

National Council of Jewish Women

# VISION FOR AMERICA

NCJW™

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# Our vision for the nation

For more than a century, National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) has been at the forefront of social change for women, children, and families. In the America we have long envisioned, each of us has what we need to be healthy, live with dignity, and share in our growing prosperity.

We can envision a future in which we all have the full range of health care we need, enough to eat, and a safe place to call home. In which we can each achieve financial security while caring for our health and family. In which every young person is affirmed at school, gets unbiased information about their health, and is safe. That no matter who we are or where we are from, we all can access education, economic opportunities, and a court system committed to justice for all. And in which our democracy is strong and stable.

**This document outlines NCJW's domestic policy recommendations to build that future.**

**We must make our vision into reality.**

NCJW is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, we strive for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms.

Today, NCJW leaders are shaping the nation we imagine through advocacy, education, and direct service. We work at all levels of government to create a democratic society that works for everyone — regardless of race, immigration status, gender, income, religion, or any other factor.

For, the Torah commands the Jewish people to not only to set up a just society, but to ensure that those who are most marginalized are safeguarded, enfranchised, and lifted up. In fact, the Torah goes so far as to say, “Cursed be the one who subverts the rights of the stranger, the orphan, and the widow.” (Deuteronomy 27:19)

In its repeated echoes to pay special heed to the needs of these three categories of people in particular, it reminds us that women, children, and families are uniquely vulnerable in poverty, and in our society as a whole — as are those without national status, all those regarded as outsiders in some way. Everyone must be included, cared for, empowered — and their rights must be protected.

The Talmud teaches that we are all responsible for one another. As such, Jewish tradition emphasizes the importance of honoring every person's dignity and caring for our communal and social well-being. And our past and present experiences as Jews only further underscore our obligation to work towards ending all oppression, in solidarity with others.

Indeed, America faces several overlapping crises. As we live with a global pandemic, amid rising levels of racism, transphobia, and antisemitism, and have experienced a violent insurrection, people nationwide confront disparities in health, economic security, and educational opportunity. Though these challenges are deep and complex, policy leaders can create a better future by adopting solutions that advance equity and justice.

**To build a nation where everyone can flourish, we call on our lawmakers to:**



**1. Advance reproductive freedom.** *Secure abortion rights for every person; promote access to family planning and abortion care in the US and globally; and safeguard religious liberty for workers, patients, and students who need health care and information.*



**2. Achieve economic justice.** *Fund and advance policies that support health and success for all; guarantee nationwide comprehensive paid family and medical leave and paid sick days; and secure equal pay, a federal minimum living wage for all workers, and equitable workplace practices.*



**3. Ensure access to justice for all.** *Confirm a representative judiciary, with judges committed to equal access to justice for everyone; increase access to the courts; and ensure transparency and accessibility at the US Supreme Court.*



**4. Promote and protect the freedom to vote.** *Ensure every voice can be heard at the ballot box; protect and expand our freedom to vote; advance a transparent process for voting that we can all trust; and support increased voter education.*



**5. Ensure and advance civil rights.** *Build a society free from bias, including ending antisemitism and racism; secure and affirm equal rights for LGBTQ+ individuals; and advance and protect the rights of people with disabilities.*



**6. Foster communities free from violence.** *Support and maintain robust measures to prevent domestic and sexual violence, and to protect all survivors; advance community safety with common sense limits on firearms; create safe, respectful, equitable workplaces; and ensure that campus life is a safe place for everyone.*



**7. Welcome immigrants and refugees.** *Support a path to citizenship as part of permanent relief for all immigrants; prioritize immigrants' safety, healing, and human rights; and welcome and assist refugees in resettling and attaining stability.*

By adopting these and other moral policies, we can make progress shaping a nation that advances equity and justice. Since our founding in 1893, NCJW has proven we can drive effective social change on a range of issues with diverse coalition partners.

**NCJW welcomes opportunities to partner with federal, state, and local policy leaders and advocates who want to join us in building a future where all people can thrive.**

## Advancing social justice for 130 years

For more than a century, National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) has boldly imagined a world where women, children, and families are fully valued and supported. Hannah G. Solomon founded the organization in Chicago, Illinois, in 1893. Outspoken and courageous, she asserted that “a woman’s sphere is the whole wide world...” Guided by Jewish values and a progressive vision for the future, NCJW takes on today’s most pressing issues.

**Since our founding, NCJW has advanced women’s rights and equality. We value and welcome advocates and allies of any gender identity. Throughout this resource, and in our work, we strive to include gender-neutral language and spotlight how policies impact people of diverse gender identities in addition to women.**

Throughout our history, we have been at the forefront of social justice movements. NCJW established some of the earliest birth control clinics in the United States, and today we continue to champion access to family planning and abortion care for all who need it. NCJW advocates have fought for women in the workplace, helping to pass the 1963 Equal Pay Act, 2009 Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and the Family and Medical Leave Act, and today mobilizes for policies to close the gender wage gap and ensure paid leave for all workers. And, we have long worked to secure a federal judiciary that prioritizes equal justice, opposing ideologically extreme Supreme Court nominees — from Justice Clarence Thomas to Justice Brett Kavanaugh. Our work has shifted over time as we take on new challenges. But NCJW advocates have been steadfast in driving forward reproductive freedom, economic justice, and a federal judiciary that advances justice for all, among other fights for progress.

Today, NCJW is building the nation we imagine through advocacy, education, and community service. We work at all levels of government to create a democratic society that works for everyone — regardless of race, immigration status, gender, income, religion, or any other factor. **Our advocates are inspired by Jewish values and heed the Torah’s call to action:**

**“Justice, justice shall you pursue.”**

## Our vision in action

Given the overlapping crises confronting the United States, NCJW’s work is more urgent than ever. Our nation has experienced a violent insurrection; rising levels of antisemitism, white supremacy, and other forms of hate; and a global pandemic. These emergencies have occurred alongside persistent, deep disparities in health, wealth, educational opportunity, and economic security. While these problems are significant and complex, they are not insurmountable.

