

THE CARTER CENTER



U.S. Domestic Political Violence Mitigation in Select Localities

PROJECT REPORT

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Conflict Resolution Program
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I Executive Summary

From September 2020 through January 2021, The Carter Center (the Center), in partnership with Princeton University's Bridging Divides Initiative (BDI) and Cure Violence Global (CVG), implemented a pilot project that attempted to mitigate violence surrounding the November election in a select number of U.S. communities. This project complemented and was reinforced by a parallel Carter Center project designed to bolster confidence in the U.S. electoral process.

The Center began the violence mitigation project by working with an experienced data analyst to aggregate a variety of quantitative datasets — from socio-economic indicators to incidence of protest and past election results — to help understand which communities might be at risk of unrest surrounding the Nov. 3, 2020, election. By early October, the Center had identified 27 counties around the country as being at higher risk. Working with project partners, the Center consulted and shared these findings with a dozen national networks with the potential to direct violence prevention resources to these communities. In addition, the Center zeroed in on four metro areas and their surrounding regions, where the Center engaged directly to reach local organizations, understand how they viewed conflict dynamics in their communities, and help build local conflict resilience mechanisms.

By mid- to late October, the Center had identified and convened dozens of community influencers, via three Zoom workshops, in Pittsburgh; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Charlotte, North Carolina. The purpose of these sessions was to equip key stakeholders in these communities with targeted messages designed to reinforce confidence in the electoral process and push back against violence. In Atlanta, the Center conducted a range of community consultations and convened a high-profile event, together with the King Center and the Georgia Secretary of State, designed to disseminate information to voters and reinforce confidence in the electoral process. Throughout this period, Cure Violence and the Center hosted a series of weekly conflict analysis sessions, bringing together activists and experts in key hotspot cities. CVG also delivered regular violence de-escalation trainings. Overall, during the life of the project, CVG led the delivery of 11 violence de-escalation trainings to over 450 participants.

After the presidential election, with Georgia's U.S. Senate runoff elections looming, the Center shifted to focus almost exclusively on that state. The Center was concerned by the toxic combination of violent rhetoric and former President Trump's effort to undermine the credibility of the presidential election result in Georgia and nationally. The Center convened dozens of faith leaders in two workshops in December 2020. These sessions were used to disseminate anti-violence talking points that the Center created for use in religious sermons, op-eds, and in-person engagements. The Center also developed social media-ready, Georgia-themed graphics and messages highlighting pro-democracy, anti-violence themes. These too were shared with faith leaders. In parallel, the Center spearheaded advocacy for violence mitigation. The Center drafted a letter from the Carter Center's CEO to Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp and other leaders, outlining concerns about the potential for election-related violence in the state and urging him to issue calls for calm. The Center helped establish a coordinating group, together with the Southern Poverty Law Center, Anti-Defamation League, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, including weekly calls to coordinate and share information.

Working with these same organizations, the Center helped draft a joint letter, urging the Georgia business community to promote adherence to the Center's electoral code of conduct.

The Sept. 1 start date meant The Carter Center needed to develop an analytical model that could help predict where election-related violence might occur — and prepare flexible violence mitigation infrastructure in those communities — in just over two months' time. The Center proceeded from the assumption that core preparations needed to be in place by Nov. 3, election day. It was the period between the election and the inauguration, on Jan. 20, 2021, that was anticipated to be the most volatile. This was an extremely short timeline, given the scale of the challenge. Staff recognized from the outset that, at best, the Center would be able to test violence mitigation strategies in a few target communities. The hope, however, was that in those communities, the project could make a difference — and that the Center would learn lessons that could be applied in the future.

Despite the initiative's limited scope, The Carter Center learned a number of lessons that should be considered when designing any analogous programming in the future. (For the full list of recommendations, see Section VIII). Five key lessons are summarized here:

- (1) There is a need. The Center was concerned that years of dehumanizing rhetoric, hate speech, and disinformation had primed a growing minority of Americans to accept political violence. The Center also was concerned about the potential for then-President Trump to directly incite violence. These risk factors collided in the riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, and the risks have only increased since.
- (2) The Center engaged an array of community stakeholders in three states — most of whom had no prior connection to The Carter Center — yet they were eager to volunteer their time to experiment with political violence prevention in their communities. There was particular concern about the potential for violence around the election — and a willingness to try to be part of the solution. This suggests the potential exists to broaden local conflict resilience mechanisms.
- (3) That said, the relationships the Center formed in the weeks around the election were largely with left-of-center individuals. The large majority of interlocutors the project engaged did not have meaningful relationships with, nor social capital extending to, conservatives. This underscores the importance of pursuing further such conflict resilience programming with credible right-of-center partners.
- (4) Sharing data with local stakeholders, outlining how the violence risk factors in their communities compared to other locales, was extremely helpful in sparking engagement and framing the problem. It is worth investing more time to build a better analytical model that can more accurately identify at-risk communities — both because of the potential predictive value but also because data can make seemingly abstract risks more concrete, particularly for local stakeholders not steeped in these issues.
- (5) The Carter Center code of conduct, which outlined basic commitments including accepting the election results and avoiding hate speech for Georgia Senate candidates, was a valuable advocacy tool. Similar codes may be useful in the future as impartial and voluntary frameworks for pushing community stakeholders and candidates seeking office to agree to uphold basic anti-violence/pro-democracy norms.

In January 2021, The Carter Center sent a short survey to a limited number of the project's most active community stakeholders in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Georgia. The responses received contained significant positive feedback and recommendations for future Carter Center engagement. As the Southern Poverty Law Center noted, "The Carter Center's expertise and credibility in this space has been invaluable." The police reform organization Police2Peace went further: "Expertise in international extremism applied to the US is priceless right now," it said, urging the Center to "[e]nter the US with ... expertise and resources."

II Data Analysis

Starting in September, along with partners Cure Violence Global and the Bridging Divides Initiative, The Carter Center examined multiple open-source datasets in an attempt to identify communities that might be at elevated risk of election-related violence. The core idea was that by analyzing the type and location of recent protests, county-by-county election results from 2016, and datasets on demographics and past violence, the Center could develop a model with some capacity to predict where the U.S. was likely to experience future politically motivated protest and violence. Primarily drawing on data from the U.S. Crisis Monitor, a joint partnership between BDI and the Armed Conflict Location Event Data Project (ACLED), the Center began by looking at the frequency of various kinds of protests, by county, around the U.S. This formed the basis of two political violence risk models, focused on understanding potential mobilization and violence from left-of-center and right-of-center Americans, respectively. The Center developed two parallel models out of a recognition that liberals and conservatives likely would be motivated to protest, and possibly engage in violence, for different reasons. Experience from 2020, in particular, supported this theory. During the course of the year, liberals and conservatives took to the streets in response to different issues, with racial justice issues animating the left and opposition to COVID-related public health measures motivating the right. The Carter Center and partner organizations also anticipated that liberal and conservative Americans would respond very differently to actions by President Trump and his Democratic challenger, Joe Biden, hence the need for two models for understanding the potential for public protest and the risk of violence.

