.S. citizens do not have government-issued photo identification.

#### **Voter Registration Guidelines/Restrictions**

- Itemize documents required to prove citizenship or identification in each state, particularly the swing states.
- Note any restrictions/penalties for voter registration drives at the state level.
- Highlight the window of time in which voters can register.
- Highlight states with online voter registration.
- Because states have different voter registration deadlines and requirements, encourage persons to register well in advance of Election Day.
- Although voter registration deadlines vary, some states allow individuals to register for the first time and cast ballots on Election Day.

### **Validate That the Voter Has Not Been Purged From The Rolls (at the Precinct Level)**

- Eligible voters are sometimes purged as a result of inaccurate data, and often without adequate notice to the voters. Often, voters learn they've been purged when they show up at the polls on Election Day.
- The most common excuses for purging voter rolls are to filter out voters who have changed their address, died, or have failed to vote in recent elections.

### **Educate the Voter On the Place to Vote In His Or Her Precinct**

- Although every state offers options to vote in-person on Election Day, specify the polling place or vote center and its hours of operation.

### **Educate the Voter On How to Fill Out the Registration Form & How to Cast the Vote**

- Each state coordinator provides a sample ballot or a link to the sample ballot at the precinct level.
- Each state coordinator provides a sample registration form or a link to successfully complete the registration form.

The education effort includes relevant information disseminated via voter information cards, flyers, questionnaires, door-to-door canvassing, and partnering with other organizations to help raise awareness of an upcoming election and its deadlines.

Educating voters can be done through townhall meetings and candidate forums, which both present excellent opportunities for constituents to learn about a candidate's platform.

## **HOW TO EDUCATE VOTERS**

Educating the electorate is the **ONLY** way to boost **VOTERS'** motivation. Turning out the **VOTE** matches the will of the people.

- (1) Educate voters on local, national, and global issues.
- (2) Provide voters with resources such as flyers, pamphlets, websites, five-call apps, etc.
- (3) Host voter seminars and webinars to explain the voting process.
- (4) Explain the concept of polling.
- (5) Educate voters on the timeline for registration.
- (6) Inform voters on legislators' voting records.
- (7) Make voters aware of voter's ID laws, intimidation tactics, and resources to access for assistance.

## **APPS DOWNLOADED FROM APPLE, GOOGLE & OTHER RESOURCES**

- (a) Five-call app - lets you know who your elected officials are
- (b) Voter Helpline - having trouble at polls
- (c) Vote.org - laws for all states
- (d) iVote Voting - a voting reminder
- (e) We Vote Ballot Guide- tells you who candidates are on the ballot

## **REDEPLOYMENT STRATEGY**

Political campaigns today are won or lost in the so-called ground war—the strategic deployment of teams of staffers, volunteers, and paid part-timers who work the phones and canvass block by block, house by house, voter by voter into areas that need strengthening. Suggested reading materials for this effort: “Inside the Mind of a Voter” by Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison and “Ground Wars” by Rasmus Kleis Nielsen.

**SUMMARY:** A Strong Political Campaign Strategy equates to a Strong Campaign that begins with educating the voter. Nationwide, the Census found that Black voter turnout was 59.6% in 2016, down sharply from 66.6% in 2012 - and the lowest Black turnout rate since 2000. The 2016 rate was lower than White voters (65.3% of whom turned out) but higher than other minority groups. In 2012, Black voters had a higher turnout than White voters for the first time, according to the Census. Many other races did not vote as well, but the thrust of the message this year must be to educate African American voters, in order to produce a historical turnout for the 2020 elections.

## Voter Registration

## A large, stylized graphic of the numbers 1, 2, and 3. The number 1 is red, 2 is black, and 3 is red. They are rendered in a bold, sans-serif font with thick strokes and are positioned in the upper left quadrant of the slide.