We believe in a country that advances equitable policy solutions and upholds justice for all, where every individual and family is healthy and lives with dignity. NCJW will continue building the movement for progress in the US on the range of policies that can bring about this social change. This document outlines our vision for America, including the following top domestic policy priorities:

### 1. Reproductive freedom and justice is achieved.

In the America we envision, everyone has affordable access to birth control and abortion care as part of comprehensive health services. People can get the abortion care that is right for them, whether at a clinic or self-managed at home. Abortion providers are respected and safe. Policymakers do not restrict access to family planning or abortion care in the US or around the world. Our religious liberty is respected, including our ability to make our own moral or faith-informed decisions about our body and reproduction. Everyone can decide whether and when to have children. People who want to become pregnant or be a parent can give birth and raise their children with dignity, and live in a safe, healthy community.

### 2. In every community, people have what they need to flourish.

In the America we envision, we have unfettered access to programs and services that support our health, stability, and success. In every community, people have enough to eat; a safe place to call home; and the full range of health care they need, including mental health. Families have quality, affordable caregiving for kids; older adults; and individuals with disabilities, in a system fair to care workers. All workers have equitable, livable wages and appropriate accommodations to work safely. We have comprehensive benefits to care for ourselves or loved ones when illness strikes, without risking our economic security. We can all get a quality education, a good job, or job training. With well-supported infrastructure to shape healthy communities, we share in a prosperous and more equitable economy.

### **3. All women, children, and families have equal access to justice.**

In the America we envision, the federal courts work for everyone. People have equal access to justice through courts that recognize and protect their rights. Across communities, individuals can have their day in court, with a justice system that keeps pace with the demand of a growing population. Our courts are fully accessible and transparent. Judges — from lower level courts through the nation’s highest court — adhere to clear codes of conduct to promote nonpartisanship, impartiality, and accountability, reinforcing public trust. Our federal judiciary is fair, independent, and qualified, with judges representing a range of experiences and backgrounds. They reflect the rich diversity of the communities they serve. Judges confirmed to lifetime seats on federal courts also have the requisite experience and temperament, and proven commitment to equal justice for all. They support constitutional rights and protections including reproductive rights and voting rights.

### **4. Our democracy is strong, stable, and everyone can participate in shaping the future.**

In the America we envision, our freedom to vote is respected and honored. The vote is accessible, equitable, and secure. Every citizen can safely and freely register to vote and cast a ballot. Rather than facing obstacles, voters have unimpeded access to registration. Our states have modernized election systems, and we have protections in place against election interference and partisan gerrymandering — because our elected leaders know that voters choose them, not the other way around. In every community, voters are supported in engaging in the political process, participating in candidate forums and ballot initiatives, and learning about the issues. We all have a voice in fairly electing policymakers who will make decisions that touch nearly every aspect of our lives.

### **5. We have a firm separation of religion and state, a founding principle of American democracy.**

In the America we envision, policymakers recognize that religion has flourished in the US precisely because of the wall separating religion and state. Religious freedom is used as a shield to protect religious minorities, rather than a sword that can impose beliefs on others. Our leaders fight any antisemitism where it emerges, and ensure religious liberty as it relates to reproductive freedom and access to social services. Non-profits, such as religious institutions, cannot take a position on political candidates. In addition, public funds go only to public schools. Taxpayer dollars cannot be funneled into private schools, religious organizations, or schools that discriminate against students, teachers, or staff.

**Across the country, NCJW advocates are working toward this better world. We are living out our values with each action we take. We envision our future based on the following commitments and principles:**

#### **→ Our liberation is bound together.**

In every generation, those who attack our rights and freedoms seek to divide us from our neighbors, pitting communities against each other. But we will not be divided. Judaism teaches us to respect and value the dignity of all, and to care for one another, as each person is created in the image of the divine. Our Jewish experience — historically and today — also reminds us to uplift each other because we know what it is like to be oppressed. As we fight to end antisemitism, we also fight to eliminate racism, xenophobia, and other systems of oppression, many of which are part of white supremacy. NCJW believes we are united in our shared humanity and collective struggle for freedom. We will only achieve justice when it includes everyone — progress that we must make together.

#### **→ All of our most basic rights are connected.**

In our daily life, the issues that matter do not affect us in neat siloes. Whether it is our access to abortion care, the ballot box, or the courts, our basic rights can affect each other and we often experience them together. For example, our ability to elect leaders who reflect our values can advance or impede our bodily autonomy, our access to justice, and whether our voices are heard. And federal judges make decisions on the freedom to vote, abortion access, and other issues, impacting us for generations. In communities nationwide, when one of our basic rights is attacked, an assault on others is sure to follow. They are the same forces who would elevate a biased, ideological extremist to the federal bench. Our policy fights may be distinct, but they are tied together in how they impact our lives and our pursuit of justice.

#### **→ To build a more just future, we must advance racial equity.**

And we join in solidarity with Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latino, multi-racial, and others who experience racism. With the increase in local, state, and federal leaders who hold extremist views, America has faced escalations in overt racism and xenophobia. The damage of harmful policies and dangerous rhetoric has, historically and today, most hurt Black, Indigenous, and other people of color — particularly women, people who are immigrants, LGBTQ+ communities (especially individuals who are transgender, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming), people with low incomes, communities in rural areas, and young people. We want a nation and world where each of us feels safe and lives free from discrimination, violence, or other barriers to success.

➔ **We can achieve justice for all by partnering with people who are most affected by harmful policies and by following their lead.**

Justice and equity are not only our end goals, but are values that guide how we pursue our work. When we listen and take the lead from people who have been most marginalized, we can be more effective in uprooting the source of the problem.

We believe in developing trusting relationships in community and building power through collaboration. We can make a greater impact by working together toward common goals. By partnering with a diversity of organizations on the range of issues we care about, we can speak with one voice, center those most impacted, and achieve collective change.

Coalition work is vital to NCJW's efforts improving the quality of life for women, children, and families across the US and safeguarding individual rights and freedoms.

