

...fostering universal justice and community action...



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June 2020

*Share
this news-
letter
with your
family
and
friends!*

News on Staying Informed and Taking Action Brought to you by the Restoring Democracy Team

If you have information to share or ideas for taking action, contact Dorie Godfrey or Rita Brown. We welcome anyone who would like to get involved!



URGENT! Save the USPS and provide funding for voting at home. Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice are asking for responses by June 18!

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the HEROES Act (H.R.6800) on May 15, which includes \$3.6 billion in much-needed funding and provisions to secure our vote, and health. The HEROES Act also includes necessary funding for the USPS, now under severe threat. With the pandemic driving down mail volume by as much as 50 percent this year, the USPS is on track to run out of money by September 2020. The Senate majority leader has not scheduled a vote on the HEROES Act. There is no stimulus package that would include funding for states in support of the elections and similarly for the USPS under consideration in the Senate.

Contact Senate Majority Lead-

er Mitch McConnell, Senators Markey and Warren to urge passage of this funding. You can use this website to have a letter sent for you! <http://uusj.net/wp1/whwn-letter-submission/>

If you live in Massachusetts, you can vote with absentee ballot due to COVID19 according to Secretary of State William Galvin. <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/Elc/covid-19/covid-19.htm>

The website of Secretary of State William Francis Galvin states: A new law has been passed clarifying that any person taking precaution related to COVID-19 in response to a declared state of emergency or from guidance from a medical professional, local or state health official, or any civil authority shall be deemed to be unable by reason of physical dis-

ability to cast their vote in person at a polling location.

It is the opinion of this office that you qualify for an absentee ballot due to physical disability if:

- You are ill;
- You are confined to your home because you may transmit infection; or
- You cannot leave your home because you are a member of a population vulnerable to illness;
- You are staying in your home or avoiding your polling place as a precautionary measure in response to COVID-19.

The law has also been updated to allow early voting by mail for any election held on or before August 1, 2020. Early voting by mail is similar to absentee voting, but unlike absentee voting, no excuse is required.

Taking Action, Staying Informed



Indivisible is a grassroots movement of thousands of local Indivisible groups with a mission to elect progressive leaders, rebuild our democracy. You can join the local Indivisible MVY by joining the Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/IndivisibleMVY/about/> or by emailing IndivisibleMVY@gmail.com

Need more information on voting from home or voting by mail? Vote at Home has an extensive list of Research, Best Practices and handouts, Media Coverage and Articles.



<https://www.voteathome.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/NVAHI-Reference-Library.pdf>

month to secure voter registration and get out the vote. We have over 25 volunteers from UUSMV, MV League of Women Voters, MV Dems, MV Hebrew Center Social Action Committee! We are using non-partisan postcards from Reclaim Our Vote, Women's March Foundation, and Indivisible Chicago! If you would like to join us or are not sure if you are on the list of volunteers, contact Dorie Godfrey at dorie.godfrey@gmail.com.



in Massachusetts, citizens must register to vote at least 20

Take Action to bring Election Day Registration to Massachusetts.

Go to the link to sign a petition. <https://www.commoncause.org/massachusetts/our-work/expand-voting-rights-election-integrity/election-day-registration/>

In American democracy, our vote is our voice—voting is the best way to hold our representatives in government accountable and make ourselves heard. To make sure our electoral systems are as fair, accessible, and as efficient as possible, we need to make commonsense updates to modernize them. One of these practical updates is Election Day Registration (EDR).

Currently, to cast a ballot

days before an election. This arbitrary restriction keeps thousands of otherwise qualified Bay State residents from participating in our democracy. Plus, it forces voters with errors – typos or out of date addresses, for example – in their registration to cast provisional ballots. These create additional work for elections officials and often, they go uncounted.



Take action by writing and sending postcards!

The Restoring Democracy team has set a goal of sending 1000 postcards every



Take actions every week that value democracy.

“If you believe that diversity is our greatest strength, that respect, truth, and compassion matter, and that we are called to love our neighbor, You are an American of conscience.” Go to the website and sign up. <https://americansofconscience.com/about/> Each week you will receive actions that you can take to restore our democracy.



