ANNUAL REPORT

Vote America

2020
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From Our Founder

The 2020 election was one of the most important in our lifetime. The control of our government was at stake, but so was the democratic foundation of our country. That's what made it so consequential. Together— with your partnership—we registered, educated, and mobilized voters to turn out in record numbers.

The work we did ensured the true voice of the American people is represented in power. It protected the future of representation in our country, and nothing is more important than that.

Every two years, campaigns, non-profits, and independent expenditure committees deploy resources to help elect chosen candidates. We buy digital ads and billboards. We run voter registration and turnout campaigns. We do all of this because we know what made it so consequential. The defense of democracy has to meet the attack on the same level, with the same resources.

I've dedicated my life to this work, not because I love texting voters (which don't get me wrong, I do!), but because I believe democracy is the only form of power that can protect and advance the rights of everyone, no matter their race, gender, or socioeconomic status. I believe this vision of democracy is what anchors American greatness, and I know you do, too.

We worked overtime in 2020 to make sure that in an election year rife with misinformation—on top of being in the middle of a global pandemic—voters had the information and resources to turn out in record numbers in the most consequential election of our lifetime. Our goal was to avoid midterm-level turnout in a presidential election year. Our programs and investments were built around that specific, tactical goal. Now, we must turn our attention to the 2022 midterms and the larger, years-long effort to protect and advance our democracy. We must work to ensure presidential election year turnout in what will be the most consequential midterm elections of our lifetime—one in which the fate of our democracy is on the line.

VoteAmerica is building a series of programs designed to not just win elections, but prevent the overall erosion of democracy. Our upcoming programs will focus on drop-off voters. Sadly, voters who are key to preventing the continued erosion of our democracy—the New American Majority of young people, BIPOC, and others—make up the bulk of drop-off voters. Our programs will target these voters in the ramp up to 2022. We will focus on engaging and registering high school students and college students to make sure they become regular voters. We'll grow our partnerships to make sure our voter registration tool is integrated with other key platforms that Americans are already familiar with and use regularly. And, yes, we will continue to run large, impactful registration and turnout campaigns.

These programs recognize the reality that protecting American democracy will require a comprehensive, future-focused investment. One where elections are important battle grounds, but are part of a larger strategy. We're excited to take on this new challenge, and we know it will require an evolution in how we structure our teams, programs, fundraising, and revenue.

Sincerely,
Debra Cleaver
Founder & CEO, VoteAmerica

Founder & CEO, VoteAmerica
By The Numbers

$12 Million
Dollars Raised & Spent

101 Million
Peer-to-peer Text Messages Sent
to 28 million voters in 47 states + Washington D.C.

1,100
Billboards Placed in AZ, CA, & NC

500,000
Voters Looked Up Where to Vote

4 Million
Voters Used Core Toolset

3.5 Million
Voters Opted-In
to election reminders via email & sms

241
Colleges Reached
including 94 HBCUs

1 Million
Voters Requested an Absentee Ballot

3 Million
TikTok Views

3.49 Million
Estimated Media Impressions
from 652 media pieces & 242k social shares

1.2 Million
Voters Used Register to Vote Tool

1.2 Million
Voters Used Verify Tool
to check their registration status

300+
Strategic Partners
utilized our tech tools

29
Full-Time Employees
by Nov 2020
The 2020 Vision

VoteAmerica envisions an American electorate that fully reflects our dynamic and diverse population. We envision a strong democracy in which 100% of eligible voters are engaged, consistently turn out to vote, have confidence in the validity of our elections, and whose votes set the agenda for our elected leaders.

In 2020, VoteAmerica set about reaching a fuller spectrum of people to help make this vision a reality. We ran a $12 million program focused on the so-called low-propensity voters that are often ignored by political parties. This includes young and student voters, BIPOC voters (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and, young single women.

We flipped the script and decided these people are actually high propensity voters if we take the time to engage them. VoteAmerica did, and we spent every dollar we raised doing so. We left it all on the field, because the stakes in 2020 were just too high.

We expanded our impact by uplifting and supporting the work of boots on the ground groups in Arizona, Georgia, Missouri, and Mississippi.

As it turns out, if you target young & BIPOC voters, actively engage them, and reach them where they are, they will turn out and vote. We did just that in 2020, and they turned out to vote in record numbers.

We ran turnout programs with groups like Four Directions Vote in Arizona targeting Native American voters whose communities were hard hit by the pandemic.

We made grants to the New Georgia Project to fund SMS voter outreach and billboards - both in the general election and in the January 5th runoff elections.

We worked with organizations like Show Me Integrity & MOVotes.org in Missouri and gave them our voter tools at no cost.

We supported the important voter registration and turnout work of small but mighty organizations like Mississippi Votes, because no state will ever be competitive if you don’t spend money in them.

Targeted young voters on
241 Campuses
across the country with
campus advertising
and through student
ewspapers, digital ads,
and social media.

Reached students on
94 HBCUs
(Historically Black
Colleges & Universities),
a program for which we
fought vigorously to
raise money to fund.

Ran one of the largest
influencer campaigns
on TikTok reaching over
3 million voters
in all 50 states, including in
Southern states who are
rarely ever targeted.

An estimated 52–56% of voting
eligible 18–29 year olds cast a ballot
in the 2020 presidential election
compared to 42–44% estimated 2016 youth voter turnout.*

*Source: CIRCLE, Nov 25, 2020 "Election Week 2020: Young People Increase Turnout, Lead Biden to Victory"
Our Track Record

VoteAmerica is a relatively new organization staffed by people with extensive experience in running large-scale voter registration and voter turnout campaigns. Our programs are built to be scalable and cost-efficient, allowing us to successfully reach more voters with less overhead and drive tangible results. We’re goal oriented and tactic agnostic, which allows us to pivot when necessary. As a result, we are often on the cutting-edge of the intersection of democracy and technology creating tools and programs that become ubiquitous.
Experience builds trust.

As a team, we've been at this for more than 14 years - we know which voter turnout tactics work, and what hurdles we have to clear state by state to give Americans the best and most up-to-date information and resources to help them exercise their right to vote.