The Carter Center's first violence risk model focused on scenarios for left-of-center mobilization, that is, mobilization by Biden's supporters and left-of-center activists — with the assumption that this mobilization would likely attract conservative counterprotesters. This model was based on a count of the number of 2017 Women's March protests and the number of summer 2020 racial justice protests by county. The Center drew on this protest data as a proxy for attempting to anticipate which counties were likely to see future protest around the 2020 election cycle, the theory being that communities with an activist base and experience of protest were more likely to be mobilized around electoral issues. The Center also focused on tracking protests in anticipation of the likelihood that protests could be venues for violence — whether through confrontations with law enforcement or counterprotesters. Data on the Women's March protest was added, as it helped point toward counties with a deeper history of activism — communities that were thus more likely to protest around the 2020 election cycle. The Center selected counties that experienced both a Women's March protest and summer 2020 racial justice protests — though only those racial justice protests that included some act of violence — whether that violence was perpetrated by police, protesters, or counterdemonstrators. The vast

majority of the summer 2020 racial justice protests were peaceful. For the purpose of this analysis, protests with prior violence were singled out to help narrow down the number of at-risk counties and zero in on those with a recent history of violent activity. From that subset of selected counties, the data team then layered on additional indicators to assess relative risk of violence — everything from militia activity and police shootings to data on voting patterns and population density.

The second assessment model looked at right-of-center mobilization, that is, mobilization by former President Trump’s supporters and right-of-center activists — with the assumption that this mobilization also could attract counterdemonstrators. This model was not based on an analysis of racial justice protests or the Women’s March, since participants in those protests tended to be opponents of President Trump and his policies. Rather, the Center sought to analyze protests that were likely to draw more conservative activists. Therefore the right mobilization model was based on a count of 2020 protests to reopen the economy or against the use of masks, as well as protests involving militia activity. Since 2017, the overall frequency of right-of-center protest in the U.S. has been low, leaving this analysis to draw from a smaller sample of activity when trying to understand possible future right-wing mobilization and potential violence. To account for this, the Center counted every U.S. county that saw either 2020 anti-mask protests or militia activity at protests. From this subset of U.S. counties, the data team factored in additional indicators of possible violence or protest, similar to those used above to examine left-of-center mobilization.

This analysis identified 27 counties nationwide at elevated risk for election-related unrest. Figure 1 below denotes the major urban centers in those counties. This analysis did not suggest that

US Cities with Risk of Mobilization

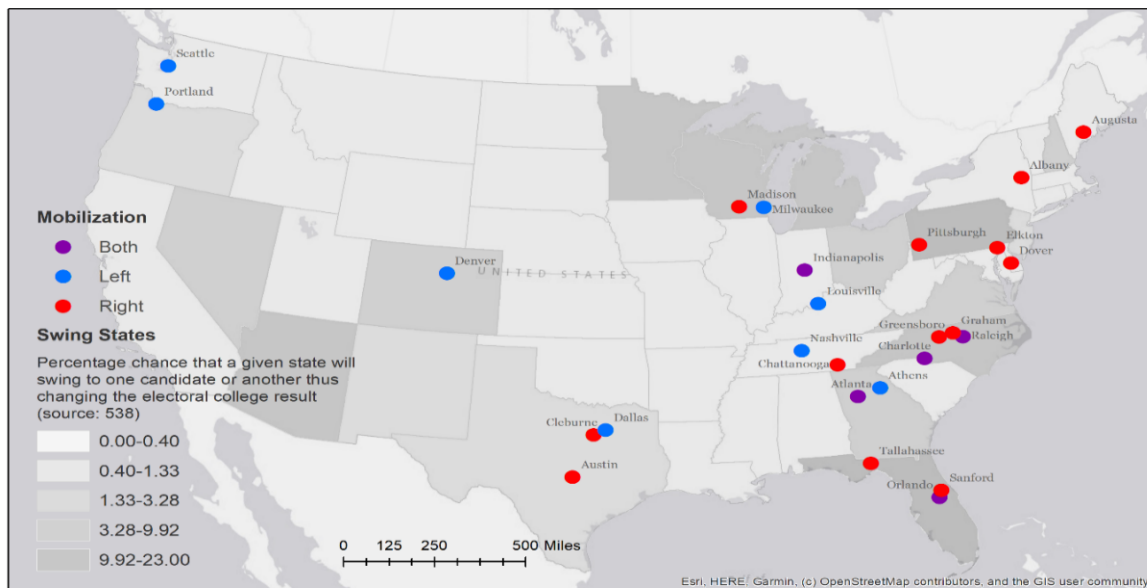


Figure 1 – Locations deemed at highest risk for political violence, right or left.

every listed community would experience violence, nor did it suggest that there would be no violence elsewhere. The analysis did, however, serve as a reasonable guide for focusing the Center’s efforts — and certain patterns were clear. The most at-risk communities were smaller, liberal-leaning cities in close geographic proximity to more conservative rural areas (e.g., Portland, Oregon, or Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina). Larger metro areas that were more politically heterogeneous (e.g., metro Atlanta or Dallas-Fort Worth) also registered as being at elevated risk. State capitals in swing states stood out as magnets for possible protest and violence. The largest urban centers in the U.S. (e.g., New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago),¹ were at lower risk for political violence — as were more rural/conservative swaths of the U.S.¹

The application the project data analyst developed to identify counties at elevated risk of political violence was able to synthesize a risk profile for each selected county. The app produced a simple graphic, demonstrating how a given county ranked regarding the key violence risk factors that made up the Center’s analytical model. The graphic below illustrates the risk profile for Fulton County, Georgia, part of metro Atlanta. Note that indicators that ranked “high” were in the top third of all counties that saw the types of protests counted by the Center’s analytical model. “Intermediate” indicators were in the middle third, and “low” were in the bottom third of selected counties.