## OF VOTER REGISTRATION

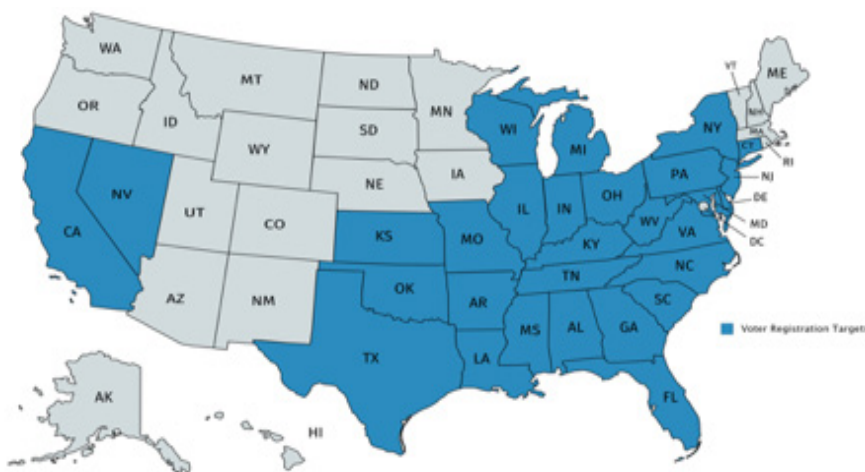
1. Designate a point of contact from your church.
2. Contact your local ELECTION OFFICE for the rules and guidelines on running a voter registration program.
3. Get a list of unregistered African American voters in your area from the National office.

Voter Registration is a part of the #VoteYourHope Campaign for the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc. We should leave a large footprint at the ballot box in the General Election this November. There are multiple offices that will be on the ballot in November, including the very important Presidential Election. The following are some elements to consider and incorporate into Voter Registration efforts conducted by the National Baptist State Conventions and Churches.

WWW.VOTEAMERICA.COM is a valuable digital resource that each church uses. Go to the website [www.voteamerica.com](http://www.voteamerica.com) to check your registration status, register to vote, vote by mail, get your absentee ballot, receive election reminders, find your polling place, and contact your election office.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT VOTER REGISTRATION RULES ARE DIFFERENT FOR EVERY STATE. BEFORE REGISTERING SOMEONE TO VOTE PLEASE CHECK WITH YOUR ELECTION OFFICE FOR RULES AND GUIDELINES.

The map below shows the states that have at least 5,000 unregistered African American voters:



# Voter Access

## BACKGROUND

Throughout our Nation the Democratic party/minority is constantly faced with voter suppression and intimidation to hinder and stop our right to cast a vote for the candidate of our choice.

Many battleground states are facing purging rolls, eliminating polling places which result in long lines to discourage the voter from casting their vote. Their strategy is, if the line is too long, we the voter, will go home and tell others that the line is too long, and you might as well stay home and not vote. The most recent scheme was that voters who requested and received mail-in ballots, found that the return envelopes were already sealed upon receipt. It was noted that if the voter unseals the envelope, then it will be constituted as tampered with and the ballot voided.

One of the oldest intimidating method is threatening the African American Voter with violence or the threat of incarceration, as they show up and present identification. Additionally, we are now seeing our brown brothers and sisters worrying about being held falsely or threaten by I.C.E.

Stacey Abrams, founder of Fair Fight, stated that Republicans and the Far Right have devoted over 60 million dollars toward voter suppression. Due to Covid-19, many states want to safeguard their voting citizens' health, by allowing them to stay home and vote by mail in. Republicans in many states are fighting in court to not allow the mail-in votes.

## THE RATIONALE

Too often it has been stated by the African American voters that "my one vote won't matter." But as we approach November 2020, we must convey to our voters that each and every vote will count. Our forefathers fought for our rights and many having suffered and died for the privilege of equality to cast a vote. We cannot take our votes for granted; and we should not ignore nor allow the death of many to be for naught.

We, as African Americans, have a voice today that many did not have 50 years ago, or even 30 years ago, and we certainly should not entertain the thought to stay home and not vote in this election as in 2016. An estimated 6 million African Americans, 59.6%, according to the Pew Research Center, decided they would not vote for either candidate in 2016, resulting in today's turmoil.

## ACTION PLAN

To discover, define and dissect actions used to suppress and eliminate the votes of the Democratic Voter.

Our task will be to spotlight various tactics that have been and is currently in use to discriminate and discourage the voter. We must define each tactic to educate our communities and provide information for distribution throughout our Convention and disseminate the gathered information to State Conventions, District Associations, and Local Congregations.