We're innovators that have personally pioneered SMS text messaging, billboards, and campus advertising tactics to reach unprecedented numbers of voters in 2020 and turn them out to vote. And we're election experts that have spent decades in the trenches.

We're innovators.
IN 2020, THE VOTEAMERICA TEAM SENT MORE THAN 101 MILLION PEER-TO-PEER (P2P) TEXT MESSAGES TO LOW & MID-PROPENSITY VOTERS OVER A SPAN OF 8 WEEKS, TARGETING 28 MILLION VOTERS IN 47 STATES + WASHINGTON, D.C. AND 428 CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS.

A voter outreach program of this scale, executed in this time frame, has never been done before, and probably won’t be done again. We pushed existing technology well past the accepted limits, and reached millions of voters per day.

When our Founder & CEO Debra Cleaver stood onstage at Y Combinator 2016’s ‘Demo Day’ to pitch the idea of hiring people to send text messages directly to unregistered voters, it seemed radical.

Since then, she and her teams have built P2P programs from the ground up, developed best practices around cadence & language, employed rigorous academic study to understand effectiveness, and published the research so others could learn from our work.

P2P texting is now the norm and in 2020, we utilized it to drive record-shattering voter turnout.

**CUMULATIVE TOTAL TEXTS SENT BY MONTH**
IN OCTOBER 2020, VOTERAMERICA LAUNCHED TARGETED BILLBOARD PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT CRUCIAL STATES SUCH AS ARIZONA, GEORGIA, AND NORTH CAROLINA TO DRIVE TURNOUT.

We purchased more than 1,100 placements near gas stations, grocery stores, and highways for less than $800,000 in diverse census tracts (comprising at least 40% people of color).

VoteAmerica’s billboards are simple. They instruct viewers to vote & provide the date of the election. And it works because in 2016, 41% of Americans didn't vote, 37% didn't even know when the election was*.

If citizens aren’t voting because they don’t know when to vote, we can easily increase turnout by providing that information to Americans.

We can’t take full credit for the idea of using billboards to reach voters.

Conservative groups beat us to the punch almost a decade ago, when they put up voter intimidation billboards advertising that “Voter fraud is a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison” in majority black & brown neighborhoods. These had an extremely chilling effect on turnout.

Rather than suppressing voter turnout, we utilize factual & informative billboards to increase it.

*Source: American Council of Trustees & Alumni
VoteAmerica is bullish on billboards. Here’s why:

- **They’re cheap.**
  The low inventory and production costs make billboards one of the most cost-effective mass-marketing mediums available. VoteAmerica can blanket entire congressional districts for $150,000. We can cover every inch of Florida for $2.2 million.

- **They reach young people.**
  They’re an excellent way to reach young people (a demographic target that most campaigns do not effectively reach during election cycles) — and particularly more effective than broadcast television, which is a medium young people increasingly watch year-over-year.

- **And young people pay attention.**
  Corporate marketing studies (including research by Nielsen) have demonstrated that consumers notice outdoor advertising and that young people are especially likely to recall the messages they see on large-format advertising channels.

- **They’re literal amplifiers.**
  Nielsen studies also show that billboards are an effective amplifier for other outreach efforts — such as direct mail, radio, and SMS.

We tested billboards in partnership with Professor Scott Minkoff of SUNY New Paltz in 2018, and found that they produced votes at a cost of $25 per net new vote. To put that into perspective, $100 per net new vote is currently considered cost effective.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Billboards work.
In 2016 an investment of $50,000 to turn out the youth vote at each of the 4 biggest colleges in Michigan, the state's electoral votes would have gone to someone else. A similar effort in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania would have yielded similar results.

**IN 2020, WE LEFT NOTHING TO CHANCE.**

We ran the largest and most cost effective student outreach programs in American political history, reaching more than 3 million students in 29 states on 241 college campuses, including on 94 HBCUs.

VoteAmerica used multi-channel campus media to register students and help them vote - either by mail, through early voting, or on Election Day.

We engaged students on college campuses across the country, with a particular focus on:

- Arizona
- Florida
- Georgia
- Michigan
- North Carolina
- Pennsylvania
- Wisconsin

in 3 comprehensive & distinct phases:

1. Voter Registration
2. Early Voting
3. GOTV

We took out full-color ads on the back of every student newspaper, bought all the campus billboards in student centers and at on-campus transit hubs, and had placements in the email newsletters that are sent to students. We filled campuses with posters, partnered with student influencers, and integrated directly into campus news sites.

**2020 CAMPUS PROGRAM FAST FACTS:**

- **3 Million Students Reached**
- **$3,250,000 Budget Spent**
- **16 Weeks of Messaging**
- **8 Media Channels**
DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, FINDING NEW WAY TO REACH COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO WERE NOW ATTENDING CLASS OFF-CAMPUS QUICKLY BECAME A PRIORITY.

Utilizing college TikTok & Instagram influencers for a revolutionary GOTV campaign very much came out of our “COVID response” plan, to make sure we reached young student voters, even if they were now learning remotely.

Why focus solely on these channels?

- Facebook is a great way to reach older Americans that are already active voters.
- Twitter is a great way to reach politically engaged people.
- Instagram & TikTok are great ways to reach young people, especially students.

And we reached a ton of young voters.

700 INFLUENCER POSTS

41 CAMPUSES

13 STATES
THE TOOLSET

In 2020, we built a full suite of voter engagement and turnout tools that were open-sourced and subjected to an extensive third-party security review.

Elections are too important to trust proprietary, closed source, untested technology. So while there were already many tools on the market when we started there were none that we considered up for the challenges of 2020. The open-source part is key. If VoteAmerica ever decides that we’re done building technology, another group can reuse our code without starting from scratch.

We also open-sourced our data: collecting and maintaining more than 100 data points per state, including everything from voter registration deadlines to ID requirements when requesting an absentee ballot, and making this data available via an API. Groups as diverse as CreditKarma, Everytown for Gun Safety, and Change.org used our data to help power their 2020 programs.

