



Thursday, April 29, 2021

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Dear Governor Abbott,

We are writing to you at a time when voting rights across the nation are under attack. Georgia has already passed one of the most restrictive voting bills, and other states are considering similar measures.

In Texas, a number of voter suppression bills aim to undermine voting by imposing additional burdens on voters and restricting opportunities to vote. As district attorneys, we stand with Texas Organizing Project and other progressive organizations who are taking a stand against any bill that would suppress the right to vote, and we urge you not to sign any bill that threatens the constitutional right to vote.

Of particular concern to us are bills that seek to criminalize those involved in the voting process. Several bills propose harsh criminal sanctions that target voters, volunteers who assist voters, and public officials. Taken together, SB 7 and HB 6 would increase criminal penalties for violations of voting laws as well as create new criminal offenses for people exercising their rights to vote or helping others to exercise their rights to vote. SB 7 would make it a felony for local elections officials to proactively send absentee ballot applications to voters, while HB 6 would authorize the prosecution of volunteers who engage in voter turnout campaigns.

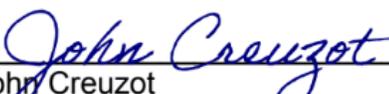
In addition to SB 7 and HB 6, we urge you not to sign the following bills in order to protect the voting rights of Texans:

- HB 3080, which criminalizes individuals with a class A misdemeanor charge for providing an application for an absentee ballot to someone who didn't specifically request it (the same class of misdemeanor as assault). It also forces voters who wish to vote-by-mail to submit a thumbprint for verification, putting the burden and expenses for voters to acquire fingerprinting services.
- SB 1111 / HB 3974, which would require voters who receive an address confirmation notice to provide documentation of their residence when returning the notice or risk being purged from the rolls.

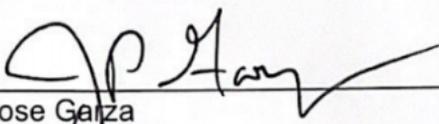
- SB 1115, which would severely restrict the hours counties are allowed to offer early voting, making voting harder for Texans who work extended hours during the day.
- HB 25, like the provision seen in SB 7, which would prohibit election officials from proactively sending voters an absentee ballot application.
- HB 3281, which shortens the deadline when you can return mail ballots to 5 p.m. on the FOURTH day before Election Day.
- HB 2321, which requires election administrators to verify mail voters' signatures against all voters' signatures on file in the Texas Department of Public Safety and the county election administrator. If the signatures don't match perfectly, the ballot could be thrown out and with no recourse to appeal.
- HB 1026, which removes local authority over voter registration and list maintenance and establishes the Texas Secretary of State as the voter registrar of every county and sole authority for those duties statewide. It also would make registering harder by eliminating the volunteer deputy registrar system and instead requiring all applications to be submitted by mail or in person to the Secretary of State.

As district attorneys, our number one priority is to keep our communities safe. The conduct these bills seek to criminalize is intrinsic to the right to vote and poses no threat to public safety. For far too long our legislature has unfairly targeted and discriminated against communities of color. These bills represent another attempt to discriminate against those same communities while suppressing their right to vote. Punishing those who seek to exercise or help others exercise their right to vote is a violation of the United States Constitution and threatens to destroy the fabric of our democracy, and as elected officials, we oppose any bill that would threaten our constituent's sacred right to vote.

Sincerely,



 John Creuzot
 Dallas County District Attorney



 Jose Garza
 Travis County District Attorney



 Joe Gonzales
 Bexar County District Attorney



 Mark Gonzalez
 Nueces County District Attorney



 Brian Middleton
 Fort Bend County District Attorney