



SPLC

# VISION FOR A JUST FUTURE



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SPLC ACTION 

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In 2021, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> year of working to ensure that the promise of the civil rights movement becomes a reality for all. Through legal, legislative and educational work, the SPLC is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements and advance the human rights of all people.

Every presidential election provides an opportunity for significant reassessment in White House and federal agency policies, priorities and personnel – and the prospect of collective work with a new Congress to make our nation more fair, just and equitable. The person sworn in as president on Jan. 20, 2021, will be confronted with a number of unprecedented, urgent challenges. The COVID-19 virus has killed more than 200,000 people in the United States, left millions unemployed and brought pain and loss to virtually every community – with experts predicting another surge of infections and deaths this fall. The pandemic has also revealed dramatic racial disparities in health care and housing, in the workplace, and in financial and educational systems.

At the same time, the killing of George Floyd and many other unarmed men and women of color by the police has driven thousands to sustained protests in the streets, energizing a decades-long movement calling not just for reform, but for a fundamental reimagining of policing and incarceration policies and practices in the United States, and a deep reinvestment in community-based programs and services.

Our **Vision for a Just Future** sets forth recommendations for executive and federal agency action, for legislative action and for funding priorities. It reflects the SPLC's perspectives on how best to address the legacy of entrenched, systemic racism in the Southern states in which we primarily live and work. We believe that it is not enough for the next Congress and administration to merely modify policies and regulations to expand rights and freedoms. Instead, we recommend bold, transformative actions that can revitalize and fundamentally realign our nation to eliminate white nationalism, structural racism and historic inequalities, to remove unjust barriers to fundamental voting rights, to expand inclusive anti-discrimination protections, and to reinvigorate our values as a diverse, welcoming and compassionate nation.

Our **Vision for a Just Future** document outlines SPLC policy priorities for the next administration administration – whether it is the incumbent administration or a new one – and Congress and calls for forward-looking, progressive action in six sections:

## ➔ **White Nationalism, Extremism and Threats to Democratic Institutions**

Confronting hate and building trust in democratic ideals.

## ➔ **Criminal Justice Reform and Decarceration Efforts**

Promoting a fair and equitable criminal justice system while working to end mass incarceration.

## ➔ **Immigration Reform, Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

Promoting a just, humane and welcoming immigration system.

## ➔ **Voting Rights and Voter Engagement**

Expanding ballot access and eliminating discriminatory barriers to voting.

## ➔ **Food Insecurity, Systemic Barriers Keeping People in Poverty, and Workplace Justice**

Promoting health, safety and fairness in the workplace, schools and communities.

## ➔ **Institutional Racism, Inclusion and Educational Equity**

Promoting opportunity and combating discrimination in schools and in the workplace.

During these deeply unsettling times, we have seen how much we rely on each other and the essential role that government plays in protecting our rights and well-being. Now is the time to build the kind of world we want, in which all communities can thrive.



# CONFRONT THE MAINSTREAMING OF WHITE NATIONALISM AND EXTREMISM/STRENGTHEN AND REBUILD TRUST IN DEMOCRATIC IDEALS AND INSTITUTIONS

## EXECUTIVE ACTION

➡ **Establish a national truth, racial healing and transformation commission to examine the history of white supremacy and structural racism in the United States.**

## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- Prohibit racial, ethnic and religious profiling in federal, state and local law enforcement.
- Reject efforts to create a new criminal domestic terrorism statute – or the creation of a listing of designated domestic terrorist organizations.
- Require renaming of military bases named for Confederate leaders, and ban the display of Confederate flags or other racist symbols from all military installations, federal parks, streets and highways.
- Mandate federal collection of hate crime data and fully fund and promote the importance of the FBI's new police use-of-force incidents data collection and reporting mandate.

- Codify independent authority and autonomy protections for inspectors general at federal agencies.

## EXECUTIVE/CONGRESSIONAL FUNDING

- Move funding for Department of Education programs aimed at preventing extremism and promoting deradicalization from punishment models to initiatives that build community resilience.
- End funding for police militarization and the transfer of excess military property for use by law enforcement agencies (1033 program).
- End funding of the Department of Homeland Security's Countering Violent Extremism/Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention programs, which profile and target immigrants, Black Muslims and other Black Americans.
- Provide funding for states and municipalities to remove Confederate monuments and public displays.
- Provide funding for the Department of Education to develop a curriculum on structural racism and funding for states to implement their own related initiatives.

