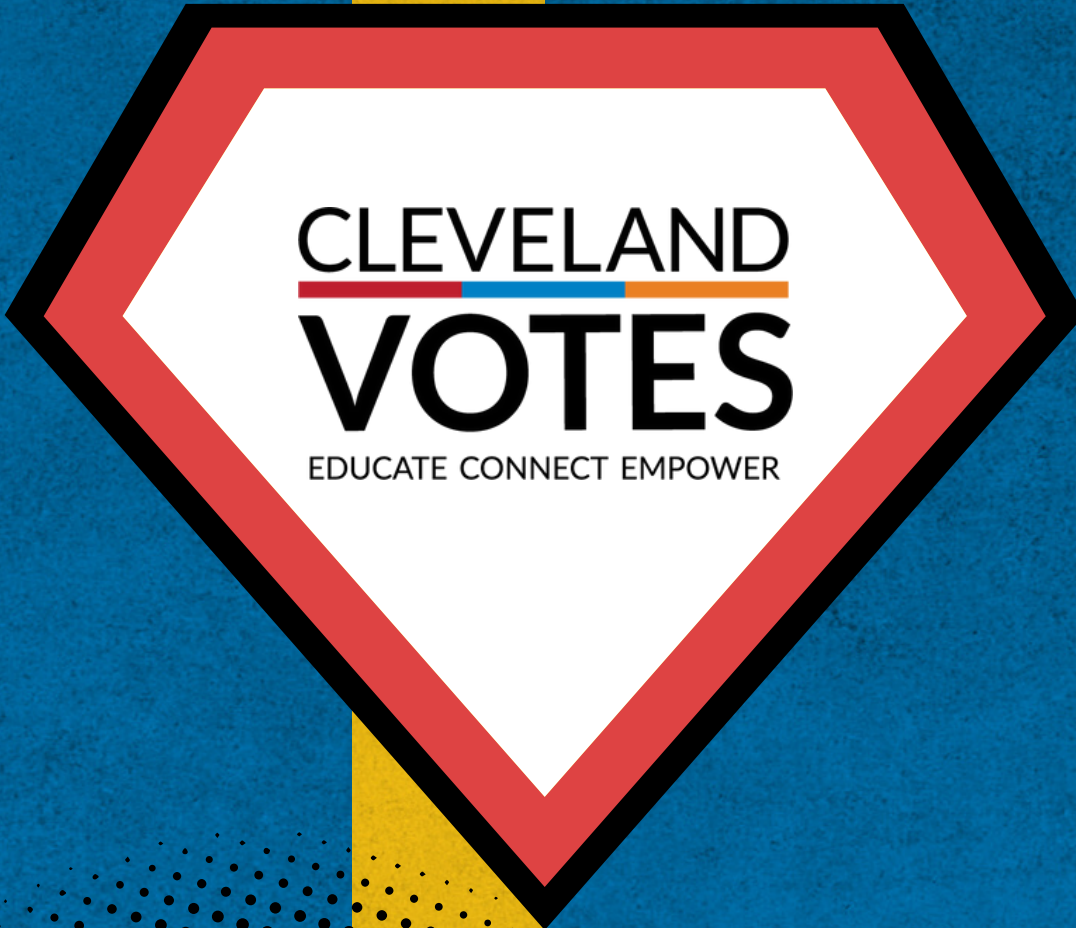


DEFENDING OUR DEMOCRACY



2023

**DEMOCRACY
IN REVIEW**

2023

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Cleveland VOTES is a nonpartisan, democracy-building movement that works to reconstruct and strengthen power through active participation of our collective partners. Guided by a system of networks, we promote informed, action-oriented mobilization that shifts power towards Equitable Civic Engagement and Infrastructure.

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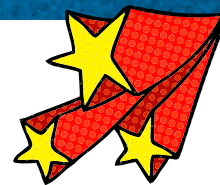


DEFENDING OUR DEMOCRACY

Reflections from the CV Team



Message from the Executive Director Erika Anthony



Dear Partners,

Cleveland VOTES holds deep appreciation for all the ways our communities showed up for each other in 2023. Cultivating a community where folks feel a deep sense of belonging and connection does not happen without deep investment of time. It's not enough to simply say you care—your actions must reflect those words. Despite constant adversity, we work hard to hold joy in the midst of anger, disappointment and frustration. We are not blind or naive to the woes of the world, but we also implore ourselves and our partners to celebrate with each other, even in the midst of what feels like a state of emergency for our democracy.

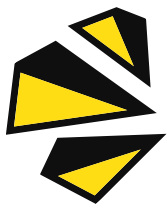
The Cleveland VOTES team has been in a constant state of vigilance as we watched and responded to threats to our democracy time and time again in 2023. On January 6—despite tremendous advocacy—HB 458 (the Voter ID Bill) was signed into law and went into effect in April. This law brought forth drastic changes to the state's voter ID rules, disproportionately affecting already disenfranchised voters, most notably persons of color. HB 458 has also eliminated early voting on the Monday before the Election and shortened the absentee ballot request window as well as the window to cure provisional ballots from seven days to four days [you can learn more about the changes [here](#)]. Our team and partners worked to ensure voters understood these changes. We also teamed up with a national organization, VoteRiders to distribute free educational materials and help people get appropriate forms of ID.

Gerrymandering has been another barrier to equitable democracy. Ohio is one of the 10 most gerrymandered states, and unfortunately the Ohio Redistricting Commission implemented voting districts that the Ohio Supreme Court had previously ruled unconstitutional. However, in late November 2023, the Court upheld the state's new legislative redistricting plan, dismissing lawsuits filed by Democratic and good-government groups claiming the new maps are illegally gerrymandered. But our team and fellow advocates continue to demand fair and equitable maps for all Ohioans. Voters should pick their politicians, not the other way around. This is why Cleveland VOTES stands in solidarity with initiatives like Citizens Not Politicians, which aims to end gerrymandering by empowering citizens, not politicians, to draw fair districts using an open and transparent process. [Learn more [here](#)]

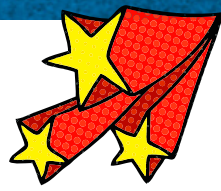
Cleveland VOTES and fellow advocates also worked diligently to defeat Issue 1 during the August 8th Special Election. Issue 1 would have required a vote of at least 60% of the electors to approve any constitutional amendment and to modify the procedures for an initiative petition proposing a constitutional amendment. Additionally, Issue 1 would have required petition signatures from at least 5% of the electors of each county in the state, instead of half of the counties and eliminated the ten-day cure period to gather additional signatures. Thankfully all hands were on deck—we defeated this issue by a decisive margin of 57% to 43%!

But we couldn't rest yet. The same dedicated folks had to quickly pivot to ensure the passage of the 'new' Issue 1 during the November General Election, which would constitutionally guarantee Ohioans abortion rights. Despite the many attacks, fear mongering and blatant lies that were thrown at this campaign from the opposition, Ohio voters answered the call and made their voices heard on November 7th! Issue 1 passed (56% to 43%), permanently enshrining reproductive rights for all Ohioans.

Here in Cleveland, our organization proudly endorsed and served on the Steering Committee for Issue 38, which sought to adopt a charter amendment that would give residents the ability to decide how 2% of the city budget is spent using participatory budgeting (The People's Budget). Issue 38 ended up not passing. However, despite strong opposition from several local government officials, it was a very close race. Just over 33,000 Clevelanders voted for a policy that many had learned about only in the last year, and it expressed what they know intuitively: that residents deserve a say in how public money gets spent. So PB CLE's story is not over! As stated by Molly Martin, PB CLE Campaign Manager and Advisory Board member, "We took bold action to change this city's political culture, and we can rest assured that the next time city leadership tries to throw public money in the interest of billionaires, working people in Cleveland have another model for how to fight back".



Message from the Executive Director Erika Anthony



It might appear that this year brought only challenges, but there were also some incredible high points! We continued to expand our team and launched three new initiatives, The Democracy Collective, Seasonal Civics + Creative Activism. We held our second annual State of Our Democracy, recapping our progress and celebrating partners. We proudly re-granted \$100,000 to 24 local organizations via our Equitable Civic Engagement Fund and additional \$35,000 for the August Special Election. We continued to increase our communications capacity and strived to be a trusted resource for the community, including the introduction of our #CommitToCle blog.

As you dive into our Democracy in Review 2023, you will see we've opted for a superhero theme. Whether you're a D.C. or Marvel fan, hopefully this summary of our collective work will elevate all the ways we must remain vigilant in defending our democracy. And most importantly, how no one person or organization can tackle all the challenges we're facing. Fostering a social fabric that embraces the voices of those historically and systematically silenced requires grit and tenacity (and maybe a few superpowers). Even when there is a loss or things don't seem to be going our way, we press forward. We invite you to dig into our year in review and celebrate all the ways Cleveland VOTES and our partners showed out + up this year!

In power,

Erika Anthony





I was able to connect, empower, and educate through our many endeavors, and improved my own professional journey in the process.

LIQUE GATES

Senior Strategist, [She/They]

I defended democracy through my continued commitment to uplifting community partnerships and programs. This year, Cleveland VOTES launched its first democracy-building incubator, The Democracy Collective, which was designed to offer resources and education for our community leaders. We also brought on a Cultural Strategist, who is working to help us design and launch a Creative Activism training program. I collaborated with our local education institutions, Cuyahoga Community College and Hawken Mastery School, where I presented the current story-based strategy work we do at Cleveland VOTES, as well as offer guidance on ways students can engage. During the election season, CV served as a beacon of information, and multiple staff members including myself participated in panel and forum discussions.

I was able to connect, empower, and educate through our many endeavors, and improved my own professional journey in the process.





I will continue to defend democracy by always sharing what I know (and learning what I don't), and I thank my CV team for empowering me to do so.



TACHA SAKO

Operations Administrator, [She/Her]

In my role at Cleveland VOTES this year I soaked in all the information that my teammates gave me. I am someone that has always been interested in “politics,” but it also has always intimidated me. I gave myself space (at my own pace) to read all the articles shared through our channels, whether that be from a teammate or a partner of CV. With all that information I formulated my own opinions and then felt empowered to share the latest voting news with my friends and family (and even people I didn’t know). I made sure that my siblings knew what was going on both nationally and in their respective cities and counties. Going into 2024, I will continue to defend democracy by always sharing what I know (and learning what I don’t), and I thank my CV team for empowering me to do so.



I knew I would have to “step up” to defend democracy. And that was making sure our partners and networks have the most up-to-date information possible.

BRIANNA ZGODINSKI

Communications + Narrative Strategist

[She/Her]

In some ways my role this year was similar to last year's: using research and storytelling to guide me, I utilized our communication channels to help people stay vote ready and engaged year round. I also made sure that the information we provide is accurate, relevant and accessible to diverse audiences. But with the constant curveballs being thrown at us by our state and local legislative bodies (sometimes overnight), there was one aspect of my role that I knew I would have to "step up" to defend democracy. And that was making sure our partners and networks have the most up-to-date information possible.

