



July 6, 2017

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Asian Americans Advancing Justice |

AAJC

Policy and Enforcement

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Anti-Defamation League

President & CEO

Vanita Gupta

Dear Secretary of State:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (“The Leadership Conference”), a diverse coalition of more than 200 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, and the undersigned allied groups, we write to condemn and oppose the data request by President Trump’s advisory commission (the “commission”). We applaud the principled actions that many Secretaries of State and election administrators have taken to reject the commission’s request for sensitive information about voters, and we urge those that have not yet responded to carefully consider any future responses to the commission.

We strongly believe that the commission’s request is an unprecedented overreach and a brazen assault on the founding principles of our democracy. We have three overarching concerns. First, we are concerned that this commission is laying the groundwork for potential voter suppression by the wrongful removal of eligible voters, including Black, Hispanic, Native American, older, and student voters, from the rolls through the problematic process known as Crosscheck. Second, the creation of a national database of voters’ detailed information raises serious privacy concerns. And finally, at a time when the focus should be addressing the possibility of past and continued Russian interference, including cyberattacks in the 2016 elections, the creation of a national database raises significant national security concerns.

The right to vote is a sacred right. It is the right that protects all other rights and ensures that our elected leaders are accountable to the citizens they represent. Our country has made great strides to increase access to the ballot throughout its history, and you play a fundamental role in the free and fair administration of our electoral process.

As reported, Kansas Secretary of State Kobach sent you a letter last week requesting that you provide sensitive voter roll data, including the names, addresses, dates of birth, political party affiliation, past voter history, and even partial Social Security numbers of registered voters in your state. That letter is merely a request and given the fact there are no guarantees about how this data would be used or even secured, no one should feel compelled to cooperate.

We were heartened that this request rightly [drew swift and bipartisan condemnation](#) across the country in large part because of serious questions about the legality of releasing this personal information. Member organizations of The Leadership Conference, and others, have filed multiple legal challenges to this request, alleging possible violations of numerous federal laws, and constitutional violations. Depending on how states respond to the commission’s request, additional legal challenges could be pursued under state laws as well.

Although disgraceful, the commission’s actions are unfortunately not surprising, given the individuals leading the effort and their longstanding pursuits of voter suppression in the

name of phantom voter fraud. As Governor of Indiana, Vice President Pence supported voter suppression tactics, including undermining voter registration drives and pushing extreme voter ID laws. Secretary Kobach also has a long record of discriminatory and regressive actions on voting rights. His unrepentant attempts to suppress voting have led to thousands of voters being wrongly removed from the rolls and barred from exercising their democratic right. And just last week, President Trump appointed Hans von Spakovsky to the commission. Mr. von Spakovsky's troubling support for voter suppression led not only to a public rebuke from career Justice Department attorneys but also to the U.S. Senate refusing to confirm his nomination to the Federal Election Commission.

Many Secretaries of State and election administrators have rightly characterized the commission's data request as ["disingenuous," "repugnant," a "waste of taxpayer money," and "a tool to commit large-scale voter suppression."](#) As you prepare to join your fellow Secretaries of State later this week at the National Association of Secretaries of State summer conference, we respectfully request that you join your colleagues in expressing collective opposition to the commission and its data request. At a time when barely half of eligible voters exercise the franchise, we should instead be taking every possible step to remove barriers to voting in America.

Our democracy is stronger when more, not fewer, citizens are involved in the electoral process. If the right to vote is denied, we will fail our democracy and it will not survive. Secretaries of State and election administrators have the mission and responsibility to ensure access to the ballot by upholding the guarantees of our laws and Constitution. All Secretaries of State and election administrators should stand united in protecting the voting rights of our nation's citizens and rejecting the commission's outrageous request.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Access Democracy
Advancement Project
AFSCME
Alliance for Justice
American Association for Justice
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union
American Federation of Labor-Congress of industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
American Federation of Teachers
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Andrew Goodman Foundation
Anti-Defamation League
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Brennan Center for Justice
Center for American Progress
Center for Community Change
Center for Media and Democracy
Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

Coalition on Human Needs
Color of Change
Common Cause
Common Cause Illinois
Communications Workers of America
Contra Costa MoveOn
Crescent City Media Group
Daily Kos
Democracy 21
Democracy Initiative
Democratic Women in Action
Demos
Equal Justice Society
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality California
Every Voice
Fair Elections Legal Network
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches
Hindu American Foundation
Hip Hop Caucus
Human Rights Campaign
Institute for Science and Human Values
Japanese American Citizens League
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Lambda Legal
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
League of United Latin American Citizens
League of Women Voters of the United States
Main Street Alliance
MALDEF
Money Out People In Coalition
MOVI (Money Out Voters In)
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Public Affairs Council
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.
National Action Network
National Association of Human Rights Workers
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund
National Bar Association
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Congress of American Indians
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Law Center
Native American Rights Fund
Nebraskans for Civic Reform
New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
Occupy Bergen County (New Jersey)
Ohio Voter Rights Coalition
One Wisconsin Now
PC(USA) Washington Office of Public Witness
Peace Action
People For the American Way
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
PolicyLink
Presbyterian Feminist Agenda Network
Public Citizen
Rock the Vote
San Francisco Democratic Women in Action
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Southern Poverty Law Center
State Voices
The Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda
The Voter Participation Center
Transformative Justice Coalition
U.S. National Committee for UN Women
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Universal Health Care Action Network (UHCAN)
Voices for Progress
Voting Rights Institute
Women's Intercultural Network (WIN)
YWCA USA