# PROMOTE CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM AND DECARCERATION EFFORTS

## EXECUTIVE ACTION

➡ **Eliminate Department of Justice-imposed barriers to creating or enforcing police consent decrees to help ensure accountability for local police departments involved in systematic misconduct.**

➡ **Rescind Department of Justice sentencing guidance calling for federal prosecutors to "charge and pursue the most serious, readily provable offense."**

➡ **Restore vigorous Department of Justice pattern-or-practice civil rights enforcement of police misconduct.**

- Eliminate private prisons for federal prisoners and immigrant detention.
- Expand Department of Education data collection on youth arrests, on a wider range of early release or involuntary removals of students as forms of

discipline, and on police use of force in schools – and make Civil Rights Data Collection reporting an annual requirement.

## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- Eliminate cash bail in federal criminal justice system and provide incentives for states to end this and other racially biased pretrial practices.
- Eliminate barriers for formerly incarcerated individuals to employment, housing and voting rights. Prohibit the use of fines and fees that deny the right to fully participate in democracy.
- Prohibit chokeholds and all maneuvers that restrict the flow of blood or oxygen to the brain; require the use of de-escalation techniques; prohibit the use of no-knock warrants; lower the federal

standard for holding law enforcement accountable for misconduct and abuse; end the qualified immunity doctrine that has prevented police from being held accountable.

- Enact legislation designed to divest and reprogram funds from police and mass incarceration, while investing in community infrastructures and better schools.

- Abolish the federal death penalty and provide incentives to encourage states to end the practice.

#### **EXECUTIVE/CONGRESSIONAL FUNDING**

- Reduce federal law enforcement spending and redirect funds toward social services and efforts to address systemic racism in policing.
- Expand funding for educational opportunities and vocational training for incarcerated persons.

## **PROMOTE IMMIGRATION REFORM AND PROTECTIONS FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS**

#### **EXECUTIVE ACTION**

➡ **Repeal discriminatory and racist entry bans on Muslims and Africans.**

➡ **Repeal regulations and policies that restrict access to asylum, and establish a full and fair process for adjudication of asylum claims in accordance with the protective intent of U.S. and international law.**

➡ **Impose a moratorium on immigration enforcement – including ending raids, family separation, detainees and deportations – until the White House and Congress review current practices and recommend comprehensive immigration reforms that end racist discrimination policies that disfavor immigrants from Central and South America, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.**

- End immigration detention and encourage the release of immigrants into community-based programs that provide wrap-around services to help navigate the immigration system.
- Issue guidance on the legal responsibilities of schools to provide services – including translation services – to children of undocumented immigrants and their parents and caregivers.

#### **LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

- Establish independent Article I immigration courts that ensure impartial case-by-case adjudication free from a criminal enforcement frame and political pressure by the attorney general.
- Extend the Agricultural Worker Protection Act to include guest workers, allow visa employer portability and create a path to citizenship for H-2A and H-2B workers and their families.
- Prohibit future presidents from discriminating based on religion, wealth, race, country of origin,

language ability or disability status in suspending or restricting entry into the United States.

- Ensure robust oversight and accountability for Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection leadership and personnel.
- End the use of Section 287 (g) of the Immigration and Naturalization Act and related programs to force local law enforcement officials to enforce federal immigration laws.
- End workplace and community immigration raids that have been characterized by racial profiling and civil rights abuses of vulnerable populations.

#### **EXECUTIVE/CONGRESSIONAL FUNDING**

- Significantly reduce funding for ICE and CBP – and invest those funds into community programs that support immigrants and assist in the transition to living in the United States.
- Increase funding to the Department of Labor to enforce the rights of immigrant workers – including undocumented immigrants – against wage theft and discrimination.
- Provide funding for legal representation for immigrants in custody, in deportation proceedings or seeking asylum – as well as for all unaccompanied children.

## EXPAND VOTING RIGHTS AND PROMOTE VOTER ENGAGEMENT

### LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- Pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act.
- Abolish the Electoral College and elect the president by national popular vote.
- Enact automatic school-based pre-voter registration and voter registration.
- Move Election Day to a weekend and designate Election Day a national holiday.
- Enact automatic universal voter registration.
- Mandate restoration of voting rights to formerly incarcerated individuals, regardless of outstanding debt.

- Update the National Voter Registration Act to limit deregistration discrimination and provide greater safeguards against voter purges from registration rolls.

### EXECUTIVE/CONGRESSIONAL FUNDING

- Provide incentives and funding for states to implement online registration, early voting and no-excuse vote by mail.
- Provide funding to states and counties to report election results in real time on the internet.
- Provide incentives for states to mandate civics education for all public schools and colleges.