Every morning I scan headlines for legislation and democracy updates at the national, state and local levels. I also check in with partners on social media and subscribe to their newsletters to keep track of any changes in their communities and realms of influence. Then I share all updates with my team, on social media, our blog, and our newsletter. There are unfortunately a lot of legislators who depend on us remaining uninformed about what they're up to behind closed doors—but there are also a lot of dedicated comms professionals who are making sure you know about every dollar your leaders spend and every paper they sign. If you ever have a moment, I hope you will check out and follow important information initiatives like Cleveland Documenters, The Land's Community Journalism Project, and Follow the Money CLE. These folks defend democracy by being its witness. And I think that's pretty heroic.



STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

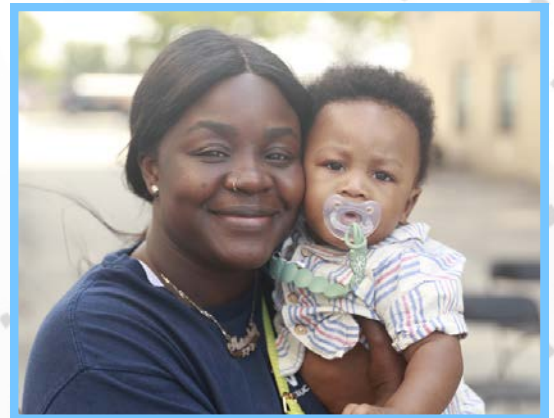


Brianna organized the launch of #CommitToCle: A Democracy Blog, received a certificate in digital organizing from re:power, and attended the ReFrame Fall Virtual Academy 2023.



Erika proudly represented Cleveland VOTES and the People's Budget at the Funders' Committee for Civic Participation Annual Conference. She participated in a workshop alongside fellow participatory budgeting advocates.

Tacha had a smooth transition back after maternity leave and successfully helped aid in planning the Equitable Civic Engagement Fund, our upcoming Creative Activism program, and in the revamping of State of Our Democracy.



STAFF HIGHLIGHTS



Lique helped launch CV led programs Creative Activism and the Democracy Collective, as well as revamping our inaugural State of Our Democracy to be more partner-forward.





CV welcomed 3 new part-time consultants in 2023: Kirby Broadnax (Democracy Collective Facilitator), Ahlon Gonzalez (Creative Activism Cultural Strategist Consultant) + Yugan Sakthi (Democracy Fellow).



Please note, Robin Turner served as our Civic Engagement Strategist in 2023. While she is no longer with the organization, we extend our thanks for her contributions during the past year.

UPDATES IN DEMOCRACY





We know that one of the best tools we can give our partners when defending democracy is regular updates on the current issues that impact them and their communities as well as current local and statewide engagement opportunities. While we believe our communication channels are a vital tool for keeping folks informed, we also believe in the power of convening formally as a network. Our civic gatherings are opportunities for democracy-minded community members to interact in a supportive environment and for the Cleveland VOTES team to share upcoming events and programming.



EDUCATE CONNECT EMPOWER 2022 - 2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

CLEVELAND
VOTES

“When the systems and institutions that are in the rightful position to show up fail to do so, we don’t allow that to deter us. We pull together our collective assets and make a way.”



Together with our partners, we are working towards a more liberated future.

In 2022 we launched a four-year Strategic Plan to outline the steps we will take -together- to reach that future.



2022-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

In late 2021, the Cleveland VOTES team engaged in a rigorous deep dive to commence our strategic planning process, partnering with the consulting agency M State Partners, Cleveland Documenters, and several other organizations. The goal behind this was to better understand the way(s) Cleveland VOTES contributes to the ecosystem of the city, and the footprints we leave along the way. As the process concluded, we identified four pillars that highlight our commitment to equity, growth, and building a better democracy that prioritizes inclusivity. The pillars are [Movement Building Capacity](#), [Grantmaking](#), [Realizing Equitable Civic Engagement](#), and [Shifting Power](#). This process was not linear, and we have created a benchmarking structure that will highlight the plan as we continue to learn and implement tools from our peers (such as organizations like The Land, NOVA, OPAWL, and many others).

SPRING INTO DEMOCRACY

After completing Democracy in Review 2022, we wanted to come up with a way to share some highlights with our network of partners. So in March of 2023, we hosted Spring into Democracy, a virtual event that we live streamed on our Facebook and YouTube pages. Spring into Democracy (which we plan to make an annual event) was an opportunity both to reflect on our past programming and provide a preview of what people could expect in 2023. We recapped Cleveland VOTES' accomplishments/highlights from 2022, revisited our core goals from our four-year strategic plan, provided an overview of civic engagement opportunities for attendees to get involved with, elevated the democracy-building work of our partners, and provided helpful information on HB458, HJR1, and the May Primary Election. Representatives from Honesty for Ohio Education, Participatory Budgeting Cleveland, and ACLU Ohio also provided campaign updates on all of the education bills circulating in the Statehouse, The People's Budget in Cleveland, and the Ohio abortion ballot initiative.

A graphic for the 'Spring into Democracy' event. The background is a vibrant, abstract painting with streaks of red, yellow, green, and blue. The words 'SPRING INTO DEMOCRACY' are written in a white, sans-serif font, curving across the top of the graphic. A white arrow points from the word 'DEMOCRACY' down towards the event details below.

SPRING INTO DEMOCRACY

MARCH 28
FACEBOOK LIVE
12PM

CLEVELAND
VOTES



STATE OF OUR DEMOCRACY

At this year's State of Our Democracy, we enjoyed the opportunity to present updates on the organization and upcoming initiatives as we continue our ongoing partnerships. The theme this year was "Faces of Democracy" and those who contribute to the immense work happening in the civic realm on a daily basis. We are fortunate to be surrounded by amazing democracy builders that expand across the Cleveland ecosystem, and we appreciate the constant support we receive.

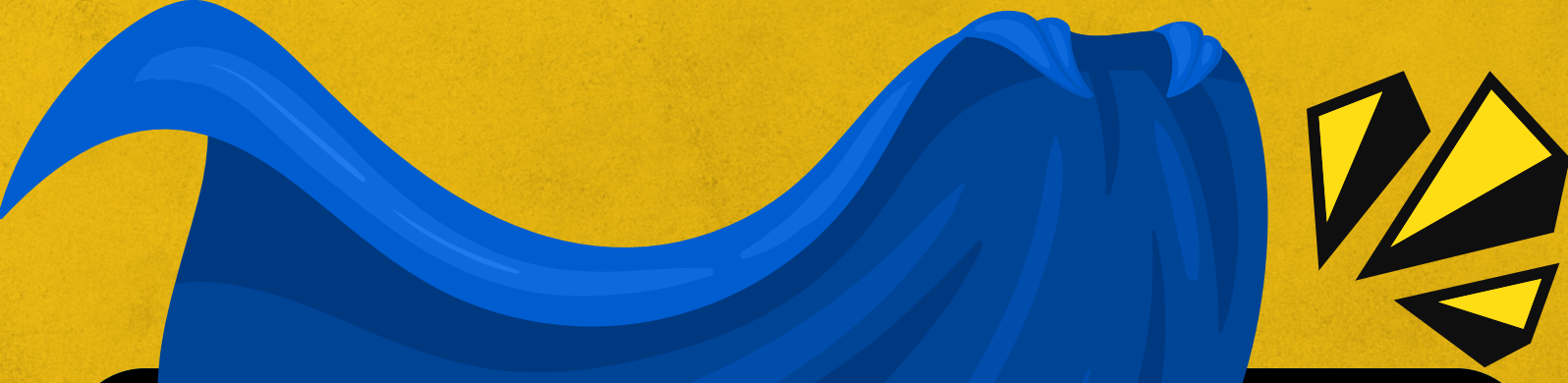
Our Senior Strategist, Lique Gates, gave a quick overview of upcoming programming, Strategic Plan updates, and collaborative opportunities happening within Cleveland VOTES. Since a special election was approaching us in August, and then the general election soon after, we also provided some quick issue-based information such as the new voter ID rules from HB458 and how to get involved with the People's Budget (Issue 38). You can review the full presentation [here](#), which includes a partnership video we made with local changemakers (edited by SunnyBlu Art Agency).

As with any work, there should be a time to reset. Distributing copies of Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto by Tricia Hersey and offering a healing station were quick ways to offer techniques on how we can insert rest periods into our everyday lives. The event also served as a networking event opportunity for attendees and uplifted the intersections in all of our work. There was a raffle for gift cards from three local Black-owned businesses that heavily support CV: Kafela, the Roaming Biscuit, and Third Space Reading Room. We would also like to thank our venue The Elliot for providing such a lovely space and Taste of Excellence for providing yummy treats.



CAMPAIGNS, ISSUES + LEGISLATION





At Cleveland VOTES we both educate people about the issues that might impact them and engage with those issues head on. Every year we get involved with several coalitions, legislation pushes, and campaigns that we believe will ultimately foster equitable democracy. And if we don't believe something will make our democracy healthier? We push back.

We have compiled a list of the key issues, campaigns, and legislation we engaged with—and were vocal about—in 2023, along with the role we played in elevating them. Some of these examples required only a day or two of engagement (e.g. NEOCH letter writing campaign), while others required more in-depth focus, people power, and long-term planning (e.g. Participatory Budgeting Cleveland). Regardless of the time and involvement they require, our goal for promoting (or not promoting) these campaigns is the same. Our participation serves as a catalyst, resulting in dynamic conversations and creative solutions that align with the community's values and vision.



LOCAL ISSUES, CAMPAIGNS, AND LEGISLATION WE ENGAGED WITH IN 2023

Issue 5 [Cuyahoga Community College Levy Renewal]

Issue Summary:

The Cuyahoga Community College Board of Trustees voted to place a 2.1-mill renewal levy with a 0.4-mill increase on the November 7 ballot to sustain Tri-C's vital educational and economic impact in Northeast Ohio. The request asked Cuyahoga County property owners to invest an additional \$1.17 per month on \$100,000 of property value. Tri-C claimed the proposed levy would keep higher education affordable and accessible for county residents, a critical need as jobs increasingly require a college degree or workforce credential. Tri-C currently offers the lowest tuition in Ohio while serving as the community's leading education provider. Thousands of students each year graduate with the skills needed to launch careers with household-supporting wages, with 85% of Tri-C graduates living or working in Cuyahoga County. Issue 5 passed with 67% of Cuyahoga County residents voting in favor. Collection of the levy begins in 2024 and will run for 10 years.

Status: **PASSED**

Cleveland VOTES' position: **FOR**

Cleveland VOTES' role:

Cleveland VOTES expressed support for Issue 5 via our communication channels and conversations with community members. We also participated in an issue panel hosted by Ghetto Therapy and Men and Women of Central where we shared talking time with an Issue 5 representative.