In 2020, nearly
4 Million
used our core toolset

1.2 Million
REGISTERED TO VOTE

1.2 Million
CHECKED THEIR REGISTRATION STATUS

1 Million
REQUESTED AN ABSENTEE BALLOT

500,000
LOOKED UP "WHERE TO VOTE"

3.5 Million
OPTED-IN TO RECEIVE ELECTION REMINDERS VIA EMAIL & SMS
Why are elections so expensive if turnout is so low?

The 2016 election cycle cost over $6 billion dollars, and the 2020 election cycle cost even more. The overwhelming majority of this money goes to partisan campaign efforts. Partisan campaigns, in turn, largely spend this money on broadcast TV ads, which are expensive, and largely ineffective. 50% of people under 50 haven’t watched a single minute of broadcast TV in over a year.

Most TV ads are designed to persuade the high-propensity registered voters to cast ballots across party lines (also known as persuasion in partisan language). This is an odd way to spend money when you are statistically more likely to change your spouse than your political party. This waste of resources was even more wasteful in 2020 when the partisan lines were clearly drawn and we were in the midst of a straight turnout election cycle.

If you’re wondering why partisan groups spend so much money on ineffective media campaigns, it’s because media consultants are compensated based upon the total money they spend.

In a just world, they would receive a base salary plus bonus if their candidate wins. Instead, today’s media consultants are incentivized to spend tens of millions of dollars on ineffective campaigns, and democracy suffers as a result.

VoteAmerica takes the exact opposite approach. We zig where other people zag. While other people ignore low and mid-propensity voters, we focus all of our time and effort on this key demographic. We recognize that your propensity score is like your credit score: it starts out low and you build it over time. Neglected low and mid-propensity voters create an unfortunate cycle, where someone’s score starts low and remains low because they miss elections.

Our work is designed to undo the harm caused by partisan neglect. It’s simple, research backed, and effective. If we provide timely, informative, nonpartisan messages to low-propensity voters:

They will vote.
DATA-DRIVEN TARGETING TO BUILD RECORD TURNOUT.

Ideally, we would have enough funding to run registration and turnout programs targeting all low- and mid-propensity voters. In reality, we have far less money than we’d like. So in March 2020, we tasked a data scientist, a computer scientist, and an economist with helping us to refine our targeting. The goal was to identify the Americans who could vote in the greatest number of competitive races, up and down the ballot (from President down to the state legislature).

We organized our data by Congressional District, with the districts stack ranked by the number of competitive races in which their constituents could vote. We also used a scoring system that could be applied directly to the people in the voter file.

Using [Cook Political Report](https://www.cookpoliticalreport.com/) data, and some manual adjustments to account for state legislative races, our data team was able to produce this document.

This document is pretty cool. The tab called “weights” allowed us to weight races based on competitiveness and scale. Every race received a certain number of points whether it was “safe,” “tossup,” etc. Then it was weighted by what type of race it was, gubernatorial, state house, etc. (more points for federal races, less for local).

We organized the results by Congressional District, totaling the points for all the races taking place within that district, and then ranking them with the highest point earners being the most competitive and highest priority. Changing the weighting changed the sorting order of the Congressional Districts.

What we found was that Georgia’s congressional districts ranked #1–14, with districts in North Carolina and Maine rounding out our top 20.

View the full data analysis at: [https://myvoteamerica.com/2020-Targeting-Data](https://myvoteamerica.com/2020-Targeting-Data)
WE KNEW GEORGIA WAS GOING TO BE THE KEY STATE LONG BEFORE MOST OTHER GROUPS DID.

Any way we weighted races, Georgia rose to the top of the competitiveness ranking. So while other folks may have been surprised when both of Georgia’s U.S. Senate races went to runoff, we were not; we knew this would be the case way back in March 2020.

Funders thought we were crazy.
Political experts thought we were crazy.
But data does not lie.

If you aren’t familiar with how voter turnout groups map out their targeting, one common strategy is to pick just a few high-priority districts in the most competitive battleground states.

So it was clear (though surprising) to us that Georgia was going to be one of the most competitive states we worked in. We knew this before the sprint to invest there ahead of their Senate runoff elections, and before early voting had even started.

After triple checking our numbers, we launched a comprehensive program:

249
BILLBOARD ADS PLACED

1.25 Million
IN-STATE VOTERS REACHED

3 Million
GOTV TEXT MESSAGES SENT

1.1 Million
IN-STATE VOTERS REACHED

Directed residents to our Voter Helpline via shortcode link

Raised funds and worked with local organizations to help fund transportation to the polls for rural & disabled communities.

Our data-driven targeting paid off in Georgia. It was one of, if not the most, competitive states of the 2020 election cycle, both at the presidential level and for the U.S. Senate races.

Due to the increased investment from our group and others, voter turnout in Georgia increased 8.6 percentage points in 2020, according to Pew Research*.

We believe you can’t judge a state or a district at face value alone. We invest heavily in research that helps us to make informed, targeted decisions. From there, we can focus our resources where they count.

*Source: Pew Research, January 28, 2021
Build For The Future

We could have stopped there, but we didn’t.

As an organization, we like to make big bets, to be audacious when others are cautious. We build programs aimed at meeting voters where they already are.

We’re also skilled at rapidly pivoting & adapting to change. In 2020, the circumstances which voters had to contend with were constantly changing. So we were constantly adapting our approach as well.

Proactively, we also like to make long term investments in what we believe will be the next wave of tools to help voters.

So we scaled up.
We love joint projects, and we love when fellow technologists approach us with great ideas that are ready to scale. The voter helpline was one such great idea.

Our friend Tomer Ovadia is a technologist who built [https://voterhelpline.org](https://voterhelpline.org) in his spare time, and was looking for a nonprofit partner to bring the idea to market. And that’s where we came in.

Voter helplines aren’t new: our friends at the Lawyers Committee have been running a helpline since 2004 and have helped tens of thousands of voters who need real-time assistance via their 866-OUR-VOTE project.

What is new is the idea of helping voters entirely via text. And that’s what Tomer built: a platform that lets voters and trained volunteers communicate directly via text with a dedicated Slack workspace as the conduit, and with the Twilio API powering the text messages under the hood.

Our Voter Helpline (VHL) ran from October 9 - November 3, 2020. We hired and trained 274 volunteers and were able to assist more than 14,000 voters from all 50 states & DC.

