

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2021

Letter From President Biden and Vice President Kamala D. Harris on the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality

October 22, 2021

America is unique among the nations of the world because we were built on an idea: that every one of us is equal in dignity and deserves to be treated equally. Though we have never fully lived up to that idea—not at the time of our founding, nor in the centuries since—it is the defining hallmark of our country that we have never stopped reaching for it. From the Emancipation Proclamation, to the passage of the 19th Amendment, to the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act, to the fight for reproductive rights and marriage equality—and countless movements and victories before and since—America has been strengthened through the years by our tireless pursuit of greater equity for all.

This document, the first-ever United States government strategy on gender equity and equality, is a part of that noble American tradition. It comes at an inflection point for the economic security, safety, health, and well-being of women and girls in our nation and around the globe. COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing economic, health, and caregiving crises that disproportionately impacted women and girls long before the pandemic struck. Following the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression, women's participation in the American labor force plummeted to its lowest level in over 30 years. Rates of gender-based violence have risen significantly, and racial and ethnic inequity has deepened. Globally, the pandemic has fueled increased economic insecurity for women and girls, and in far too many places—including, far too often, here in America—their fundamental rights remain at risk.

This moment demands a bold and united response—a commitment to do more than just rebuild to a status quo that wasn't working for women and girls, but rather to build back better. We have already taken major strides, leading a strong and comprehensive response to COVID-19 both domestically and globally, getting our economy back on track, and centering equity in our recovery and response efforts, but we still have work to do to ensure equal opportunity for all people, regardless of gender. As we work to invest in the American people and build an economy that deals everyone in, we have an unprecedented opportunity to chart a course for a future in which gender equity and equality are instilled in every part of our country, and—through our defense, diplomacy, foreign aid, and trade efforts—to advance the rights and opportunities of women and girls across the world.

This effort is personal to us, as it has been throughout our lives and careers; as local elected officials and as U.S. Senators, we each worked tirelessly to expand services and deliver justice to survivors of gender-based violence, fought for equal pay and against abuses of power, and helped craft legislation to bring greater dignity to the lives of all workers. Now, as President and Vice President, our Administration is carrying that work forward, making progress toward gender equity and equality a priority from day one.

On the day that we were sworn in together, the Vice President toppled a barrier to women's participation that had stood for more than 200 years. Our Cabinet and senior staff are the most diverse and gender-balanced in history. And we have taken executive action aimed squarely at advancing equal opportunity regardless of gender, race, or any other characteristic. On International Women's Day, the President issued an Executive Order establishing the White House Gender Policy Council to ensure that gender equity and equality are at the forefront of America's domestic and foreign policy. That Executive Order also mandated the development of

this first-ever national strategy to guide our work on gender equity and equality as a government and as a nation.

This strategy outlines an ambitious agenda for this Administration and those to come—a roadmap to help our nation close pernicious gender gaps and propel us toward a world with equal opportunity for all people. The restaurant worker organizing for fair wages. The migrant farmworker putting food on our tables. The leader fighting for a place at the negotiating table where the future of their country will be determined. The girl studying hard, despite the barriers that stand in her way, to discover the next vaccine or scientific breakthrough in the fight against climate change. The single father who depends on paid leave to care for his family. The woman migrating with her children to flee gender-based persecution and seek a safer life. The transgender athlete who dreams of the chance to compete free from discrimination.

The millions of frontline workers—disproportionately women—whose heroic work in our hospitals, grocery stores, schools, child care centers, domestic violence shelters, nursing homes, and elsewhere kept us going during one of the darkest periods in recent history. This strategy addresses barriers faced by those who belong to underserved and historically marginalized communities that have long been denied full opportunity: women and girls of color, LGBTQI+ people, people with disabilities, and all of those whose lives are affected by persistent poverty and inequality.

Ensuring that all people have the opportunity to live up to their full potential, regardless of gender identity or other factors, is not only a moral imperative. It is a strategic imperative—a continuation of our national journey toward justice, opportunity, and equality set forth in our creation—that will advance prosperity, stability, and security at home and abroad in the years to come.

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 22 as part of a White House report titled "National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality."

Categories: Letters and Messages : National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, letter with Vice President Kamala D. Harris.

Names: Harris, Kamala D.

Subjects: Civil rights : Civil rights movement; Civil rights : Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, equality; Civil rights : Racial equality; Civil rights : Women's rights and gender equality; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Elections : Voter participation; Foreign policy, U.S. : Foreign aid policies and funding; Holidays and special observances : Women's Day, International; Law enforcement and crime : Gender-based violence; White House Gender Policy Council; White House Office : Vice President.

DCPD Number: DCPD202100868.