Issue 38 [The People's Budget]



Issue Summary:

Status: **DID NOT PASS**

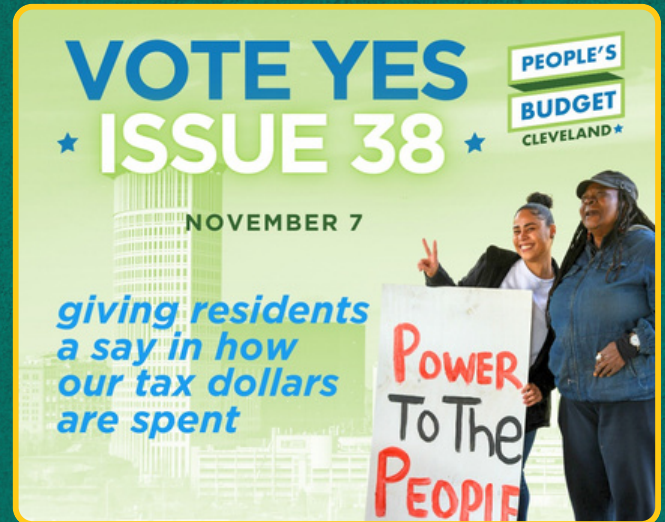
Cleveland VOTES' position: **FOR**

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. PB gives people real power to make real decisions over real money. The process was first developed in Brazil in 1989, and there are now over 1,500 participatory budgets around the world, including 700 in the United States, most at the municipal level. The Participatory Budgeting Cleveland (PB CLE) coalition launched in the spring 2021 and has been building momentum around PB locally ever since. In 2022, PB CLE hosted three more PB in Action events in Glenville, Central, and Lee-Miles and another dozen house parties attended by, in total, hundreds of Clevelanders of all ages who learned about PB and shared ideas for public spending that would make a difference in their lives. A 2022 poll from Policy Matters Ohio and Data for Progress showed PB is popular with nearly 8 in 10 voters in Ohio cities (including Cleveland). At the same time, members of PB CLE's ~20-person Coordinating Committee met with nearly every member of City Council to make the case for participatory budgeting in Cleveland.

PEOPLE'S
BUDGET
CLEVELAND
YES ON 38

Nearly 32,000 Clevelanders voted for a policy that many learned about only in the last year and that expresses what they know intuitively: that residents deserve a say in how public money gets spent.

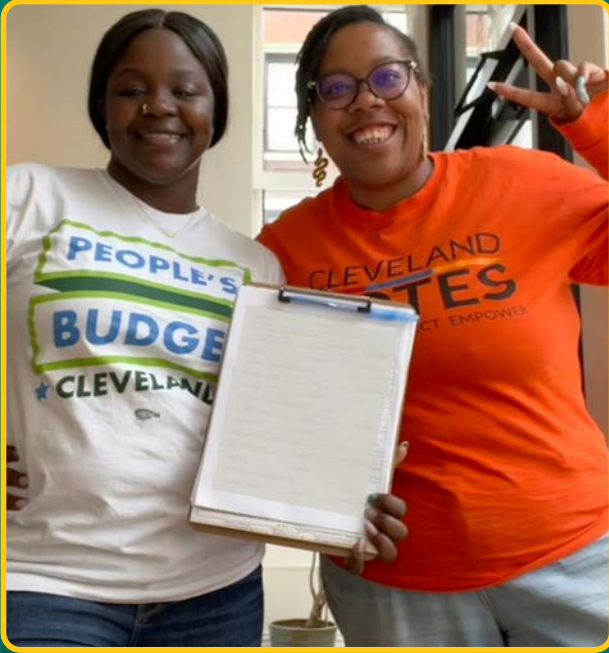
This isn't the end of the story for building resident power in our city. Instead, this is an early chapter in a much longer story to put the needs of our communities at the center of policy making rather than corporate interests.



The legislation moved to City Council's Finance Committee two weeks later. Nearly every member of City Council showed up. While the four co-sponsors reiterated their support for this new piece of civic infrastructure, the other members of Council did not. In fact, many offered comments that demonstrated little interest in reinvigorating democracy in a city where more than 7 in 10 registered voters choose not to vote. Some members of Council even showed open disdain at the idea of sharing power with residents by taking democracy beyond elections.

Despite the setback, PB CLE again tried for months to find a workable solution with Council. But by spring 2023, after two years of education and public pressure, it was clear to the members of PB CLE that Council was not ready to enable residents to have power to make decisions about how public money gets spent. Instead, they knew it was time to ask Cleveland residents themselves – the source of power in a democratic system – through a referendum on the November 2023 ballot.

Issue 38 [The People's Budget]



Cleveland VOTES' role:

The PB campaign proved, though, that in spite of institutions jumping into action to defend unchecked corporate influence in city politics, Clevelanders are yearning to contribute their creativity and talents to building a better city through new political structures that do not exist today. It revealed the weaknesses of those status quo institutions - who were united in opposition to Issue 38, and yet unable to wrangle consent from 33,000 Cleveland who openly defied them and voted in favor of a policy that gives residents real power on how our city prioritizes our money.

Cleveland VOTES has been a supporter of PB CLE since its conception in 2021. In 2023 when it was decided that PB would become a ballot initiative, Cleveland VOTES became a campaign partner. Over the year we helped with phonebanking, provided communications & marketing assistance, attended rallies and events, gathered signatures, and more. Our Executive Director Erika provided additional support: she was a member of the 10-person PB steering committee as well as the petition committee, acted as a spokesperson when PB was initially presented to city council, and co-authored an op-ed in support of PB that was published by Cleveland.com.

Residents, organizers, educators, and grassroots leaders collected signatures to put the People's Budget charter amendment on the November 2023 ballot (Issue 38). A People's Budget charter amendment would set aside 2% of the City's budget for residents to decide directly how to spend on projects residents themselves propose.

Hundreds of PB volunteers raised awareness for Issue 38 through phone banking, dinner parties, tabling, media releases, public debates, and other methods. But there was pushback from the mayor and many city council members, who claimed that PB would draw public funds away from safety services like fire and police. This led to several safety unions—including the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 8, Cleveland Police Patrolmen's Association, International Association of Cleveland Fire Fighters Local 93, Cleveland Association of Rescue Employees—pushing back against the proposed legislation as well. In the end, Issue 38 narrowly lost by 1, 201 votes (51% against, 49% for).



UNITED RESIDENTS OF EUCLID BEACH LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN



Status:

Campaign did not reverse original decision. Demolition still scheduled for 2024.

Campaign Summary:

On August 3rd, 2022, Euclid Beach Mobile Home Park residents came together to form the United Residents of Euclid Beach (UREB) after the Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) repeatedly ignored their concerns about property management and they heard rumors that their community would be destroyed in favor of a public park. Their worst fears were confirmed at a public meeting on February 9th, 2023 when the WRLC announced the destruction of their community in favor of a public park. Cleveland VOTES' partner Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless organized a virtual letter-writing campaign (addressed to the individuals in charge of the removal efforts) so that community members could show solidarity with the residents. However, despite receiving hundreds of letters, the WRLC reported that they still plan to go through with the demolition of the homes in early 2024.

Cleveland VOTES' position:

In support of the residents

Cleveland VOTES' role:

CV shared the letter campaign on social media and in our newsletter. Some staff members also sent letters.



STATE + NATIONAL ISSUES, CAMPAIGNS, AND LEGISLATION WE ENGAGED WITH IN 2023

OH HB 458 [Voter ID Bill]

Legislation Summary:

STATUS: PASSED

**Cleveland VOTES'
position: AGAINST**

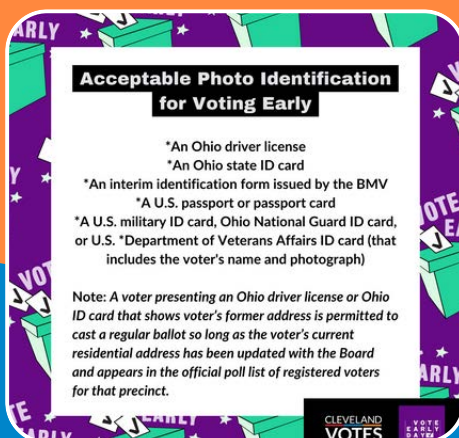
This bill was originally introduced in 2022 by the Senate Local Government & Elections Committee to eliminate August special elections. But then additional voting restrictions were added to the bill during the Lame Duck Session in December 2022. The Ohio House worked overnight on Dec. 14 and passed the bill while most Ohioans were asleep. On January 6, Governor DeWine signed HB 458 into law.

The new law limits drop boxes to one location per county and may only be open during business hours during early voting; shortens the absentee ballot request window; ballots now must be requested a full week before Election Day - the previous Tuesday by 5pm - as opposed to the previous Saturday by noon; adds citizenship as a designation on driver's license and state ID cards; eliminates the last day of early voting, the Monday before Election Day; mandates that absentee ballots must be received by County Board of Elections 4 days after Election Day, as opposed to ten days; changes curbside voting rules so that only those with a physical disability or those physically unable to enter a polling location are eligible for this option; and shortens the window to cure provisional ballots from seven days to four days. It is currently one of the strictest voter ID laws in the country [Source: ACLU Ohio]



Cleveland VOTES' role:

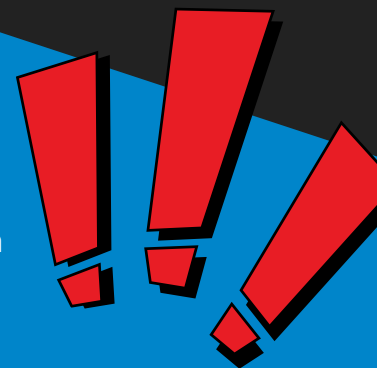
Cleveland VOTES has been against OH HB 458 since it was introduced as a substitute bill in late 2022. Since it was signed into law right at the beginning of 2023, there was little we could do to protest the resolution further. But we DID make sure that Clevelanders had all the correct information about the amended voting rules that would come out of the new law. We outlined the new rules on social media, our newsletter, blog, and at external events throughout 2023. And we will continue to fight for the repeal of HB 458 into 2024.