By the 2024 election, we expect to see the majority of voter support services provided via SMS or chat platforms, rather than by telephone.

14,000+ VOTERS ASSISTED

274 TRAINED VOLUNTEERS
ELECTION NIGHT INTEGRITY PROJECT

THIS WAS A FUN ONE FOR US DATA NERDS!

A few weeks before the election, our friends at Data for Progress asked us if we wanted to partner on the Election Night Integrity Project. The answer was a resounding yes! Here’s why: The way we currently call elections in the United States is problematic. We call results before votes are counted, which leads to incorrect presumptive results, which then undermine confidence in our elective process, and depresses turnout in states that are still in the process of voting.

Historically, results are called based on the number of precincts reporting. This is not ideal: precinct reporting only tells you which precincts (small units of geography) have counted their ballots, not how many ballots they’ve actually counted.

The Election Night Integrity Project was a mapping tool, updated in real time, that showed the number of 2020 votes counted in a county, and compared them to the number of votes counted in that same county in 2016. This was to provide perspective for the site viewers. Until election officials have counted a similar number of ballots in one election as the last analogous election, it is too soon to call the results.

It is our hope that this project contributes meaningfully to a larger effort to encourage the country to count every vote before declaring the victor. The stakes are too high to let the media decide the winners rather than the Federal Election Commission.

Votes Counted By State

Our election night (and thereafter) results data is from the AP Elections API, which is generally considered to be the best source for election-night results. This feed is used by most major news sources, including broadcast media and the New York Times. Read more about our methodology.
IDENTIFYING VOTING TROUBLE “HOTSPOTS” IN ORDER TO BETTER PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE.

As mentioned previously, the Lawyers Committee has run an election protection hotline (866-OUR-VOTE) for years. Trained volunteers provide real-time support to voters who need help casting ballots. The calls range from basic questions about the process of voting, to active complaints of issues at the polls. Each call is logged as a “ticket” and then categorized. After elections, the Lawyers Committee publishes detailed reports about their work and findings.

In 2020, we were fortunate to partner with the Lawyers Committee & United States Digital Response (USDR) on a first-of-its-kind live map of the calls. You can see the outcome of the work at 866ourvote.voteamerica.com. Regions are black by default, becoming red as tickets are filed.

The map is detailed: You can zoom in and out, filter by time period or category of support ticket, display by raw number of tickets, or tickets per million registered voters. Unsurprisingly, there were more complaints logged in denser, urban areas.

We intentionally did not discuss this project until after the election to avoid accidentally dissuading anyone from voting due to advertising issues at their local polling locations.

Now it’s time to dive into the data and expand the project. We’re currently working with the Lawyers Committee and the USDR to map historical data as well. The goal is to use data to identify “hot spots,” meaning areas that have more tickets per capita than one would expect if tickets were simply a function of population density. Using historical data, we hope to be able to predict which precincts will be hot spots in 2022 & 2024 and be prepared with a plan and resources.
In 2020, a year where more voters than ever were casting their votes by mail, Texas offered no way for voters to track their ballots and make sure their vote was counted.

For the second time in as many years, our team stepped up to build critical election infrastructure for Texas. In 2018, we built an "online voter turnout" tool for Texas that created a paperless workflow for Texas voters by submitting completed voter registration forms via fax, then printing and mailing a copy to the County Clerk within 4 days.

This time, we built a ballot tracker for Texas voters, which was praised and promoted by many prominent Texans including Beto O’Rourke & Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins, who issued a press release and took to social media to urge Texans to use www.TxBallot.org.

Texas publishes a set of data that identifies which ballots have been counted. However, there is a catch: the data set is released as pure code. Great for computers, but completely illegible to the average voter.

This is unfortunate, because it’s human voters who need to know if their votes have been counted. Put simply: giving voters in America’s second most populous state the opportunity to check and correct ballot irregularities is critical democratic work.

As long as officials exploit technology gaps in an effort to suppress votes, this will remain a VoteAmerica sweet spot: we tackle an acute roadblock to voting with critical infrastructure, watch it go viral, and get ready to scale.

In 72 hours, VoteAmerica undertook translating the state’s data set into an easy to use web tool that allowed Texas voters to track the ballots they had cast. Half a million Texans did exactly that, proving the tool to be quite useful.
HELPING PEOPLE NAVIGATE THEIR NEW LOCAL ELECTION REGULATIONS AFTER A RELocation.

Whenever we talk about voter registration, people assume we’re talking about 18 year olds. And we are:

4 Million
PEOPLE TURN 18 EVERY YEAR

and they all need to register to vote. But also,

40 Million
PEOPLE MOVE EVERY YEAR

and they need to register to vote as well (you need to re-register to vote every time you move). This makes movers a very important population for anyone in the voter registration space.

The most cost-effective mover-focused registration programs to date have been done by mail. Voter registration groups license the National Change of Address (NCOA) database from the Post Office and send multiple waves of direct mail to people who have recently moved. This is brilliant, timely, and cost effective.

We didn’t originally intend to run a mail program. But then we secured a partnership providing us with a proprietary set of mover data. This data set differs from the NCOA data in two key ways:

1. It’s compiled 30 days before NCOA.
2. It includes the movers’ email addresses.

This meant that we could run our mover programs in a more timely fashion than other groups, and potentially reduce the cost of additional waves of outreach by sending email reminders instead of additional mail.

As part of a randomized controlled test, we used moving data to automatically find and send cross-state movers two blank registration forms + two emails reminding them to register.

We zeroed in on cross-state movers who were also renters. Cross-state because you need an in-state driver’s license to use most online voter registration systems, and renters because they are more likely to be young and/or people of color. Renters are more likely to move than homeowners, and under-35% continue to be the most likely of all age groups to rent. Black & Hispanic households are about twice as likely as white households to rent their homes, about 54% and 58% respectively, to 28% of whites.

We also sent paper voter registration forms (along with a pre-stamped and addressed return envelope) to 39,074 people who moved to or within Texas. We focused specifically on renters because renters are significantly more likely to be members of the New American Majority (young voters, BIPOC, and single women).

If you missed what was said before, tune back in:

WHEN WE HELP MOVERS VOTE, WE BUILD A MORE REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY.

