



**National
Urban League**

To Be Equal #5

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**African American Leaders Announce Jobs, Community Safety and Voting Rights
Recommendations**

Marc H. Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

"In Unity There is Strength" Aesop's Fable

Last Friday, at the end of the first week of President Obama's second term, I joined a coalition of civil rights leaders in Washington, DC to call for immediate action on the urban jobs crisis and a host of other issues adversely affecting communities of color. Standing with National Action Network President, Rev. Al Sharpton; NAACP President, Ben Jealous; National Coalition on Black Civic Participation President, Melanie Campbell and others, we called for swift action on a number of recommendations geared to leveling the playing field and giving a hand up to the thousands of urban Americans who are being left behind by the nation's economic recovery. While each of us in the meeting has made our individual voices heard, we believe our unity gives us greater strength.

This was our second meeting. When we gathered in Washington a little over a month ago, we urged our nation's leaders to commit to economic and educational parity as well as voting rights protections, and criminal justice reforms to strengthen America and improve the lives of the millions of working and middle class citizens we see and serve every day. On Friday, we presented our preliminary recommendations on how best to achieve those goals. We propose:

Reintroduction and passage of the Urban Jobs Act allocating resources for job training, education, and support services for eligible young adults, including many who have not finished high school, to prepare them for entry into the workforce. .

Reintroduce the American Jobs Act, President Obama's proposed package of tax cuts, investments and incentives designed to put American back to work and speed economic growth.

We support the President's recently announced push for a ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazines, and his call for universal background checks. In addition, we

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recommend a stronger focus on violence prevention, including investments in programs that create safe spaces for kids after school and improved mental health services and treatment.

We also call for citizens to mobilize around the upcoming February 27th Supreme Court case challenging the constitutionality of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which requires states and counties with a history of discriminatory voting practices to undergo Justice Department review of any change to their voting rules.

This is especially important in light of the unprecedented voter suppression campaign leading up to the 2012 Presidential election.

Finally, we call for reforms of the nation's dysfunctional and discriminatory criminal justice system. As NAACP President Ben Jealous noted, "Study after study has shown that students of color face harsher punishments in school than their white peers, African-American students are arrested far more often than their white classmates, and African-American youth have higher rates of juvenile incarceration and are more likely to be sentenced to adult prison. One in 13 African Americans of voting age is disenfranchised because of a prior criminal conviction. That's a staggering statistic that reveals the desperate need for reform."

We urge the President to address the urban jobs crisis in his upcoming State of the Union Address and we call on the leaders in Washington to make economic and educational parity a top priority this year.

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