STATE + NATIONAL ISSUES, CAMPAIGNS, AND LEGISLATION WE ENGAGED WITH IN 2023



Image credit:
Ohio Voter Rights Coalition



HJR1/SJR 2

[Require 60% vote to approve any constitutional amendment]

Legislation Summary:

STATUS: PASSED

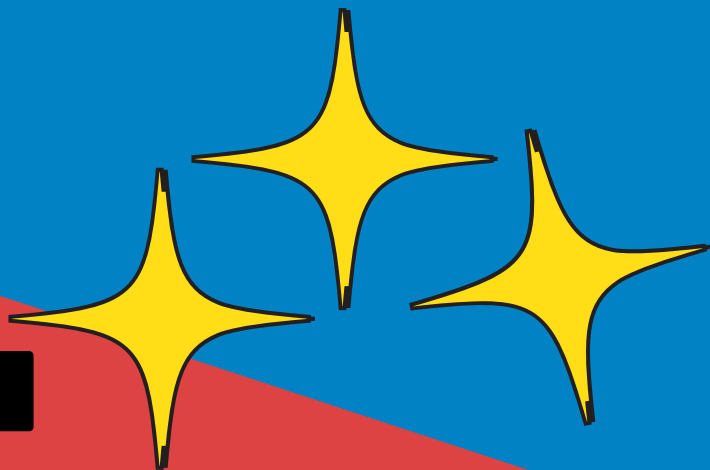
Cleveland VOTES' position: AGAINST

In February, Ohio Republican legislators introduced House Joint Resolution 1, which would require a vote of at least 60% of the electors to approve any constitutional amendment and to modify the procedures for an initiative petition proposing a constitutional amendment. The proposed resolution would also: Require petition signatures from at least 5% of the electors of each county in the state, instead of half of the counties; eliminate the ten-day cure period to gather additional signatures. The resolution was passed by the General Assembly in late April. And then the state legislature approved another resolution (Senate Joint Resolution 2) on May 10 that would ask Ohio voters to vote on the threshold increase during a special election in August 2023. Secretary of State Frank LaRose approved SJR 2 on the same day (since the election measure passed in the form of a joint resolution, it did not require the governor's signature to take effect). The Special Election was then scheduled for August 8. The Republican leadership involved made it clear that the proposed threshold increase was intended to thwart efforts to get abortion access encoded in the Ohio Constitution.

Cleveland VOTES' role:

CV partnered with the Ohio Voting Rights Coalition and spoke out against HJR 1 and SJR 2 on social media. We told people to contact their state representatives and ask them to defeat the measures. We also shared a Letter to the Editor toolkit created by OVRC.

STATE + NATIONAL ISSUES, CAMPAIGNS, AND LEGISLATION WE ENGAGED WITH IN 2023



Issue 1 [August Special Election Amendmen]

Elevating the Standards to Quality for an Initiated Constitutional Amendment and to Pass a Constitutional

Issue/Campaign Summary:

**STATUS: DID NOT
PASS**

**Cleveland VOTES'
position: AGAINST**

Issue 1 asked voters to change current law so that amendments to the Ohio Constitution will be required to be approved by voters by a 60% supermajority of voters, rather than simple majority that has been Ohio law for over 100 years. The Vote No in August campaign was a statewide coordinated effort to raise awareness about the August election and how voting no was necessary to protect reproductive rights.



Cleveland VOTES' role:

CV signed on as a Vote No In August campaign partner in May and raised awareness for Issue 1 across our media communication channels, including our blog. We also had campaign literature available during tabling and elevated the Special Election during programming and events (such as State of Our Democracy).



Tell the Primary and Secondary Education Committee to give HB 171 a Proponent Testimony Hearing!



OH HB171

Educating for Ohio's Future Campaign

Include certain instruction in social studies model curriculum

Campaign/Legislation Summary:

STATUS: IN HOUSE COMMITTEE

Cleveland VOTES' position: FOR

House Bill 171 was proposed by Ohio State Rep. Mary Lightbody in May and was supported by Educating for Ohio's Future. It uses the existing model curriculum review process to update Ohio's K-12 social studies curriculum to include age- and grade-appropriate instruction in the migration journeys, experiences, and societal contributions of a range of communities in Ohio and the United States. According to the bill, the educational goals of HB171 must be achieved by July 1, 2024. Educating for Ohio's Future is a broad coalition of more than 40 organizations including the Ohio Education Association and Ohio Federation of Teachers and is led by OPAWL – Building AAPI Feminist Leadership, Honesty for Ohio Education, CAIR-Ohio, Young Latino Network, and The Freedom BLOC.

Cleveland VOTES' role:

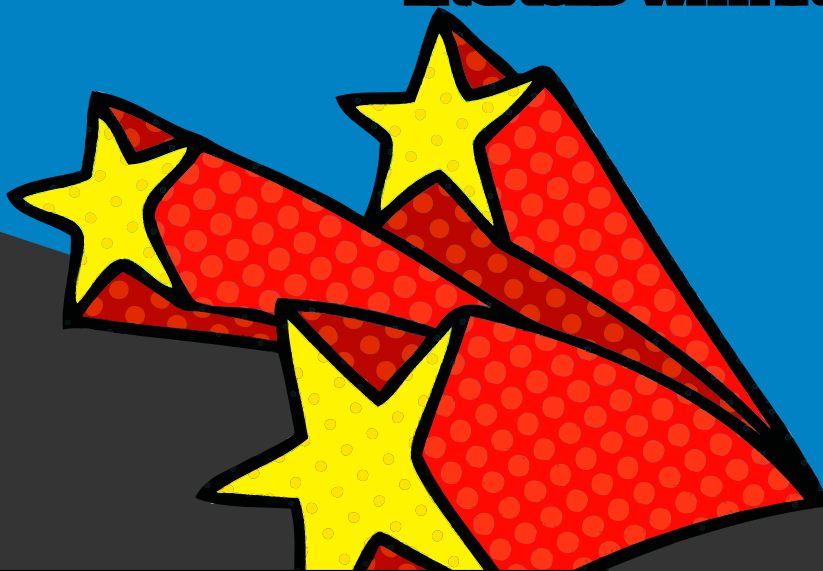
CV signed on as a campaign partner in May. CV staff also sent digital letters telling the Primary and Secondary Education Committee to give HB 171 a proponent testimony hearing. We also asked our partners to write letters and share proponent testimonies.



STATE + NATIONAL ISSUES, CAMPAIGNS, AND LEGISLATION WE ENGAGED WITH IN 2023

VOTE YES ON ISSUE 1

to protect abortion access



Issue 1 [November General Election]

Right to Make Reproductive Decisions Including Abortion Initiative

Issue Summary:

STATUS: PASSED

**Cleveland VOTES'
position: FOR**

In March 2023, Ohioans United for Reproductive Rights (along with hundreds of volunteers) began collecting signatures for a ballot initiative that would let Ohioans directly decide if they think abortion rights should be permanently guaranteed in the state constitution. By July enough signatures had been collected, and the Ohio Attorney General gave the green light for the proposed abortion amendment to appear on the November General Election ballot. In August, the Ohio Ballot Board approved the language that would appear on the ballot (Issue 1).

The proposed amendment would amend Article I of the Ohio Constitution by adding Section 22, titled "The Right to Reproductive Freedom with Protections for Health and Safety." A yes vote for Issue 1 would protect the rights for one to make their own reproductive decisions. This included not only the right to make decisions about abortion, but also contraception, fertility treatment, miscarriage care, and continuing pregnancy. A no vote would give reproductive decision power to the state. Issue 1 ended up passing with 56.6% support.

Cleveland VOTES' role:

Cleveland VOTES was a proud supporter of the Ohioans United for Reproductive Rights campaign. We raised awareness for Issue 1 on our social media channels, during programming & external events, in our newsletters, and our blog. We put extra work into making sure people understood that the November Issue 1 is different from the August Issue 1, because Republican legislators were intentionally trying to confuse voters by assigning the issues the same number.

Understanding Issue 1, the Constitutional Amendment that will be on Ohio ballots this November





Issue 2 [Marijuana Legalization Initiative]

Issue Summary:

Ohio Issue 2 was on the ballot during the General Election as an indirect initiated state statute. A yes vote on Issue 2 would mean allowing the sale and purchase of marijuana, which a new Division of Cannabis Control would regulate; allowing adults who are at least 21 years old to use and possess marijuana, including up to 2.5 ounces of marijuana; and enacting a 10% tax on marijuana sales. The Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol led the campaign in support of the ballot initiative.

STATUS: **PASSED**

Cleveland VOTES' position: **None taken**

Cleveland VOTES' role:

Since Cleveland VOTES did not take a public position on Issue 2, we did not campaign for it on our communication channels. However, we did provide neutral information on the issue if a community member had questions.



STATE + NATIONAL ISSUES, CAMPAIGNS, AND LEGISLATION WE ENGAGED WITH IN 2023

OH SB 158 [Regards disbursement of municipal funds by residents]

Issue Summary:

STATUS: PASSED BY SENATE, IN HOUSE COMMITTEE

After the state legislature caught wind of Issue 38 in Cleveland, there was a growing fear that participatory budgeting (PB) could become implemented statewide. So the Republican-led Senate introduced OH SB 158 (“regarding the disbursement of municipal funds by residents”) to ban PB at the state level. It was passed by the Senate and is currently stalled in House Committee.

Cleveland VOTES’ POSITION: AGAINST

Cleveland VOTES’ role:

Cleveland VOTES spoke out against OH SB158 on social media. Some staff members also submitted opponent testimony virtually. And some staff members wrote letters to our local representative (Mike Skindell).

SB 158 would nullify Issue 38. Tell the Statehouse it’s up to Cleveland voters to decide.

submit written testimony with us NOW

PEOPLE’S
BUDGET
★ CLEVELAND ★
YES ON 38

the testimony form is in post description and at www.pbcle.com

SB 158 IS VOTER SUPPRESSION

TELL OUR OHIO HOUSE REPS TO VOTE NO on SB 158

PEOPLE’S
BUDGET
★ CLEVELAND ★
YES ON 38



OTHER LEGISLATION WE ELEVATED IN 2023

Bill #	Name/Nickname	Summary	Status	Cleveland VOTES' position
SB 1/HB 12	Education Oversight Bill	Would restructure and rename the Ohio Department of Education to "Department of Education and Workforce" and shift ODE into a cabinet-level agency managed by an appointment from the governor's office.	Passed in Senate, being incorporated into 2024 state budget	Against
SB 83/HB 151	Enact Ohio Higher Education Enhancement Act	Would ban mandatory diversity training for public school employees, prohibit university staff and employees from striking, end affirmative action, and more	Passed by Senate, Cleared House Committee	Against
HB 6/HB 68	Enact Ohio Saving Adolescents from Experimentation (SAFE) Act	Would ban therapists from diagnosing or treating minors with gender dysphoria without parental consent, prohibit the use of puberty blockers and hormone therapy for minors, ban trans girls and women from playing on sports team that match their gender identities	Passed by House and Senate, Awaiting Governor Signature	Against
HB 183	Regards single-sex bathroom access in schools, universities	Would require all Ohio schools to segregate bathrooms on the basis of "biological sex" as determined by a person's birth certificate	In House Committee	Against
HB 245	Prohibits certain adult cabaret performances	Would ban drag performances in public spaces	In House Committee	Against
SB 101/HB259	Abolish death penalty; modify juror challenges in certain cases	Would abolish the death penalty	In Senate Committee, in House Committee	For
SB 184	Ballot Drop Box Ban	Would prohibit use of outdoor receptacles for absent voters ballots	Referred to Senate Committee	Against

PROGRAMMING + PARTNER ACTIVATION

WELCOME
TO



PROGRAMMING + PARTNER ACTIVATION

One of Cleveland VOTES' primary roles in the community is serving as a partner "activator." Our approach to partner activation is holistic. It can look like providing funds and resources for voter registrations, voter mobilization, general operations, and civic holidays. It can also look like providing guidance and support via programming, mentoring, meetings, trainings, and drop-in hours. And our offerings are constantly in a state of evolution.

