



September 16, 2026

Dear Secretary of State:

The undersigned Black and Latino nonpartisan, civil rights organizations represent two of the nation's largest racial and ethnic communities, with long, interconnected histories in the struggle for voting rights and racial justice. We have convened as a Joint Black Brown Summit to deepen trust, strengthen solidarity, and dispel narratives that seek to divide our communities. Collectively we represent or work and advocate on behalf of millions of Americans, including members, partners, and other stakeholders in your state.

We write today to urge your office to review and strengthen voter protections as we enter the 2026 election season. American democracy has always required vigilance from Secretaries of State and others who serve as Chief Elections Officials. As detailed below, this year the federal government is threatening to engage in voter intimidation and to interfere with your work to administer the November election. Robust preparation by your office is essential to ensure that access to the ballot box is safe, unimpeded, and free from discrimination.

Preparing to Counter Voter Intimidation, Including Federal Deployments at or near Poll Sites

Our nation's elections have too frequently been marred by voter intimidation, especially of Black and Brown eligible voters. The current federal administration has not ruled out the possibility that it will send federal law enforcement authorities, including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), to polling places, in violation of federal law.¹ Indeed, the federal administration's deployment of federal troops and law enforcement to civilian settings in the past year² and to seize voter and voting data³ demonstrates its willingness to push legal boundaries in

¹ Michael Williams, *Will the Trump administration Send federal officers or troops to the polls? Here's what we know* (Sept. 7, 2026), <https://www.cnn.com/2026/09/07/politics/troops-ice-agents-polls-mullin-caine>; Maya Yang, *Trump Homeland Security Chief says ICE agents could be sent to polling places* (Sept. 1, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/sep/01/trump-homeland-security-markwayne-mullin-polling>.

² Lindsey P. Cohn, *On the Deployment of Federal Troops in American Cities*, 125 Current History 6 (2026), <https://online.ucpress.edu/currenthistory/article/125/874/6/219048/On-the-Deployment-of-Federal-Troops-in-American>; *Trump's illegal National Guard deployment in Los Angeles cost taxpayers \$120 million* (Sept. 4, 2025), <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2025/09/04/trumps-illegal-national-guard-deployment-in-los-angeles-cost-taxpayers-120-million/>; Kat Lonsdorf, *Trump is deploying the National Guard to Memphis. Experts worry it's becoming normal* (Sept. 18, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/09/18/nx-s1->

order to stop free and fair elections. Moreover, the administration continues to promote the lie of widespread noncitizen voting and fraud⁴, which may prompt private persons to engage in anti-democratic conduct and interfere with voting during this election cycle. And the administration's ongoing efforts to prevent the United States Postal Service (USPS) from delivering mail-in ballots to eligible voters in states that do not meet unprecedented demands for voter data and other information⁵ risks creating more voter confusion and fear, which causes us significant concern given the current climate.

As you are aware, Section 11(b) of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) prohibits any person, "whether acting under color of law or otherwise," from intimidating, threatening, or coercing—or attempting to intimidate, threaten, or coerce—another person because that person is voting, attempting to vote, assisting another person in voting, or exercising certain voting-related rights or duties. 52 U.S.C. § 10307(b). Federal law explicitly prohibits the deployment of federal troops or armed federal law enforcement to polling places, 18 U.S.C. §§ 592, 593, and administrative personnel interfering with election administration, 18 U.S.C. § 595.

We urge states to undertake timely and comprehensive scenario planning in preparation for ICE, National Guard, and other law enforcement presence at or near polling locations. For example, your office should train local election officials on identifying and reporting voter intimidation, and on the process for ejecting intimidating officers or persons from polling places. Your office should also assess the security of polling places, particularly those located in or near federal buildings, which may become pretextual staging areas or locations defended by federal personnel, creating a chilling effect for voters there or at nearby polling places. Any jurisdictions that have entered into 287(g) agreements with ICE should be trained on federal and state laws prohibiting voter intimidation. Your office should use the fullest extent of the law to prevent and stop voter intimidation, whether it happens at, near, or on the way to the polls.

[5544549/memphis-national-guard-trump](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/dec/24/trump-national-guard-deployment-new-orleans); *Trump approves deployment of 350 national guard members to New Orleans* (Dec. 24, 2025), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/dec/24/trump-national-guard-deployment-new-orleans>; Conrad Wilson & Ravenna Koenig, *9th Circuit rules that National Guard can deploy to Portland* (Oct. 20, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/10/20/nx-s1-5564797/ninth-circuit-decision-portland-national-guard-tro-president-trump>; Josh Gerstein & Kyle Cheney, *Supreme Court blocks Trump effort to deploy National Guard troops to Illinois* (Dec. 23, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/12/23/supreme-court-national-guard-ruling-00704962>.

³ Greg Bluestein, *FBI raid in Fulton sends shockwaves across Georgia's political landscape* (Jan. 30, 2026), <https://www.ajc.com/politics/2026/01/fbi-raid-in-fulton-sends-shockwaves-across-georgias-political-landscape/>; Jacob Knutson, *AG Bondi demands access to Minnesota voter rolls after fatal Border Patrol shooting* (Jan. 24, 2026), <https://www.democracymonitor.com/news-alerts/attorney-general-bondi-minnesota-voter-rolls-border-patrol-fatal-shooting/>.

⁴ Nick Corasaniti & Hamed Aleaziz, *Trump Administration Begins Blitz to find Elusive Voter Fraud Ahead of Midterms* (Sept. 2, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/02/us/politics/trump-election-voter-fraud.html>; Shannon Bond, Jenna McLaughlin & Audrey Nguyen, *In primetime speech, Trump doesn't provide evidence for illegal voting* (July 16, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/07/16/nx-s1-5896448/trump-election-address>.

