

Strategy 2023/24

The plan to fix America's broken political system and unlock solutions to humanity's greatest challenges.





Introduction:

Anti-democracy’s Rising Tide

It’s 2023, and America finds itself wading in the wash of the worst anti-democratic wave since the Civil War. Teetering on the brink of political violence; flirting with unnerving feeling that we’re headed towards another civil war; reckoning with a failed insurrection; test-fitting authoritarianism versus rule by the people — it’s not the America we envisioned, but it is the America we have.

Sucked in on the undertow of dysfunction were attacks on our personal freedoms; backsliding educational and environmental policy; looming recession; a yawning wealth divide; the tearing of our nation’s social fabric; and a near-crippling of America’s global leadership.

As we grapple with the consequences, two questions must be front of mind:

1. What caused this wave?
2. Is there a tsunami behind it?

The cause is clear: Our government is corrupted. For decades we have largely ignored it and grossly underinvested in fixing it, turning time and again to one political figure or another in the hopes that *this time* winning the election will fix the system itself.

Will there be another wave? Surely, if we cannot muster the political fortitude to set aside partisan gains and finally address the root cause of America’s political failure, the next wave will not only be inevitable, it may wash away so much we take for granted.

To fix the dysfunction and unlock solutions to our nation’s greatest challenges, we must address the root of the problems and change the systems that created them.

And to that end, there is hope.

In 2022, the American Democracy Movement showed its strength. Fifteen RepresentUs-supported campaigns won across the country. Each one strengthens democracy, combats corruption and gives power to the people. Election deniers lost at all levels of government, and public sentiment towards our issue was proven to be top of mind as never before.

Amidst the crisis, we find ourselves in a moment of extraordinary opportunity. If we can seize it, the next few years could be the ones that history regards as the time that America saved itself.

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Vision 2050:

Make America the World's Strongest Democracy

Where the best and brightest run for office and win.
Where lawmakers govern for the public interest,
rather than private interests.
Where the best ideas, not the biggest bank accounts,
drive outcomes.

In this America, our government puts its broad
shoulders behind solutions to humanity's greatest
challenges and drives real progress on the issues that
matter most to the American people.

A government that is truly of, by and for the people.

*We base our assessment of the strength of America's democracy on Transparency International,
Freedom House and The Economist's annual democracy indices.*

The root problem:

A corrupt system

Americans know it because we see it every day: Our political system is broken and corrupt. Special interests have hijacked politics. Nearly every issue we face as a nation is caught in the grip of corruption. Billions of dollars of influence peddling generate trillions in returns through tax cuts, regulatory relief, and subsidies.

In pursuit of the spoils, political parties work to cement their power, leaving a path of destruction in their wake. They game democracy itself through gerrymandering and partisan primaries. Ever more extreme candidates feed off of disinformation to deny the results of elections and threaten political violence against their opponents. Power is its own reward to be won by inflaming the people against each other. The result? Gridlock, polarization and an ineffective government that is unresponsive to people it is mandated to serve, and the American people pay the price.



The solution:

Structural reform to fix the system

Anti-corruption, anti-gerrymandering, and election reform laws have a proven track record of shifting political behavior and making elections more competitive and civil. Even more important, these common sense changes have proven to shift the way politicians behave in office, providing better outcomes and better representation for the people.

In order to fix the system we must change the rules.



Our system incentivizes corruption

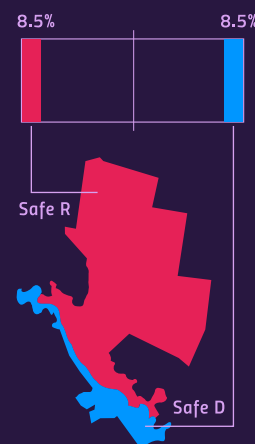
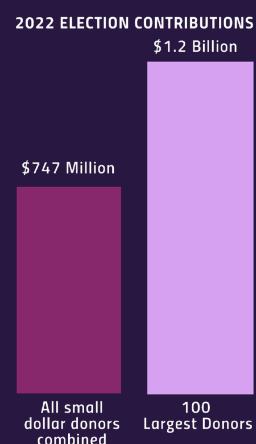
Our campaign finance system breeds corruption by putting politicians in a never-ending vortex of fundraising and campaign spending. Even politicians with good intentions are locked into a pay-to-play system where only monied interests have access and influence. Worse, by allowing unaccountable entities to spend unlimited money to influence elections behind closed doors, politicians are coerced to deliver laws counter to the interests of the vast majority of Americans.

Our redistricting, primary election, and voting systems breed polarization, gridlock, and extremism and block ideological diversity, compromise, and progress. Partisan primaries silence huge swaths of voters who aren't registered with either major political party. Gerrymandering allows politicians and parties to virtually guarantee their own re-election. Voters are perennially forced to choose between the lesser of two evils, where both candidates are disconnected from the needs and values of the people they purport to represent.