Stay informed with Issue Voter: <https://issuevoter.org/misc/about>
 When we vote, we're hiring our elected officials. Issue Voter works to increase Voter Participation. By keeping voters informed throughout the year on issues that matter most to them, more people will see how legislation affects those issues and recognize the importance of voting and engaging with their representative year-round. Voters will have a more informed view about their representatives during election season. You can track your rep's activity. The website tells you how your rep voted, how often your representative agrees with you, and whether they've attended a vote. Encourage open discussion. You can share an issue on your favorite social network, without revealing your opinion. Act on issues that don't make headlines. Issue Voter not only tells you about what is breaking the news; they check for updates every hour to make sure you have the latest information. Become an informed voter. Using IssueVoter year-round informs you before elections and keeps money's influence out of your opinion. Only re-elect reps who truly represented you.

Stay informed with UU the Vote: One of the fundamental principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) is the use of the democratic process. As an expression of our faith, many Unitarian Universalist congregations engage in voter registration, election reform, protecting voting rights and democracy, and Get-Out-the-Vote drives. **UU the**

Vote supports congregations and UU organizations in activating thousands of UUs in 2020 to mobilize voters, counter voter suppression, and engage in spiritually grounded, values-based issue conversations with voters in their communities. This is a grassroots campaign that relies on grassroots support. Go to the website <https://www.uua.org/justice/vote2020> or join the UU the Vote Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/509770206273429/> to stay informed.



Stay informed! You can sign up for informational emails. Ballotpedia: <https://ballotpedia.org> Ballotpedia is the digital encyclopedia of American politics and elections. Its goal is to inform people about politics by providing accurate and objective information about politics at all levels of government. They are firmly committed to neutrality in our content; here's why.

"As a nonprofit, our mission is to educate. We're here for you when:

- You're considering a run for office.
- You're making decisions about how you'll vote in an election.
- You need the latest political news and analysis from a reliable, nonpartisan source.

"Ballotpedia's articles are 100 percent written by our professional staff of more than 50 writers and researchers. Although we have an office in Middleton, Wisconsin, the majority of our staff work from home offices across the United States."



Criminal Justice



Reform

The Criminal Justice Reform interest group has been learning about ways to reform criminal justice at all levels of society. The research has made us even more aware of injustice in the United States, especially for people of color.

It is profoundly important that we elect candidates in November 2020 who recognize injustice in all its forms and are committed to making American society live up to its pledge of "... justice for all." Therefore, the Criminal Justice Reform group is taking a sabbatical so that its members can work on UU the Vote. We will chart a new course when UUSMV re-visits its universal justice priorities for 2021. In the meantime,

Watch *Just Mercy* in June

We urge all UUSMV members to watch the provocative movie ***Just Mercy***. It tells the true story of Bryan Stevenson (played by Michael B. Jordan), a civil-rights attorney who defended Walter McMillian (played by Jamie Foxx), who was wrongfully convicted of murder. In response to current events, Warner Bros. is offering free streaming rentals during June of ***Just Mercy***, which was released in theaters on January 10. (continued next page)

Criminal Justice Reform, Continued from previous page

Just Mercy is available to rent for free in June through a variety of digital movie services in the US, including [Apple TV](#), [FandangoNow](#), [Google Play](#), [Amazon Prime Video](#), [Redbox](#), the PlayStation Store, [Vudu](#), [Microsoft](#), and [YouTube](#).

Learn more about Bryan Stevenson's life work on the website of the Equal Justice Initiative, [eji.org](#).

—Mimi Davisson



Bryan Stevenson (played by Michael B. Jordan) and Walter McMillan (played by Jamie Foxx) in courtroom scene from Just Mercy

The Importance of Voting - Words from President Barack Obama on from his address to 2020 Graduates:

“The point of protest is to raise public awareness, to put a spotlight on injustice, and to make the powers that be uncomfortable; in fact, throughout American history, it’s often only been in response to protests and civil disobedience that the political system has even paid attention to marginalized communities. ...

“... Yes, we should be fighting to make sure that we have a president, a Congress, a U.S. Justice Department, and a federal judiciary that actually recognize the ongoing, corrosive role that racism plays in our society and want to do something about it. But the elected officials who matter most in reforming police departments and the criminal justice system work at the state and local levels.

“It’s mayors and county executives that appoint most police chiefs and negotiate collective bargaining agreements with police unions. It’s district attorneys and state’s attorneys that decide whether or not to investigate and ultimately charge those involved in police misconduct. Those are all elected positions. In some places, police review boards with the power to monitor police conduct are elected as well. Unfortunately, voter turnout in



these local races is usually pitifully low, especially among young people – which makes no sense given the direct impact these offices have on social justice issues...

“So, the bottom line is this: if we want to bring about real change, then the choice isn’t between protest and politics. We have to do both. We have to mobilize to raise awareness, and we have to organize and cast our ballots to make sure that we elect candidates who will act on reform.”

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