This year we added two new programs: [The Democracy Collective and Creative Activism](#). As we conducted our strategic planning process in 2021-22, a few priorities were elevated and ultimately added to our plan. One of our pillars is Movement Building Capacity. We have identified the need to not only invest in and support organizations (e.g. ECEF), but also expand the knowledge of individual leaders in the local democracy-building ecosystem. The Democracy Collective was conceived to ensure there is consistency in the knowledge, resources, and tools civic leaders have to assist them in catalyzing their visions into a reality. Realizing Equitable Civic Engagement is another pillar in our strategic plan. We believe that the artists, musicians, and storytellers that make Cleveland vibrant are critical to our social fabric. As such, we seek to strengthen our relationship with Cleveland's creative economy and partner with creatives to amplify narratives that will resonate with voters.

2022-2023 Advancing Equitable Environmental Justice + Democracy Incubator



Cleveland VOTES | 2022-2023 Environmental Justice Cohort

Lindsey Lott

Birthing Beautiful Communities

Robin Brown

Concerned Citizens Organized Against Lead (CCOAL)

Samira Malone

Cleveland Tree Coalition

Kimberly Woodford

Journey on Yonder (JOY)

Erika Hood

See You at the Top (SYATT)

Peter Chmiel

Empower Youth, Exploring Justice (EYEJ)

CLEVELAND VOTES

In September 2022, Cleveland VOTES was pleased to announce a new initiative focused on synergizing the efforts of BIPOC-led or serving nonprofits committed to advancing equitable environmental justice and civic engagement in the Greater Cleveland area. The initiative was called the Advancing Equitable Environmental Justice + Democracy Incubator. Through the initiative we aimed to partner with (and learn from) leaders who are committed to elevating the environmental justice issues facing local residents, while also creating a more cohesive local infrastructure for civic engagement. Since capacity building + equitable civic engagement are core values of Cleveland VOTES, we also gave each participating nonprofit organization the opportunity to apply for a grant to support their organization's involvement in the "EJ Cohort."

2022-2023 Advancing Equitable Environmental Justice + Democracy Incubator

These were the objectives of the Incubator/Cohort:

- Convene, establish/foster/strengthen trust among BIPOC-led/serving climate and environmental justice organizations in the Greater Cleveland area.
- Understand organizational and policy priorities among the cohort.
- Create space to educate, connect and empower each other to increase impact.
- Cultivate a learning environment where collectively we can clearly articulate the intersectionality between environmental justice and democracy.

With the support of the Cleveland VOTES team, EJ Cohort members would also be expected to develop and execute a shared Awareness + Activation plan that will allow the participants to build upon the following skills: developing shared goals and objectives, determining the shared message and modes of communication, and developing indicators and metrics to measure impact.



At the end of the incubator, the EJ Cohort decided on *Defend Our Democracy, Defend Our Planet* as the title of their shared campaign. Then they made a personal pledge to commit to the theme of the campaign once the incubator had concluded.

Finally, they brainstormed practical ways they could live out the shared campaign in their own lives. Here are some of the options they came up with:

- volunteering with a like-minded organization
- coalition building
- engagement around different environmental issues (e.g. free outdoor events)
- registering people to vote
- hosting fireside chats

Cleveland VOTES also interviewed some of the participants for a special storytelling video where members reflected on their experiences in the cohort. The video was shared on social media and is currently available on our [YouTube page](#).



Equitable Civic Engagement Fund

Advancing equitable civic engagement is about bridging resources, identities, and organizations to a greater purpose of reclaiming our narrative. The purpose of the **Equitable Civic Engagement Fund (ECEF)** is to provide grants to nonprofit organizations committed to educating, connecting, and empowering voting-age residents in the Greater Cleveland area. When reviewing the grant applications, we seek organizations that are committed to democracy building, racial equity, and participatory practices. However, it is not required that the applicant be a “voting” organization. Ultimately, we seek to shift power while catalyzing innovation and inclusive strategies to strengthen the social fabric of our community. While some of our grantee partners solely focus on voter engagement, many of our partners are multi-issue organizations. This speaks to the intersectionality of our work and of democracy-building in general.



Cleveland VOTES has cultivated our grantmaking process over the years, consistently evaluating and making updates to ensure the process is not only equitable, but also seamless for the potential applicant. Each year we seek feedback from that year’s grantee cohort and we incorporate their insights in our process. This year we hosted (4) information sessions to answer questions about the application. Our Executive Director and Civic Engagement Strategist also made themselves available for one-on-one conversations. All staff members reviewed the applications we received. Our Executive Director and Civic Engagement Strategist, along with our Co-Founder/Advisor and select members of our Advisory Board scored, deliberated and selected the recipients.

In 2023, we disbursed **24 grants totalling \$100,000** to nonpartisan, non-profit organizations that facilitated voter education, voter registration, or mobilization work in Cleveland. We hosted a kick-off meeting at the end of June, as well as Community of Practice sessions in July and August. We also made ourselves available in September-October for 1:1 office hours to support our grantees with their goals. In November, we hosted a post-election debrief session. Here are some of the projects our grantees used their ECEF dollars towards:

- Producing educational voting materials in languages other than English
- Raising awareness about the August Special Election
- Supporting a digital storytelling project about local minority leaders
- Hosting voter engagement pop-up events
- Organizing educational civic programming for local youth
- Holding a candidate forum about LGBTQ+ issues
- Training young adults to register voters
- Hiring a part-time staff member to assist with civic holidays
- Providing voting information at a wage theft clinic
- Convening a Homeless Congress

Power of the People
Remarks by:
• Colin Marozzi, ACLU of Ohio
• David Miller, Mandel School of Applied Sciences at CWRU

Join LMM for a community forum about Ohio's ballot and referendum process. Learn how an issue gets to the ballot, and hear a nonpartisan presentation of the issues that will be on the ballot this November.

The Rev. Richard E. Seiring Center
4515 Superior Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113
Tuesday, October 24 | 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM



Equitable Civic Engagement Fund Grantees

Here is a breakdown of the amounts disbursed to our ECEF grantees. Thanks to an unexpected (but welcomed!) investment, in the summer of 2023 we were able to re-grant an additional \$35,000 to organizations specifically working on the Special Election. Please note, special election grants are marked with {**} next to the amount.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Alpha Omega Chapter - \$4000
Arab American Voter Project - \$4500
Black Empowerment Makes A Difference - \$3000
Council on American-Islamic Relations, Ohio - \$4500
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated Greater Cleveland Alumnae Chapter- Social Action Committee - \$4500; \$2000**
Fair Election Center - \$5000; \$4000**
Faith in Public Life - \$3000**
Faith Community United/Vessels Vote and Healing Communities - \$5000**
Greater Cleveland Congregations - \$5000; \$8000**
Honesty for Ohio Education - \$4000
Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry - \$5000
Midtown Cleveland Inc. - \$5000; \$2000**
M-PAC Cleveland - \$3500
Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless - \$4500
Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates - \$5000
Northeast Ohio Worker Center - \$4500
OCA Greater Cleveland - Asian Pacific American Advocates - \$5000
Ohio Families Unite Against Police Brutality - \$2000
Ohio Voter Fund/Promise of Democracy - \$5000
Renounce Denounce Gang Intervention Program Corporation - \$3000
Teaching Young Women in Society Truth - \$2000; \$1000**
The Buckeye Flame - \$3500
The Spot Youth Empowerment Organization - \$4000
Towards Employment Incorporated - \$5000; \$2000**
Tremont West Development Corporation - \$2500
Young Latino Network - \$6000; \$8000**



The Democracy Collective

The Democracy Collective (DemCo) is a 9-month cohort-based program for community-driven leaders in Cleveland to strengthen their capacity for building transformative efforts in the city, and to increase their commitment to equitable civic engagement. The seed for DemCo was planted after reflecting on feedback that Cleveland VOTES heard from partners throughout our strategic planning process – that there was a need for space that would support deeper organizing skills and strategy building, foster meaningful relationships, and provide ongoing opportunities for shared practice and growth among Clevelanders working for change in their communities. The Democracy Collective is responding to this charge, with a foundational philosophy that creating a more just, equitable, and engaged city requires a collaborative and sustained effort.

Ten Clevelanders were selected to join the inaugural cohort of DemCo, and are currently half way through the program. Our dynamic group of local luminaries from across the city will continue to work through six months of curriculum designed with our partners, Liberation in a Generation, and then spend the remaining 3 months implementing an activation project they have designed to respond to various needs in Cleveland. The most telling feedback that we continue to receive from the DemCo cohort is that they value getting to know other community leaders that they may not have otherwise met, and that they wish that we had more time together in our sessions!

The Democracy Collective was going strong as we wrapped up 2023. Looking ahead to 2024, our Democracy Collective cohort will finalize their designs and then implement their activation projects within Cleveland. The bi-weekly Saturday sessions will shift to a community of practice model, where our participants will share project updates and receive ongoing support, and continue to build on their skills and visions as leaders.



Creative Activism

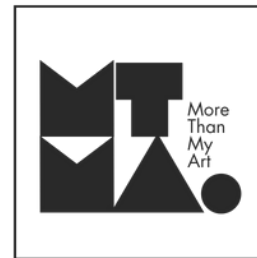
2022-2026

Building upon the priorities detailed in our [2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#), Cleveland VOTES is launching More Than My Art, a creative activism initiative that aims to cultivate space to uplift and amplify the narrative of art/creative activism, in recognition that the artists, musicians, and storytellers that make Cleveland vibrant are critical to the social fabric of the community. We will work with individuals and organizations from the art/creative community to ensure that our narrative work and the way we lift up storytelling and art activism is a part of, and impacts, both elections and the stories that are told after elections.