## CONFRONT FOOD INSECURITY AND SYSTEMIC BARRIERS KEEPING PEOPLE IN POVERTY AND PROMOTE WORKPLACE JUSTICE

### EXECUTIVE ACTION

➡ **Rescind the Department of Homeland Security's restrictive public charge regulations (8 USC §1182) that permit only the wealthiest people to immigrate to the United States while also creating fear in immigrant families who are already here, making it harder for them to put food on the table.**

➡ **Create a White House task force on regional development in the Black Belt, along the lines of the Appalachian Regional Commission, which over several decades has brought employment and high school graduation levels in Appalachia to national rates and significantly reduced poverty.**

➡ **Create Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards to limit line speeds and other unsafe practices in poultry processing and meat-packing plants.**

➡ **Repeal Executive Order 13782 and reinstate regulations requiring contractors receiving federal funds to comply with labor and worker safety laws.**

- Reinstate and invigorate the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing provision of the Fair Housing Act to expand housing choices and redress racial segregation caused by federal, state and local governments.
- Restrict state Medicaid waivers and reconsider waivers previously given to states to partially expand Medicaid.

### LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- Raise the federal minimum wage to a living wage.
- Eliminate work requirements, education loan restrictions and other discriminatory barriers affecting immigrants in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 public safety net.
- Enact a federal arbitration ban on consumer contracts, including hospitals and nursing homes, to allow consumers to fight abuse and deceptive practices.
- Create a public option for banking and limit interest rates by predatory financial services companies.
- Include farmworkers and domestic workers in worker protection laws, including the Fair Labor Standards Act and the National Labor Relations Act.
- Repeal the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act laws and create a lawful path to status for all migrants.
- Incentivize state and local governments to stop policing for profit by reducing fees to cost and by limiting their reliance on fines, fees and civil forfeiture in their budgets.
- Expand funding for Legal Services Corporation and repeal limitations on use of LSC funding; repeal the bar on class action litigation, representation of incarcerated people and certain noncitizens.

- Amend gainful employment rule to make for-profit colleges accountable, and amend the borrower defense regulations to permit students to discharge loans taken out on their behalf by predatory for-profit colleges.
- Amend the bankruptcy code to permit students to bankrupt student debt more easily.

#### **EXECUTIVE/CONGRESSIONAL FUNDING**

- Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Title I to help ensure low-income students and students with disabilities have the resources they are due under federal law.
- Fund school breakfast, lunches and after-school suppers, along with free, nutritious summer meals for all children.
- Increase revenue to help ensure that the federal government can play a redistributive role in addressing

race, health, education and economic inequalities; provide incentives for states to do the same.

- Increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits and make SNAP more available to working people and immigrants.
- Replace Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (and potentially SNAP) with a guaranteed basic income.
- Increase funding to make Section 8 housing vouchers universally available to those who qualify.
- Support community land trusts focused on empowering communities of color.
- Fund tribal, rural and municipal expanded access to broadband internet services and regulate as a utility to ensure affordable access.

## **ADDRESS SYSTEMIC RACISM AND PROMOTE INCLUSION AND EDUCATIONAL EQUITY**

#### **EXECUTIVE ACTION**

- ➡ **Restore guidance on nondiscriminatory school discipline.**
- ➡ **Reinstate Department of Education Title IX protections for transgender students.**
- ➡ **Repeal rule expanding Title IX religious exemptions for schools.**
- ➡ **Reinstate broad federal anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people, including:**
  - **Bureau of Prisons policy to house transgender people in facilities consistent with their gender identity.**
  - **Health and Human Services rule to provide nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ people in health care and health insurance.**
  - **Department of Education guidance protecting transgender students and athletes.**
  - **Ending the ban on transgender people serving in the military.**

#### **LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

- Pass the Equality Act.
- Ban corporal punishment and seclusion and restraint punishments; ensure due process protections for students, including parental notification of disciplinary actions and a right to a hearing for students facing suspension from school.

#### **EXECUTIVE/CONGRESSIONAL FUNDING**

- Increase funding for language access services to ensure that people with limited English proficiency are made aware of public health threats, their rights and government services to which they are eligible.
- Increase funding for the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights to ensure civil rights investigations can be completed in a timely manner.
- Prohibit federal funds for law enforcement in schools – reprogramming funds to implement supports-based measures, such as mental health supports, hiring/training school counselors and psychologists, nurses, social workers and staff trained in anti-bias, de-escalation and violence interruption practices.
- Ensure equitable school funding that is not based on local property tax base, and provide incentives to states to revise school funding formulas so they are not based on local property taxes.
- Eliminate taxpayer funding for private and parochial schools and oppose any future voucher funding initiatives. Expand federal community schools model funding. Ensure that all government-funded K-12 institutions, including charter schools, have public oversight, including government officials and local community members.