

Voting toward Racial Justice

How to Use Your Votes to Join the Movement



Almost every ballot measure and candidate policy platform has implications for racial justice because racial disparities are woven into every part of our political system and common life. But those implications are often masked by the language being used. Here are some ways that questions of racial justice will likely show up in a ballot box near you this election season:

Measures and platforms that explicitly involve racial justice...

- **Voting Rights and Voter Suppression:** be aware of anything aimed at restricting voting access, including making mail voting more difficult, implementing stricter photo ID laws, curtailing registration drives, intimidating eligible voters, or creating obstacles to voting, all of which create racial inequities in the exercise of democracy.

- **Education around Race and Racism:** watch for restrictions on education or book bans involving critical race theory, (multi)cultural education, ethnic studies, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). These efforts will often include language prohibiting the discussion, training, and/or understanding that the U.S. is inherently racist as well as any discussions about conscious and unconscious bias, privilege, discrimination, and oppression. Consider how your vote can support education toward a more racially just future.
- **Reparations:** from local initiatives to federal commissions, the question of monetary and other forms recompense to address and repair systemic and structural racial harm and inequity are emerging at every level of government. Pay attention to the racial justice implications of who qualifies for these reparation initiatives and how, as well as potential limitations on payouts and administrative obstacles.

Other areas where racial justice is a factor to consider...

- Efforts to increase criminalization, incarceration or surveillance; create more privatization; or promote “colorblind” policies often have greater detrimental impact on communities of color because they exacerbate already existing racial inequities.
- Efforts to address student debt, fair housing, broadband access, medical debt and childhood poverty, among others, will increase racial equity because people of African, API and Latine descent, as well as Indigenous people are overburdened by these systems and structures.

Language to watch out for...

Somewhat ironically, the same language is being used in policies, platforms and initiatives aimed at combatting racial bias and racial inequities by making discrimination illegal as those that are seeking to prevent reckonings with racial injustice by maintaining the status quo, including the unequal access to resources and rights afforded to people of European descent. So when you see or hear language about “equal protections” and “discrimination” be curious about whose rights and access to resources is being protected, how and why.