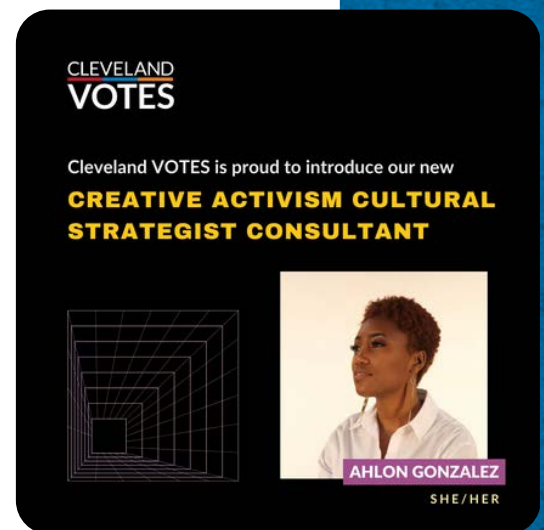
CURRENT STRATEGY

To guide this work, we engaged the [Center for Creative Artistic Activism \(C4AA\)](#), a national organization that trains and advises organizations; artists and activists to help them increase the efficacy and efficacy of their artistic activism. Our Executive Director became familiar with their work through some of her other endeavors. Our staff have engaged with their programming over the last few years. For instance, our Senior Intern, Sidney Poor participated in a learning lab (summer 2022) and in 2023, our Civic Engagement Strategist participated in their Unstoppable Voters Fellowship. In September, we also added capacity for this program by conducting a request for applications, interviewing, and later selecting our Cultural Strategist Consultant, Ahlon Gonzalez.



From the months of August to October, our team conducted a preliminary research phase of work to compile useful data. At that time, we posed and answered research questions that identified fellow democracy builders and creatives in Cleveland and clarified how we saw arts and culture intersecting with our current civic engagement work. During this phase, we also conducted round tables and one-on-ones that have helped inform our future program goals. Since then, C4AA has analyzed and assessed said data to produce recommendations that will inform the development and implementation of this program.

Currently, the C4AA is continuing to assist us with an implementation plan around this initiative which will involve training and workshops that we will provide to the Greater Cleveland community in spring 2024. C4AA has also begun train-the-trainer sessions with our staff, which will prepare us to facilitate larger workshops with Cleveland's most civic minded cultural workers.



DEFENDING DEMOCRACY THROUGH STORYTELLING

In November, Cleveland VOTES hosted Storytelling at Sunset, a celebratory and reflective convening for our ECEF, EJ Cohort, and DemCo participants. The CV team kicked off the event with a post-election debrief and then they went over next steps for getting voters engaged in 2024. Then attendees were broken up into groups and spent the rest of the evening sharing personal stories about their social justice work from the past year. Participants left encouraged and with new ideas and connections.



“QUOTES FROM PROGRAMMING PARTICIPANTS”



“

This past summer, CAIR-Ohio Cleveland was one of the organizations awarded a grant from Cleveland VOTES to help mobilize the community in the hopes to create a more equitable democracy. Since then, we've sent out more than six thousand Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) postcards, we registered scores of new voters, created our own voter guide to help inform the community of new guidelines, and produced a (GOTV) video incorporating several languages. The Community Resource Fair was a continuation of these efforts and I really enjoyed meeting new faces and helping people get ready for the upcoming elections.

”

Faten Odeh

Interim Executive Director of CAIR-Ohio,
Cleveland Chapter, ECEF Grantee + NVRD Partner

“

DemCo has helped me expand my knowledge base and make connections to continue my advocacy work in a significant way. I have gained an even more concrete education and understanding of the rich history of political and social work here in Cleveland, specifically by the Black community.

”

Jerrod Amir Shakir

Grassroots Organizer with Uhcan
Ohio, DemCo Member

“

The Cleveland VOTES Strategic Plan describes the importance of elevating community narratives and highlighting stories of the people most affected by environmental inequities. The EJ Cohort has supported Birthing Beautiful Communities' goals by helping us showcase just how strongly climate change and those environmental inequities are negatively impacting Cleveland families, pregnant persons, and their newborns. Our organization continues to act as a sounding board to elected officials of what our clients are faced with to simply have healthy babies, and with CV's prioritization of equitable civic engagement, we will be able to effect more change.

”

Lindsey Lott

Development Coordinator at Birthing Beautiful
Communities, EJ Cohort Members



COMMUNITY ACTIVATION + ENGAGEMENT



CV's partner ecosystem is quite expansive. We define a partner as an institution/organization that is value aligned, committed to advancing equitable civic engagement and engages/works with historically marginalized populations. Some examples include: past/current grantees, collaborative partners, and institutions that have invited us in for a speaking engagement/training and tabling.

We believe positive partnerships and collaborations are essential to a thriving democracy. In 2023, we participated in over 30 different forms of engagements with local partners. Many of these organizations wanted help elevating the importance of equitable civic engagement, the 2023 elections, and learning how they can live out democracy beyond elections. We served as hosts, project leads, promoters, facilitators, collaborators, conveners, panelists, teachers, and many more. As democracy evolves, so does our role within the community.

Local organizations, initiatives, and institutions we engaged with in 2023

Cleveland Council on World Affairs
NAACP Cleveland
PEP Cleveland
ASIA
NOVA
SYATT
EYEJ
Birthing Beautiful Communities
Concerned Citizens Organized Against Lead (CCOAL)
Cleveland Transformation Alliance
OCA Greater Cleveland
Ghetto Therapy
Mobilize the Vote NEO
Cleveland Tree Coalition
Journey on Yonder

Men and Women of Central Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry
Neighborhood Connections
Cleveland State University
Cleveland Institute of Art
Case Western Reserve University
Legal Aid Society of Cleveland
CAIR Cleveland
Midtown Cleveland
Old Brooklyn CDC
Destination Cleveland
City Club of Cleveland
League of Women Voters
Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park
LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland
Cleveland International Film Festival

Assembly for the Arts
YLN
Cleveland Municipal School District
Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless
Tremont West
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. - GCAC
Towards Employment
The Land
Teaching Young Women in Society Truth
ReNOUNce DeNOUNce
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Alpha Omega Chapter
Arab American Voter Project
Black Empowerment Makes A Difference
Greater Cleveland Congregations
M-PAC Cleveland
Northeast Ohio Worker Center
Bike Cleveland

Leadership Cleveland
Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association
Burten Bell Carr Development Corp
Northwest Neighborhoods
Mastery School of Hawken
Fund for Our Economic Future
Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential [LEAP]
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated - Great Lakes Region
Promise Academy
Tamir Rice Foundation
SURJ Cleveland
Neighborhood Connections
Wave Space Studio
Voting Matters
Cleveland Community Police Commission

Statewide and national organizations, initiatives, and institutions we engaged with in 2023

State Voices

ACLU Ohio
Rank the Vote Ohio
Black Voters Matter
Common Cause Ohio
All Voting is Local
Center for Artistic Activism
ReFrame

VoteRiders

Fair Elections Center
Ohio Voting Rights Coalition
ReFrame
RePower
Red, Wine + Blue
Jream Foundation
Ohioans for Reproductive Freedom
Alliance for the Great Lakes

America Votes

OPAWL
Ohio Voter Fund
Honesty for Ohio Education
Ohio Families Unite Against Police Brutality
The Buckeye Flame
New Voices for Reproductive Justice
Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio
Policy Matters Ohio

Nonprofit Vote

Ohio Environmental Council
Ohio Fair Courts Alliance
Equality Ohio
Fair Districts Ohio

SPECIAL PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

Black Voters Matter provided us with 6,000 in-kind August Special Election guides to distribute to the community and our partners. Then during our November Pull Up to the Polls event, BVM passed out free swag and voting information to attendees



COMMUNITY AWARDS + RECOGNITION

POSITIVE EDUCATOR AWARD

Awarded by:

Positive Education Program Cleveland

Date: June 6

AWARD SUMMARY

Since 1971, Positive Education Program Cleveland has been supporting young people to overcome and thrive. PEP provides services for children challenged by complex developmental trauma, mental health issues and autism, their families and the professionals who support them. Each year they honor one or more local organizations for being a “positive educator” in the community. At PEP Cleveland’s annual PEP Rally for Kids fundraiser, CEO Habeebah R. Grimes presented the Cleveland VOTES staff with the award.



COMMUNITY AWARDS + RECOGNITION

NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY ALL-STAR PARTNER FOR 2022

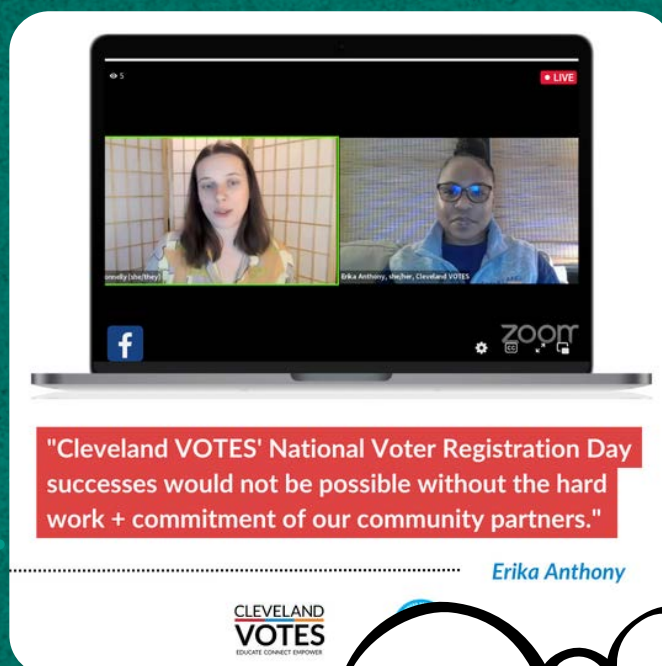
Awarded by:

NVRD

Date: February 17

AWARD SUMMARY

Back in 2022, Cleveland VOTES had the highest number of voter registrations for National Voter Registration Day (7411 voter registrations, 2669 online voter registrations). The national NVRD office elevated us as an “All-Star Partner” for our efforts. Then in February, NVRD gave Erika Anthony a chance to explain our strategy for registering voters in Cleveland during a Facebook Live event (“Looking Back: National Voter Registration Day 2022”). Erika emphasized the importance of working with community partners who already have established relationships with the people they serve.



"Cleveland VOTES' National Voter Registration Day successes would not be possible without the hard work + commitment of our community partners."

Erika Anthony

CLEVELAND
VOTES
EDUCATE. CONNECT. EMPOWER.

COMMUNITY AWARDS + RECOGNITION

COMMUNITY HONOREE

Awarded by:

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Great Lakes Region

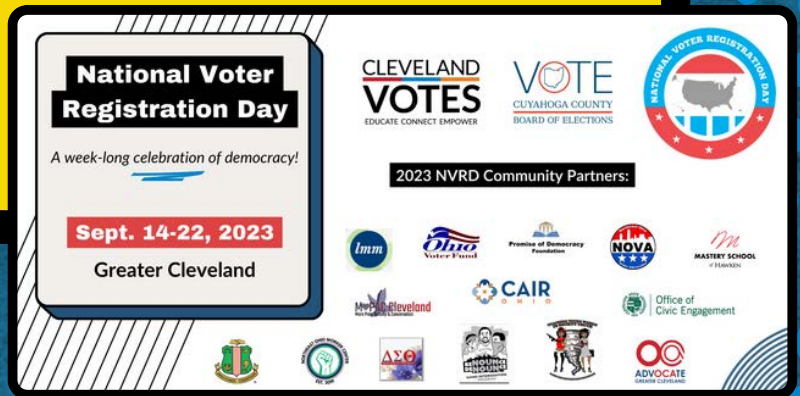
Date: March 3

AWARD SUMMARY

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated is the first sorority formed by African American women in 1908 at Howard University. AKA Sorority, Inc., Great Lakes Region held a regional conference in March with the theme “Women Leading and Soaring to Greater Heights.” Cleveland VOTES co-founders Erika Anthony and Crystal Bryant were honored at the event for demonstrating outstanding service and leadership in and around the Greater Cleveland area.



