

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties  
FROM: Center for American Progress  
DATE: October 9, 2020  
RE: Top 3 things cities can do to protect the 2020 election

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As noted in a [recent CAP report](#), although they generally do not have a direct hand in overseeing state and federal elections, city officials and employees can be hugely influential in making sure elections are carried out safely and effectively this year. With less than a month before Election Day, here are the **top three things every city should do right now:**

**Recruit poll workers to serve at polling places, including city employees:** If there are not enough poll workers, early voting options will be severely curtailed and many polling places on Election Day will be forced to close. As a result, voters will have no choice but to wait in long lines at the few polling places that remain open. City officials can encourage city employees to be poll workers, such as by providing paid-leave, and can work with local businesses and non-profits to recruit poll workers.

- [Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms](#) recently issued an executive order granting paid leave for city employees to serve as poll workers.
- [St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman](#) is granting city employees two hours of paid leave to volunteer as poll workers and/or to vote.
- The City of Columbus recently approved a plan to provide city workers with [paid leave](#) for serving as poll workers. A similar plan was [approved](#) in Kansas City, Missouri

**Recruit election workers to help sort mailed ballots, including city employees:** Given increases in mail voting this year, jurisdictions lacking sophisticated ballot sorting equipment will need more workers to assist with ballot sorting and processing. Making sure ballots are processed and sorted properly takes time; the more staff that are on hand, the faster that election outcomes can be finalized. This leaves bad actors with fewer opportunities to undercut legitimate democratic processes. City officials can help ensure there are sufficient workers to help with sorting and processing ballots, including by encouraging or redirecting city employees to these efforts.

- [Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan](#) has announced that he is diverting non-essential city workers on Election Day to assisting election clerks count and sort absentee ballots for the November 2020 election.

**Engage in robust voter education efforts:** The pandemic has led election officials across the country to adopt and implement a slew of new voting policies, update electoral procedures to comply with public health guidelines, and change the locations of in-person voting sites. Although these changes are necessary, they also mean that voter confusion poses a greater threat to upcoming elections than it did in past cycles. City officials should utilize all communication and outreach channels to ensure voters have the information they need.

- The City of Lakeville, Minnesota released a [video](#) designed to educate voters by answering frequently asked questions about how to vote in the November 3<sup>rd</sup> election, along with directions for requesting and completing absentee ballots.
- The City of Chicago's website includes a [webpage banner](#) urging voters to make a voting plan for the November 3<sup>rd</sup> general election and directing visitors to resources for applying for absentee ballots and information for locating their polling place.