

## AJC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

June 12, 2020

***For the Congressional Caucus on Black-Jewish Relations Round-table Discussion:  
“Where do we go from here? How the Black and Jewish Communities Can Collectively  
Dismantle Racism”***

---

Congresswomen Lawrence and Wasserman Schultz, other Representatives from the Congressional Caucus on Black-Jewish Relations, distinguished communal and organizational leaders, colleagues, and friends, thank you for convening today’s roundtable, and thank you for offering AJC this opportunity to present brief remarks on pervasive American racial discrimination and appropriate government responses.

I say pervasive because it is not just an enormous problem, and not just a longstanding one, but because racism has tentacles that reach throughout almost every facet of our society. As such, it is hard to give just one policy prescription. There is no silver bullet for this. The Floyd family has called for a national taskforce to examine systemic inequities. Nationally and in communities around the country, such a model should be implemented to examine systemic inequities and propose practical steps to heal the wounds of historic racial injustice.

We know that many proposals have been made to begin the work of addressing the sad and continuing legacy of racism. All merit study, and many will warrant adoption. The process will undoubtedly be arduous for all Americans. We must remember that even if we cannot support every single proposed measure, we remain committed to the same goal.

AJC has been a strong advocate of the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act to improve hate crimes reporting, and I am pleased the Caucus has also supported this initiative. For more than two decades, under the 1990 Hate Crimes Statistics Act, local, state, tribal and federal law enforcement agencies have voluntarily submitted hate crimes data to the FBI. As the incidence of hate crimes has risen, inaccurate, incomplete, and simply absent hate crime reporting has stymied efforts to fully comprehend and formulate responses to this social pathology. More than 80 cities of over 100,000 residents report zero incidents or do not report hate crimes at all to the FBI. We have a general idea that Black Americans are disproportionately victims of hate – but to achieve justice we need exact numbers, specific incidents, and names. AJC is urging cities across the nation to commit to reporting hate crimes. Even if federal statute does not mandate reporting, state and local governments can. For those few, tardy states that do not have hate crimes laws, now is clearly the time. In the heartbeat of AJC’s Black-Jewish relations program, Georgia – one such state that lacks a hate crime law – AJC has clearly and publicly called on state officials to act.

While we rely on law enforcement to count and report hate crimes, we also recognize that too many injustices take place at the hands of police – a small but significant minority that stains the honor of the women and men in blue who serve communities across our country. George Floyd is just the most recent, most visible example. Many of the reforms outlined in the Justice in Policing Act are a good start and will, we hope, receive bipartisan endorsement. If we are counting victims, we must count police violators, and a national registry should be created. We

**AJC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS****June 12, 2020*****For the Congressional Caucus on Black-Jewish Relations Round-table Discussion:  
“Where do we go from here? How the Black and Jewish Communities Can Collectively  
Dismantle Racism”***

---

need better transparency on disciplinary records to ensure that they are not expunged altogether or shielded so that abusers just circulate from one place to another. Civilian oversight can ensure accountability and community empowerment. Police must receive anti-bias training and instructions in how to de-escalate conflicts. Similarly, we believe it makes sense to undertake appropriate reform of the doctrine of “qualified immunity” for police; for those who would cross an ethical and legal line, criminal prosecution and civil lawsuits are warranted. Practices such as no-knock warrants must be looked at critically; the use of chokeholds should be banned. And, making lynching a federal crime – for the first time – is long overdue. But I must tell you that we will not support the wholesale defunding of police departments – institutions essential to the welfare and safety of communities across America.

The mention of reparations can raise eyebrows in some circles, but a deliberate effort to overcome the legacy of racism is long overdue if we are truly to close the wound of American racism. Resources must be allocated to redress stubborn inequities and indignities. Education resources funded on the basis of local property taxes will never be able to raise struggling sectors. Impoverished communities of any color require and deserve additional resources to remedy the lack of job opportunities, the unavailability of affordable housing, and unequal education quality in their neighborhoods. On education, I know this Caucus called for an American public that is educated on the legacy of slavery, of racism, of lynching. That is vital for all Americans.

Now, amidst a crucial election season, we are especially mindful of the importance of focusing increased attention on the ability of all to be heard in this year’s – and every – election. An important element of the current outcry over injustice and inequality is the threat to citizen enfranchisement. The basic right to vote can never be debated. The only debate should be how best to ensure the enfranchisement of all Americans while safeguarding honest elections.

While the government must address all forms of bias and hate that lead to criminal action, a comprehensive examination of the violence motivated by white supremacist ideology is necessary, as it poses a deadly and dangerous threat to the United States. All U.S. public officials must consistently condemn white supremacist violence, and law enforcement agencies should receive enhanced, specialized training about white supremacist groups. We should also recognize the transnational nature of hate. Numerous white nationalist extremist groups based abroad have successfully found sympathizers and supporters in the United States, with terrifying consequences. These groups are engaged in transnational radicalization, recruitment, training, and violence. In April, the State Department designated the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) and members of its leadership as Specially Designated Global Terrorists, the first time in history the Department has designated a white supremacist terrorist group. There are additional white supremacist groups abroad that qualify for such designation; this move should be considered to

## AJC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

June 12, 2020

***For the Congressional Caucus on Black-Jewish Relations Round-table Discussion:  
“Where do we go from here? How the Black and Jewish Communities Can Collectively  
Dismantle Racism”***

---

curb financing and enable prosecution, to protect American values abroad and lives at home. It is one step that can swiftly, and lawfully, be taken to thwart violent white supremacy.

For generations, Blacks and Jews have marched together to demand equal justice. This conversation is another mile in that long walk. Today’s conversation – one year after the Black-Jewish Congressional Caucus was launched at the AJC Global Forum – takes us another mile in that long walk. Together we will continue to press on, using the tools of our democracy to make America’s founding promise a reality. Together we will write what we hope is the last chapter in the story of America’s long confrontation with racism. AJC stands – and marches – as a willing partner in this noble effort. Thank you.