Fulton, GA (county seat: Atlanta)

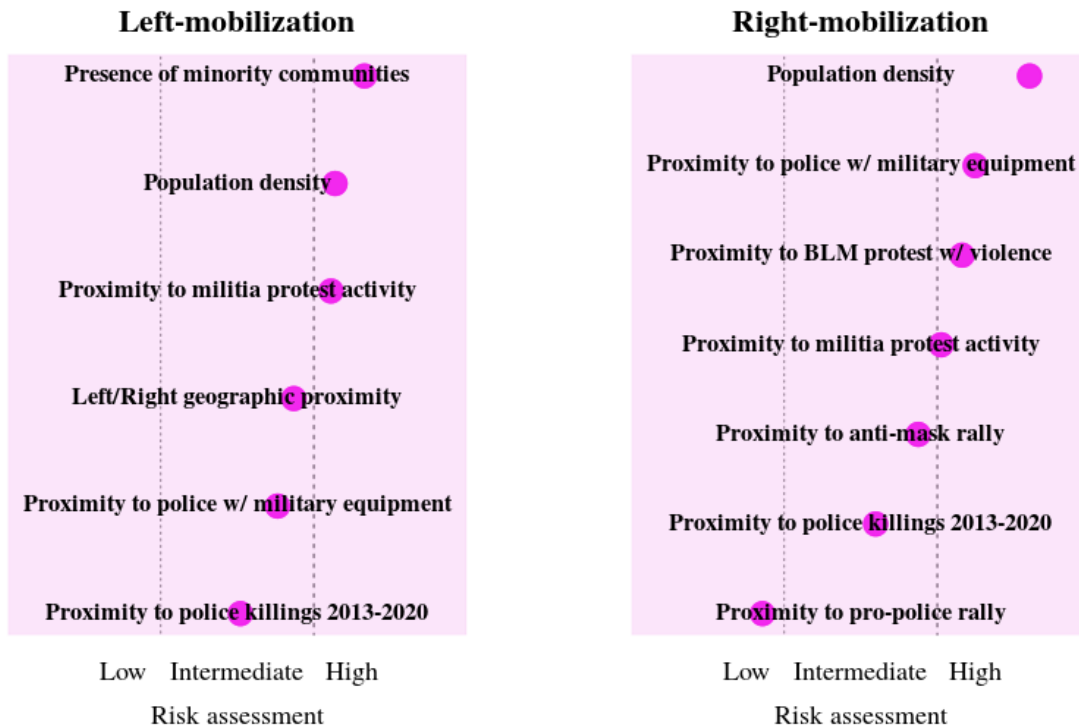


Figure 2. Political violence risk profile for left- and right-of-center mobilization.

¹ Note also that this analysis did not include Washington, D.C. The Carter Center anticipated that the capital would have a unique capacity to attract protesters from around the U.S. That also meant that it did not fit well into the project’s analytical model, which focused on understanding how local voting patterns and past violence could suggest future localized protest and violence.

III Qualitative Conflict Analysis and Stakeholder Outreach

Starting in September, as The Carter Center and project partners were building the national risk-assessment model, staff also began reaching out to local community stakeholders, particularly in communities that were already known to be at high risk. The Center began this effort with a series of conversations with activists, academics, and policy analysts in Portland and other parts of Oregon because of the ongoing violence there. Consultations of this nature, also including faith leaders, civil rights organizations, and voting rights activists, continued throughout the project. Carter Center personnel met with over 75 individuals, in some cases repeatedly. These discussions helped the Center understand local conflict dynamics in the states targeted by the project. More fundamentally, project staff were keenly aware of the importance of building trust in these communities. Prior to the fall of 2020, The Carter Center had never done work of this nature in the United States. The Center lacked relevant contacts in the vast majority of communities that were seen as being at risk of political violence. As such, individual meetings helped Center personnel build rapport, learn about conditions on the ground, and solicit introductions to additional community stakeholders. In these conversations, Carter Center staff were careful to do more listening than speaking. Staff took pains to emphasize that this domestic engagement was a new Carter Center intervention, that project staff were eager to hear the concerns of these community leaders, and that the Center wanted to explore collaboratively ways in which Carter Center programming might contribute to violence reduction. Lastly, throughout the project, project staff also engaged in regular consultations with other nonprofits doing related work, helping to ensure that Carter Center interventions met unique needs.

Once initial quantitative data analysis was complete, having identified 27 at-risk counties, the Center chose six pilot metro areas (Atlanta, Portland, Pittsburgh, Raleigh-Durham, Charlotte, and Dallas-Fort Worth) and their surrounding regions to conduct additional qualitative conflict analysis and to examine the availability of potential local partners for conflict resilience interventions. The Center opted to work in this smaller number of locales because the project lacked the staffing resources to conduct community outreach and qualitative analysis in all 27 counties. These six target regions were chosen considering several factors. Atlanta's status as the home of The Carter Center made it an obvious choice. Portland's history of frequent protests and violence made it important to include. The Center added Dallas-Fort Worth to ensure that the project had one other large metro area included in the analysis. Pittsburgh gave the project one target locale in the Northeast. The cities in Pennsylvania and North Carolina also were in electoral swing states that likely would be key in deciding the presidential election, and thus were more likely to be volatile.

In the initial consultations in these six locales, the Center sought to hear from local stakeholders to understand how they viewed conflict dynamics in their communities and to explore options for assistance. Specifically, the team sought to answer two critical questions: (1) Was there a need the Center could meet? In particular, were there existing, community-level networks across the political divide that could be leveraged to help prevent and mitigate violence? (2) Were there credible local stakeholders willing to partner with The Carter Center in this effort?

This qualitative analysis and stakeholder outreach was a rushed process. Ideally, one could spend months doing rigorous conflict analysis in each of the target locales. With the clock ticking to the

November election, the Center was forced to condense this analysis of all six target communities into a couple of weeks. While acknowledging the limitations of this analysis, it should be noted that the Center did not identify pre-existing, cross-partisan conflict resilience networks in any of the six locales examined. Regardless, final decisions on where the Center ultimately engaged were largely a function of the ability to quickly identify local stakeholders interested in collaborating.

IV Enhancing Local Conflict Resilience

The Carter Center was able to connect with several local leaders in Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham, and Pittsburgh, all of whom were concerned about possible violence during the election and were interested in working with the Center. Key stakeholders included clergy, local activists, municipal employees and volunteers with a local dialogue organization. Once those core stakeholders were engaged, staff solicited from them introductions to additional relevant local contacts. This led the Center to invite these stakeholders to three Zoom-based workshops in mid- to late October 2020, one for each community. The Raleigh-Durham group had 20 participants. There were eight in Charlotte, while Pittsburgh interfaith leaders pulled together a coalition of clergy from throughout southwest Pennsylvania, for a total of about 70 participants.

In each session, the Carter Center began by sharing the risk profile for the relevant urban center. (See Figure 2 for an example). After explaining the key risk factors, staff facilitated a Zoom small group exercise. Drawing on tools produced by the nonprofit Over Zero, participants were encouraged to think through and discuss potential drivers of violence in their communities, as well as individuals, networks, and institutions with a track record of mitigating violence and fostering healthy community ties. This very brief exercise was designed to whet their appetites. It was no substitute for the weeks that could be spent interviewing and convening local stakeholders to understand local conflict dynamics. Rather, the purpose was to make the point that, with some advance planning, these community figures could take steps to help make their communities more resilient to conflict — *before* the election. The Center sought to empower these community influencers with the idea that they could build coalitions that could, among other things, prepare in advance to issue targeted nonpartisan, pro-democracy and anti-violence messaging.

