2017 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

During the last eight years, NBCSL members have been fighting to create an environment that encouraged fairness and equality for African Americans and other people of color. A shifting political climate that brings with it potential rollbacks of any and all progress made for vulnerable communities, will require NBCSL members to continue that fight in their respective states. Recognizing that some of the fights remain the same: economic development, criminal justice reform, and health disparities, for example, NBCSL members are also prepared to fight in some new areas such as environmental justice. Safeguarding the rights and protections of these communities, NBCSL members will step into the fray to keep the progress continuing.

BUILDING ROADS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

NBCSL members are committed to using new strategies that create a support economic opportunities, especially for the marginalized.

► Creating educational, economic and entrepreneurial opportunities for women and girls of colors helps to close the pay and education gap between women and girls of color and their white counterpart. When women and girls have access, it is reflected back positively into their communities.

► Supporting fair and equitable home buying practices helps families build wealth and assets. Wealth development through home ownership has been a common practice often obstructed by predatory practices. Keeping these practices fair will help African Americans build wealth.

► Repealing maximum family grants allows families to focus on obtaining resources that will help them become sufficient.

► Utilizing technologic innovations to create next generation networks will help all communities experience more through improved access.

[ADRESSED BY NBCSL RESOLUTIONS BED-17-10; HCD-17-21; HHS-17-37; TST 17-05]

CREATING IMPROVEMENTS IN EDUCATION THROUGH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Children of color often face some of the most difficult challenges within the education system. Providing innovative supports to address their needs, NBCSL members are committed to quality education atmosphere and outcomes for children.

► Engaging all parts of the school system allows parents, teachers, and school administrators to support children and their families.

► Providing awareness and training to school professionals to recognize learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, earlier will help children perform better in school.

[ADRESSED BY NBCSL RESOLUTIONS EDU-17-09; CFY-17-33]

TAKING CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND INCREASING TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

With an emphasis on environmental justice and transportation equity, NBCSL will be moving forward with policies that ensure communities are able to experience clean and safe areas.

► Supporting the efforts of the Environmental Protection Agency’s ruling on beneficial use of solid waste helps protect the environment.

► Encouraging environmental practices that keep areas clean and free of toxic waste keeps communities healthy.

► Building more areas that allow for safe and easy access to shops, schools, and jobs, keeps individuals safely on the move. Additionally, facilitating business practices that take more cars off the roads and provide more transportation options also helps to connect people to the resources they need.

► Educating the public on alternative energy and also making it easier for them to participate, helps to reduce pollution.

[ADRESSED BY NBCSL RESOLUTIONS ETE-17-01; ETE-17-11; ETE-17-16; ETE-17-40; ETE-17-41]

CREATING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES BY ELIMINATING HEALTH DISPARITIES

Reducing health disparities among African Americans has always been a priority of NBCSL. By decreasing the instances of chronic disease and death, NBCSL can ensure a productive workforce and engaged population.

► Supporting innovative medical treatments that encourage independence while also demonstrating better health outcomes.

► Facilitating better health practices that enable medical providers to focus on treatment.

► Increasing awareness of disease through early testing and screenings.

► Encouraging more individuals to become doctors and also reducing the barriers to practice.

[ADRESSED BY NBCSL RESOLUTIONS HHS-17-08; HHS-17-17; HHS-17-18; HHS-17-19; HHS-17-32; HHS-17-35; LJE-17-24]
ACTING ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM AND EXPANDING ACCESS FOR RETURNING CITIZENS

Criminal justice practices of the past have been costly. Not sure fiscally, but they have taken an emotional and societal costs on the millions of people affected by mandatory minimums, racial profiling, abusive practices. NBCSL will be calling on states to enact criminal justice reform policies that are fair that reduce the number of people unfairly in jail and provide support to offenders where possible.

› Decreasing the number of people in jail, especially low-income individuals, through progressive bail reform and drug sentencing reform, will keep families together and also reduce the costs to states.

› The restoration of voting rights for returning citizens is one way to enact successful reentry. By providing returning citizens with their right to vote, it is a huge step in getting them to be engaged in their communities.

› Reform to civil asset forfeiture will help prevent abusive practices by law enforcement agencies and improper seizing of assets.

› The death penalty has been demonstrated to have deleterious effects on communities of color, especially among African American defendants. Eliminating the death penalty will be one way to balance the uneven scales of justice.

› Improvements to eyewitness identification procedures will also lower the number of individuals who are unfairly imprisoned.

[ADDRESSED BY NBCSL RESOLUTIONS LJE-17-23; LJE-17-25; LJE-17-26; LJE-17-36; LJE-17-38; LJE-17-43]

ENSURING FAIR WAGES AND WORKER PROTECTIONS

To support a strong labor force, there must be protections in place that provide fair wages, active protections, and a general economic atmosphere that does not exploit workers. NBCSL will continue to push policies that keep the nation's workforce engaged and properly remunerated.