We now know that in 2020, mail delivery was deeply impacted by the pandemic, and may continue to be impacted in the future. We’re optimistic about the potential for this program in 2022, especially with our access to offline and online contact information, but 2020’s unforeseen attack on the US Postal Service is one of the many reasons we remains alert, nimble, and tactic-agnostic in response to increasing voter suppression.
Most states now offer online voter registration. Those that don’t, expect their citizens to print and mail a paper form. Home printer ownership in the U.S. has been in the low single digits for about a decade. So it’s not shocking that the #1 help request we receive from voters is to print and mail their forms to them. In the past, we were unable to fulfill this demand because we also don’t have printers at home.

Our tech team likes to joke that their job is to build smart solutions to stupid problems. Texas provided us an opportunity to do just that. We utilized the Lob.com platform to offer print & mail support on demand (and pre-stamped return envelopes) to those without printers.

We didn’t have the funds to turn this on for all 50 states, but one donor funded the project for Texas, as well as a massive P2P voter registration drive which allowed us to send 2.5 million P2P SMS messages to unregistered Texas voters directing them to our tools. As a result:

14,000
TEXANS ASKED US TO PRINT & MAIL THEM VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS

That’s 14,000 people who likely would not have registered to vote without our assistance.

The key to increasing voter turnout is identifying and removing any roadblocks to participation. Removing the hurdle of printer access for voter registration is an incredibly solvable problem. At an estimated cost of $2.00 per voter (including 2 First Class stamps), this is an incredibly cost-efficient way for us to increase registration rates in all 50 states.

Can you print & mail this form me?

Contact us if you want to help.

When we built this, we thought we were just providing a commonsense solution to a really stupid problem. Turns out that several states do not appreciate us making it easier to vote, and are now actively passing legislation prohibiting charities from sending pre-filled forms to voters. They’re focused on absentee ballot applications for now, but it’s clear where they are going: They want to keep us from sending voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications to voters, even if those voters have actually requested our assistance.

We have very little patience for people who make it harder to vote. Georgia & Kansas recently passed legislation making it illegal for nonprofits to send pre-filled forms to voters. And both states are threatening steep fines for groups who ignore the new law. Their goal is to bankrupt us. So in partnership with the Campaign Legal Center, we’ve filed suit.

ADDITIONAL READING:

Democracy Docket | Georgia voter suppression bill unconstitutional
ABC News | Civic groups file lawsuit challenging absentee ballot provisions in Georgia’s election law
WREG | Backlash to Georgia-voting law continues as lawmakers remain split
The Topeka Capital-Journal | Voting rights advocates file dual lawsuits arguing new Kansas election laws are unconstitutional

Contact us if you want to help.
Native Americans - especially those in rural communities - have a disproportionately difficult time casting their ballots. In 2020, we made helping these voters a priority.

There are an astounding number of roadblocks to voting for Native Americans, but we’re going to zoom in on one aspect: limited access to postal services. The pandemic exacerbated this, since Native Americans - just like most Americans - were voting by mail for the first time.

At more than 18,000 square miles, the Arizona portion of the Navajo Nation alone is larger than any other reservation in the country. Yet, it has only 27 postal locations, some of them open for just three or four hours a day. This is roughly equivalent to having 13 mailboxes in the entire state of New Jersey. And while early-voting sites accept mail ballots, there is only one per 1,532 square miles on the reservation.

These realities, compounded with the glacial pace of 2020 postal delivery, left people in rural reservation lands without sufficient time to receive and return their ballots.

Despite lawsuits from the community and requests for extensions, Arizona wouldn’t budge. Mutual aid and community groups turned their attention to early voting and voter mobilization, including:

- Four Directions
- The Navajo Hopi Relief
- Rural Utah and Arizona Project
- Native Vote

VoteAmerica partnered with the local mutual aid groups to develop phone and SMS banks that encouraged residents to drive all members of their households to the polls.

Funds were channeled directly into gas cards to alleviate the financial burden of driving up to 100 miles. We reached 99,092 Native voters in the state of Arizona.

These collective efforts are credited in determining not just the outcome of the election in Arizona, but nationally.

IN LESS THAN 3 WEEKS, WE RAISED MORE THAN $100,000 TO SUPPORT THE EXISTING, HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MUTUAL AID INFRASTRUCTURE ALREADY IN PLACE

There has been decades of work done by community members on the ground to build the political infrastructure for Native turnout and now we’re starting to see it in 2020. We are going to see this power continue to build.

-- Jordan James Harvill, VoteAmerica Chief of Staff (Cherokee & Choctaw)
We anticipated this would be the case and dedicated significant resources to help engage and turnout this critical cohort of the New American Electorate. We fought hard for the resources - especially to fund an HBCU-centric program - to do the critical work of turning young people out to vote and expanding the electorate.

According to our partners at Tufts University Tisch College Center For Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), young voters and youth voters of color were instrumental in the outcome of the election, particularly in key states like Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

STUDENTS

YOUTH VOTING SURGED IN 2020, ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUNG VOTERS OF COLOR.

Election Day served as the culmination of an unprecedented election cycle shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, a nationwide movement for racial justice, and the boundless energy of young people who made their voices heard in the streets and at the ballot box.

Our research reveals that young voters increased their turnout in 2020; they made the difference in key battleground states; and the participation and overwhelming support for President-elect Joe Biden from youth of color was one of the defining elements of the election.

In 2020, we implemented a strategic plan to reach, register, and turnout college student voters across the country. As part of our overall $3.25 million college campus investment, $900,000 was dedicated specifically toward Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs).

Of the 241 colleges reached, 94 were HBCUs. With 107 HBCUs nationwide, this meant we had a presence at almost every single HBCU campus in the country - something that had never been done before.

We hope future efforts to raise funds to turnout young voters won’t prove as challenging as they were in 2020 because the proof is in the pudding: IF YOU ENGAGE YOUNG VOTERS, THEY WILL TURNOUT AND THEIR VOTES WILL SWING ELECTIONS.

