



# ACLU-VA Request for Proposal

Opinion research on voting rights among likely voters in Virginia

---

Date: AUG. 2, 2019

## Executive Summary

The American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia seeks to hire an experienced opinion research firm with diverse credentials to conduct a statewide poll and related focus groups to provide a better understanding of attitudes and opinions among likely voters with regards to voting rights. Results of this research will inform an upcoming campaign we plan to launch to amend the Constitution of Virginia to include a guaranteed right to vote for every citizen over 18.

## ACLU of Virginia Background

### The Organization

For nearly 50 years, the ACLU of Virginia has been Virginia's guardian of liberty, working in courts, legislatures, and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and the laws of the United States guarantee everyone in this Commonwealth. In addition to the litigation for which the ACLU has been best known, we also educate the public, inform the media, lobby legislators, organize grassroots activists, and disseminate information about our constitutional freedoms through our membership and volunteers.

The ACLU has filed more than 300 lawsuits in Virginia over the last 50 years, and with each successful case we have advanced the cause for freedom and equality. Because these cases required financial resources and legal expertise not available to the average citizen, it is safe to say that only a handful would have made it to the courtroom without the ACLU's assistance. In addition, hundreds of other threats to civil liberties have been resolved with the mere threat of litigation by the ACLU or through our public education efforts.

As of 2017, there are more than 1.5 million ACLU members nationwide with almost 25,000 of them living in Virginia.

### The American Civil Liberties Union and the ACLU Foundation

The ACLU comprises two separate legal entities, the American Civil Liberties Union and the ACLU Foundation. Although both the American Civil Liberties Union (a 501c4) and the ACLU Foundation (a 501c3) are part of the same overall organization, it is necessary to have two separate entities to enable the network to do the broad range of work necessary to protect civil liberties. Both entities support the ACLU's extensive litigation, communications, and public education programs. However, certain important activities carried out by the ACLU cannot be supported with tax-deductible gifts. This is primarily in the area of lobbying, because federal law limits the amount that a tax-exempt organization like the ACLU Foundation can spend on lobbying.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia, Inc. is a tax-exempt, non-profit advocacy organization to which membership dues are paid. Dues paying members who reside in Virginia are automatically members of both the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia and the national American Civil Liberties Union. Membership dues and other contributions to either the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia, Inc. or the national American Civil Liberties Union are not tax-deductible.

The ACLU Foundation of Virginia is a tax-exempt, non-profit charity that provides legal assistance and conducts educational programs and activities. Donations to either the ACLU Foundation of Virginia or the national ACLU Foundation are tax-deductible.

## Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the poll and focus groups will be to gather opinion research findings that will inform messaging for a multi-year, comprehensive campaign to amend the Constitution of Virginia to include a guaranteed right for every citizen over 18. Amending the Constitution in Virginia requires the following:

- (1) Approval of amendment language by a simple majority vote of both houses in one session in the state legislature;
- (2) Re-approval by a majority vote of both houses of the legislature in the session following the next House of Delegates election, which occurs in every odd-numbered year; and
- (3) Majority approval by voters on a special or general election ballot.

### Key Objectives:

- (1) Assess favorability among likely voters toward the idea of guaranteeing the right to vote in the state constitution, and test support and opposition messaging;
- (2) Identify key demographic groups who may be more supportive of a constitutional amendment, those who may oppose it, and the reasons behind their opinions; and
- (3) Determine what shorter-term goals and messages related to the above, if any, may be most effective at increasing support for a constitutional right to vote. These could include but are not limited to:
  - a. Increasing awareness and accessibility of voting while being detained pre-trial and/or held on misdemeanor charges only;
  - b. Expanding the current process of individual restoration of rights by the governor;
  - c. Ending prison gerrymandering, which is the practice of drawing legislative districts based on population counts of people where they are incarcerated rather than where they lived before;
  - d. Same-day voter registration; and
  - e. No-excuse absentee voting.

## Scope of Work

### Detailed Requirements and Timing:

- Poll sample size must be large enough to yield credible results across every geographic region of Virginia.
- Survey should be designed to maximize participation and breadth of issue.
- At least two but no more than four focus groups should be conducted with participants who are representative of the polling sample, with the purpose of obtaining qualitative themes to complement and aid in interpreting survey data.

