Every four years, without fail, reminders and requests to VOTE are circulated.

Many of these messages, especially those targeting Black voters stress the importance of voting by suggesting that the current election is the most important election there has ever been. This year, this sentiment is beyond true. For nearly four years our community has carried an unfair share of the consequences of systemic racism and anti-Blackness and a flagrant disregard for the responsibilities of leadership. COVID-19, much like Hurricane Katrina, exposed and made worse many of the challenges that have long plagued too many members of our community and it is important to ensure that we leverage the right to vote to repair our democracy in ways that meaningfully and measurably demonstrate that All Black Lives Matter. As we engage in the final weeks of Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts we encourage consideration of the following messages developed in response to our work in and with communities throughout the country.

Three (not always simple) things we’re encouraging every eligible voter to do (immediately):

1. Check your voter registration status
2. Request a ballot
3. Make a plan to vote early
Respect Black Minds...

**IT’S NOT THAT BLACK PEOPLE DON’T UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING.**

We’ve endured voter intimidation and suppression attempts since the 3/5th’s compromise. However, understanding the importance of voting in this particular election and respecting the historical significance of the hard-fought right to vote, many Black people fear their vote will not count—literally.

There is mounting evidence of voter suppression efforts—some allegedly involving state election officials. Instead of finger wagging in the face of Black voters, **GOTV EFFORTS MUST SPEAK TO HOW VOTERS CAN HOLD ELECTION OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR COUNTING THEIR (AND ALL VOTES).** Efforts of national organizations and partnerships should similarly focus on holding elections officials accountable for protecting every vote.

Those who are capable of being a Poll Worker should consider doing so. To learn more about what is required and how to sign up to work with your local election official visit: [https://www.eac.gov/voters/become-poll-worker](https://www.eac.gov/voters/become-poll-worker).

**VOTE BY QUADRANT**

Building upon the campaign devised by Mike Muse, NBJC encourages voters to remember that politics are local. Too often, the following four positions are filled by people who run unopposed, are appointed by elected officials without due process, and/or who serve in ways that reveal/affirm a disregard for all Black lives:

1. **District Attorney**
2. **Mayor**
3. **Police Commissioner/Sheriff**
4. **School Board**

We encourage efforts and partnerships that help to ensure voters are aware of candidates for each of the aforementioned positions and any evidence of what they have done or will do to ensure that every member of our beautifully diverse community can thrive.
There are a LOT of conversations about voting by mail. There’s even more misinformation about the process, much of it designed to prevent members of our community from participating in the process. Here are a few things that are important to know:

More than 75 percent of Americans can vote by mail this fall after numerous states relaxed their rules in response to the health crisis. This is an ever-evolving process and we encourage monitoring your state’s rules regarding voting by mail. Please share with others what you learn.

1. **You can confirm you’re registered to vote** [HERE](#).
2. **Register to receive a ballot by mail.** Some states send ballots to every registered voter while others require voters to request them. Check with your local board of election office to ensure that you will receive a ballot by mail, including by requesting one if required. [Search for your local board of election office HERE](#).
3. **Confirm voter registration deadlines.** In some states, the deadline to register to vote by mail may be a month before the Nov. 3 election. Check with your local election office to confirm your deadline. [Search for your local election office HERE](#).
4. **Make a plan to vote by mail early.** Some states mail out a ballot as early as 45 days before the election while others mail ballots less than a month before. Confirm the date(s) for your state and make a plan that includes requesting, if necessary, and returning your ballot in advance of the November 3, 2020 election.
5. **When completing your ballot follow all instructions to ensure your ballot is counted.** If you have questions call the number provided on the ballot.
6. **When returning your ballot, plan for challenges.** At present, 32 states do not accept ballots received after Election Day. There are ongoing court battles about mail voting that could change these deadlines. The Postal Service recommends that voters mail back their ballot at a minimum of one week before Election Day, which is Oct. 27th.
   - States that hold all-mail elections provide secure boxes where voters can drop in their ballots, and elections officials will collect them.
   - You can drop off your ballot at your local election office. In many states, you can have a third party, like a family member or neighbor, collect your signed and sealed ballot for you and drop it off to election officials.
7. **Finally, check to see whether your state has a smart bar code** so you can track your ballot on its way to your house and on its way back to the election office.

Since it just takes longer to count mailed ballots and at least 17 states do not allow ballots to be counted until Election Day we probably will not know results on election night. Prepare for this.
Keep that same energy after November 3, 2020!

Elections are but one critically important part of the political process. As such, it’s important to ensure that GOTV efforts include capacity investments that extend beyond November 3, 2020. This is important, in this election, for two reasons:

1. **Given current considerations regarding suppression, COVID-19, and related political realities it is not likely that we will have a clear winner of the presidential election the night of November 3, 2020.** GOTV efforts should prepare voters for this unprecedented, likely reality; and

2. **Election day is an important step in the process of civic participation and there are other important steps to take.** GOTV efforts should encourage and support voters with learning about and engaging with elected officials; shaping and advancing legislation; and supporting policy implementation, at every level. The goal should be to ensure that criticism of current candidates, parties, and issues can be channeled into sustained and meaningful engagement after the November elections.

In Love and Continued Struggle,

David J. Johns
The National Black Justice Coalition

**CAMPAIGNS & PARTNERSHIPS**

- Vote.org
- Vote by Quadrant
- When We All Vote
- Your Voice, Your Power, Your Vote (Sony)
- Head Count, Vote with Pride
- Just Democracy
- Transformative Justice Coalition, Voter Justice Initiative

**IMPORTANT DATES**

- **Inaugural National Black Voter Registration Day** (NUL/BET), September 18, 2020
- **National Voter Registration Day**, September, 22, 2020—a nonpartisan civic holiday celebrating democracy. Nearly 3 million voters have registered on the holiday to date.
- **Request your vote by mail ballot NO LATER than September 22, 2020**
- **Return your ballot no later than October 13, 2020** (*submit to approved drop boxes, the board of elections, or the post office*)