

Kierra Smith

COM738

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Request for Proposal

Seeking Polling or Strategic Communication Firm for Indigent Defense & Bail Bond Initiative and Public Opinion Polling

Proposals will be accepted until end of day on Thursday, September 12, 2019. Proposals can be emailed to washingtonbureau@naacpnet.org or mailed to:

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

1000 U Street, NW

Washington, DC 20001

<http://naacpdc.org>

Our Organization: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Who we are: We are a civil rights advocacy group that consistently work toward the advancement of colored and underrepresented communities. Originally founded in 1909, we have become the nation's largest and most recognized civil rights organization. Since our founding year, the NAACP has advocated for civilians guaranteed rights that was written within the 13th, 14th and 15th amendment in the constitution – guaranteeing an end to slavery and equal protection under the law. A victory within the court case, *Guinn v. United States, 1910* helped NAACP gain footing as legal advocates and continue to fight till this day. Since 1909 our mission has remained; to secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons. The NAACP has a desire to remove all barriers of racial discrimination through democratic processes. We have evolved from eradicating lynching's and segregation to issues that impact minorities today. Those issues include education, environmental and climate justice, economic opportunity, and voting and federal advocacy. We have made progress against voting discrimination and would like to refocus a section of our organization towards criminal law reform again.

Criminal justice and law reform have been a major pillar of advocacy for our organization. In the past we have conducted research on incarceration trends and drug sentencing. We've also developed a, "Know Your Rights" pamphlet for youth. However, we've noticed a bigger issue surrounding indigent defense and bail bond.

Kierra Smith 1

Communication Challenge: Earlier this year, President Trump signed into law the First Step Act in response to prison and bail reform advocates push for change. The First Step Act promises to place prisoners close to families, expand inmate employment, prohibit restraints on pregnant prisoners, curb mandatory minimums and reduce crack sentences amongst many other things. However, advocates are not pleased that the abolishment of cash bail systems have not been included. The NAACP believes that cash bail system is at the core of the rise in prison population and harsh sentencing. Our organization believes that the inability to post bond correlates to indigent defense. Furthermore, the NAACP believes that if a person is held in pre-trial detention (haven't yet been convicted of a crime) and cannot afford to post bail, consequently, that same person cannot pay the fees required to hire a defense lawyer. That particular fact alone is very concerning to our organization. The NAACP believes that bail shouldn't act as a punishment or function as a way to influence people to plead guilty. We firmly believe that the cash bail system is not only hurting defendants but taxpayers as well. However, President Trump has reduced the budget needed for prison reform from \$75 million a year for five years to \$14 million.

Furthermore, in recent news the state of California has scrapped the cash bail system. Earlier this week, California's Sen. Kamala Harris responded to the First Step Act and Trump's recent budget cut, by introducing the Ensuring Quality Access to Legal Defense (EQUAL Defense) Act of 2019. This act will serve as a grant program that will uphold the 6th amendment and also fund public defense, establish workload limits and address pay parity between public defenders and prosecutors. The NAACP wants to see more progress toward the abolishment of cash bail. Our primary opposition comes from economists and conservatives who feel eradicating cash bail can hurt the economy.

Another challenge we are facing is that Congress has many pressing matters on its schedule for this month, so the NAACP needs a captivating campaign to catch the attention of congress and educate the general public about the workings of the cash bail system and indigent defense.

The Project and Research Objectives: The NAACP plans to launch the Abolish the Bail, Right to Counsel initiative. We hope to establish this initiative as a large-scale campaign to inform and educate the public about the cash bail system, the turmoil of indigent defense and lobby congress to increase funding on prison reform and eradicate bail. Our organization are big advocates for voting empowerment and wish to see this campaign evolve into a Get out and Vote effort, gaining widespread support for abolishing the bail system and upholding the sixth amendment. Because this is an issue that can only be changed through legislation, we hope the research will help us identify strategic messaging to motivate young voters. We then plan to utilize print material including pamphlets and billboard placements. In addition to print material, we wish to develop a website in partnership with affluent TV networks with a primary audience of minorities and individuals from underrepresented communities. Research will help inform us on how to frame the language that will be utilized on print material. We also hope this research will

help us in developing ways to reach our secondary audience; lower to middle class minority mothers who still might value direct mail and pamphlets. Mothers are affected by this issue because it is their child who is behind bars and they are most likely the person to utilize a bail bond. With the website, we will work with local prisons and advocacy groups to develop content surrounding our issues at focus. We also hope to use grassroots efforts to pressure congress to create legislation surrounding the abolishment of cash bail. We want congress to see how their citizens feel about this issue and their desire to change the system. We are seeking more information on public opinion concerning indigent defense, pretrial detention and cash bail, as well as assistance developing two strategic communication plans: one for members of congress and the other serving as an informative plan. The strategic plan for the public should be internet and social media based because we feel that we can reach young voters directly and social media platforms will also give them the space to have conversations about our findings. Our goal is to target middle to lower class minority voters to become more informative on the cash bail system and how they can get involved and vote. Middle to lower class minority voters are our focus because their households are more impacted by the bail system; whether they are the ones who have struggled to pay bail or have witnessed a family member or parent struggle to post bail. Their voices are important and can have impact on influencing their Senators and Representatives. Another goal is to inform both general public and congress on the economic and social benefits of eliminating the cash bail system. We are seeking a firm to conduct public opinion polling and research on the following:

- How many families are affected by the cash bail system?
- Have the public been a victim of a crime?
- Does the public know who is affected by the lack of counsel?
- Have the public or anyone in their family ever been arrested?
- Does the public know the history of bail?
- Does the public understand the economic benefits of abolishing bail?
- What is the public opinion on the commercial bail industry?
- Is the public familiar with pretrial risk assessment tools?
- Are there other factors fueling the mass incarceration of those awaiting trial?
- Does the public know the role of a bails bond man?
- Does the public know how many people make up the population of pretrial detention who cannot afford bail?
- Which strategies would be most beneficial for NAACP to educate the public on these issues?
- Examination of which message styles would be most effective in reaching the general public
- Which social media platforms would be effective to inform public about said issue?
- Which social media platform would be effective to persuade voters?
- What communication strategy would be beneficial to reaching congress?
- Would establishing a website be beneficial for our efforts?

Any findings of public support will be incorporated into a lobbying campaign that will target members of Congress. We plan to use this research to determine message framing and beneficial avenues to target our audience. With this research, we plan to create print material and web content to better inform families about the system and the effects on families. We will also utilize this research to target members of congress who can be persuaded on the issue and is also passionate about creating legislation geared toward prison and bail reform by showing how their community feel about the issue. Finally, we plan to use the research to develop strategic communication plan that will motivate voters and people who were once affected by the bail system to get out and vote..

Deadline: The NAACP is requesting proposals no later than Thursday, September 12, 2019. NAACP will make a decision no later than September 15, 2019. NAACP's contract will initially be a nine-month contract, but the contract length depends upon when Congress reaches a decision about bail and indigent defense legislation.