Carter Center staff closed these initial workshops in Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham, and Pittsburgh by asking participants if there was a critical mass of leaders in their communities who would want to work with the Carter Center on these issues surrounding the election. Ultimately, stakeholders in each of the three communities expressed interest in moving forward with conflict resilience work. From there, working through these stakeholders, the Center sought to identify others in the communities who could be mobilized to issue public messaging designed to strengthen local anti-violence norms and instill confidence in the electoral process. The initial set of messages consisted of approximately 15 core talking points. (See Annex A.) Messages on electoral integrity were developed in consultation with Carter Center election experts, while the Center drew from the work of other nonprofits, including More in Common and Over Zero, to develop additional anti-violence messages.

The group of interfaith leaders in Pittsburgh was the very successful in this regard. They took the Center's generic content and tailored the material to include images and language that were Pittsburgh-specific. They released them on social media and promoted them with partners on a daily schedule before and after Election Day. The efforts of these faith leaders were profiled in an Election Day article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. (See Annex B.)

In each of the three locales, the Center also attempted to develop a rapid-response contingent of key messengers who could be mobilized to push back against voter intimidation, violence, or other disruptions to the electoral process. It was unclear how robust these networks were. One of the Charlotte participants expressed interest in recruiting Nascar legend Dale Earnhardt Jr. (whose car racing dynasty hails from the Charlotte area) as an anti-violence messenger. The Pittsburgh group was trying to secure participation from figures with the Pittsburgh Steelers football team, as well as other local sports personalities.

Ultimately, in these three locales, any attempts at disrupting the electoral process were minor and were addressed by local law enforcement. There was no need to activate these emergency messengers or networks. Had there been cause to mobilize these networks, it is unclear how effective they would have been. By the time the data analysis, stakeholder outreach, and mobilization workshops were complete, the election was at most two weeks away. The rapid-response anti-violence networks were incomplete. However, the Center had managed to pre-position some key community figures with anti-violence messages.

In Atlanta, Center personnel conducted a rapid series of consultations, engaging a range of local nonprofits, faith leaders, and activist groups. In the weeks before the presidential election, the Center did not bring together a critical mass of local stakeholders focused on political violence prevention. This was, in part, because Atlanta and Georgia were already highly organized by left-of-center community-focused organizations whose time was almost entirely focused on getting out the vote. Instead, the Center organized a high-profile event with the King Center and the Georgia Secretary of State designed to reinforce anti-violence norms and bolster voter confidence. The Secretary of State used the occasion to reiterate basic rules and procedures for



Figure 3 – An example of the social media content developed and disseminated by interfaith leaders in Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh is home to the H.J. Heinz Company.

voting and voter access. The CEOs of The Carter Center and the King Center were able to share key messages warning of the communally contagious nature of violence.

V Faith Leader Mobilization and Messaging Support

Throughout the project, the Carter Center was intentional about engaging faith leaders from a variety of traditions. Since the 1970s, trust in major American institutions — from the media to government to business — has been declining. According to Gallup, the portion of Americans who express “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in “the church or organized religion” declined from 65% in 1973 to 42% in 2020. While that is a steep drop, almost all other institutions have fallen much further, and those results suggest that, in American life today, faith institutions remain significantly more trusted than almost any other institution, save the U.S. military. In addition, at a time when American social networks tend to be siloed into liberal or conservative communities, faith leaders are more likely to have access to religious communities with differing politics.

Near the start of the project, in September, Center staff addressed a virtual meeting of the Multi-Faith Neighbors Network, including dozens of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faith leaders with congregations around the U.S. The Center’s Conflict Resolution Program director explained the project and sought suggestions for collaboration. Participants expressed interest in sharing core anti-violence/pro-democracy messages with the members of their religious communities and using their pulpits to urge nonviolent responses to electoral grievances.

The Center and Cure Violence organized workshops and trainings for Imam Malik Mujahid’s Sound Vision network, which has thousands of Muslim members nationwide. The project also engaged leadership at the National Council of Churches, the North Carolina Council of Churches, and the Florida Council of Churches.



Figure 4. Social media "card" developed by the Carter Center

After the presidential election, with Trump refusing to concede and the Jan. 5, 2021, Senate runoff elections looming in Georgia, The Carter Center shifted most project efforts toward violence mitigation in the state. In particular, the Center was concerned about the rising tide of threats being levied against activists, election workers, churches, and elected officials. In



Figure 5. The Center's most popular social media card

response, Center staff ramped up engagement with faith leaders in the state. On Dec. 3 and then again on Dec. 10, together with partners CVG and BDI, the Center hosted two meetings of Georgia-based faith leaders, bringing together about 50 participants. The sessions allowed the Center to hear their concerns about the political environment, and the risk of violence, in the run-up to the January Senate elections. The Center also shared, and solicited feedback on, draft anti-violence messaging (similar to those found in Annex A).

The Center used the meetings to encourage faith leaders to proactively issue anti-violence messaging. Faith leaders have unique influence and are one of the few remaining segments of U.S. society that possesses some degree of moral authority that could be leveraged constructively to push back against political violence. For those whose faith traditions typically maintain a strict separation between religion and politics, Center staff suggested that faith leaders should have space to speak out in support of underlying principles, including democracy, truth, and nonviolence — and that these principles should not be cast as political.

As a follow-up to these workshops, on Dec. 17 the Center shared a series of five social media “cards.” The cards mixed curated Georgia-themed images with some of the Center’s key anti-violence and pro-democracy messages. The images were customized for display on different social media platforms and were downloadable from the Carter Center’s website. The “Average Election Official” card posted on the Carter Center’s Facebook page garnered over 1,000 “likes,” more than three times the typical number of “likes” for a Carter Center post. The other cards garnered between 324 and 660 likes. The cards disseminated to faith leaders for their own use received a total of 96 clicks, representing individuals accessing the card to potentially download. (See Annex C for the full set of cards.)

On Jan. 6, after the storming of the U.S. Capitol, the Center disseminated additional pro-democracy/anti-violence messaging to approximately 150 faith leaders. In addition, the Center organized a Georgia-focused pro-democracy/anti-violence statement signed by 75 faith leaders (Annex D). Finally, the Center and project partners organized a closing workshop, via Zoom, on Feb. 4 with the community stakeholders the project had worked with in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Georgia. Center staff used the session to share analysis of developments from the past month, including the storming of the Capitol, consider what this could mean for political violence going forward, and solicit ideas and recommendations from participants.