**Our country is at a turning point. In these extraordinary times, we demand more from our leaders. A range of policy solutions exist that can create the nation that women, children, and families across America deserve.**

**National Council of Jewish Women will continue to stay true to our values as we take action to achieve this progress, and we are always ready to welcome others who want to join us in making this vision a reality.**

## Advance reproductive freedom

Reproductive freedom is a Jewish issue. Since NCJW's founding in 1893, we have supported access to family planning and abortion care. Our religion supports abortion as health care — allowing and sometimes requiring it. Above all, Judaism teaches us to respect and affirm the dignity of all people. We should all be able to make our own moral decisions about our body, health, and family. Restrictions on abortion, comprehensive sex education, and related services are rooted in Christianity and white supremacy. They go against our nation's core principle of religious liberty and promise of justice for all. Policies that deny reproductive health care most hurt people who already face steep barriers to equitable health care and economic security. They include Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, especially young people, LGBTQ+ communities, people who have immigrated to the US, those with disabilities, people in rural America, and individuals working to make ends meet. NCJW envisions a world where each of us can control our own body, sexuality, and future with support and compassion, not stigma or political interference. **We call on our leaders to:**

### 1. Secure abortion rights and access in principle and practice.

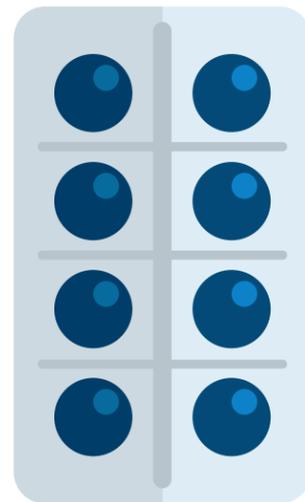
- **Policymakers must ensure access to abortion for all.** Each of us should be able to make our own faith-informed decisions about our health and future with dignity. NCJW strongly opposes the 2022 US Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which overturned the right to abortion nationwide. This decision took away 50 years of constitutional precedent affirmed by *Roe v. Wade*. After *Dobbs*, more state lawmakers banned abortion, imposing greater dangers on providers and increasing barriers for people who need this health care. Yet, regardless of the law, access to care was never a reality for everyone. Before *Roe* was overturned, court decisions and legislation blocked abortion care in

ways that made this right effectively meaningless for too many people. Systemic racial discrimination, economic inequality, and inequities based on immigration status continue exacerbating these roadblocks. The consequences fall hardest on people struggling to make ends meet, especially women of color; LGBTQ+ people; and young people. Our leaders must address the legal landscape in the aftermath of *Dobbs*, restoring abortion rights and going further to help build healthy communities. Our policies must guarantee insurance coverage for abortion and expand the types of providers authorized to offer abortion care, ensuring anyone can access the abortion care they need.

- **Abortion justice means protecting access to all forms of abortion care.** NCJW supports policies guaranteeing available, affordable, timely abortion care for anyone who seeks it — regardless of identity, place of residence, income, or immigration status. People who are pregnant must be free to obtain the type of abortion care that is best for them, without jumping through hoops. Our policies must safeguard access to clinics and to medication abortion. Policymakers must also treat abortion providers like all other clinicians who provide vital care, rather than criminalizing them.

- **Advancing equitable access to abortion coverage is vital for racial and economic justice.** We should all be able to access abortion as part of comprehensive health care, no matter our income or type of insurance. Private and public insurers should cover the full range of reproductive health services, including abortion, birth control, and emergency contraception. This is a racial justice issue. Coverage or funding bans like the Hyde Amendment deny abortion access to people with low incomes, who are disproportionately women of color. These bans are racist, discriminatory, and immoral. NCJW supports repealing Hyde and all other restrictions that bar abortion coverage in federal programs that provide health care, such as those serving Indigenous people, people who are incarcerated, federal employees, and members of the military and their dependents

- **All people must have the ability to manage their own abortion.** When people decide to end a pregnancy, they also have a right to access the type of abortion care that is best for them. Some of us may visit a health provider at a clinic, while others want to manage their abortion at home. Our policies must ensure that anyone can self-manage an abortion with dignity, and full control. We should all be able to self-manage wherever we feel safe, with the support we want and services we need. As with all aspects of our reproductive health decisions, this should never be met with criminalization, punishment, or harassment.



**Sample efforts that block abortion justice:** Ignoring scientific and medical evidence, barriers to abortion often include mandatory — and medically unnecessary — waiting periods, counseling, and ultrasounds; abortion bans at arbitrary points in pregnancy; targeted restrictions of abortion providers; bans on medication abortion, or how it can be provided; and criminalizing people who provide or support others' access to abortion care. NCJW opposes these and similar measures that prevent abortion access.

## 2. Promote access to family planning and abortion care in the US and around the world.

- **Sustaining family planning programs is key to safeguarding individual rights and health.** Birth control is an important part of health care and greater access helps people thrive in every aspect of their lives. NCJW supports the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act's (ACA) coverage of contraceptive services and supplies as essential care. America's federal family planning program, Title X, provides birth control and other preventive care to people with low incomes, including many young people. Policymakers must fully fund this program and all its providers, including Planned Parenthood health centers. Globally, the US must fully support the UN Population Fund. This global initiative expands access to reproductive health care and information to people around the world.

the Global Gag Rule undermines access to reproductive health care for people around the world. This policy forbids any international family planning provider receiving US funds from providing abortion care, referring patients to abortion providers, and discussing the option of abortion. Similarly, the Helms Amendment bars any organization receiving US foreign aid from providing abortion, with few exceptions that have often been ignored. NCJW opposes these policies, as well as any domestic gag rule that has previously barred Title X health centers from referring patients to abortion providers.

