



APSA Presidents' Letter on 2020 Election & Voting

What Alexander Hamilton called America's "Great Experiment in Democracy," was to make the public the sovereign power in the new nation. Today that sovereignty rests at its core on voting. The administration of the vote has long been fraught with partisan politics, and this has been increasingly true in recent years with the growth of political polarization, compounded by the growing ability to use social media as a disruptor. But the three great crises of 2020 -- the viral pandemic, ensuing unemployment and economic distress, and the movements calling for social and racial justice -- make the conduct of the 2020 election especially critical. Franklin's admonition, that after the people created the republic, they needed to keep it is, if anything, truer today than at the Founding.

We, the undersigned current and past presidents of the American Political Science Association, believe that all eligible citizens should be able freely, safely, and securely to cast their one vote, should they so choose. To make this a more perfect election for our more perfect union requires urgent commitment and resources from the national government and each state and local government. We fully understand that the crises this year make the necessary attention and dedication of resources difficult, but failure to let James Madison's "great body of the people" have their say will damage the American republic in the short run and threaten to undermine it completely in the long run.

We therefore call upon our governments at all levels to coordinate on an administration of elections that makes registration to vote, mailed or absentee voting, early voting, and voting on Election Day itself as safe, secure, and efficient for all eligible voters as possible. Anticipating that there will certainly be some very close elections for House, Senate or President, and that the pandemic will lead to new and complex procedures, we also call upon our governments to prepare now for an accurate vote count using procedures that are accepted as legitimate by all, and we call on our governments to allow sufficient time for everyone's vote to be tallied. Finally, we also call upon our governments at all levels to coordinate on a long term commitment of technical, administrative, and financial resources in a non-partisan way to make our elections as open, accessible, and free to all citizens as possible, so that America may truly become a government of the people and by the people as well as for the people.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula D. McClain, President (2019-2020)
Rogers M. Smith, President (2018-2019)
Kathleen Thelen, President (2017-2018)
David A. Lake, President (2016-2017)
Jennifer Hochschild, President (2015-2016)



Rodney E. Hero, President (2014-2015)
John Aldrich, President (2013-2014)
Jane Mansbridge, President (2012-2013)
G. Bingham Powell, Jr., President (2011-2012)
Carole Pateman, President (2010-2011)
Henry E. Brady, President (2009-2010)
Peter J. Katzenstein, President (2008-2009)
Dianne Pinderhughes, President (2007-2008)
Robert Axelrod, President (2006-2007)
Ira I. Katznelson, President (2005-2006)
Margaret Levi, President (2004-2005)
Theda R. Skocpol, President (2003-2003)
Robert D. Putnam, President (2001-2002)
Robert Jervis, President (2000-2001)
Robert O. Keohane, President (1999-2000)
Matthew Holden, JR., President (1998-1999)
M. Kent Jennings, President (1997-1998)
Arend Lijphart, President (1995-1996)