VI Violence De-escalation Training and Violence Mitigation Dialogues

Carter Center partner Cure Violence Global led the delivery of 11 violence de-escalation trainings to more than 450 participants. The trainings were staggered from October 2020 through December 2020. Their purpose was to equip participants with an understanding of how violence can spread as a contagious phenomenon at the community level. From that conceptual foundation, CVG shared specific techniques and language that can be used to de-escalate encounters with individuals who may be prone to violence. The Carter Center worked to integrate the trainings, ensuring that they complemented core community-driven conflict resilience programming. Starting in October, as the Center began identifying community leaders in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Georgia who shared concerns regarding potential political violence, staff began to recruit these individuals into regular de-escalation trainings. During the sessions, project staff took pains to emphasize, repeatedly, the importance of keeping oneself as safe as possible. Trainers also underscored that a 90-minute training could only impart basic skills. The trainings were designed to share helpful techniques should participants find themselves in a potentially violent situation. Examples included being confronted by armed or otherwise hostile individuals while trying to vote, or peaceful demonstrators encountering counterdemonstrators. The trainings were an attempt to meet a specific need identified by community interlocutors who wanted to build practical skills, though The Carter Center recognizes the limitations of what can be delivered via relatively short trainings over Zoom. CVG also organized a series of over a dozen dialogues on Zoom, creating a platform for activists and experts to strategize on violence mitigation efforts in several U.S. communities, including Portland and Washington, D.C.

VII Advocacy

As threats against activists, election workers, and officials increased in Georgia in advance of the Senate runoffs, The Carter Center moved to engage in more direct advocacy, seeking support from state leaders and the private sector to speak out against violence and misinformation. The Center helped form a coordinating group together with local civil and human rights organizations, including the SPLC, ADL, NAACP, and ACLU, to coordinate information-sharing about election violence and outreach on violence prevention. After receiving briefings on rising threats to activists and election workers from human rights and voting rights groups, Center staff drafted a letter from Carter Center CEO Paige Alexander to Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, with copies to Georgia House Speaker David Ralston, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, and the heads of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the Atlanta Metro Chamber, outlining these concerns and urging Kemp to issue calls for calm. Thereafter, the Center helped draft a joint letter, together with the SPLC, ADL, and NAACP, pushing the Georgia business community to promote adherence to the Carter Center's electoral code of conduct. The code commits candidates to, among other things, accept election results, avoid spreading disinformation and hate speech, denounce violence, and refrain from disrupting the electoral process. (See Annex E for the full text.) The project manager, Nathan Stock, engaged in direct advocacy around these issues in conversations with leaders at the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the Atlanta Metro Chamber. The joint letter was sent to the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, the Atlanta Metro Chamber, the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the

Georgia Beverage Association, the Georgia Greater Black Chamber of Commerce, and the Atlanta Black Chambers.

VIII Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The Carter Center decided to engage in the 2020 U.S. elections based on an analysis of the growing threat of political violence. Further, as an institution committed to human rights worldwide, there was a sense of obligation to contribute to protecting democracy at home, given the risk of democratic backsliding in the U.S. and the negative implications for human rights norms abroad. Events surrounding the election demonstrated that these concerns were well-founded.

Despite the risks of working in a hyper-polarized environment, the Carter Center successfully navigated a nonpartisan course, basing activities explicitly on democratic principles and international standards. In the course of this work, the Center found few if any organizations with this ability to link engagement with local, state, and national actors. This pilot project also demonstrated that the Center's capacity to use data analysis to guide programming, to convene a wide array of stakeholders, and to work proactively and flexibly to prevent conflict — all staples of the Center's international work — applied well in the domestic context.

The Carter Center lacked the time and resources to develop baseline data against which to assess project outcomes. However, responses to the stakeholder survey issued in January were positive. Moreover, the Center learned several valuable lessons through this project that should inform any future programming:

1. ***There is a need.*** The Carter Center was concerned that years of dehumanizing rhetoric, hate speech and disinformation had primed a minority of Americans to be open to political violence. The Center also was concerned about the potential for former President Trump to directly or indirectly incite violence. These risk factors collided on Jan. 6 — risks that have only increased since. According to Pew, over 56 million Americans believe President Trump legitimately won re-election. The narrative of a stolen election — however erroneous — is a profound grievance that will continue to animate other underlying fears of demographic change and status loss on the right. Left unchecked, these grievances, free to germinate in the right-wing media ecosystem and fueled by anti-government and white supremacist ideologies, are likely to spark further violence.
2. ***There is an appetite for strengthening communal resilience against political violence.*** The Carter Center was humbled by the willingness of strangers to collaborate on this initiative. The Center had no history of prior programming in the majority of places where this project engaged. Even in Atlanta, where the Center enjoys positive name recognition, the institution did not start this project with a deep set of contacts with the city's activist groups and community organizers. Yet, the stakeholders the Center engaged — despite being extremely busy in their communities and despite having no pre-existing relationship with the Center — were willing to volunteer their time when project staff reached out suggesting that this project might be able to help, modestly, to buffer their communities against unrest surrounding the election. There was particular interest in

the international perspective the Center provides, combined with technical expertise on elections. This suggests a strong potential to broaden these community-based networks.

3. ***Build scalability into future programming.*** This initiative was an experimental pilot project. The Carter Center understood that the short timeline before the presidential election would limit direct conflict resilience interventions to a handful of communities. Going forward, the Center should build on the work this project began in these same communities, broadening the conflict resilience networks established in this first phase. Future programming should include the training of facilitators in additional communities to develop their own local conflict resilience bodies. It may also be possible to leverage some of the national faith networks the Center engaged during the pilot project, bringing them into conflict resilience networks in additional states.
4. ***Engage “movers and shakers” and cast a wide net.*** The group of interfaith leaders that the Center engaged in Pittsburgh was one of the most successful community conflict resilience networks in the project. They developed social media-ready content, customized with Pittsburgh themes. They released the material on a regular schedule and garnered positive local media coverage that helped reinforce anti-violence norms. The Pittsburgh cohort, whose members hailed from locally prominent faith institutions, were well-connected to local government, law enforcement, local media, and sports personalities. This experience suggests that community figures of this nature are, indeed, well-positioned to attempt to influence the wider public discourse, including norms around violence. Further, the network in Pittsburgh tried to recruit local professional football and hockey stars as anti-violence messengers. Ultimately, in the rush before the presidential election, there was not time to secure their participation. But, the attempt to recruit famous influencers — particularly individuals likely to have credibility with conservatives — should be replicated in the future.
5. ***Be positive and empowering.*** During the October workshops in Pennsylvania and North Carolina, and again with Georgia-based faith leaders in December, The Carter Center sought to empower stakeholders by underscoring their agency. The Center argued that, as influencers in their communities, participants could proactively issue messaging that could reinforce norms, and potentially make violence less likely. This approach seemed to resonate. Project interlocutors were eager to do something constructive and were looking for ideas.
6. ***Work with a conservative partner from the outset.*** While the Center was encouraged by the positive response from community stakeholders, it is important to note that most people the project connected with were left of center in their political orientation. This is not surprising. American society is highly siloed into politically like-minded communities. It is possible to strategically cultivate interlocutors across the aisle, but the process requires deliberate trust-building and time that this project lacked. While The Carter Center has some capacity to forge these relationships, it would be more efficient and effective to begin future community-focused conflict resilience outreach together with a right-of-center partner. A credible conservative partner — still committed to underlying democratic principles — would enhance bipartisan credibility.

