

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

2022 Federal Legislative Priorities

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated was founded in 1913 on the campus of Howard University to promote academic excellence; to provide support to the underserved; to educate and stimulate participation in the establishment of positive public policy.

Today, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated has chartered 1,060 chapters worldwide and has initiated more than 350,000 members since its founding. The Sorority boldly confronts the challenges that face the Black community through its Five-Point Programmatic Thrust of economic development, educational development, international awareness and involvement, physical and mental health, and political awareness and involvement. Notable members include lawmakers from Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, Carol Mosley Braun and Alexis Herman, to CBC Chairwoman Joyce Beatty and Secretary Marcia Fudge.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Voting Rights, Voting Access and Voter Engagement

As a citizen in the United States, you have the right to vote and have your voice heard in every election. Casting your vote is fundamental to America's democracy. It's the most basic - and essential - building block of our democracy. In 2013, the Supreme Court gutted key portions of the Voting Rights Act, which protected eligible voters from discriminatory voting laws. The court claimed those protections were no longer necessary.

Today, voter suppression legislation, tactics and schemes are being implemented across the country. Congress has a duty to make sure that every eligible voter can engage in the electoral process, access voting and cast their vote without any barriers.

We urge Congress to pass legislation that protects the right to vote and restores Sections II, IV and V of the Voting Rights Act.

Federal Antilynching Legislation

Historically, lynching was a form of racial terrorism used to maintain white supremacy, establish political, social, and economic dominance, suppress the African American vote, punish perceived violations of customs (later to become Jim Crow laws), and instill an overwhelming sense of fear and terror in the Black community. Despite having achieved a modicum of racial progress, terroristic racial killings in the United States have not stopped; making lynching a federal hate crime just as important today as it was decades ago.

We urge Congress to pass antilynching legislation to finally make lynching a federal hate crime after more than a century of failed attempts.

Student Loan Debt Crisis

Student loan debt has reached astronomical levels in the United States with millions of Americans carrying an estimated \$1.54 trillion in education debt. The financial burden of student loan debt falls heaviest on women and people of color. According to an analysis by the American Association of University Women (AAUW), women hold nearly two-thirds of the nation's \$1.54 trillion in student loan debt. Even before COVID-19 upended the global economy, the gender wage gap made it harder for women to repay their student loans. AAUW's 2020 analysis also revealed that:

- Black women finish their undergraduate education with more debt than other women
- First-generation college students face more debt when they graduate
- Women who attended for-profit colleges owe far more money than those who attended public or private non-profits schools
- Recent graduates are facing the worst unemployment crisis since the Great Depression and women are faring worse than men. In the early weeks of the pandemic, women filed nearly 59% of unemployment claims, despite being only half of the labor force.

We urge Congress to pass legislation canceling student loan debt.

Redistricting

While the most states have completed their processes of redrawing districts after the 2020 Census, it is not too early to prepare for the 2031 round of redistricting. Redistricting determines who is elected to office and the access that constituents have to their officials. We need Congress to outlaw political gerrymandering and prison gerrymandering, while also strengthening the Voting Rights Act. As our national elected officials, we also demand full funding of the Census Bureau to prepare for the 2030 survey, to at least 2010 levels, modified for inflation. Finally, there needs to be mechanisms in place to prevent the political manipulation of the Census that was experienced leading up to, during, and after the 2020 Census collection.

We urge Congress to fully fund the Census Bureau as it prepares for the 2030 Census, end partisan gerrymandering at the federal level and protect voting rights.

Economic Justice

A serious examination of the economic status of Americans will reveal an untenable racial wealth disparity. Today, the average Black household earns approximately half of what the average White household earns. Addressing the racial wealth gap through a variety of legislative changes is essential to achieving economic justice.

We urge Congress to enact laws that will:

- Protect the powers of the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau
- Raise the Federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour
- Encourage innovation by bringing high-speed Internet to every corner of America
- Support gender pay equity and require federal contractors to eliminate gender disparities in compensation; assure a minimum level of paid family leave, without preempting state/local protections
- Resist attacks on reproductive rights; reduce the cost of prescription drugs, eliminate health disparities

Reimagining Public Safety

Communities across the United States need new models to create opportunities for public safety. True public safety is realized when dramatic investments are made in critical resources that address the root causes of trauma, economic insecurity, and disparities. In addition, public safety is enhanced when police (and police unions) are held accountable for their actions and to a higher standard of conduct.

To secure a reimagined justice system and communities that champion public safety, we urge Congress to:

- Advance legislation that addresses gun reform
- Promote gun violence prevention
- Raise the age of gun purchases
- Eliminate no-knock warrants
- Eliminate police immunity

DC Statehood

Every year since 1991, Congressional leaders have been presented with the opportunity to extend Statehood to the District of Columbia. The founding fathers intended the District to serve as the seat of the federal government. The legislation brought forth by Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton would shrink the national capital to a complex of capitol buildings allowing the rest of the District to become a state. “Taxation Without Representation” is unacceptable when residents of the District are paying their fair share as citizens of this great democracy.

We urge every Congressional official, from every state, to support Statehood for the District of Columbia.