*Source: CIRCLE, Nov 25, 2020 "Election Week 2020: Young People Increase Turnout, Lead Biden to Victory"
ONE WEEK BEFORE ELECTION DAY WE REALIZED SOMETHING BIG, LIKE REALLY, REALLY BIG.

ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION

It’s called Election Day Registration (EDR) and 20 states + the District of Columbia offer it.

The process is straightforward: Citizens go to a designated location (generally their polling place), show their ID, fill out a registration form, and then cast their ballot on the spot.

If you’ve never heard of this, you’re not alone. It’s a marketing issue really: election officials lack communication budgets, and partisan groups focus all their efforts on registered voters. It’s also relatively new.

In rapid response mode, we integrated EDR information into all of our tools, website copy, and campus outreach messaging. We sent emails to 3 million people, and SMS messages to 1.8 million people, letting everyone know which states offer EDR and asking them to help share the message.

We booked our Founder & CEO on a satellite TV and radio media tour targeting EDR states, netting 47 media interviews in a single day, specifically focused on the trusted, local news outlets in those communities.

When organizations don’t need to run separate voter registration and voter turnout drives, the cost per net new vote in these states becomes much lower. It is essentially a 2-for-1 campaign. Expanding access to Election Day Registration would be an exceptionally cost-effective route to expanding the electorate.

13.4 Million of the country’s 40 million unregistered voters lived in EDR states, in the final few days before the election.
Amplify
The
Message
Leveraging earned & owned media to build turnout.

While helping millions of voters with our trusted tools, we also did our best to keep them informed & entertained.

Working diligently to amplify our message as widely as possible, we leveraged the hell out of our partnerships, professional & personal networks, and every attainable media channel to reach the most voters.

And had fun doing it.
For a freshman organization, VoteAmerica drew massive media attention in 2020, in part because our Founder & CEO is a known trusted expert in voter engagement and turnout.

We invested in building a small but mighty communications team and it paid off. In addition to earned coverage from major national outlets like The Washington Post, The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, MSNBC, NPR, Fast Company, and Business Insider, we received a stunning amount of local, regional, and state media.

The launch of our organization was covered by TechCrunch, Business Insider, CBS News, and The Fulcrum. And throughout the year, we received tremendous coverage for our various tools by outlets like The New York Times.

Our Native American outreach program garnered 16 pieces with an estimated reach of nearly 1 million views. Chief of Staff, Jordan James Harvill, (Cherokee & Choctaw), became a vital resource for reporters covering Native American voting.

With zero prompt from us, Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins issued a statewide press release in Texas informing citizens about our TXBallot.org ballot tracking tool. This resulted in several press inquiries and coverage in major regional outlets such as The Dallas Morning News.

Our November 2nd broadcast media blitz informing voters about the availability of Election Day Registration in 21 states resulted in our Founder, Debra Cleaver, being interviewed by 50+ television and radio stations.

**PRESS**

** CLICK TO READ A FEW OF THE HIGHLIGHTS: **

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 5</td>
<td>Thousands of North Carolina ballots in limbo amid challenges over rule changes</td>
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<td>May 12</td>
<td>More Americans than ever are expected to vote by mail this year, which means we probably won’t know who won the 2020 presidential race until days after election night</td>
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<td>3 things you can do right now to make voting easier and help avoid an election catastrophe in Nov</td>
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The Speaker Series served as an important way for us to engage every one of our supporters - from high dollar donors to grassroots online supporters - offering them a way to hear from some of the top election policy experts, political figures, advocates, and activists in the country.

As an official Impact Partner of the first annual National Black Voter Day organized by BET Network & National Urban League, we brought together an impressive panel of luminaries such as Everett Ward, President of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity & Interim President of St. Augustine’s University, Mondale Robinson, Founder of the Black Male Voter Project, Cliff Albright, Co-Founder of Black Voters Matter, Rev. Dr. Frederick Haynes, Sr. Pastor at Friendship West Church, and MSNBC commentator & Founder of Pine Street Strategies Don Calloway.

We paired CA Assemblywoman Buffy Wicks with actress & advocate Mary Steenburgen, former VA Governor Terry McAuliffe with Anthony “The Mooch” Scaramucci (which was a hoot to say the least), psychologist & author Mary Trump with GLAAD President Sarah Kate Ellis, chief strategist of the ’92 Clinton-Gore campaign Paul Begala with actor Richard Schiff, who played Toby on The West Wing, for a fun conversation about real life vs fiction in the West Wing, and actors Tony Goldwyn & Jeff Perry from the hit show Scandal.

On the eve of the election, thousands of supporters joined us for live broadcast while we shared timely trusted election updates through the Election Night Integrity Project, a partnership of VoteAmerica & Data For Progress.
PARTNERSHIPS

IN ADDITION TO TRADITIONAL MEDIA EFFORTS, WE UTILIZED KEY PARTNERSHIPS TO INCREASE ACCESS TO OUR TOOLS, AMPLIFY REACH, AND HELP PEOPLE Exercise THEIR RIGHT TO VOTE.

We partnered with a wide array of major national and regional organizations and allies in 2020. By capitalizing on our partner’s existing networks, we were able to further amplify our reach to voters in an incredibly cost-effective way, while building goodwill with numerous communities.

JUST A FEW OF THE HIGHLIGHTS:

As an official Impact Partner of the inaugural National Black Voter Day, VoteAmerica joined forces with BET & National Urban League to host a virtual panel event discussing the critical role the black community plays in America’s electoral process, featuring Beto O’Rourke, former US Congressman, Michael Sorrell, President of Paul Quinn College, Everett Ward, President of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity & Interim President of St. Augustine’s University, Mondale Robinson, Founder of Black Male Voter Project, Cliff Albright, Co-Founder of Black Voters Matter, Rev. Dr. Frederick Haynes, Sr. Pastor at Friendshipwest Church, and MSNBC commentator & Founder of Pine Street Strategies Don Calloway.

Clothing companies CCS & Columbia Sportswear embedded our tools within their websites to offer their customers convenient access to registration & mail ballot information.

Daily Kos ran a dedicated vote-by-mail campaign featuring our core toolset and covered how users could make use of our innovative Voter Helpline program on the way to the polls.