CIVIC HOLIDAYS



NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY WEEK OF ACTION

National Voter Registration Day is a nonpartisan civic holiday celebrating our democracy. Celebrated every September, National Voter Registration Day involves volunteers and organizations from all over the country hitting the streets in a single day of coordinated field, technology and media efforts. NVRD seeks to create broad awareness of voter registration opportunities and to reach tens of thousands of voters who may not register otherwise [Source: NVRD].

Cleveland VOTES has been celebrating NVRD since its founding in 2014. NVRD 2023 (which we spread over a “week of action” from Sept. 16-22) sought to promote community, knowledge, and voter accessibility for the city of Cleveland. Because of the dedication and teamwork of our community partners, creative consultants, local businesses, and the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections, NVRD 2023 was a success! Working with partners for NVRD instead of working alone is unique to Cleveland VOTES. ED Erika Anthony has even received attention the past two years from the national NVRD organization for the effective way she and the CV team have built strong relationships with community members, which leads to a high organization participation rate during our annual NVRD celebration.

Out of all the organizations and partners that helped with the event this year, all of them either hosted their own event or supported, partnered with, or elevated other organizations who hosted an event. There was a mix of organizations who had previously served as NVRD partners with Cleveland VOTES and new partners who had heard about us from colleagues or our outreach via our communication channels. Some of the notable NVRD Week of Action events include pop-up registrations, ice cream socials, and tabling at schools, county libraries, festivals, job fairs, shopping centers, and more.



We estimate that all our outreach efforts combined to reach over 3500 individuals. In addition, our combined efforts collected about 1081 voter registrations and 250 vote-by-mail applications, as well as 6 precinct election official Spanish translators.

CIVIC HOLIDAYS

NATIONAL VOTER EDUCATION WEEK

OCTOBER 2-6

This was Cleveland VOTES' second year participating in National Voter Education Week (NVEW). NVEW is an open-source, nonpartisan voter education campaign held the first week of October that equips voters with the tools, information, and confidence they need to cast their ballots. Launched in 2020, NVEW works in conjunction with the other Civic Holidays to help guide voters through the entire voter engagement process – from registration to turnout – in fun and creative ways [Source: NVEW]. Just like in 2022, Cleveland VOTES celebrated NVEW virtually this year by sharing helpful information on social media about finding your polling location, understanding your ballot, making a plan to vote in person or by mail, and more.

#NationalVoterEducationWeek

NATIONAL VOTER EDUCATION WEEK

REGISTER TO VOTE OR CHECK YOUR STATUS

Registration is the first step to becoming a voter!

NationalVoterEducationWeek.org

NATIONAL VOTER EDUCATION WEEK

5 simple steps to make sure you're ready to vote this fall!

- 10/2 REGISTER TO VOTE
- 10/3 VOTE BY MAIL
- 10/4 MAKE A VOTE PLAN
- 10/5 RESEARCH YOUR BALLOT
- 10/6 MOBILIZE YOUR COMMUNITY

#NationalVoterEducationWeek NationalVoterEducationWeek.org

CIVIC HOLIDAYS

VOTE EARLY DAY/PULL UP TO THE POLLS

Vote Early Day is a nonpartisan movement of media companies, businesses, nonprofits, election administrators, and creatives working to ensure all Americans have the tools to vote early. Launched in the midst of a global pandemic, Vote Early Day became a critical resource to ensure no voter had to choose between their health and casting their ballot. In its first celebration, Vote Early Day attracted 134 premier partners and 2,700 general partners from every state in the nation [Source: Vote Early Day]. There are many proven benefits to early voting, such as reduced stress on the voting system on Election Day; shorter lines on Election Day; improved poll worker performance; early identification & correction of registration errors & voting system glitches; greater access to voting; and increased voter satisfaction [Source: Brennan Center for Justice].

Cleveland VOTES has incorporated VED into its civic holiday programming since 2020. This year we celebrated our second annual Pull Up to the Polls, an early voting celebration held on November 4 outside the Board of Elections. For four hours we greeted people who came to vote early, offering them free food & beverages (provided by KafeLA and Comfort Cle), children activities, music, VED swag, and just general encouragement. ThirdSpace Action Lab, All Voting is Local Ohio, Black Voters Matter, Towards Employment, the SPOT Youth Empowerment, Bike CLE, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. - GCAC, New Voices for Repro Justice, MPAC Cleveland, Ohio Voter Fund, and the NAACP Cleveland branch partnered with us on the event. They helped the festivities run smoothly and had tables with community resources. Everything was documented by photographer Rudy Duran. The total number of attendees that day was 261.

VOTE EARLY DAY
Sponsor

PULL UP TO THE POLLS
A free early voting celebration

NOV 4 12-4PM

CLEVELAND VOTES
EDUCATE CONNECT EMPOWER
Host

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- THE SPOT
- BLACK VOTERS MATTER
- ALL VOTING IS LOCAL
- NAACP Cleveland Branch
- THIRDSPACE
- MPAC Cleveland
- DELTA SIGMA THETA
- NEW VOICES FOR REPRO JUSTICE
- OHIO VOTER FUND

BOARD OF ELECTIONS
1900 E. 30th St.
Cleveland, OH 44114

LEKKO COFFEE
COMFORT CLE
THE AMERICAN STORE
Vendors

Registration for this event is not necessary.
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT ROBIN@CLEVOTES.COM OR VISIT CLEVOTES.COM



CIVIC HOLIDAYS

ELECTION HERO DAY

NOVEMBER 6

Election Hero Day (EHD) is a national day of recognition held on the Monday before the General Election every November. Nonprofits, business leaders, brands, public officials, and many more celebrate the tremendous contributions state officials and local election workers are making to ensure a safe, secure, and accessible voting experience for all [Source: Election Hero Day]. Cleveland VOTES has been an EHD partner since 2022.

This past year we celebrated Angela Douglas as a local election hero. Angela served as a trainer for the Board of Elections during the Obama campaign and has also worked the polls for over 2 decades. In addition to serving as the Chief Operations Officer for ReNOUNce DeNOUNce—where she educates young adults about civic engagement—she is also a member of Cleveland VOTES’ 2023-24 Democracy Collective Incubator Program. Cleveland VOTES honored Angela’s work with a special tribute post and video on social media. The response from the community was overwhelmingly positive.

This Election Hero Day, the Cleveland VOTES team is honoring Angela Douglas



Angela Douglas

Angela [she/her] was a trainer for the Board of Elections during the Obama campaign and has also worked the polls for over two decades. She was raised in a home that understood democracy, with both of her parents working the polls for over 5 decades.

Happy
Election Hero Day 



Election Hero Day 

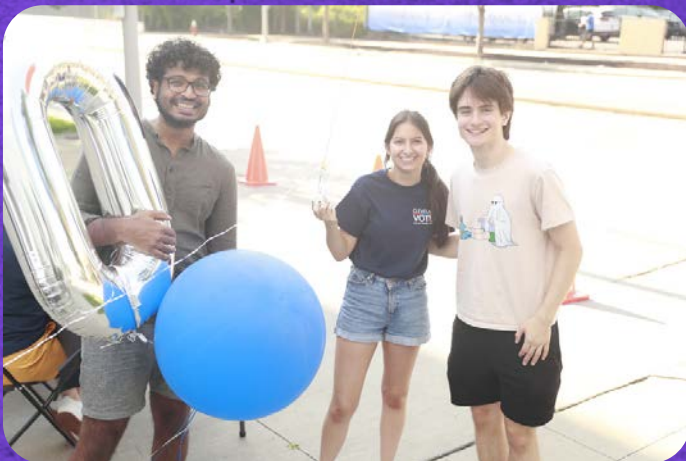
CLEVELAND
VOTES
EDUCATE CONNECT EMPOWER

Nov. 6,
2023

OTHER CV-LED COMMUNITY EVENTS

PULL UP TO THE POLLS [AUGUST SPECIAL ELECTION]

Cleveland VOTES and All Voting is Local Ohio hosted a special Pull Up to the Polls event on August 4 to encourage people to vote early in the August Special Election. Volunteers and Cleveland VOTES staff pulled voters from the Board of Elections and directed them to the lot outside our office building where the event was being held. There were free voting resources, chicken sandwiches, a photo booth, and a DJ. Photos were taken by Rudy Duran.



OTHER CV-LED COMMUNITY EVENTS

FALL CIVICS CIVIC CAFÉ

Cleveland VOTES partnered up with All Voting is Local Action Ohio to host our first ever Civic Café, a space for community dialogue around civics and the then upcoming August 8th special election. For an evening, Kafela, a cornerstone of the St. Clair-Superior neighborhood, was transformed into a space with food, coffee, and music. Community members from the neighborhood, Cleveland VOTES, and our partners gathered together to talk about issues like: Do you have faith in the electoral process? How has the State of Ohio treated your communities? Why do you think voter turnout is low in Cleveland? And more. Kayla Griffin, director of AVL Action Ohio and president of the Cleveland NAACP, moderated an impassioned large group discussion.

COME HANG OUT AT OUR FIRST EVER

Civic Café

JULY 27, 2023
KAFELA (6710 ST. CLAIR AVE.)
5:30-8:30PM

FREE FOOD + DRINK

FREE CHILDCARE
AVAILABLE

DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE'S A SPECIAL
ELECTION ON AUGUST 8TH? STOP BY TO DRINK
ICED TEA, VOICE YOUR CONCERNS + DISCUSS
HOW OUR GOVERNEMENT IMPACTS US!



CLEVELAND
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ALL
VOTING
IS LOCAL ACTION
OHIO

REGISTER AT
[BIT.LY/CIVICCAFE](https://bit.ly/civiccfe)



OTHER CV-LED COMMUNITY EVENTS

FALL CIVICS

MEN AND WOMEN OF CENTRAL

In partnership with Bridgette Smith-Jackson and her organization, Men and Women of Central, Cleveland VOTES hosted a civic dialogue in the Central neighborhood (which included residents from neighboring communities as well). This opportunity came about as we realized the power of leveraging a pre-existing base, which Men and Women of Central has done so incredibly well. At their Wednesday Empowerment Sessions, community members come together to dialogue, learn about, and share resources, opportunities, information, and more. We co-organized for Cleveland VOTES to be the focus of one of these sessions, and hosted a dialogue around the issues for the upcoming November election. We saw an extremely high level of engagement, reinforcing our belief that Clevelanders do have real interest in and care about civic issues.



