



DEAR FRIENDS,

EFFORTS TO DISENFRANCHISE people have been a regular part of United States history. Voting has always been closely guarded precisely because it is so powerful. It is why people have been willing to die to vote. As the late Civil Rights legend John Lewis wrote in his final essay, “The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it.”

This presidential election will take place under unprecedented pandemic circumstances. People nationwide are facing ongoing attacks on the right to vote. In this election, like in every election, your ACLU of Maine team is working to ensure that every Mainer is educated about their voting rights, and that those rights are protected.

Let's use our power to vote!

Alison Beyea, *Executive Director*

LET PEOPLE VOTE!

To request your absentee ballot, visit:

www.maine.gov/cgi-bin/online/AbsenteeBallot/index.pl

LOOKING TO NOVEMBER

MAINE HAD ITS first test of conducting an election during COVID in our postponed July primary election. It is a testament to the months of advocacy, preparation and planning by voting rights groups, including the ACLU of Maine, and municipal and state officials that we can say our primary election ran smoothly.

We have lost no time turning our sights to November. A presidential election will pose even more challenges.

There will be many more in-person voters, many more absentee ballots, and many more people registering on Election Day. The Maine Secretary of State's office issued almost 200,000 absentee ballots for the primary and it is predicting 600,000 absentee ballots in November. And the US Postal service is facing efforts to cut funding and slow service. We want to avoid long lines at the polls and delays in delivering mail or processing absentee ballots.



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So as we look to November, we will work with coalition partners and call on elected officials to:

- begin counting absentee ballots early;
- expand ballot scanner capacity to deal with the unprecedented absentee ballot volume;
- keep polling places open, unless absolutely necessary to consolidate for public health; and
- engage in extensive voter education.

Not all voter suppression is nefarious. Some of it just does not take into consideration how an action could impact New Mainers, people of color, poor people, people with limited English proficiency and people with disabilities. This is why the coalition recommends any changes in polling locations must center how the change would affect these voters.

What the ACLU is doing

- ▶ advocating with officials for safe and accessible in-person voting
- ▶ educating voters about early registration and absentee voting
- ▶ coordinating a voter protection hotline with attorneys on Election Day

We are going to keep up our education campaign to ensure more voters register early, vote early and vote with absentee ballots. And we are going to ensure that polling places remain open, safe and accessible for those voters whose only option is to vote in-person. On voting day, we will keep our voter protection hotline staffed with attorneys to respond in the moment to allegations of impropriety or challenges at the polls.

We are also working with the National ACLU on a project called Let People Vote. You can check out the website to see all the advocacy and litigation the ACLU is doing to ensure voting by mail is an easily accessible option in every state. When you support the ACLU of Maine, you're not only ensuring your neighbors in Maine have the right to vote, but that every eligible voter in the country can exercise their right to vote.

Let People Vote: www.aclu.org/voter

OUR COMMITMENT TO RACIAL JUSTICE

THE ACLU HAS always treated voting rights as the bedrock of democracy. Voting rights are, at their core, a racial justice issue. Attempts to restrict, limit, and suppress voting are about the majority maintaining power. Maine may feel hundreds of miles away from racist voter identification laws and voter suppression. But elected officials have routinely tried to curb voters' power in Maine.

Indigenous people in Maine did not get the right to vote in national elections until a 1954 ballot referendum. And they couldn't vote in Maine state elections for another 13 years—until 1967. This was despite Congress granting Native Americans citizenship in 1924. In more recent history, as the number of New Mainers grew, the LePage administration repeatedly introduced a voter identification bill. In 2011, the legislature repealed Maine's same-day voter registration law, but a successful People's Veto campaign restored it. In 2016, pamphlets were distributed at Bates College to discourage students from voting.

The ACLU of Maine has long worked for racial justice, not just in our voting rights advocacy but in all of our work. Take for example, our criminal legal system

reform efforts. Black and indigenous people are disproportionately targeted by police, overcharged by prosecutors, convicted by juries, sentenced by judges, and mistreated in prisons. And Black and indigenous defendants are more likely to receive a court-appointed attorney, subjecting them to a system with little oversight and few requirements to ensure quality representation.

Our advocacy to reduce the use of cash bail is racial justice work. Our work to raise the threshold for charging people with felony drug trafficking is racial justice work. Maine has some of the toughest drug laws in the country, and Black people in Maine are overcharged with drug trafficking and disproportionately sentenced to prison, compared to white people engaging in the same acts.

Our work to end youth incarceration is racial justice work. The first child to be incarcerated at Long Creek Youth Detention Facility, in 1853, was believed to have been a Black boy named George Washington Rollins. His crime was stealing bread. We support a coalition of impacted young people in their ongoing effort to shut down Long Creek, Maine's youth detention facility. We've supported these efforts through changing the

LEARN MORE

For resources about police and prison abolition, the history of white supremacy and how to be an ally in the movement, we have compiled an anti-racist resources webpage.

Visit it here:

www.aclumaine.org/readinglist

public conversation on youth incarceration, through litigation and through legislative efforts.

While the ACLU of Maine has long been committed to racial justice, we recognize we are in the midst of a transformative moment. The movement that has coalesced around George Floyd's murder is pushing for more than incremental reform. As partners in this movement, so are we. As supporters of the ACLU, so are you. You are protesting, having difficult conversations with friends and family, educating yourselves, and supporting efforts in your community. And like you, we recognize our work of learning, listening and educating ourselves never ends.

Together, we will keep up our work, as partners in this movement for Black lives and for an end to systemic racism for all.



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CREWE FOUNDATION MATCHING FUND

Thanks to the generosity and leadership of the Crewe Foundation, every new or increased gift made by December 31, 2020 will be matched — up to \$50,000!

CREWE



Double your impact with a tax-deductible gift today. Your support fuels our urgent civil rights and civil liberties priorities including:

- Ensuring the burdens of COVID-19 don't unfairly fall on our most vulnerable communities
- Pushing Maine leaders to divest from police, and reinvest in our communities
- Fighting to ensure every ballot counts

If you've already contributed to the ACLU of Maine, thank you! You can still make a gift toward the match if you would like.