- **We should all be able to access vital health services.** Each of us should be free to make decisions that are best for ourselves and our families, no matter where we live. However,



### 3. Safeguard religious liberty for workers, patients, and students who need health care and information.

- **Our ability to make our own moral or faith-informed health care decisions is tied to religious freedom.** In our pluralistic democracy, everyone should have the basic right to control their own body, without interference. We strongly oppose attempts to use “religious liberty” as a cudgel against patients seeking medical care. This includes opposing the Church and Weldon Amendments, both of which embolden health insurance plans and providers to deny abortion care under the guise of protecting “conscience” or “religious freedom.” NCJW also rejects using claims of religious freedom to protect employers who refuse to cover contraception, medical providers who deny patients abortion care or other reproductive health services, and doctors who refuse to treat certain patients, such as LGBTQ+ people, including transgender, gender nonconforming, or non-binary people.
- **Young people should get accurate health information and resources at school, where they are safe and affirmed.** Comprehensive sex education is essential to young people’s health. Abstinence-only programs have proven to be ineffective and should be defunded. They are harmful to young people, including LGBTQ+ youth, and often impose the religious beliefs of one group on students. Young people have a right to honest reproductive health information. They also have the right to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. Sex education must be LGBTQ+ inclusive, medically accurate, age appropriate, consent-based, and sex positive.

## Achieve economic justice

As the Torah commands the newly liberated Israelites in the Book of Exodus and beyond to set up a new society, it is notably designed around a myriad of systems to ensure economic justice. Later Rabbinic teachings, too, center the urgent, lived experiences of those who are less financially secure and create additional legal structures to protect them. NCJW believes that the moral test of a nation is how it treats people who face the steepest barriers to success due to structural inequities. NCJW champions policies to end poverty in America and, until that is achieved, to improve the lives of those who experience it — disproportionately women and children, people who are transgender, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, and individuals with disabilities. Each of us has the right to thrive. No matter who we are, where we are from, our ability, or income, we all have the right to live with dignity, in health, and with financial stability, and to provide for our families. Ensuring families have what they need is essential to creating a vibrant economy and shared prosperity. **We call on our leaders to:**

### 1. Fund programs and advance policies that support our health and success.

- **Federal funds must ensure that individuals and families have every opportunity to thrive, not just survive.** As the COVID-19 pandemic reminds us, the health of a nation depends on the health of its people. To shape healthy communities, each person and family — no matter their immigration status, ability, income, or other factor — must have equitable access to core public programs that support their wellbeing and stability. NCJW supports ensuring access to high quality, affordable, comprehensive health care and coverage, including mental health and reproductive health care; educational opportunities; nutritious food; safe, stable housing; and caregiving for children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. In

particular, policymakers must extend and protect the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit; sufficiently invest in Medicare, Medicaid, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; and secure universal access to comprehensive health coverage. Policy leaders must also ensure that people facing obstacles to work can access equitable programs to help bridge the gap, such as by funding income supplements, providing job training, and overhauling our unemployment insurance system. Access to public programs should be provided without added barriers. We can all benefit from shared prosperity by strengthening these programs and building budget and tax policies that serve us all.

**NCJW is a reproductive rights organization that uses a reproductive justice analysis.** Reproductive justice is a framework created by Black women and other women of color to describe how societal factors, such as racism, poverty, and state violence, deny women of color and others some basic human rights:

1. **The right to bodily autonomy;**
2. **To have or not have children;**
3. **To birth and to parent children with dignity; and**
4. **To raise a family in a healthy community.**

NCJW’s approach to reproductive issues centers on the leadership of Black women and those who are most harmed by systemic discrimination.

Lawmakers have shown we can create a future where every family has the resources to thrive. For example, expanding the Child Tax Credit (CTC) in 2021 dramatically cut child poverty to historic lows. With other investments, it reduced hunger among struggling families. Poverty is an immoral policy decision that hurts millions of women, children, and families in America. It most harms Black, Latinx, Indigenous and other people of color. NCJW believes policy solutions like restarting an expanded CTC can build toward a more moral and just nation.

- **We can shape an economy that values caregiving and works for everyone, including all types of caregivers and the people who count on them.** Caregiving is essential to our everyday life and economy. It includes the range of care we may need across our lifetime — from safe, nurturing child care and early education, to caregiving options that maintain the dignity and autonomy of people with disabilities and older adults. But our nation’s systems of care have long been unaffordable and out of reach for many, gaps that most harm families with low incomes and others pushed to the margins. These inequities also hurt care workers, who are disproportionately Black, Latina,

Asian, and immigrant women, and who have historically been paid poverty-level wages. During the COVID-19 pandemic, mounting barriers to a stable caregiving infrastructure came into sharper focus, as many women were pushed out of the workforce to provide unpaid care to loved ones. Policymakers can reshape our care economy so it benefits care workers, those receiving care, and their families. Our leaders must secure and maintain bold investments in child care, universal preschool, and home- and community-based services. These and other efforts can build more equitable, affordable, and high-quality systems of care while also creating better jobs that work for us all.



## 2. Guarantee nationwide, comprehensive paid family and medical leave and paid sick days.

- **Each of us should be able to achieve economic stability while caring for our health and family.** Paid leave is a critical part of making that goal a reality. But recent data show that most workers cannot access such benefits. This policy gap most harms women, especially women of color, single mothers, and women struggling to make ends meet. By undermining family economic security, the absence of guaranteed, nationwide paid leave

and paid sick days can have far-reaching consequences on the health and wellbeing of children and adults. We should all be able to access policies that let us balance work and caregiving needs without risking our financial future. Policymakers must recognize the needs of all workers and their families by providing at least twelve weeks of comprehensive paid family and medical leave and seven job-protected paid sick days per year.

## 3. Secure equal pay, a federal minimum living wage for all workers, and other equitable workplace practices.

- **Workers should earn a fair, livable wage that lets us and our families flourish, no matter who we are.** Too many people who work a full-time job — or multiple jobs — still experience poverty. People paid the minimum wage are disproportionately women, people of color, and parents. A discriminatory wage gap worsens women’s financial insecurity; the average woman is paid only 80 cents for every dollar paid to a White man. This gap is wider for women who are Black, Indigenous, Latina, Asian American, and other people of color. In addition, workers who are pregnant can

be pushed out of their job or denied the reasonable accommodations they need to work safely. Policymakers can help all families thrive with better income and workplace policies. NCJW supports efforts to raise the minimum wage to a living wage, end the tipped minimum wage, expand employment nondiscrimination protections for pregnant workers and others who can still be fired for who they are, and ensure workers can unionize. We support bolstering existing equal pay policies and barring practices designed to keep workers from earning fair, equitable wages.