In 2022, groups "not aligned" with political parties or candidates spent over **\$2.1 billion** to buy political influence.

The largest 100 donors outspent all small dollar donors combined. It is a vicious cycle of **legalized corruption**.

(Source: Brennan Center)



In 2022, national voter turnout in primaries for US Congress was just 17%. **That means 8.5% of voters determined the candidate for either party in the general election.**

That candidate was assured of victory in 83% of US Congressional districts. Put another way: **Just 8.5% of voters picked 83% of the US Congress**

(Source: Unite America)

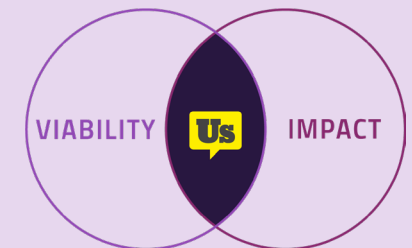
Core Policy Solutions:

3 key policies to fix the broken system

1. Anti-Corruption, Ethics, Transparency - change the structure of political resources to eliminate the rank corruption of pay- to- play politics by holding legislators accountable to create laws in the public interest, not just for the private interests who finance their campaigns: *Lobbying, ethics, transparency and disclosure laws, close the revolving door and prohibit insider trading, implement 'democracy dollar' campaign financing, prohibit foreign donations to campaigns.*

2. Anti-gerrymandering - change the structure of redistricting, break the cycle of political operatives controlling voting districts and instead enable voters to choose their representatives: *Independent redistricting commissions; proportional RCV.*

3. Election Reform - change the structure of our election system, eliminate the spoiler effect, enable third parties and independents to run and win, and incentivize elected officials to represent a wider, more representative swath of their electorate: *Ranked choice/ instant runoff voting; top 4 or 5 nonpartisan primaries;*



The policies within these solution sets sit at the intersection of 'policy impact' and 'political viability.' They are winnable, and winning them delivers substantive structural change.

We also support a raft of high-viability, pro-voter policies that uplift and accelerate structural change. We both fix the system and bring more people into the system: *Automatic voter registration, vote by mail, term limits, electoral college reform, election protection, ballot initiative defense and more.*

A note on additional policies: We take a long view towards low-viability, high impact structural reforms like multi-member districts and proportional representation; knowing that broad adoption may be challenging in the current moment, but also knowing that viability will increase over time, and so will our investment of resources.

A proven model for change

Build a Movement and Pass State Laws

For decades, elected leaders have proven unwilling or incapable of passing laws to fix the system. Those that do pass are watered down. But this is not the first time that advocates have overcome the odds to win.

Our winning strategy is proven through centuries and field-tested in real time over the 10 years since our founding: **Real, lasting change requires two interdependent strategies:**

- An active and engaged social movement that fundamentally shifts American culture, and
- A sophisticated political strategy to win and defend impactful policies over time.



Just as a bird with one wing cannot fly, our success depends on both strategies. Winning and protecting transformative laws requires a robust and active movement. Building a durable movement requires the momentum of winning campaigns that move the issue forward. From women's suffrage to marriage equality to the end of prohibition, victorious movements have relied on this state-by-state, movement-focused strategy.

A virtuous cycle to victory

Our movement builds its political power in a virtuous cycle. **We inspire, energize, activate and empower people to win.** Our **States Program** supports every step of a campaign from seed to victory, and amplifies the story of the campaign and its victory. Our **Movement program** attracts the next generation of leaders to win in other locales.

In the past 10 years, we have secured more than 170 pro-democracy victories and brought millions of people into the movement. These numbers represent real momentum, and in order to counter the rising threats to democracy and prevent further backslide, we must urgently accelerate our win-count and dramatically increase our numbers.

How many states won prior to federal passage of:



From women's suffrage to marriage equality, prohibition to interracial marriage, movements throughout American history have ushered in monumental changes when they built a critical mass of political power, or 'tipping point,' of victories in the states paired with a powerful movement that reached a critical mass of Americans.

(Source: Bloomberg)



A global analysis of more than 300 movements over a 100- year period demonstrated that when a movement attracts and activates at **least 3.5% of the population**, they are virtually guaranteed to win.

(Source: Chenoweth and Stephan 2012 & 2013)



2015-2022

Non-partisan Victories for our Movement



■ Anti-Corruption ■ Voting Reform* ■ Anti-Gerrymandering

*RCV, FFV, Expanded Voter Access, Democracy Dollars



Accelerating Progress State by State

RepresentUs exists to create a center of gravity for the pro-democracy movement and the design of our States Program is our commitment in action. Winning statewide pro-democracy laws requires a coordinated and strategic approach where a 'stack' of partners each bring their strengths to the table. (See *Power in Partnerships*, page 12.)

