



# Latino Policy & Politics Initiative

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **UCLA VOTING RIGHTS EXPERTS AND MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS TEAM UP TO ADVOCATE FOR UNIVERSAL VOTE BY MAIL AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

*The UCLA Voting Rights Project has issued recommendations in partnership with the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA to urge officials across the nation to make changes to protect voters' public health.*

The UCLA Voting Rights Project has partnered with the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA to urge officials across the nation to implement universal vote by mail with a set of best practices and recommendations informed by a medical perspective in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The 2020 elections are expected to be a record year for turnout among voters of color, young people and other groups that have a significant stake in the future of this country,” said Matt Barreto, co-founder of the UCLA Voting Rights Project, a project of the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative. “Voting officials across the nation need to act now to protect the right to vote for all citizens and to ensure that people can fulfill their democratic rights in the safest and easiest way possible. Universal vote by mail ensures that everyone has access to the ballot box.”

The recommendations are part of ongoing advocacy by the UCLA Voting Rights Project and the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative. They are pushing for the implementation of universal vote by mail for upcoming primaries and the November general election out of concern that the current public health crisis and efforts to encourage “social distancing” will depress voter turnout, particularly for voters of color and other underrepresented groups.

The recommendations made in partnership with the medical experts, state that vote by mail is a safe option to prevent the spread of coronavirus and underscores the health risks that in-person voting poses for poll workers and those who head to the ballot box in person.

“Voting by mail is significantly safer than voting in person given just how infectious COVID-19 is proving to be. This pandemic offers an urgent opportunity for us to transition to a vote by mail system that protects public health in the short term and in the long term will increase voter participation,” said Dr. Annabelle de St. Maurice, a UCLA Health infectious disease specialist who consulted on the project.

The recommendations to implement universal vote by mail are based on the following medically based findings:

- Based on studies about the length of time coronavirus can survive on paper products and hygiene protocols established by the United States Postal Service, mailed ballots represent a low risk for potential contamination.
- The viability of coronavirus is longer on plastic and metal surfaces, which are common in polling places, thereby increasing infection risk to those voting in person.
- Hygiene protocols such as constant cleaning and disinfecting, hand washing and social distancing can be expensive and would be difficult to implement at polling places.
- Public health guidelines should drive the implementation of a universal vote by mail system.

The joint recommendations [are available here](#).

### **About UCLA Voting Rights Project**

The UCLA Voting Rights Project, the marquee advocacy program of UCLA LPPI, leverages teaching, research and legal advocacy to enforce and expand voting rights in the states and localities across the country.

The UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative (UCLA LPPI) is a comprehensive think tank that addresses the most critical domestic policy challenges facing communities of color in the U.S. through research, advocacy, civic engagement and leadership development that expand opportunities for all Americans.

For more information, visit [latino.ucla.edu](http://latino.ucla.edu).

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