### **1. Voter Registration and Identity:**

A. Voters must confirm they are still registered in their state as some states are purging rolls. Voters cannot allow registration deadlines for their state and county to pass, prior to realizing their eligibility to vote in the upcoming election.

### **2. Precinct Locations:**

A. Many minority community polling places are being closed and voters are not aware, and the discovery is not made until Election Day, resulting in them being at the wrong location. This is a problem because many may not have transportation or time left in the day to find the correct polling place.

B. Each voter should verify their voting location 90 days prior to November 3, 2020 and make a final location check at least 2 weeks prior.

### **3. Senior Voters:**

A. Many seniors depend upon mail-in ballots and attention should be given to the quality of the return envelopes.

B. Some states and counties are fraudulently sealing return ballot envelopes so when the voter unseals the envelope to place the ballot inside to return it, it is considered tampered with and is a voided ballot.

C. Some states and counties are sending wrong party ballots to minority voters. Democrats are receiving Republicans voting ballots along with applicant's wrong date of birth.

### **4. Change of Voting Format:**

The State of Texas for the first time will not allow straight Democrat or Republican ticket voting, as in previous years. Each voter must mark each candidate of their choice, rather than a straight Democrat or Republican ticket; and education should be provided to the voter for awareness of candidates and procedures.

### **5. Early Voting States:**

It will be imperative for everyone to vote early in states where early voting is an option; in light of voter suppression, intimidation tactics, and consequences of bad weather on Election Day. We must vote early!

# Voter Participation

## NBC Voting Participation Committee Proposed Action Plan

Millions of eligible Americans today are either choosing not to vote or are prevented from participating in the electoral process. Voter participation remains low by historical measures. Since 2000, voter participation for U.S. citizens has hovered between 54 and 64 percent during presidential elections and between 41 and 48 percent during midterm elections. In 2016, falling participation defined the election, as swing states such as Wisconsin and Ohio saw voter participation drop by approximately 3 percent and 4 percent, respectively, compared with 2012. Voter participation rates are particularly low during primary and local elections. During the 2016 primaries, only 28.5 percent of eligible voters cast votes for party candidates, while a mere 14.5 percent participated in the 2012 primaries. For local mayoral elections, participation falls below 20 percent in 15 of the country's 30 most populous cities.

America's representative government is warped by low voter participation, and, of those who do vote, the group is not representative of the broader population of eligible American citizens. Research shows that communities of color, young people, and low-income Americans are disproportionately burdened by registration barriers, inflexible voting hours, and polling place closures, making it more difficult for these groups to vote.

This report outlines the following recommended actions to drive voter participation for the 2020 election, sponsored by the National Baptist Convention. Voter participation committee propose the following:

