



Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

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UU advocacy in the nation's capital

Write Here! Write Now!

Contact: advocacy@uusj.org or 703-786-5206; www.uusj.org

Delivery of Letter - Organizers: All letters due by Thursday, June 18, 3pmET

New online: [Letter Submission Form](#); Emailed to: advocacy@uusj.org;

Mail to: UUSJ c/o Lavona Grow, 2308 N. Buchanan St., Arlington, VA 22207



Secure Our Vote! Urge your Senators to provide \$4 billion for free, fair, safe, and secure elections -- and support the United States Postal Service!

WHY ARE WE WRITING NOW?

Time is running out. COVID-19 presents an unprecedented challenge to our elections and endangers our democracy. No citizen should have to make a choice between their health and their democratic right to vote. The Senate may consider another stimulus package within the next month or more. **We must urge our senators now to provide at least \$4 billion in funding for the 2020 elections and protect the United States Postal Service (USPS). A functioning Postal Service is critical for safe vote-by-mail elections.**

BACKGROUND

Defending Our Democracy is a key priority for UUSJ. The Advocacy Corps went to Capitol Hill in March 2019 to urge Congress to restore the protections of the Voting Rights Act and to stop voter suppression, and in November 2019 to urge the Senate to adequately fund election security. To ensure that all eligible voters are able to exercise their right to vote and are confident that the election will be conducted in a safe, secure manner, Congress must now include funds to protect our health and our elections. Changing our voting systems requires a great deal of money, and **state budgets have been stretched to the breaking point due to the pandemic.**

In the stimulus package passed in March, Congress included \$400 million towards state funding for this year's elections. It was a start but it's not enough to ensure that all states can run safe and fair elections. According to election experts, in order to ensure that COVID-19 doesn't keep millions of people from voting, states and localities will need approximately \$4 billion of federal funds to administer the elections. Congress needs to provide the funds for online registration, vote-by-mail, early voting and safe in-person voting.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the [HEROES Act \(H.R.6800\)](#) on May 15 which includes \$3.6 billion towards the much-needed funding and provisions to secure our vote -- and health. The HEROES Act also includes necessary funding for the USPS, now under severe threat. With the pandemic driving down mail volume by as much as 50 percent this year, the USPS is on track to run out of money by September 2020.

The Senate majority leader has not scheduled a vote on the HEROES Act. There is no stimulus package currently that would include funding for states in support of the elections and similarly for the USPS under consideration in the Senate.

UU GROUNDING

Our 5th Principle, "The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large" compels us to advocate to protect the integrity of our national elections, which is key to our democratic process.

(See other side for Key Message, Talking Points, and Sample Letter)

KEY MESSAGE/ASK

Provide \$4 billion to adequately fund states and localities. Protect the USPS. A functioning Postal Service is essential for safe vote-by-mail elections. We should not have to choose between our health and our right to vote. Promoting and protecting the democratic process is a fundamental principle of our UU faith.

SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

[use your own examples, tell your story, and/or draw on some of these suggested points]

- **States and localities need adequate federal funds NOW to fund, prepare for and administer the November elections.** Millions of citizens will want to protect their health and vote by mail. Funding should also support expanded early voting and online and same-day registration. Polling places will need to be modified to ensure they are safe for voters and poll-workers.
 - **Support the provisions for state funding for the elections and USPS in the HEROES Act in the next stimulus bill.** (The bill includes \$3.6 billion, we support \$4 billion as recommended by election experts.)
 - **We should not have to choose between our health and our right to vote.**
 - **Preserving the Postal Service isn't a partisan issue.** The USPS enjoys overwhelming public support in polling surveys, even in "normal" times. But the value of a strong Postal Service is even greater in this time of crisis. The Postal Service receives NO tax dollars for operating expenses.
 - **A functioning Postal Service is critical for safe vote-by-mail elections.** The Postal Service is the only organization in the country that has the resources, network infrastructure and logistical capability to regularly deliver to every residential and business address in the nation - and in rural areas!
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SAMPLE LETTER TO YOUR SENATORS

[Use your own words. Speak from your heart -- this is only a sample letter.]

[Today's date]

Dear Senator _____ *[name]* _____, *[write to both of your Senators]*

I'm a Unitarian Universalist from *[optional: name of congregation and location]*. I ask you to support funding of \$4 billion in the next stimulus bill to protect voters' health and secure our votes, and to enable states and localities to provide the ability for citizens to vote-by-mail. I also support the USPS and want to make sure that it has the resources it needs to ensure safe and free vote-by-mail elections.

During this unprecedented pandemic, many state and county election officials from both parties have made clear that they need funding in order to hold safe and secure elections in November. This should not be a partisan issue.

I'm concerned because ... *[insert your concern such as: health, secure voting, do you work at the polls? Do you know elderly people who are at risk? Etc. What's happening in your state or local area or a family member in another state - like Wisconsin! Why you are concerned., etc.]*

Fair and accessible elections are the backbone of our democracy. Please urge Senate leadership to provide \$4 billion in the next stimulus bill.

[adapt a closing such as...] I care deeply about this issue. We should not have to choose between our health and our vote. I would like to hear your position on how to ensure free, fair, safe and secure elections.

Sincerely, *[YOUR NAME and include your COMPLETE ADDRESS so they know you are a constituent and how to contact you.]*

(See other side for Why We Are Writing, Background, UU Grounding, and Instructions for Delivering Letters)