Everytown for Gun Safety used the VoteAmerica toolset on their Gun Sense Voter site, registering nearly 100,000 voters.

We partnered with the United Way to offer our comprehensive voter toolset to their ‘United We Count, United We Vote’ campaign.

credit karma

In August 2020, Credit Karma launched a ‘Voter Roadmap’ within their app & website utilizing the VoteAmerica tools. In less than 3 months, nearly 600,000 of their users were able to register to vote, check their registration status, request a mail ballot, find their polling location, and more.

CEO Kenneth Lin wrote about the partnership in Business Insider: “Beyond voting for the next president of the United States, voting joins people within a district or county to elect local officials and influence their community. Local elections often have a greater impact on Americans’ everyday lives more so than a candidate sent to Washington. They determine who is in charge of the local government agencies making decisions around issues that are impactful and visible now more than ever, like resources for small businesses, schools, and healthcare.

Undoubtedly, the combination of a major social justice movement, global pandemic, and resulting economic crisis has laid bare the importance of representation at the local, state, and federal level, but it has also served as a call to action for CEOs and business leaders to step up and use their platforms for good. For us, that means leveraging our scale and technology to build a tool that helps Americans exercise their right to vote for representatives at all levels of government.”
How We Do It

We built the most amazing team of employees, donors, partners, and volunteers.
As an organization, we may have been new heading into 2020, but we built a team of champions, bringing together a uniquely talented and professional group of technologists, campaign experts, civic engagement experts, and data nerds that rivaled many top tier campaigns! At a time when they could have been working anywhere they wanted - from presidential campaigns to major tech corporations - these all stars joined VoteAmerica instead. They chose us.

DEBRA CLEAVER  
Founder & CEO

A serial founder in the voter turnout space, whose previous credits include Long Distance Voter, Vote.org, and ElectionDay.org, Cleaver has been diligently to increase Vote-By-Mail adoption since 2008.

Amanda Luther, Kendra Cotton, Shawn Johnson, and the entire New Georgia Project team.

The Politics Rewired team for pulling off the impossible for our P2P SMS program.

Jake Mattiasky, Melinda Gibson and the rest of the CSME team.

Nate Persily from Stanford and Charles Stewart from MIT.

Matt Davis and Hilda Nucete from League of Conservation Voters.

Brian Dunn, Ken Dean, Leigh Chapman, Ryan Hughes and the entire team Deliver My Vote.

Jason Putorti and Susan Stutz from Resistbot.

Susan Dziweduszycka-Suinat from the US Vote Foundation.

Adam Quinn, Matt Holland, Harris Qureshi and the rest of the CreditKarma team.

Khalan Boyer, Khemari Cook, Maghan Cook, Morgan Howder, Justin Garnett, and the rest of the Red Ventures team.

Amanda Luther, Mike Jones, Ben Rattray, and the rest of the Change.org US team.

Vivian Shibata, Amanda Marmor, and the rest of the Everytown.org team.

Meghan Nesbit, Jacob Talbot, and Chelsea Mattingly from Twilio.org.

Sam Altman and Adam Goldstein from YC for all the early advice and support.

Colette Kessler for all of her work laying the foundation for the creation of this report.

TEAM

We would like to extend a special thank you to our extended team (and family) for your support, consult, and efforts in driving our mission forward.

- John McClung and the AdQuick team, for your years of hard work and support.
- Alex Kronman, Piper Jackson- Sevy, and the rest of the Flytedesk team.
- Ashley Spillane. Matt Singer, Keara Fenzel, Katie Dolan and the rest of the Impactual team.
- Josh Nussbaum, Jenn Kauffman, Kate Gage, and the rest of the TMC team.
- Jason Rosenbaum, Brian Young, and the rest of the Action Network team.
- Sibel Sunar, Craig Sinel, Jeremy Long, Janelle Grai, Maddy Troha, Paige Slaughter, and the rest of the 47 Communications team.
- Arekia Bennett and the entire MSVotes team.
- Nse Ufot, Kendra Cotton, Shawn Johnson, and the entire New Georgia Project team.
- The Politics Rewired team for pulling off the impossible for our P2P SMS program.
- Jake Mattiasky, Melinda Gibson and the rest of the CSME team.
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- Sam Altman and Adam Goldstein from YC for all the early advice and support.
- Colette Kessler for all of her work laying the foundation for the creation of this report.
Our fight for democracy would not have been possible without the collective support of our donors, including thousands of grassroots donors.

46,871
DONATIONS FROM INDIVIDUALS
95.9%
OF DONATIONS LESS THAN $100
$25.42
AVERAGE GRASSROOTS DONATION

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Carol Winograd
Cassidy Carroll
Charles Davis
Chambers Initiative
Charlie Furman
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Laura Kramarsky
Laurn Storholm
Lawrence Neely
Lawrence W. Abel
League of Conservation Voters Education Fund
Legacies Now, Philanthropy Consulting, Munich
Leslie Witt
Lois Friedland
Lois Vaccaro
Lori & Michael Massey
Lorraine Ballesty
Luna Pictures
Lynnae Schwartz
M.J. Schuler
Malte Ubl
Manasi & Maneesh Modi
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Martin & Terri Bittner
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Mary Cummer Steele
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Matthew Abel
Megan Furrin
Megan Hull
Michael & Sandy Blend
Michael Gatton
Michael Rodriguez
Michelle Johnson
Michelle Quinton & Mike Pazar
Murray Edelman
Nancy Dier
Nasty Woman Giving Fund
New Georgia Project
New Venture Fund
Nick Adams
Nick Felt
Nick Keller
Nicole Kinsley
Nils Klinkenberg
Oak Foundation
Pamela Johnson
Patrick Shriwise
Patricia Tubb
Paul & Winfred Dooley
Peter E. Haas Jr. Family Fund
Peter Martinazzi
Peter Saligman
Phil Lord
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Tom Lagatta
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United Way
Voter Participation Center
CONTRIBUTIONS & SPENDING

WE SPENT YOUR MONEY IN 2020. WE SPENT IT STRATEGICALLY & PURPOSEFULLY WITH THE GOAL OF SHATTERING HISTORICAL VOTER TURNOUT RECORDS.