› Wage equality for all workers, supporting workers’ rights, protections for pregnant women, and preventing working misclassification ensures that all workers are able to provide food, shelter, and other resources for their families, without undue burden.

› Keeping practices fair by studying contracting practices among state and government procurement processes, will inform lawmakers on how to eliminate discriminatory practices.

[ADDRESSED BY NBCSL RESOLUTIONS LWD-17-07; LWD-17-13; LWD-17-27; LWD-17-28; LWD-17-29]

2017 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

A new administration can bring new hope but also some new challenges. Policy requires the cooperation and collaboration of Congress and the President, with intent to move forward. Though NBCSL members actively work to address the issues that impact their constituents, NBCSL also fights for issues that require the federal government to decisively act, especially in the favor of historically marginalized groups. NBCSL members cannot continue these fights alone and will need Members of Congress and the Administration to see the urgency and the importance in acting.

FAIR REPRESENTATION AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

The cornerstone of American democracy is the ability to have one’s voice heard and recognized without encumbrance. Fair representation at all levels of government requires action by the federal government to lead the way in removing obstacles to representation.

› Statehood for the District of Columbia ensures that the more than half a million people that live in the District have a voice in Congress. Whereas residents of Congress pay federal income taxes, have voted in favor of statehood, and have been fighting for statehood for years, it is on Congress to grant the District statehood.

› Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment, is an opportunity to acknowledge the women who fought hard for the right and to also consider the suppressive voting tactics going through the states. The Department of Justice is tasked with investigating instances of suppressive voting tactics and preventing them from blocking voters.

[ADDRESSED BY NBCSL RESOLUTIONS BED-17-20; LJE-17-06]

SUPPORTING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY’S POLICIES DEDICATED TO ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY

The Environmental Protection Agency
The National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) is a membership association representing over 650 Black state legislators from 45 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. NBCSL members represent upwards of 60 million Americans of all racial backgrounds. NBCSL tracks legislation at all levels of government and actively monitors state and federal policy initiatives to provide its members with important information. Each year, NBCSL members pass policy resolutions that directly impact federal and state policy. The organization focuses on U.S. domestic policy and is committed to policies that positively affect all Americans. Learn more at www.nbcsl.org.

The EPA was created to protect human health and the environment. The EPA creates and enforces regulations based on environmental laws passed by Congress. In order to be effective, the EPA must create regulations that not only protect human health and the environment, but also address issues of environmental equity.

- Policies should be aimed at supporting renewable fuel sources without disadvantaging minority business owners. Informed policies will help to curtail unfair practices and help sustain these businesses.
- Acknowledging native land and also the health risks associated with the Keystone XL Pipeline, NBCSL opposes the pipeline and asks Congress to stand with the Sioux Nation.

[ADDRESSED BY NBCSL RESOLUTIONS BED-17-15; ETE-17-44]

OPEN ACCESS TO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT
Where the federal government can assist small businesses owners through agencies such as the Small Business Administration or the Minority Business Development Agency, the federal government should promulgate policies that support business development. For individuals, the federal government should reconsider policies that

- Agencies such as the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau should be putting forth rules that inhibit unfair debt collection practices.
- Trade laws should be enforced that protecting domestic businesses from imbalanced foreign competition

[ADDRESS BY NBCSL RESOLUTIONS BED-17-14; LWD-17-34]

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS
The history of African Americans in the United States is unlike many others. Originally brought to America in bondage as chattel, then emancipated only to experience years of regressive laws and Jim Crow, African Americans have contributed much to the progression of this country and its culture. NBCSL is looking towards the Administration and Congress to recognize those accomplishments and also to remedy the injustices of the past.

- There are few musicians that become a part of the soundtrack of America, and Prince was one of them. An accomplished instrumentalist, Grammy-award winning artist who was also a dedicated philanthropist, Prince was a voice for many Americans.
- A commission on reparations to the descendants of enslaved Africans is a critical step in analyzing racial inequality and developing strategies to combat it.
- Marcus Garvey, Jr. was an iconic figure in the Civil Rights Movement. Garvey demonstrated that there were many different paths to racial equality for African Americans in the U.S. Acknowledging his contributions, NBCSL calls on the President to grant Garvey a posthumous pardon.

[ADDRESS BY NBCSL RESOLUTIONS CYF-17-22; LJE-17-31; LJE-17-42]

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY
Increasing advancements in the tech sector require informed consumers. It also requires that those least able to access those advancements become empowered by agencies like the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The private sector will be an integral partner in enabling consumers and their families to utilize the internet to stay connected to jobs, schools, and necessary resources.

- As African Americans and Latinos use internet on their mobile devices more than other groups, sponsored data programs allow them to access internet in a low-cost way. Additionally, NBCSL calls on the FCC to modernize the Lifeline program to support broadband internet.
- Providing low-income consumers more ways to access internet increases their ability to apply for job, complete homework, and get connected to services.
- Protecting consumer privacy across platform is critical in preventing consumer data from being accessed and exploited.

[ADDRESS BY RESOLUTIONS TST-17-02; TST-17-03; TST-17-04]