## Ensure access to justice for all

Judaism's call to pursue justice inspires all of our work, especially when it comes to improving the federal judiciary. Jewish teachings — from the Torah onward — are clear about the importance of unbiased judges as well as fair and impartial courts. In fact, Deuteronomy's clarion call, "Justice, justice you must pursue!" is found in the context of verses commanding the enactment of an unbiased judiciary. Judges confirmed to lifetime seats on federal courts have the power to impact almost every aspect of our lives. They make decisions about health care and bodily autonomy, voting rights, and religious freedom, among other vital issues. Therefore, judges must be fair, qualified, and independent with a commitment to equal justice for all. Further, for our courts to work for all of us, they must reflect all of us. **We call on our leaders to:**

### I. Confirm a representative judiciary with judges committed to equal access to justice for all.

- **Nominees to the federal bench must be fair, independent, and qualified.** As integral players in our democracy, judges should be impartial arbiters of the law. The Senate must confirm nominees who will uphold the rights of all Americans and embrace judicial independence. History has brought into sharp focus just how vital it is to have an independent federal judiciary. It must be clear that nominees will prioritize equal justice for all, rather than pick and choose whose rights they will defend. People across America need federal judges who will be independent and serve as a check on the other branches of government.
- **Our courts should look like America.** The federal judiciary should reflect the communities they serve. Diversity in our courts inspires confidence in the judicial system and can better ensure balanced decisions. It is still true today that a majority of federal judges are

white men, yet we know that there are well qualified people who should be on our bench who represent the shifting demographics of our nation, such as Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, particularly women, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities, among others. Diversifying the bench also means confirming nominees with different professional and educational backgrounds. While most federal judges have been corporate lawyers or prosecutors, highly-qualified, independent candidates should also be selected from the larger legal community, including public defenders and civil rights lawyers. This diversity — of identity and experience — will make for a better court. To advance equal justice under the law, we need more federal judges informed by a range of real-life experiences so they deeply understand how their decisions will impact everyday people.

While we often hear more about the US Supreme Court, it typically agrees to hear fewer than 100 cases each term (about  $\frac{1}{10}$  of 1% of federal cases). The vast majority of cases — more than 400,000 filed each year — are heard in district and circuit courts, which means their decisions are the final word. The judges on these courts are overwhelmingly young, male, and white, although 51% of the population are women and 43% of those living in America are people of color. For decades, NCJW has worked for a fair, independent, and qualified judiciary with judges representing a diversity of professional and demographic backgrounds.

- **Federal judges must protect the constitutional rights of all people in America, especially reproductive rights and voting rights.** Federal courts are the ultimate arbiter of our most cherished rights. Each federal judge wields power over matters core to our ability to participate fully in our democracy and society. Therefore, nominees must have a demonstrated

record of prioritizing equal justice for all. Our courts are no place for judges who will diminish protections for ordinary people, including those who have historically been excluded or marginalized, while favoring corporations and the powerful. We need judges who will support constitutional values and protect everyone's constitutional rights.

### 2. Increase access to justice.

- **To ensure equal justice is within reach of everyone, policymakers must increase the capacity of lower federal courts.** A federal judiciary that prioritizes equal justice is one that can sufficiently manage the increased cases that come with a growing population. But today, our court system cannot keep up with demand. While lawmakers have historically expanded the number of judges as America's population rises, due to intensified political polarization, it has been decades since there has been any effort to modernize our judiciary. As a result, the nation's courts

are backlogged, and our district and circuit courts are understaffed to meet the demand of cases in the pipeline. These delays in the administration of justice most hurt people of color, individuals struggling to make ends meet, and those with disabilities. Expanding the lower federal courts would improve the federal judiciary's ability to work for everyone. It would also be an opportunity to diversify our courts as there could be more judges who reflect all of our communities and are committed to equality and justice for all.

### 3. Ensure transparency and accessibility at the US Supreme Court.

- **Justices who sit on our nation’s highest court should be held to the highest standard.** We look to the US Supreme Court to deliberate critical questions and mete out justice equally, in a nonpartisan way. US Supreme Court justices must adopt a code of ethics, which exists for all other judges on the federal bench. Ethical questions constantly arise at all levels of the judiciary, including our highest court. Without a written code, justices are left without consistent guidance and the public is left without any assurance. A transparent code of ethics at the US Supreme Court would create uniformity around issues like participation in political activities and would prevent conflicts of interest. Establishing a code of ethics is an urgent, vital task to deepen the legitimacy of the Court’s decisions and strengthen its role as the only politically independent branch of government.
- **The US Supreme Court must assure the public of its impartiality by adhering to a clear recusal policy.** The Court’s nine justices can reinforce public trust in our federal judiciary by adopting a recusal requirement. This is vital to ensure our rights are protected. Justices should not be able to rule on cases where they have personal relationships that intersect with the case. When such a conflict of interest arises, they must be required to recuse themselves. Yet there is no mechanism to ensure this happens. The Supreme Court should be held to

the same standard as the rest of the federal judiciary, with a clear recusal requirement in place to support their capacity to advance equal justice for all.

- **Improving public access to courtroom proceedings will increase confidence in the federal courts and support an informed electorate.** Transparency is a hallmark of a healthy democracy. Yet, the Supreme Court is the least accountable branch of the federal government. Adapting to modern technology, such as by live-streaming Court proceedings, and using accurate captions and American Sign Language interpretation as part of recordings, would increase accessibility for all. Opening up the courtroom by making proceedings immediately available to the public would give people an opportunity to be more informed about the judicial process and rulings that affect their everyday lives. Supporting transparency in this way is also critical to promoting trust in the legitimacy of the courts, and it can get us closer to building a federal judiciary that truly prioritizes people over the powerful.