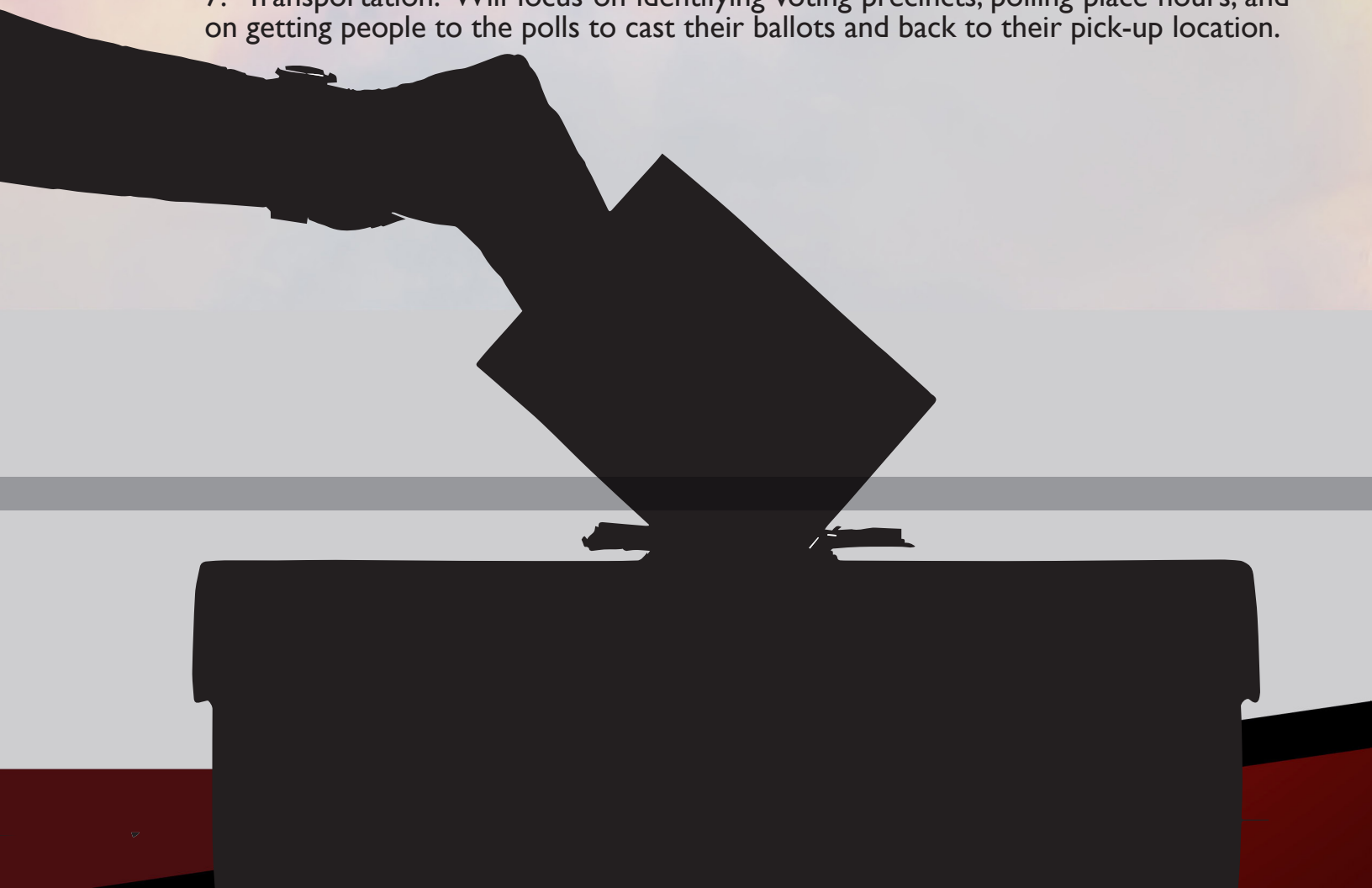
1. Encourage early voting: One study found that early voting could increase participation by about 2 to 4 percent. Early voting aims to make voting more convenient for eligible voters by providing them with greater flexibility and opportunities to cast ballots.
2. Encourage absentee voting: Absentee voting has been projected to increase voter participation by about 3 percent over time.
3. Vote-at-home with vote centers: Colorado's vote-at-home plus vote center policy increased voter participation in the state by about 2 to 5 percent.
4. Same-day voter registration/voting: States with SDR, which includes Election Day registration and voting on the same day, experience, on average, a 5 percent increase in voter participation and consistently have the highest participation in the country.

5. Restore rights for formerly incarcerated people: Low participation among formerly incarcerated people may be due, at least in part, to the lack of information provided to them about their voting rights while incarcerated and upon release. One survey found that 68 percent of ex-offender respondents failed to demonstrate an accurate understanding of how their conviction affected their right to vote. NBC Churches could host zoom conferences on educating the formerly incarcerated on their voting rights. An estimated 93 percent - or about 14 million - of formerly incarcerated people are eligible to vote based on current rights restoration laws.

6. Training will involve a focus on the millennials in particular, to motivate young eligible voters to participate in the voting process for local, state, and federal elections. Historically, young people - especially those of color - tend to vote at a lower percentage than their older counterparts. We would help NBC Churches with webinars that provides guidance and information about current barriers that show voter participation within this population. Secondly, training will also be provided for those working the polls, making sure they know how to operate the new voting machines, and to ensure the electorate learn how to use the new machine to ensure their vote counts during the election.

This would include voting machine demonstrations, where voters learned how to check the results of their electronic voting, on a paper ballot.

7. Transportation: Will focus on identifying voting precincts, polling place hours, and on getting people to the polls to cast their ballots and back to their pick-up location.



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