

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
SAN ANTONIO DIVISION

MI FAMILIA VOTA, TEXAS STATE
CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF COLORED PEOPLE, MICAELA
RODRIGUEZ AND GUADALUPE TORRES, No. 5:20-cv-00830

Plaintiffs,

v.

GREG ABBOTT, Governor of Texas; RUTH
HUGHS, Texas Secretary of State,

Defendants.

**DECLARATION OF ANGELICA RAZO,
TEXAS STATE DIRECTOR OF PLAINTIFF MI FAMILIA
VOTA**

I, Angelica Razo, hereby state on my own knowledge and belief that:

1. I am of legal age and competent to provide this declaration. All the information herein is based on my own personal knowledge unless otherwise indicated.
2. I am the Texas State Director of Mi Familia Vota, a plaintiff in the above-captioned matter. I am authorized to provide this declaration on behalf of Mi Familia Vota.
3. Mi Familia Vota is a national civic engagement organization. Our mission is to “build Latino political power by expanding the electorate, strengthening local infrastructures, and through year-round voter engagement.” Our mission consists of public education, voter registration, and voter engagement. We have operations in Texas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, and Nevada—states with the highest Latino population counts but also serve communities where Latino participation in the electoral process is lacking.
4. Our election-related work usually involves facilitating voter registration and voter education.

5. We also provide services which are not related to voting, including running citizenship workshops; referring people to pro bono legal services; providing education services in climate justice and immigration justice, including know-your-rights workshops; running youth development services; and administering a COVID-19 relief fund for those in need. We advocate on issues including immigration, voting rights, the environment, workers' rights, education, and health care.

The Latino Community in Texas has Been Disproportionately Affected by COVID-19

6. The Latino community in Texas, along with the Black community, has been deeply affected by COVID-19. Many of the community members we work with have either themselves been infected with the virus or have had friends or loved ones infected. Too many have died. I understand from press and public health reporting that Latinos who contract the virus have worse outcomes. Few members of our community have been completely unaffected by the virus.

7. For example, I understand that the hardest hit zip codes in Dallas County are predominantly Black and Latino areas.

8. My understanding is that Latinos in Texas have suffered from COVID-19 at rates higher than the general population because many are essential workers and work in crowded workplaces where social distancing is not possible.

Additionally, many live in large, multi-generational households so if one person gets infected the infection spreads to family members.

9. I also understand that Latino who contracted COVID-19 have worse health outcomes and higher fatality rates.

The Mask Exemption Carve-Out for Polling Places will Disproportionately Burden Latinos and Other Minority Groups

10. Governor Abbott ordered that masks are mandatory in most public places, which I believed was a prudent and important public health measure. Unfortunately, the order carved out voters and poll workers—masks are not required at polling places.

11. Many Latino community members we work with have expressed concern about this carve-out affecting them at the polls. They are planning to vote in person because, under Texas law, many Texans are not eligible to vote absentee.

12. With no requirement that masks be worn at the polls,

we understand that Latino Texans are concerned they will have increased risk of exposure COVID-19 in order to vote in-person.

13. We have also heard from poll workers who were concerned that the voters they are serving and other poll workers they are working alongside are allowed to be unmasked. The risk to poll workers was particularly raised by those who were signing up to be poll workers for the first time—they want to help our electoral system but do not want to risk exposure to a deadly disease in the process.

14. The risk of contracting COVID-19 is not just a risk to the voter or poll worker. Voters have raised concerns to my staff about putting their families at risk if they go to polling places to vote. As I said above, many Latinos in Texas live in multi-generational families and many care for older family members. Because masks are not required, when a younger person enters a polling place, she risks not only contracting COVID-19 herself from unmasked fellow voters and poll workers, but also risks spreading the virus to older family members such as grandparents who live with her. It has been widely reported that elderly people are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, so younger Latinos fear that by voting they could be putting their own grandparents at risk of a potentially fatal disease.

15. Many Latino voters are concerned about the impacts of COVID-19 based on personal experience and knowledge of the widespread reporting about the risks. That concern is, unfortunately, well-placed as it reflects that the Latino community has higher rates of infection and more severe outcomes for those infected.

16. As a result, Latino voters—more than other Texans—fear the risk of exposure to COVID-19 from voting without a mask mandate. Latinos have to choose between not voting or risking their lives, or the lives of their loved ones to vote. This difficult choice will dissuade some Latinos from voting.

17. In the March primary, many Latino communities face long lines. We have also heard about long lines in Latino communities during early voting for the general election, which recently started. If there are long lines again during the remainder of early voting and on election day, voters will have to be exposed to unmasked fellow voters for a long period of time while waiting to vote. It is generally understood in our community, based on messaging from public health experts, that the longer someone is exposed to a mask-less person who has

COVID-19, the higher the risk of contracting the disease. So long lines will make people more scared of contracting COVID-19.

18. Striking the carve-out—in other words, requiring masks to be worn at polling places, just like other public places—will make those voting in-person safer and minimize the risk that Latinos and other people of color will avoid voting to keep themselves safe from the virus.

Mi Familia Vota Has Advocated to Make Polling Places Safer

19. Mi Familia Vota has expended our time and resources to try to make polling places safer, time that we would have otherwise spent educating voters on issues that are central to our organization mission.

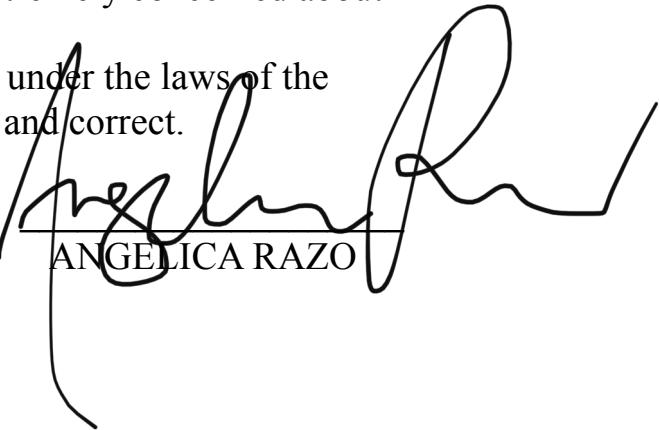
20. We lobbied Secretary of State Hughs by letter in March 2020, urging her to take immediate action to make voting safer, including by making in-person voting safer. We asked Secretary of State Hughs to issue sufficient uniform guidance to help counties find safe polling places, boost curbside voting, ensure that all polling locations have appropriate protective supplies, and assist counties with recruiting and training poll workers to administer polling sites safely.

21. We have also worked with county election officials, county by county, in order to learn what their varying pandemic election policies are in order to accurately inform voters.

22. In Dallas, we are part of the Dallas V.O.T.E.S. (Voting Openly Trouble-Free Equitably Safely) Coalition which has been working with the Dallas County Elections Department and the Dallas County Commissioners Court to ask them to provide and require voters and poll workers with PPE, including but not limited to masks, at polling locations.

23. We are also fielding many more calls from voters in the communities that we serve, who are extremely concerned about how to vote during the pandemic.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the foregoing is true and correct.
Executed on October 1, 2020.



ANGELICA RAZO