RepresentUs specializes and focuses on key areas that align with our movement-building DNA and are not well-covered by other groups. We fill gaps to deliver essential, missing assets to our state partners and provide the national cohesion that increases efficiency and ups the likelihood of victory. We develop partner networks across our key issue sets to round out the requisite disciplines, and identify and win the most impactful campaigns.



States Programs

Investment states

We invest time and resources to build lasting infrastructure in states where we can have multi-year, multi-issue impact. In **Washington, Oregon, Maine, Arizona and Nevada**, our political team has run the political viability assessments and built the relationships necessary to win multiple priority issues over time.

Campaign Accelerator

A coordinated and adaptive campaign apparatus, the Campaign Accelerator is designed to identify and assess the policy integrity and political viability of emerging legislative and ballot initiative campaigns. If the policy is transformative and the politics viable, we identify and address vulnerabilities and opportunities to strengthen campaigns through our unique resources and expertise. Importantly, the Campaign Accelerator focuses not only on passage but also on implementation and defense, post-passage.

Democracy Reformers Training Program NEW FOR 2023

Our movement has racked up wins for democracy all across the country. And along the way, we've developed an arsenal of tools and strategies for success. But each year, we hear the same thing: Leaders are building their own playbooks, often starting from scratch.

The Democracy Reformers Training Series builds on the success of our Campaign Accelerator program, sharing best practices and lessons learned, distributing resources, and helping campaigns win.

Building The American Democracy Movement

We are building the American Democracy Movement. History's most successful movements use a power-building theory that blends public awareness and education with deep engagement and organizing to win political outcomes. We **Connect** top issues to our broken political system, to help people understand how issues they care about are related to democracy reform. We **Create** breakout video assets that resonate with the average American and motivate them to get involved. Our movement **earns** news media through real world events that show the public there is a growing, successful movement they can be part of. We **Build** a social media presence that tells the story of the movement, builds a conversation online, and encourages sharing to shape the online message and win more hearts and minds.

Once we've reached supporters, we move them up the 'ladder of engagement.' We **Train** supporters in organizing tactics so they can build power and deliver political victories in their communities as spokespeople, leaders, organizers, validators, and local faces of the campaign. We **Build** a vibrant small-dollar donor community with opportunities to engage at multiple levels, via community meetings, digital community tools, events, and more.

Movement Programs

Common Wealth donor community & mobilization

Common Wealth members make monthly contributions to the movement, and are called to action when their collective efforts will have real impact on priority reform campaigns.

Unbreaking America Film Series

With a combined 2.5 million views and best-in-class view-to-conversion rate, our Unbreaking America short film series featuring Jennifer Lawrence, Michael Douglas, Sia, Ed Helms and Omar Epps has connected more Americans to our movement than any other creative media project in the country.



American Democracy Summit. Convening the movement.

American Democracy Summit convenes activists, advocates, academics, philanthropists and professionals to celebrate our victories and give birth to the next round of wins. Inspiring talks, big ideas, training, comedy, live music and more presented by dozens of organizations, collected and curated by RepresentUs.

Influencer Program NEW FOR 2023

The channels to reach the American people are constantly evolving, and with it, our communication strategy adapts. In 2023, we launched our beta influencer program, tapping into the power of hundreds of content creators you've probably never heard of, each of whom has their own dedicated fanbase hungry for unfiltered information.

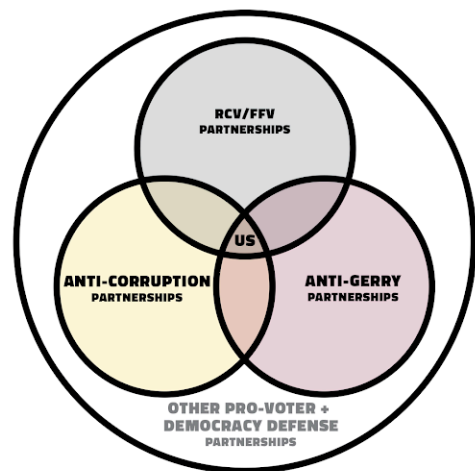
Democracy Voter Project (To launch pending funding)

New voter turnout in 2022 was overwhelming. Mainstream media 'missed' the signals and was unable to effectively predict it. Research shows that young people are eager to see the system changed. But who are they, which of them are voters, and which are driven by the state of democracy? The Democracy Voter Project seeks to identify these voters, recruit and activate them, supercharge momentum behind efforts to pass and protect transformative systemic reform and build a strong and vocal cohort of voters who will turn out for pro-democracy candidates.



Power in Partnerships

In the 10 years since we launched, RepresentUs's role in the accelerating pro-democracy movement has shifted. In 2012, we were trailblazers going it alone — virtually the only pro-democracy, single-issue organization fiercely committed to working across the aisle, and focused on winning reform in the states.