## Promote and protect the freedom to vote

Jewish texts teach that our well-being is tied to that of our community; we must take part in building the nation we want and must speak up when we see harm. Our vote is our voice and our democracy is at its strongest when every voice is heard. As one of America’s core constitutional rights, NCJW has worked for the freedom to vote since our founding. We advocated for women’s suffrage, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the National Voter Registration Act, and more. Deliberate barriers to voting — steeped in white supremacy — have made it increasingly difficult for people to register to vote and cast a ballot. Such efforts threaten the promise of American democracy. They block us from electing diverse officials who represent our values. Intentionally steep obstacles to the ballot box most hurt Black voters and other communities of color, young people, and people with disabilities. NCJW supports policies that secure and guarantee our freedom to vote, with equitable access to the ballot box and a transparent process we can trust. Together, we can continue building a government that represents, reflects, and responds to all of us. **We call on our leaders to:**

### 1. Ensure every voice can be heard at the ballot box.

- **Our democracy works best when it reflects the diversity of its people.** When voter registration is more accessible, it allows all our voices to be heard. Rather than silencing the voices of Black voters, young people, and older adults, we must improve access to voter registration to make our democracy more responsive and representative. Solutions to modernize voter registration include registering people to vote automatically when they interact with a government agency, like the Department of Motor Vehicles, and enabling people to register any time, including on Election Day and online. Policymakers must also work to include all voices in our democracy. Lawmakers should advance protections against improper purges of voter registration

rolls, and end the practice of stripping the right to vote from people who have prior criminal convictions or who are, or have been, incarcerated. For those already impacted by these harmful practices, elected officials must ensure that Americans have their voting rights restored as soon as possible, with immediate information about registering to vote. NCJW supports efforts to ensure that voter registration is accessible for everyone.

## 2. Protect and expand our freedom to vote.

- **For democracy to work for all of us, it must include everyone.** We celebrate our democratic system for its promise that every person can take part in building the future. Over the last decade, however, Americans have faced a flood of new restrictions making it harder to vote, with deliberate barriers harming some communities more than others. Such burdensome, unnecessary obstacles disproportionately deny the freedom to vote from people of color, young people, older Americans, non-native English speakers, people with

disabilities, and those living in rural areas. Lawmakers must expand access to the ballot box across the country by making Election Day a federal holiday, expanding options and making it easier to vote early and by mail, making polling stations accessible, and expanding language access programs to serve Americans for whom English is not their first language. NCJW supports restoring the full strength of the landmark 1965 Voting Rights Act, and opposes policies that put up any obstacles to voting.

## 3. Advance a transparent process for voting that we can all trust.

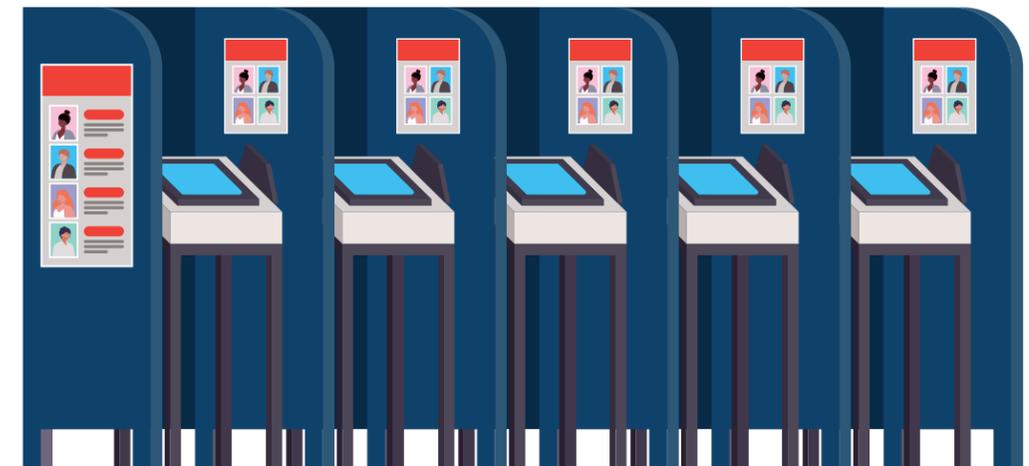
- **The stability of our democracy depends on our freedom to vote, where the will of the people prevails in each election.** When it comes to administering our elections, we want a transparent process that we can count on and believe in. Lawmakers can support Americans' freedom to vote and the fair administration of elections by preventing politicians at any level of government from unjustifiably removing trusted, local elections officials and inserting partisanship into the elections process. Policymakers must also safeguard election workers from threats of violence and protect voters from deception or intimidation. In addition, Americans have a right to clear, nonpartisan standards for drawing congressional districts to ensure that voters choose their policymakers — not the other way around.



## 4. Support increased voter education.

- **When more of us participate in our democracy, it makes the promise of democracy real for us all.** NCJW believes voters should have the opportunity to engage with the political process in a meaningful way. We support voter registration drives and Get Out The Vote (GOTV) efforts. NCJW also encourages community discussions of civil issues, candidate forums, and other voter education initiatives. These strategies enable Americans to elect leaders who have our best interests at heart.

A 2013 Supreme Court decision weakening federal voting protections opened a floodgate of anti-voter laws across the country. These laws most impact people of color, young people, older Americans, non-native English speakers, people with disabilities, and those living in rural areas. But during that same time period, states also passed dozens of laws making it easier to register to vote and cast a ballot. Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other activists of color, many of whom are young people, have been at the forefront of the movement to expand access to the ballot box.



