



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Redistricting with a Racial Justice Focus: A Statement from the Voting Rights Working Group**

The process of redistricting, which has already begun in a number of states with the appointment of members to state redistricting commissions or with hosting public hearings, will determine the political boundaries for the next decade within which our diverse American communities must have the opportunity to elect their chosen representatives to federal, state, and local governments. Redistricting encompasses the process by which states and the jurisdictions within them redraw the district maps that shape legislative, congressional, and local power.

The member organizations of the Voting Rights Working Group have been working for up to a century on behalf of communities of color and language-minority communities, to ensure participation in the redistricting process by defending and advancing the political representation of communities of color whose voices have been systemically silenced, specifically in the area of redistricting. Our collective commitment to the communities we serve includes advocacy, movement lawyering, community education, and litigation—work led by and on behalf of impacted communities centered on advancing racial justice. Through our longstanding racial justice-focused work, we have built strong relationships with community-based organizations, leaders in communities of color, and individual community members who are eager to assist in redistricting efforts around the country.

Leading with a racial justice-focus includes understanding and acknowledging our complex history of racial exclusion and segregation, recalling the systemic transgressions of Native American genocide and displacement, chattel slavery and enslavement in other forms (peonage and mass incarceration), Manifest Destiny and conquest, xenophobia, nativism, and Jim Crow laws and the ongoing systemic barriers in many areas of life that we continue to face as a result of those practices, in particular the long history of racial discrimination in voting and redistricting, which continues to this day. We seek a shared affirmative vision of a fair and inclusive society, focusing on building civic, cultural and political power of Native Americans, Latinos, Black Americans and Asian Americans, along with others, and prioritizing transformative solutions that dismantle structures of racial oppression.

Redistricting with a racial justice focus requires recognition of the longstanding and undemocratic efforts to control and reduce the electoral power of racial minorities in this country. This means placing top priority on compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act, and its core principle that communities of color should have a full and equal opportunity to elect their candidates of choice. This means a commitment to develop majority-minority districts where necessary to provide opportunities to elect minority-preferred candidates and where the legal conditions are met for the creation of those districts. This also means prioritizing the creation of minority influence, and minority coalition districts, where the legal conditions are not sufficient for the creation of majority-minority districts, or the communities seek those structures. At the same time, compliance with the Voting Rights Act is a nuanced, fact-specific inquiry and simplistic and crude interpretations of the Act should not be used as pretextual excuse for disadvantaging communities of color.

Finally, a racial justice focus requires facilitating and attending to the views of communities of color about how district lines should respect communities of interest; this entails equitable inclusion of all communities of color as members of line-drawing bodies and facilitating robust opportunities for minority input in line-drawing by eliminating obstacles, such as language, technology gaps, or the time or form of permitted input.

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*The Voting Rights Working Group is a loose consortium of 12 of the nation's most prominent and experienced non-profit organizations pursuing voting rights litigation on behalf of racial minorities. Our member organizations are non-partisan legal advocacy groups with decades of experience in using the law to promote and protect the voting rights of people of color. Our member organizations are:*

- *American Civil Liberties Union*
- *Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund*
- *Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC*
- *Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles*
- *Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law*
- *Demos*
- *LatinoJustice PRLDEF*
- *Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law*
- *MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund)*
- *NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund*
- *Native American Rights Fund*
- *Southern Coalition for Social Justice*