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For immediate release

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Participants at Omaha Table Talk: This is the most important election in our nation's history

October 7, 2020 (Omaha, NE) – Inclusive Communities hosted its first online Omaha Table Talk last night via Zoom. The discussion on Voting Advocacy featured panelists Preston Love Jr. of Black Votes Matter, Toni Monette of the League of Women Voters Greater Omaha, and Brad Christian-Sallis of Civic Nebraska.

Panelists talked about the importance of voting, especially with the challenges to exercising this civic duty that result from the COVID-19 pandemic and new forms of voter suppression. While we have moved away from literacy tests and the like as qualifiers to casting your ballot, new forms of voter suppression have emerged such as closing, moving or reducing the number of polling stations, gerrymandering and voter ID laws. These barriers to voting directly impact minority, elderly and disabled communities. There was acknowledgment however, that the state of Nebraska has some of the strongest constitutional protections for voting in the nation.

Both Monette and Christian-Sallis drew attention to the changing American electorate with larger numbers of BIPOC voters making it to the polls. Christian-Sallis emphasized the importance of completing the census in this regard as it informs the changes that need to be made to district lines and highlights what types of support are needed in minority communities. It was also acknowledged that while the vote by mail system may be new to many voters and a source of apprehension given the uncertainties surrounding postage and the future of the postal service, the audience generally felt as though it allowed them the chance to become more informed about the candidates and measures that appear on the ballot in addition to the Federal Ticket.

Following breakout room discussion, participants came back together for the share out and action steps portion of the night in which the consensus became that this election is the most important in our nation's history, requiring citizens to do more than just vote, but also volunteer for the candidates they believe in. Love Jr. encouraged the audience to "Make a commitment to yourself to do something in addition to voting, to motivate others." Christian-Sallis offered the advice, "Voting is one piece of making the change you want to see. Don't stop at voting. Hold your elected officials accountable." Monette urged the importance of "relational organizing" by encouraging those directly connected with you to get to the polls. She also provided resources such as the League of Women Voters candidate handbook, voter 411, and the voter status check to educate the audience.

The next Omaha Table Talk will take place on October 27, 2020 at 6:00 pm (CST), exploring the topic of Public Health and Race with Kenny McMorris, Tasha Conley RN, and Dr. Athena Ramos. Those wishing to register for the upcoming talk may do so via: <https://bit.ly/OTTPubHealth>.

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