## Ensure and advance civil rights

Jewish texts, our values, and our unique history remind us to honor the dignity of each person and care for one another, particularly safeguarding the rights of those being marginalized. Our nation's greatest strengths are its democratic ideals of equality under the law, the diversity of its people, and our shared interest in respect and inclusion for all. We should all have equal opportunity and the freedom to live without fear of violence and persecution. White supremacy and white Christian nationalism should have no place in America. To pursue justice, we must promote equity and fair treatment, and protect equal rights under the law. NCJW supports policies to end discrimination (including antisemitism and other types of bigotry based on religion), racism, xenophobia, bias based on ethnicity, ableism, sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, oppression based on gender identity and sexual orientation, and discrimination based on age, marital status, parenthood status, or medical condition. Fighting hatred in all its forms is a critical part of Jewish liberation. It is also part of our larger movement to build the world we envision — where everyone can participate equally, with justice, and free from oppression and violence. **We call on our leaders to:**

### 1. Build a society free from hate and bias.

- **Every person should be free to live with dignity and in safety.** Our nation's hate crimes laws can protect communities from harm. But they must be strengthened and better enforced. Fighting one form of hate is linked to our fight against all forms of hate. As extremists have become more emboldened in the last several years, antisemitism — of particular concern to NCJW — has become more visible. Acts of antisemitism have shown up on the national level and in our local communities. In the last decade, hate incidents targeting other communities have also spiked, particularly against people who are Muslim, Black, Asian, and transgender, especially trans women of color. All states should have comprehensive hate crime laws, and

these laws must be properly enforced at the federal, state, and local levels. The government must continue to require and consider incentivizing hate crime data collection. Policymakers must also fully fund training for law enforcement and other community responders to identify, respond, and even prevent hate crimes.



### 2. Secure and affirm equal rights for LGBTQ+ individuals.

- **People who are LGBTQ+ deserve nondiscrimination protections that are in line with other communities.** Each of us should have the freedom to be ourselves and access the resources and services we need with dignity. Our nation's nondiscrimination laws have significant holes. These gaps hurt and endanger LGBTQ+ people, especially young people, people who are transgender, and those who are Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. In recent years, an increasing number of states have introduced policy to repeal nondiscrimination protections, limit LGBTQ+ individuals' access to health care, and bar transgender people from access to gender-specific activities or facilities, such as school

sports and restrooms. Policymakers must stop these harmful attacks, and end discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity — characteristics not currently protected by federal law. NCJW advocates for federal, state, and local anti-discrimination laws. We are committed to ending bullying and discrimination against LGBTQ+ students, and we oppose school voucher programs that funnel public funds to private schools, religious organizations, or schools with discriminatory policies toward students, teachers, or other staff. NCJW opposes attempts to discriminate under the guise of "religious liberty." We support full and equal access to public spaces, programs, and institutions for all.

**Jewish texts teach that all people are created in the image of G-d, b'tzelem Elohim. Members of the LGBTQ+ community belong in, and enrich the Jewish community. Unfortunately, members of this community continue to face both legal and societal discrimination. At NCJW, we work to build a country in which LGBTQ+ people can thrive, free from violence, fear, and systemic injustices.**



### 3. Advance and protect the rights of people with disabilities.

- **We all have the right to full, equal participation in our nation's social, economic, and political life, but access is not the reality for everyone.** Our values inspire us to work for a fully inclusive democracy. But access is not the reality for everyone. While key legislative and legal strides have been made over the last few decades, many individuals with disabilities still face barriers to full inclusion and equitable support due to prejudice and fear, poor enforcement of laws and regulations, and underinvestment in critical programs. The harm of ableism can be worsened

by other forms of discrimination, like racism and sexism. Disability rights are human rights. Inclusion and rights of people with disabilities is a critical component of the Jewish ideal of a just world. NCJW opposes attempts to weaken the Americans with Disabilities Act. Our policies must respect the autonomy and dignity of people with disabilities. Policymakers must adequately invest in critical programs that support people with disabilities at each stage of their lives, such as Medicaid and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.



## Foster communities free from violence

Jewish texts teach us that life, health, and safety are our most crucial values, and that they take priority over just about everything else. This principle has long guided NCJW to support efforts that prevent and stop all forms of violence, online and in person. Everyone has the right to live, work, study, and raise a family without fearing violence. In particular, gun violence and sexual violence — including intimate partner violence, sexual assault, harassment, and stalking — take a toll on our communities. NCJW works to increase protections against these threats, especially for communities who suffer violence at disproportionate rates. These include LGBTQ+ people (especially transgender women of color), Indigenous women, women who are immigrants, and other women of color. Our leaders must fulfill the promise of measures such as the Violence Against Women Act and Title IX. No matter who or where we are — in school, the military, at work, or another public or private space — we should be able to count on policies that nurture healthy, safe communities. We can build a nation free from all forms of violence. **We call on our leaders to:**

### 1. Support and maintain robust measures to prevent domestic and sexual violence, and to protect all survivors.

- **Our federal laws must protect everyone from intimate partner and sexual violence.** We should all be able to live with health and safety, regardless of our relationship status, where we live, immigration status, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Sexual violence, including sexual harassment and sexual assault, continues to be a pervasive problem on college campuses, in the US military, and in the workplace. Current federal firearms law protects only domestic violence survivors from firearms violence, yet survivors of the equally dangerous crimes of stalking and dating violence lack those same protections — at a time when more women are killed by dating partners than by spouses. Our leaders must

close current loopholes that allow current and former dating partners convicted of abuse or stalking charges to purchase firearms, and ensure that each of us has full protection from gun violence and sexual violence under the law.

## 2. Advance community safety with common sense limits on firearms.

- **We should all be able to grow up and care for our families in communities that support our health and well-being.** We all want to be safe at school and work, at our house of worship, or the grocery store. Policymakers can support our collective safety by reducing gun violence. But in recent years, an increasing number of policies would expand where people can carry a gun without a permit, and the reasons why they could use it. Other laws would allow everyday people to carry a weapon of war without training and regardless of their

history of violence. Particularly amid rising levels of extremism, policymakers must promote peace so that we and our loved ones can lead full lives without having them cut short from gun violence. The range of effective safeguards includes limiting guns in schools and other public spaces, requiring someone to pass a criminal background check before buying a gun, closing the private sale and ghost gun loopholes, barring military-style assault weapons, high-capacity magazines, and bump stocks, and making it illegal to traffic guns.