7. ***Build a better quantitative analytical model and use it to open doors.*** The Carter Center began several conflict resilience workshops by sharing the local political violence risk profiles developed for a given community. (See Figure 2 as an example.) Displaying this simple graphic proved very useful. It helped make people's inchoate fears of election-related violence more concrete and constructive. It allowed the Center to frame trends in these communities in a wider national context, in a manner that participants appreciated. Such data analytics should be integrated into future programming. And, with more time for implementation, the Center should go through the process of testing the statistical significance of various possible indicators of violence to build a more accurate model.
8. ***Build conflict mitigation around codes of conduct.*** The code of conduct, endorsed by the two Democratic Senate candidates in the Georgia runoffs, was a valuable advocacy tool. It provided an impartial framework that was useful for engaging the private sector in Georgia in a conversation around the underlying principles at stake. Going forward, building local coalitions in support of codes of conduct could be a useful means of generating cross-partisan, grassroots support for violence mitigation and democratic norms. Especially if these efforts begin well in advance of the next election, it is possible to imagine broad-based coalitions that could constructively influence the candidates and the wider environment.
9. ***Expand social media-based messaging.*** During the project, in consultation with other nonprofits, the Carter Center developed a number of messaging products designed to help community influencers push back against violence. This included producing content specifically for social media. This is an area of work that has the potential to expand significantly. Going forward, the Center should consider engaging a dedicated partner with expertise in large-scale online messaging around deradicalization and/or violence de-escalation.
10. ***Develop impact benchmarks.*** The compressed timeline of this project meant that staff did not know where to focus violence mitigation efforts until several weeks into implementation (when the risk assessment model was finalized). This, in turn, meant there was not time to consider baseline data or other real benchmarks for program impact. This should be a priority for future programming.

Annex A — Key Proposed Conflict Mitigation Messages in Southwest Pennsylvania

The Carter Center
October 25, 2020

Messages Promoting Confidence in the Process and Pushing Back against Violence or Disruptions of the Vote Count

Note: More in Common tested a series of messages with Americans from across the political spectrum to see which were most successful at reinforcing confidence in the electoral process. Several of their key messages are reproduced below.

1. Duty means doing the right thing even when it's hard. This year Americans have a duty to wait for every valid ballot to be counted, even if it takes a while — because a slower process is just as valid as a fast one. Every generation before us has done its duty to keep our democracy strong; it's up to us now. [Message tested by More in Common]
2. The reason for a longer process should be clear and uncontroversial: the need to ensure the accurate counting of ballots cast by voters who choose to use alternatives to voting in person on election day in response to the risks presented by the coronavirus. These alternatives, specifically voting in person during early voting periods and voting with an absentee ballot delivered by mail or other means, have been used safely in many states for many years. Indeed, in the case of absentee ballots, the American military has safely used this option for more than 140 years. [Source: The Carter Center]
3. The United States has thousands of election officials around the country, and surveys of these officials illustrate their strong dedication to a fair and impartial process. [Source: The Carter Center]
4. America's election workers are our neighbors and friends who work side by side to make sure every ballot is counted fairly and properly. Our election systems are not perfect, but we can trust our local election workers to ensure the accuracy of this year's election. [Message tested by More in Common]
5. The average election official has worked in seven previous elections. They have experience working alongside other nonpartisan officials in presidential elections where Republicans won and elections where Democrats won. While this year's elections may be different from those in the past, we can trust that election officials know what they're doing. [Message tested by More in Common]
6. This year, more Americans will vote absentee in order to keep safe from the coronavirus. It falls on the U.S. Postal Service to deliver these ballots, and they are more than up to the challenge. Each day, the USPS handles nearly 200 million pieces of mail. Americans

can trust that the USPS can handle the increased volume of absentee ballots while keeping the election system secure. [Message tested by More in Common]

7. No election system is perfect, but America’s elections are some of the very best in the world. Americans have been holding elections for almost 250 years. We have successfully voted during the Civil War, two World Wars, and other crises. Americans can be confident that we will overcome this year's challenges to hold a fair election. [Message tested by More in Common]
8. We have a shared duty to protect our democracy and republic. [Source: Democracy for President]
9. Highlight unifying identities. Focus on shared identities among Americans. For example, 86% of Americans cite their role in their family as the most important aspect of their identity, 75% say their American identity is important to them, and 68% are exhausted by the division in our country and see pitting Americans against each other as a threat to our democracy. [Source: Democracy for President] Possible message framings might include:
 - a. “We, the community of Pittsburgh...”
 - b. “We have a history of coming together in the face of adversity...”
10. Encourage people to verify before sharing information and to actively seek to correct harmful rumors and conspiracy theories. While it’s always important to make sure we don’t fall prey to intentionally misleading information, we know that there may be people trying to spread disinformation on social media around election time, so we should be extra careful. [Source: Over Zero]
11. Acknowledge any grievances that do arise, and help people understand the different options for addressing these grievances. [Source: Over Zero]
 - a. Pennsylvanians can call the election day hotline toll free at: 1-877-868-3772.
 - b. Reiterate that the people running the hotline are people “like you and me” who want to be sure our democracy is working for everybody.
12. Follow best practices for correcting mis- and disinformation, such as:
 - a. Not repeating the misinformation and using positive framing instead (e.g. when correcting the false claim “John is a thief,” saying “John is honest and respects other people’s property” instead of “John is not a thief.”)
 - b. If it’s absolutely necessary to repeat the misinformation, only do so after giving a warning, such as “a false allegation that John is a thief has been floating around.”
 - c. Keep corrections simple and easy to understand.
 - d. More tips on correcting misinformation can be found in [“The Debunking Handbook.”](#) [Source: Over Zero]
13. **HOLD UNTIL AFTER ELECTION:** Now that voting is closed, our job is to wait patiently as our election workers work hard to count and verify every vote. During this time, as always happens with elections, any issues that arose during voting will be handled through the laws and processes in place to address election disputes.