⁵ Dan Cooney, *Under proposed rule, USPS won't deliver mail ballots to states that don't provide voter rolls, postmaster general says* (June 24, 2026), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/watch-under-proposed-rule-usps-wont-deliver-mail-ballots-to-states-that-dont-provide-voter-rolls-postmaster-general-says>.

Preparing in Case of Seizure of Ballots, Voting Machines or Other Election Materials

The federal government's unfounded claims of election fraud and track record of interfering with elections in Arizona, California, Georgia, and Michigan⁶ has increased the risk of seizure of voting machines, ballots, and other sensitive election materials.⁷ Your office's preparation to oppose such seizures is necessary to safeguard voters' confidence in elections and in the democratic transfer of power.

We urge your office to work with your attorneys general to issue clear advisory opinions and other necessary written guidance clarifying the legal framework governing when federal law enforcement may and may not have access to election materials. The guidance should confirm that law enforcement has no role in ballot counting and clarify the scope of authority to seize election materials, including what constitutes a valid warrant. It should also contain consequences for election officials who fail to follow the guidance, such as loss of state-funded legal defense.

Preventing National Origin Discrimination and English-Only Election Barriers

Limited English proficient (LEP) voters are especially vulnerable to disenfranchisement, and your office is uniquely positioned to train local election officials on rights, protocols, and other resources for these constituents. Federal protections, like section 208 of the VRA, apply everywhere and permit anyone with a disability or limited English proficiency to bring an assistor of their choosing into the voting booth to cast a ballot.⁸ Similarly, Section 4(e) of the VRA ensures that Puerto Rican voters receive appropriate Spanish-language voting services, regardless of where they are casting their ballot within the continental USA.⁹ Certain localities have additional language assistance requirements, including those jurisdictions subject to Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act and some states that have adopted their own State Voting Rights Acts.¹⁰

⁶ Press Release, Kris Mayes, Attorney General of Arizona, *Attorney General Mayes Blocks Trump Administration from Exerting Federal Control Over Elections* (June 25, 2026), <https://www.azag.gov/press-release/attorney-general-mayes-blocks-trump-administration-exerting-federal-control-over>; Press Release, Gavin Newsom, Governor of California, *Governor Newsom signs legislation to further protect California elections from interference and intimidation* (May 27, 2026), <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2026/05/27/governor-newsom-signs-legislation-to-further-protect-california-elections-from-interference-and-intimidation/>; Greg Bluestein, *FBI raid in Fulton sends shockwaves across Georgia's political landscape* (Jan. 30, 2026), <https://www.ajc.com/politics/2026/01/fbi-raid-in-fulton-sends-shockwaves-across-georgias-political-landscape/>; Press Release, Dana Nessel, Attorney General of Michigan, *AG Nessel Blocks Administration from Exerting Federal Control Over Elections* (June 25, 2026) <https://www.michigan.gov/ag/news/press-releases/2026/06/25/ag-nessel-blocks-administration-from-exerting-federal-control-over-elections>.

⁷ See Richard L. Hasen & Shelby Wayment, *A Judicial Guide to Search Warrants Seeking Election Materials* (Sept. 9, 2026), <https://tinyurl.com/SDPJudicialGuide>.

⁸ 52 U.S.C. § 10508. Section 208 is also a valuable tool for many disabled, low-literacy, and elderly Black voters who require assistance to effectively cast their ballots each election.

⁹ 52 U.S.C. § 10303(e).

¹⁰ John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York, N.Y. Elec. Law §§ 17-200 to -222 (2026). <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S1046>; Connecticut State Voting Rights Act, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 9-368i to -368q (2023), https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_151a.htm#sec_9-368i; Colorado Voting Rights Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. § 1-47-101 to -302 (2026),

We urge your office to take steps to ensure local election officials comply with federal and state language access protections and protocols. Too often, we have seen eligible LEP voters denied their legal rights because election workers did not know how to access language line assistance or were not trained on how to effectively access existing resources.

LEP voters are especially at risk for experiencing national origin discrimination. We have seen voters with an accent questioned about their citizenship status by local election workers, which is illegal and discriminatory. Your office must reiterate to local election officials that the federal administration's promotion of the falsehood that non-citizens vote in any substantial number does not justify questioning a voter's eligibility when they show up to the polls.

https://leg.colorado.gov/bill_files/40976/download; Delaware John Lewis Voting Rights Act, Del. Code Ann. tit.15, § 8101-8131 (2026), <https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail/143415>; Voting Rights Act of Virginia, Va. Code Ann. §§ 24.2-125 to -131(2026), <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title24.2/chapter1.1/>; John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey, https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2026/A1715/bill-text?f=A2000&n=1715_U1.

Your office is on the front line of ensuring that all eligible voters in your state have the freedom to vote in the 2026 midterm election cycle. You are a powerful stakeholder in ensuring the preservation of democracy and peaceful, lawful transfer of power. We encourage you to reach out directly to the 866-OUR-VOTE Election Protection Hotline and to any of the organizations that are signatories to this letter for support.

Thank you for your timely attention to these critical issues.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Civil Rights Organizations

Advancement Project

Black Voters Matter

Hispanic Federation

LatinoJustice PRLDEF

**Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under
Law**

Leadership Conference

**League of United Latin American Citizens
(LULAC)**

LDF

Mi Familia Vota

NAACP

**National Coalition for Black Civic
Participation**

National Council of Negro Women

NALEO Educational Fund

National Urban League

Poder Latinx

Unidos US

Voto Latino