**Every day, more than 110 Americans are killed with guns. Firearms are now the leading cause of death for children. And, in more than half of mass shootings over the past decade, the perpetrator shot a current or former intimate partner or family member as part of a rampage. Gender-based violence and mass shootings are inextricably intertwined issues. Everyone is impacted by the toll of gun violence, an epidemic which can begin to be addressed by strengthening current laws, keeping guns out of the wrong hands, and passing common sense public safety policies to reduce gun violence and save lives — work NCJW has invested in for decades.**



## 3. Create safe, respectful, and equitable workplaces.

- **We all have the right to respect, safety, and bodily autonomy when we are at work.** This freedom is for everyone, no matter what job we hold. Yet sexual violence, including harassment and assault, happens in every state, industry, workplace setting, military branch, and level of employment. It most hurts women, particularly women of color and immigrant women, who disproportionately hold low-wage jobs that lack legal protections. Such harms are compounded by racism and xenophobia. Our employment and economic policies also often deny low-paid workers other critical benefits that support economic mobility, such as fair, predictable schedules, health insurance, and paid time off. These gaps allow bosses, colleagues, and customers to exploit

workers struggling to make ends meet. Policymakers must ensure our laws protect every employee from sexual violence at work. This includes strengthening paths to hold people accountable when they are abusive, restoring survivors' voices, and requiring workplace sexual harassment prevention strategies.

## 4. Ensure campus life is a safe place for everyone.

- **At schools, colleges, and universities, every student should be free to focus on learning and development.** As a federal civil rights law, Title IX guarantees all students an equal right to learn, no matter their gender or gender identity. That includes every student's right to protection from sexual violence, including assault and harassment. But too many students still face fear and injustice on campus. Survivors must have access to justice and other supports. Policymakers must ensure

Title IX works as intended — to combat campus sexual violence and protect survivors.

## Welcome immigrants and refugees

The commandment to care for the “stranger” — the non-citizen — appears at least 36 times in the Torah, more than any other commandment. It lies at the core of our religious and moral obligations as Jews. In addition, our communal experiences over more than a thousand years as refugees from war, displacement, and religious persecution compel us to urgently fight back against all xenophobia and inhumane treatment. Since our earliest days, NCJW has supported the resettlement and well-being of immigrants and refugees. No one seeking refuge or opportunity in the US should fear a locked door, family separation, detention, or detainment, or increased criminalization. No one should fear hunger, homelessness, or denial of health care or other basic services. In recent years, harmful policies have hurt immigrants with limited wealth and incomes, as well as immigrants who are Muslim, Black, Latino, and other people of color. Immigrants should have access to justice, economic security, and a life of dignity and safety. Every immigrant, regardless of their path here, must have a clear opportunity to earn legal status and citizenship. In every generation, immigrants have improved America. They are vital members of our communities. **We call on our leaders**

**In the early 1900s, NCJW established an agency at Ellis Island to greet and help immigrant families settle across America. With partner offices in more than 300 cities, we provided job training and legal aid for immigrant women. Today, NCJW continues to advocate for the rights of immigrants and refugees.**

### 1. Support a path to citizenship as part of permanent relief for all immigrants.

- **Our immigrant neighbors and loved ones are integral to our communities and economy, and should be able to fully benefit from their contributions.**

Whether they arrived as children or adults, many immigrants have lived in the US for decades. Millions work in frontline jobs, including those deemed essential during the COVID-19 crisis. They keep America fed, provide health care, teach and care for our youngest children, clean schools and hospitals, and hold other

vital roles in our communities. They must have permanent relief and stability, regardless of documentation, status, or past interactions with the criminal justice system. NCJW supports policies to provide all immigrants and their families a path to citizenship — including Dreamers, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) recipients, people with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), farmworkers, and other essential workers.

### 2. Prioritize immigrants' safety, healing, and human rights.

- **We must respect and affirm the humanity of all people who immigrate to our nation.** Every person in America should be treated with dignity, no matter their background. Cruel policies such as worksite raids, immigrant detention, family separation, and deportation have endangered the health and livelihood of immigrant families and communities. Rather than punitive approaches and increased criminalization, NCJW supports immigration policies and systems that treat immigrants with dignity at every turn. Policymakers must restore access to asylum as a basic

human right, per US law. They must also minimize detention, promoting community-based alternatives instead. Where incarceration still happens, policymakers must ensure swift access to due process and improve conditions. At the same time, children and people seeking asylum must never be in detention facilities or restricted settings. Our leaders must also minimize deportation in favor of family unity, the well-being of children and adults, and immigrants' economic success. Ensuring the dignity of each person will strengthen our communities.

### 3. Welcome and assist refugees in resettling and attaining stability.

- **Our arms must remain open to welcome people fleeing violence or seeking a better life.** We have a moral obligation to care for each other. The world continues to confront a dire refugee crisis, with historic levels of people being displaced. Data shows that over the past decade, children have made up nearly half of all people forced to flee their homes. Yet in recent years, the US has dramatically

reduced the number of refugees resettled in our country — reaching the lowest number in modern history. Our leaders and communities must reject xenophobia and racism and recognize our shared humanity. When we help immigrants and refugees thrive, we all benefit. Policymakers must commit to accepting more refugees and fully funding programs that support their resettlement.



## Mission:

**National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) is the oldest Jewish feminist civil rights organization working for equity and justice for women, children, and families in the United States and Israel**

**Through the efforts of our 210,000 grassroots advocates and 50 local sections, NCJW combines education, advocacy, and direct service to affect lasting social change at the local, state, and national levels.**

**We approach our work through the intersections of gender, economic, and racial justice to center those most impacted in a uniquely Jewish way.**



National Council of Jewish Women

[NCJW.org](https://www.ncjw.org)



[connect@ncjw.org](mailto:connect@ncjw.org)



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