- All activities must be completed and a detailed analysis must be provided prior to the end of calendar year 2019.

**Expected Outcomes:**

- (1) ACLU of Virginia better understands support for and opposition to a guaranteed right to vote;
- (2) ACLU of Virginia understands messaging that should be used in a comprehensive communications campaign intended to influence voters and the legislature to support a constitutional amendment, as well as the potential effectiveness of opposition messaging; and
- (3) ACLU of Virginia understands voter attitudes and opinions on other voting-related issues which may be pursued as shorter-term goals that could help lead the way to passage of a constitutional amendment.

**Expected Use:**

- Results will be used to inform communications strategies to persuade the public and the legislature to approve a constitutional amendment to guarantee the right to vote.
- Advocacy and public education
  - Depending on outcome, poll results may be publicized in full or in part to draw attention to support that may exist for a constitutional amendment.

**Deliverables**

The accepted proposal will generate the following deliverables in line with the scope of work and overall purpose of the poll.

- (1) Key dates/timeline for project from start to finish;
- (2) Questionnaire drafting;
- (3) Data collection and analysis including topline results, data visualizations, detailed crosstabs that cut by various demographics and all Virginia media markets, summary of findings; and
- (4) Presentation of results in person or over the phone.

While nothing has been determined at this point, the ACLU of Virginia expects there may be a need for additional future tracking and requests that any proposal take this into consideration.

**Pricing and Payment Terms**

Pricing and payment terms guidelines, which are:

- Pricing is on a fixed-fee, per project basis,
- Separate pricing should be provided for the poll and the survey;
- Pricing is inclusive of all incidental expenses,
- No more than 50% will be payable at the outset, and
- No less than 25% will be retained pending completion and final approval of work product.

**Proposal Contents and Submittal Requirements**

Below is a list of information that we expect to receive in your proposal.

**Introduction**

- Understanding of the purpose of the polling and aligning how working together will achieve that purpose.

- Providing an overview of your firm’s expertise, background, and credentials.

**Methodology**

- Detailed description of sample size, margin of error, length of survey, method of survey, and why you believe your methodology will generate credible results.

**Timeline**

- Key dates for all deliverables and a general outline of time expected to draft, conduct survey, deliver initial topline, and present a full report.

**Deliverables**

- List of what your firm will provide in creation and receipt of conducting survey as well as a brief description of the purpose each item serves.

**Budget**

- Range of costs that cover the following lengths and sample sizes
  - 600, 800, or 1000 voters
  - Length of survey (minutes)
    - 15 minutes
    - 20 minutes
  - Proposed number, size and curation of focus groups, location, and identification of facilitator.

Proposals should be submitted via email by Oct. 4, 2019 and sent to the following:

Bill Farrar, director of strategic communications  
804-523-2156  
bfarrar@acluva.org

For questions, see additional contact info at the bottom of this request.

**Evaluation Factors**

Diversifying our vendor base is very important to the ACLU of Virginia – we will be evaluating offers based on the following factors as minimum requirements:

- Firms based in Virginia or those with substantial polling experience in Virginia;
- Credentials of firm and proven experience of working with a range of clients from across the political spectrum;
- Cost effective given length of survey and sample size;
- Ability to understand the purpose of the project and design a survey that aligns with key objectives; and
- Experience conducting similar polls.

**Process Schedule**

Schedule for Evaluation Process	
RFP distributed to vendors	Sept. 27, 2019
Vendor question and answer period	Sept. 27-Oct. 4, 2019
Deadline for responses	Oct. 4, 2019
Vendor demonstrations or presentations	Oct. 5, 2019
Selection of vendor and contract negotiation	Oct. 12, 2019

**Points of Contact for Future Correspondence**

Below is a complete list of people (names, titles, responsibilities, and various contact methods) to contact for information on this RFP.

Bill Farrar  
Director of Strategic Communications, ACLU of Virginia  
804-523-2156  
[bfarrar@acluva.org](mailto:bfarrar@acluva.org)