14. **HOLD FOR USE IN CASE OF VIOLENCE:** The vast majority of Americans believe that threats, intimidating messages, or use of violence against political opponents is never or not at all justified. This was demonstrated in a recent Voter Study Group poll of Americans — both Democrats and Republicans. [Source: Democracy for President]
15. **HOLD FOR USE IN CASE OF VIOLENCE:** Violence is not an acceptable way to resolve any issue. It is rejected by most of society and is a highly ineffective way of achieving political goals. [Source: Democracy for President]

Messages Regarding Protest

Note: ReThink Media tested 22 different messages to gauge which ones left Americans most supportive of public protests. The two most effective messages were:

- **HOLD FOR USE ONLY IN CASE OF WIDESPREAD PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTEST:** Protest has been instrumental in many historic advances in our history. [Source: ReThink Media]

Without the protests, demonstrations, and boycotts that led to the American Revolution, the U.S. might never have come to be. In generation after generation, popular protest has achieved important social change, from ending child labor and school segregation to increasing environmental standards and workplace safety. Sometimes those public protests have become very intense, but protest is as American as apple pie and is critical to our shared history. Restricting the right to protest is a betrayal of our founders and ancestors.

Example of alternative language: “Popular protest expanded the vote to women and people of color and was integral to advancing the rights of LGBTQ Americans.”

- **HOLD FOR USE ONLY IN CASE OF WIDESPREAD PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTEST:** Leaders listen to their people. That is how we will move forward — together. [Source: ReThink Media]

When people aren’t being heard, they protest. A protest should be a wake-up call to listen and come together to address the underlying issues. Leaders listen to the people they represent, even if it feels hard or uncomfortable. [Source: Over Zero]

Example of alternative language: “Listening to people’s concerns, and addressing them in meaningful ways, is the way to address civil discord.”

Annex B — News article: Clergy use Pittsburgh icons to urge calm and patience following the election

<https://www.post-gazette.com/news/faith-religion/2020/11/03/religious-leaders-partner-carter-center-urge-calm-patience-post-election-vote-count/stories/202011030137>

Peter Smith and Patricia Sabatini
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
Nov 3, 2020
6:27 PM

Using Pittsburgh images like Heinz ketchup and Mister Rogers, a group of religious leaders has been sending out messages urging calm and patience during voting and vote-counting this week.

The group, whose participants cross religious and denominational lines, has been working with the Atlanta-based Carter Center, which has monitored elections around the world in past years and which this year has turned its attention to the contentious U.S. vote.

Organizers are worried about a range of potential concerns, from public discontent over what may be a protracted vote-counting process to the possibility for violence from those unhappy with election results.

Echoing those fears, some Downtown Pittsburgh merchants have boarded up their storefronts.

The Rev. Liddy Barlow, executive minister of Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania, said local clergy consulted with Nathan Stock, a conflict resolution program consultant with the Carter Center, which was founded by former President Jimmy Carter.

“He has worked in places of conflict around the world,” Rev. Barlow said. “He has seen how effective the voices of community leaders can be in promoting community cohesion.”

The organizers have created a series of messages and images that can be used through social media and newsletters, or that can be used in speeches, sermons or other communications.

One of the messages, featuring Mister Rogers, describes poll workers as neighbors who deserve respect and trust. Another — showing a Heinz 57 ketchup bottle poised, but not yet pouring, over a hot dog — says, “Some things are worth waiting for. Now that voting is closed, our job is to wait patiently as our election workers work hard to count and verify every vote.”



*Some things are
worth waiting for.*

**Now that voting is closed,
our job is to wait patiently
as our election workers work hard
to count and verify every vote.**



This is one of a series of graphic messages being shared by local clergy urging calm and patience amid vote-counting. (Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania)

Other messages, which organizers hope they never need to use, urge calm in the event of post-election violence.

Organizing an effort among Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and other partners is both building on longstanding relationships and developing new ones. Christian clergy involved represent a range of liberal to conservative traditions, which often line up on opposite sides of partisan lines.

“We are so fortunate here in Pittsburgh, because for decades people of different communities have been working together,” said Rabbi Ron Symons of the Center for Loving Kindness at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh. That history of cooperation, which included an interfaith outpouring of support in the wake of the deadly anti-Semitic attack at the Tree of Life synagogue in 2018, has made it possible to quickly mobilize clergy for new initiatives, he said.

“In a city that is often spoken about as being segregated and siloed, there is a level of cooperation that is of great benefit and will help us to get through whatever comes our way,” Rabbi Symons said. “God knows we’ve had a lot come our way.”

At the same time, he said the project has drawn in participants who haven’t historically been involved in interfaith work.

“We have to talk,” Rabbi Symons added. “If we are not talking, why would we expect our community to come together in a time of anxiety?”

The Carter Center has worked with community leaders in other cities as well in advance of the election in hopes of countering those seeking to spread disinformation and incitement.

Key messages: to stay calm and trust the electoral process.

Mr. Stock, in an interview on the Carter Center website, said the center identified faith leaders as among “the influential figures at the community level, who can be bridge builders who can push back against some of this.”

Some businesses Downtown this week boarded up their windows in anticipation of possible election unrest.

The Burlington store on Sixth Avenue and GNC vitamin store on Wood Street are among them. Burlington remains open. There was no answer at GNC Tuesday afternoon.

Three blocks away on Forbes Avenue, The Headgear store has been boarded up since the business was looted in May, causing more than \$70,000 in losses, owner Kevin Hu said.

This time, Mr. Hu said he isn’t taking any chances.

“We don’t know what will happen” following the election, he said Tuesday afternoon.

The hat shop remains open, but Mr. Hu has erected steel fencing over the boarded up windows and door as reinforcement.

Pittsburgh Police are expected to be patrolling Downtown around the clock.

Also in anticipation that vote-counting will continue into the week, a coalition of groups plans to gather at 4 p.m. Wednesday at the City-County Building to demand that every vote be counted.

“We will demand an end to undemocratic attacks on our elections, in a grassroots effort to fight [President Donald Trump and demand officials count every vote,” according to a release citing participation from groups such as Pittsburgh Democratic Socialists, the Green Party of Allegheny County and Service Employees International Union 32BJ .

“Donald Trump has indicated he has no intention of respecting the election results if he loses, and will likely use fabricated allegations of voter fraud and voter intimidation from far-right members of his base to put his foot on the scale. He’s already said states should stop counting mail-in ballots on Nov. 3, which conflicts with voting laws in many states,” the release said.

Annex C —Carter Center Anti-Violence Social Media Messages

The Carter Center

Anti-Violence Social Media Messages

12.17.20

Copy and paste the bit.ly links provided into a web browser to access downloadable copies of the social media cards pictured below. There are six versions of each card: three with and three without the Carter Center logo. There are also different formats customized for ideal display. You are encouraged to share these images/messages widely. Feel free to display them with or without the Carter Center logo. Or you are welcome to add your own organizational logo. Thank you for contributing to this vital work.