IT WORKED. Americans turned out to vote at record levels.

With the help of our generous supporters, this brand new organization raised $12.2 million dollars. We rely on these donations to do our work - and we're good at it. We book and pay for things (like billboards and campus advertising) in advance, which means our programs and plans are in place, ready to go when it's time to start communicating with voters, so early investing by our donors pays huge dividends. And given our lengthy track record, we know what to do with the budget, and we know how to meet program commitments.

**REVENUE**

- Individual Donors: $9,778,080.46
- Institutional Support: $2,262,142.60
- Program Services: $193,290.00

**Total Contributions:** $12,233,513.06

**EXPENSES**

- Programs:
  - Voter Turnout: $8,760,205.68
  - Technology: $1,217,242.44
  - Investing in Local Orgs: $478,590.73
  - Voter Registration: $237,778.04

  **Total Programs:** $10,693,816.89

- Supporting Services:
  - Admin & Overhead: $492,397.96
  - Fundraising: $470,122.60

  **Total Supporting Services:** $962,520.56

**Total Expenses:** $11,656,337.45

**Net Assets Balance:** $577,175.61

**SOURCE:** The Washington Post, 2020 turnout is the highest in over a century

NOTE: 2020 financial results include VoteAmerica related income and spending while operating under fiscal sponsorship through June 14, 2020.
HOW WE DO IT

PARTNERS

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FOR GUN SAFETY
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National Urban League
WORKING FAMILIES PARTY
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STAND UP AMERICA
COMMUNITY HEALTH CHARITIES
LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS
CORAZÓN LATINO
BLACK LIVES MATTER
glaad
COUNTABLE
slack

Khalan Boyer Red Ventures

Red Ventures has recognised a need to be more actively involved

Arekia Bennett Mississippi Votes

Arekia Bennett
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MISSISSIPPI VOTES

Mississippi Votes

America.com
We spent 2020 working to make sure our country didn’t see midterm-level turnout during a crucial presidential election year. In 2022, we are conversely gearing up to push for presidential election level turnout in a midterm year.

We are currently at work building the infrastructure that will allow us grow our reach from 4 to 50 million tool users. We’ll be publishing all of our research and data analyses publicly in the next few months, and launching at least 2 new major initiatives.

After the exhaustive 2020 presidential election cycle and shocking January 6th insurrection attempt, we all took several weeks to recover - both mentally and emotionally. Then got right back to work. **The stakes are that high.**
On June 1, 2021, more than 100 scholars who study democracy issued a letter warning that “our entire democracy is now at risk.” The letter explains that the new election laws in Republican-led states, passed with the justification they will make elections safer, are in fact turning “several states into political systems that no longer meet the minimum conditions for free and fair elections.”

The letter further stated that “if we permit the breakdown of democracy, it will be a very long time before we can reverse the damage.”

**THIS IS THE REAL FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY.**

I’ve dedicated my life to this work, not because I love texting voters, but because I believe democracy is the only form of power that can protect and advance the rights of everyone, no matter their race, gender, or socioeconomic status. I believe this vision of democracy is what anchors American greatness. I know you do too.

We partnered with you in 2020 to make sure that in an election year rife with disinformation - on top of being in the middle of a global pandemic - voters had the information & resources needed to turnout in record numbers. All of our investments were planned in order to meet that specific, tactical goal. As we move into a new phase at VoteAmerica, we’re shifting our attention to the larger, years-long effort to protect and advance democracy.

Our strategy isn’t just focused on mobilizing voters for one election, because one election can’t prevent the erosion of our democracy. We recognize the reality that protecting American democracy requires a comprehensive, future-focused strategy, one where elections aren’t just important battlegrounds, but are part of a larger investment.

We’re excited to take on this new challenge, and recognize that it will require an evolution in how we structure our teams, programs, and investments. We still need to turnout voters during elections, but even more important is protecting the democratic process, and most importantly, the right to vote.

Democracy is the only form of power that can achieve our shared American ideals. We need to protect it and we need your help to do it. That’s why we’re so excited to launch The Democracy Fund. Investments in VoteAmerica now will sustain the fight and build our capacity to do critical work between and across all election cycles. In the buildup to 2022, we’ve actively built a plan to drive presidential level turnout even during midterm election years. The stakes are that high.

You can support our mission to turnout voters & defend democracy by becoming a member of The Democracy Fund today at: [https://www.voteamerica.com/democracy-fund](https://www.voteamerica.com/democracy-fund)

Thank you for everything.

Debra A. Cloose

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Statement of Concern

The Threats to American Democracy and the Need for National Voting and Election Administration Standards

June 1, 2021

We, the undersigned, are scholars of democracy who have watched the recent deterioration of U.S. elections and liberal democracy with growing alarm. Specifically, we have watched with deep concern as Republican-led state legislatures across the country have in recent months proposed or implemented what we consider radical changes to core electoral procedures in response to unfounded and intentionally deceptive allegations of a stolen election. Collectively, these initiatives are transforming several states into political systems that no longer meet the minimum conditions for free and fair elections. Hence, our entire democracy is now at risk.

When democracy breaks down, it typically takes many years, often decades, to reverse the downward spiral. In the process, violence and corruption typically flourish, and talent and wealth flee to more stable countries, undermining national prosperity. It is not just our venerable institutions and norms that are at risk—it is our future national standing, strength, and ability to compete globally.

Appearing on the website of the Washington, D.C.-based think tank New America, the statement, entitled Statement of Concern: The Threats to American Democracy and the Need for National Voting and Election Administration Standards, can be read in its entirety here.

Referring to themselves as “scholars of democracy,” the signatories include leading professors of political science, government, communications and history at many of the nation’s most prominent universities and colleges. As of mid-afternoon today, more than 100 individuals had signed onto the statement, but additional signatures were expected to be added.

---

**GET INVOLVED**

Looking forward,

VoteAmerica
Thank You

To help support our work, visit voteamerica.com/ways-to-give.

- Join The Democracy Fund
  - Donate Online
  - Donate by Check
  - Donate Stock
  - Donate Cryptocurrency
- Give Through a Donor Advised Fund (DAF)
- Company Matching
- Amazon Smile

www.voteamerica.com