Today, the movement has grown to include hundreds of organizations. These organizations are both partisan and nonpartisan, filling a variety of strategic roles and leading a gamut of issues.

To successfully build and win state-based reform campaigns for **Anti-Gerrymandering, Ranked Choice Voting** and **Campaign Finance Reform**, RepresentUs will identify and organize the best local and national partners in each issue area.

Successful state campaigns have a nucleus of **Local Power & Leadership**, have a broad yet coordinated team of **Political & Policy Expertise** nationally and locally, and must have access to adequate **Financial Support** in the later stages of any campaign.

RepresentUs's role in each campaign is strategically managed on a case-by-case basis. We are hyper-focused on bringing the movement and its pace of winning to scale by leveraging our unmatched brand visibility and political expertise. We work alongside campaigns on the ground to build early momentum and seed the ground for victory. We identify and fill gaps, train and empower local leadership with best practices, tools and mentorship, lend political and policy expertise, help campaigns professionalize and attract the financial support necessary to win, and execute with precision.

Our success in achieving our vision is intrinsically linked to the success of our movement — and we operate to dramatically scale both.

Moving Forward, Together

Imagine a nation where politicians put country over party; where decisions are made for the greater good, not the benefit of political donors; where talent and passion for public service count for more than the size of a candidate's war chest. This is the future we believe in, and we have a smart, viable plan to realize it.

This is the most urgent challenge of our time, and we must rise to the occasion. We have an extraordinary opportunity to seize the grassroots momentum of the last election cycle, to rally Americans around common-sense solutions and restore a government of, by, and for the people.

Our goal for the next two years is to identify, resource, and win the most high-impact reform campaigns while engaging millions more Americans in the fight for the soul of our democracy. But this task is too big for any organization to do alone. We must come together as a movement to achieve the critical mass necessary to win. We must work across ideologies, parties, and issue areas. **We must move forward, together.**

To get involved in the movement, visit represent.us



Our commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Our fundamental commitment to DEIB at RepresentUs informs everything we do and strive to be as an organization. Whether red, blue, or purple; Republican, Democrat, or Independent; Black, White or Brown — we fight to represent YOU. We fight for a future where that uniquely American principle of “a government of, by, and for the people” is made real for all of us.



Appendix A: Investment States

Washington

Between Seattle's role as a pilot state on two major campaign finance reform policies (Democracy Dollars and Foreign Invested Company restrictions) and the recent win of RCV city-wide last November, Washington has proven to be a place with serious reform momentum. Genuine roadblocks have emerged this legislative year and we are revisiting the timeline and gameplan to restructure towards more expansive relationship building along with initial drafting on needs for the 2025 Democracy Dollar renewal fight in Seattle.

Oregon

Building on momentum from our work in the 2022 Portland Propportional RCV win, RepresentUs is working alongside a statewide coalition to provide support for a frontline strategy to enact statewide RCV through the legislature, and a backup strategic plan to run a 2024 initiative. Support is currently targeted through direct integration on work to cover key legislative district advocacy gaps and training support. Additionally, we are building inroads towards a strong local campaign finance community with significant potential for statewide wins.

Maine

In Maine RepresentUs is providing lobbying, political, training, organizing, and mobilization support around 3 simultaneous democracy projects: an RCV expansion and protection project to integrate RCV deeper in the community through local elections, a statewide push to pass legislation limiting corporate engagement in elections through restrictions on foreign invested corporations, and a statewide push resulting from our prior vote-by-mail success in the state legislature to expand access to all Mainers, not just those 6+ or with reported disability. Maine represents one of the best examples in the country of the exponential power when a state advocacy community is fully bought in on comprehensive democracy reform.

Arizona

Pivoting from defensive work in 2021/2022 RepresentUs is working to expand, empower, and train local grassroots energy both through RepresentUs regional activist leaders and local partners along with relationship building an initial local partner network all in pursuit of the goal of providing a solid advocacy base for signature collection towards a 2024 FFV initiative measure, along with anticipated defensive needs in the state. Furthermore Arizona was the site of the largest significant campaign finance win in the country last year with the passage of Prop 211 and is ripe for continuation of that momentum.

Nevada

In 2022 Nevada voted yes on a FFV measure that would fundamentally reshape both Nevada's elections and the state of national politics around FFV/RCV. The measure is required to pass a second time, this cycle (2024), in order to go into effect. Winning a diverse swing-state is a hugely important next step for the pro-FFV/RCV coalition and the campaign has a lot of work to do in community outreach, listbuilding, and local communications work ahead of the election. Furthermore we are exploring options to revive conversations around an in-state redistricting commission, and there is significant campaign finance reform work potential in-state. RepresentUs is currently mapping out a plan with the local campaign to provide training and volunteer leadership support, along with leading on gap segments of demographic outreach.



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