

Just the Facts: A Monthly Report on the 2020 Presidential Candidates

Spotlight on Racial and Social Justice

We will not grow as a nation without addressing the privileges and biases that permeate our society. The ravages of institutional racism are evident in the inequitable funding of public schools, racial disparities in criminal justice, and growing wealth gap. NEA believes that honest and open conversations about the sources of institutional racism that continue to threaten equity, fairness, and justice in our nation are necessary to produce the critical changes needed to achieve racial healing and justice.

Here's what Democratic candidates have to say:

Joe Biden

If elected, the former vice president would [direct](#) his Justice Department to “prioritize prosecuting hate crimes.” Concerning the rise of white supremacists, he has [stated](#) that “silence is complicity.” “The only way ... you deal with it is you attack it, you expose it, you embarrass ... You call them out,” and “most of all, you call them out to our children.”

Mike Bloomberg

Before announcing his candidacy, the former New York City mayor [apologized](#) for his support of stop and frisk police tactics, admitting that “I got something important really wrong.” Despite coverage of past [remarks](#) related to the criminality of young men of color, the former mayor has released a [plan](#) that would “hold law enforcement accountable...invest \$1 billion in young men of color...[and] make hate and bias crimes a top federal priority.”

Pete Buttigieg

Citing historic inequities in education, health care, and incarceration, the former South Bend, IN mayor [proposes](#) comprehensive investments in his Douglass Plan “to make an unprecedented commitment to...those who have historically faced discrimination.” He acknowledges that “America’s racist structures were built to justify and perpetuate slavery.” According to the former mayor, “by achieving greater equity for Black Americans we lay the groundwork for achieving greater equity for other people of color as well.”

Tulsi Gabbard

Throughout her time in Congress, she has continued to fight against discrimination by [voting](#) to expand federal protections, protect voting rights, and exploring reparations for the descendants of American slaves. The Congresswoman [believes](#) that “we must work side-by-side to stand up to bigotry, hatred, and violence against others because of their race, religion, or sexual orientation. We must continue to fight for genuine equality and restore human dignity for all Americans.”

Amy Klobuchar

The Senator [admits](#) that the country needs to acknowledge the atrocities of slavery and proposes investing in “those communities that have been so hurt by racism.” When pressed on her own prosecutorial record that included tough-on-crime stances and decisions not to prosecute dozens of

police officers for killings, she [affirms](#) that “we all know there’s systematic racism in this criminal justice system — there’s no doubt about that.”

Bernie Sanders

The Senator believes physical, political, legal, economic, and environmental injustices must be addressed to ensure equal justice for black, brown, and indigenous Americans. If elected president, he [pledges](#) that “whether it is a broken criminal justice system, or massive disparities in the availability of financial services, or health disparities, or environmental disparities, or educational disparities, it is our job to—and we will—create a nation in which all people are treated equally.”

Tom Steyer

The activist believes that the country needs solutions on race. He [admits](#) that “institutional racism, discriminatory government policies, and unequal treatment” of African Americans needs resolution. He also [acknowledges](#) these policies “have robbed generations...of families.” If elected, he [promises](#) to discuss reparations and “direct more resources to monitor, investigate, and prosecute incidents of white supremacist violence as acts of domestic terrorism.”

Elizabeth Warren

According to the Senator, hate crimes are “intended to create fear... motivated by hate and bias. And they are incompatible with our values and have no place in American life.” As president, she [would empower](#) the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to “standardize prosecutions...address white nationalism in the military...and keep guns away from those at risk of violence.”

Here’s what Republican candidates have to say:

Donald Trump

Elected with an [existing catalogue](#) of racist commentary, President Donald Trump is systemically [rolling back](#) critical civil rights protections. For example, his Department of Education [boasts](#) about cutting the backlog of civil rights cases due to its “decision to stop routinely opening systemic probes that might turn up patterns of bias.” In addition, after signing criminal justice reform that he [described](#) as bringing “the whole country together,” his Justice Department is “now seeking to limit the number of inmates who could benefit” from reduced sentences for low-level and nonviolent crimes. Reports [find](#) that “the administration’s policies on religious liberty, reproductive rights, and issues that affect people of color, immigrants, and indigenous populations have harmed people.”

Bill Weld

The former governor [signed](#) legislation that provided protection and support for gay students. The initiative also included educator training in preventing harassment. He [believes](#) that “the concept of schools as safe havens must apply to all students, including gay and lesbian students.” As governor, he also [viewed](#) unequal funding of school districts in wealthy suburbs compared to inner-city districts with largely black and Hispanic populations as “unacceptable” and one that “raises a substantial question of economic and racial equality.”