	<p><u>Carter Center logo</u></p> <p>Facebook: bit.ly/34jXnRI</p> <p>Instagram: bit.ly/37oRkx5</p> <p>Twitter: bit.ly/2LBWKMF</p>	<p><u>No Carter Center logo</u></p> <p>Facebook: bit.ly/3p04aYM</p> <p>Instagram: bit.ly/2KzWFIN</p> <p>Twitter: bit.ly/3r2zHuT</p>
	<p><u>Carter Center logo</u></p> <p>Facebook: bit.ly/3agbsTT</p> <p>Instagram: bit.ly/2WnRsqe</p> <p>Twitter: bit.ly/2WjK7rZ</p>	<p><u>No Carter Center logo</u></p> <p>Facebook: bit.ly/2LKw0d9</p> <p>Instagram: bit.ly/37rKdDW</p> <p>Twitter: bit.ly/38frs6d</p>
	<p><u>Carter Center logo</u></p> <p>Facebook: bit.ly/37mgX1E</p> <p>Instagram: bit.ly/3gQTcBX</p> <p>Twitter: bit.ly/3p1OoFf</p>	<p><u>No Carter Center logo</u></p> <p>Facebook: bit.ly/34IWvfk</p> <p>Instagram: bit.ly/3h20DX6</p> <p>Twitter: bit.ly/34gDNWo</p>
	<p><u>Carter Center logo</u></p> <p>Facebook: bit.ly/2ISyghc</p> <p>Instagram: bit.ly/3oU3u79</p> <p>Twitter: bit.ly/3mpU0ir</p>	<p><u>No Carter Center logo</u></p> <p>Facebook: bit.ly/2LJK4Uc</p> <p>Instagram: bit.ly/34jdvTB</p> <p>Twitter: bit.ly/3moxq9B</p>

 <p>The Georgia Senate runoff elections have Georgia on everyone's minds.</p> <p>Let's make our mamas proud by competing respectfully.</p> <p><small>THE CARTER CENTER</small></p>	<p><u>Carter Center logo</u></p> <p>Facebook: bit.ly/3mvXoZa</p> <p>Instagram: bit.ly/3r030y1</p> <p>Twitter: bit.ly/3oXC40e</p>	<p><u>No Carter Center logo</u></p> <p>Facebook: bit.ly/2WlpPOP</p> <p>Instagram: bit.ly/3mqv7mK</p> <p>Twitter: bit.ly/2J277Zu</p>
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Annex D — Faith Leaders United for Peaceful Elections in Georgia

Faith Leaders United for Peaceful Elections in Georgia

As faith leaders from throughout Georgia, we come together across religious and political differences to express our support for fair and peaceful elections. With early voting for the Senate runoffs underway, we are deeply concerned by the hateful rhetoric and threats that have been levied against election workers, activists, supporters of the candidates, public officials, and even houses of worship.

On October 23, 2020, hundreds of faith leaders from around the U.S. issued a public call to “officials, civic leaders, and all people in a position of power across the country.” In the Faith Leaders United statement they insisted that:

- Our leaders must ensure a free and fair election in which all eligible Americans can safely cast their votes without interference, suppression, or fear of intimidation.
- Leaders and election officials must count every vote in accordance with applicable laws before the election is decided, even if the process takes a longer time because of precautions in place due to COVID-19.
- Leaders should share timely, accurate information about the election results and resist and avoid spreading misinformation.
- Leaders must actively and publicly support a peaceful transition of power or continuation of leadership based on legitimate election results.

We reiterate our support for these fundamental principles.

As people of faith, we believe that all Georgians have the right to campaign and to cast their ballots free of the threat of violence or intimidation. Once the votes are counted, we call upon our leaders and all of our fellow Georgians to accept the election results and honor our democratic process.

Read the full October Faith Leaders United statement here: bit.ly/3nz8L3x.

Annex E — Agreed Principles for Georgia’s 2020 Runoff Elections

Agreed Principles for Georgia’s 2020 Runoff Elections for the U.S. Senate

The U.S. Senate candidates for Georgia and political party representatives agree that these principles will govern their conduct and behavior during the Georgia 2020 Runoff Election for the U.S. Senate. The candidates and political parties agree to act in the utmost good faith in abiding by these principles and to encourage their supporters to do likewise.

The principles

The Senate candidates and political party representatives recognize and agree that democratic elections require that voters have the opportunity to make an informed choice and to vote freely, without being subject to disinformation, domestic or foreign interference, fear, undue influence and intimidation.

The Senate candidates and political party representatives recognize and agree that, under Georgia law, voters have the right to cast their ballots by mail, through early in-person voting, or through in-person voting on the January 5 runoff date.

The Senate candidates and political party representatives recognize and agree that, to ensure that all votes are reported and counted accurately, the counting and canvassing processes will be open to accredited party poll watchers and monitors who will conduct themselves professionally and in accordance with applicable Georgia law. The counting of ballots at tabulating centers and precincts also are open to the public and to nonpartisan observers.

The Senate candidates and political party representatives thereby agree to encourage respect for these principles by:

- taking decisive efforts to prevent party leaders, officials, candidates, and party members from acting contrary to these principles;
- encouraging all eligible voters to register and to vote, and avoiding steps to inappropriately disenfranchise currently registered voters;
- encouraging voters to select the option for casting a ballot that best suits their needs, so as to encourage maximum participation by Georgians in these elections;
- reassuring voters that all voting procedures authorized by law, including voting by absentee ballot, are safe, secure, and reliable, and have built-in checks and controls to ensure integrity of the elections; and
- allowing the media to cover all aspects of candidates’ election campaigns and the elections.

The Senate candidates and political party representatives further agree to:

- avoid the spread of disinformation on social media, including from both domestic and foreign sources;
- organize and conduct the campaign in a manner that contributes to a congenial and peaceful atmosphere during the campaign, polling, counting, and the postelection period;

- avoid using language, symbols, memes and gestures that are inflammatory, defamatory or constitute hate speech;
- disassociate their campaigns from threats or acts of violence in any form against any person or group of persons, including looting and vandalism directed against public or private property;
- actively denounce any and all acts of violence and/or threats of violence;
- act with a sense of responsibility and dignity toward others, and discourage supporters from acting in a manner that intimidates or harasses those supporting their opponents;
- refrain from any action that disrupts or interferes with peaceful and orderly polling;
- respect complete freedom for voters to exercise their right to vote without being subjected to any annoyance or obstruction;
- train their poll watchers on their roles, responsibilities, and obligations at polling sites and other election offices, including to refrain from behaviors that have the effect of intimidating or harassing others who are lawfully present;
- ensure the safety and security of electoral officials before, during, and after the polling;
- comply with all rules and regulations of the Georgia Secretary of State and other authorized election officials;
- cooperate fully with election officials, law enforcement, and the court system;
- submit only complaints that are legally and factually supported; and
- accept the outcome of the elections after the results have been certified and all complaints have been resolved.