OTHER CV-LED COMMUNITY EVENTS

FALL CIVICS PROMISE ACADEMY

Promise Academy is an alternative and flexible high school that offers pathways to a high school diploma for students who may not get the opportunity at their primary high schools. Cleveland VOTES has always understood the importance of involving young people in our programming—just because someone is under voting age does not mean they do not have an impact on the process. Understanding this, we co-organized a program to get some students talking about voting, engagement, and more. Students who attended were offered extra credit for their social studies courses, as well as credit towards a civics graduation badge. Not only did the program provide an informative space through presentations and discussions, but it also provided an engaging space through debates. We watched students get fired up as they debated with one another in a professional manner about issues they cared deeply about. There was a clear message: the narrative that Cleveland youth don't care about social or community matters is wrong. Offering them proper avenues to express and act on their care is crucial.

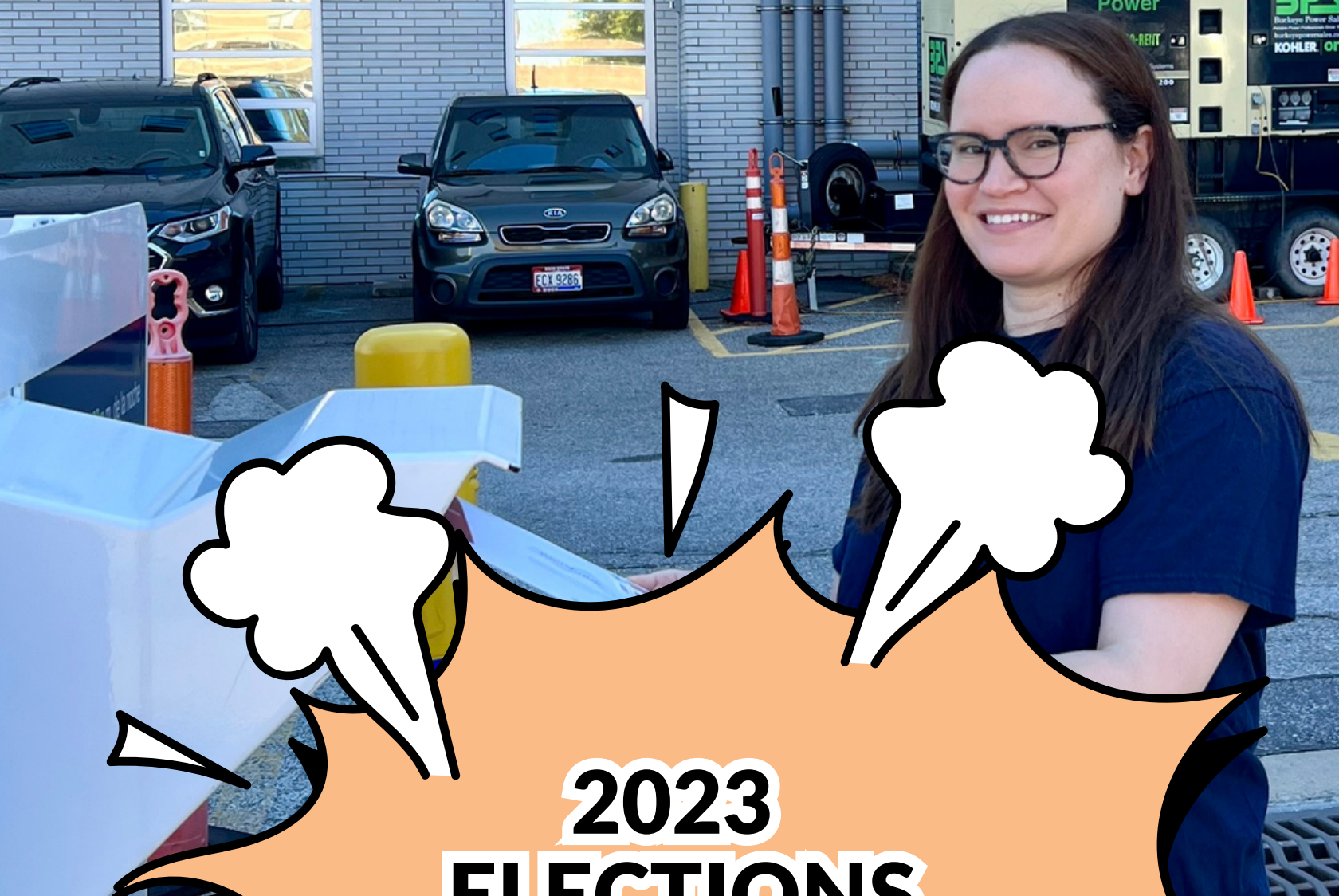


OTHER CV-LED COMMUNITY EVENTS

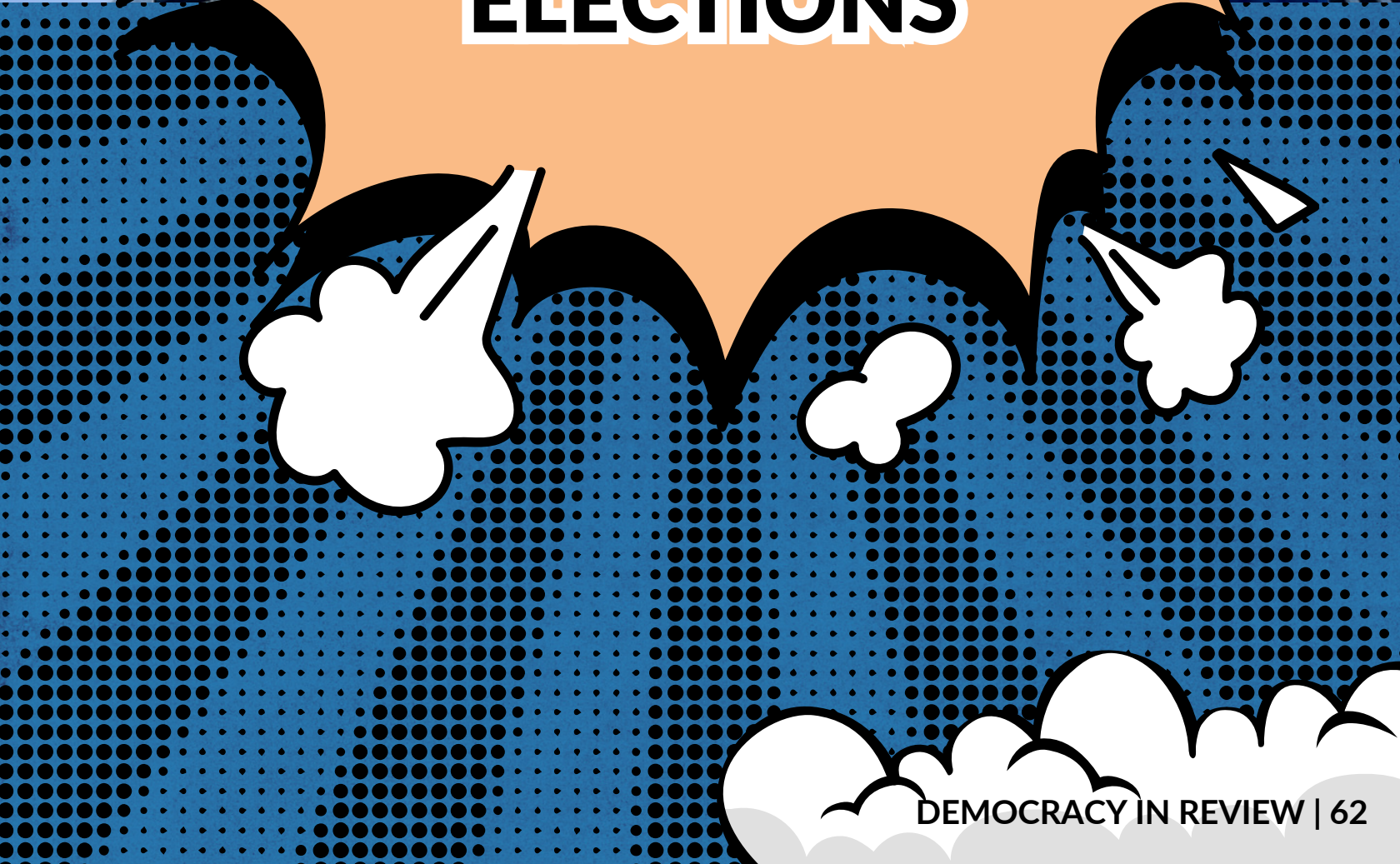
FALL CIVICS GHETTO THERAPY

Our Fall Civics event with Walter Patton's Ghetto Therapy was another arm of our programming in the Central & surrounding neighborhoods. Ghetto Therapy sessions provide a safe space for community members to talk about personal and community issues, mental health, and other topics. These sessions also often have specific themes related to a guest speaker or an organization they bring in. Leveraging this existing structure, as well as an audience and a group that already had a high degree of relationality and trust, we hosted a civic dialogue about the upcoming November 8th election. It proved to be effective, with participants showing high levels of engagement and interest, again reinforcing our belief that Clevelanders do care about civic issues.

Ghetto Therapy™
Hosted by
Walter Patton
Oct 18th
6-8pm
WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT NIGHT
"Elevating Our Community"
Reiki Session Facilitated by
Reiki Master and Occupational Therapist
Shannon
Yarbrough
THE CORNUCOPIA
7201 Kinsman RD Cleveland, OH 44104
IG @ghettotherapy216



2023 ELECTIONS



August 8 Special Election

In February, Ohio Republican legislators introduced House Joint Resolution 1, which would require a vote of at least 60% of the electors to approve any constitutional amendment and to modify the procedures for an initiative petition proposing a constitutional amendment. The proposed resolution would also require petition signatures from at least 5% of the electors of each county in the state (instead of half of the counties) and eliminate the ten-day cure period to gather additional signatures. The Republican leadership involved made it clear that the proposed threshold increase was intended to thwart efforts to get abortion access encoded in the Ohio Constitution. The resolution was passed by the General Assembly in late April. And then the state legislature approved another resolution (Senate Joint Resolution 2) on May 10 that would ask Ohio voters to vote on the threshold increase during a special election in August 2023. Secretary of State Frank LaRose approved SJR 2 on the same day (since the election measure passed in the form of a joint resolution, it did not require the governor's signature to take effect). The Special Election was then scheduled for August 8.

The Special Election was a surprise to many Ohioans, including the Cleveland VOTES staff. This is because Ohio Republicans essentially banned special elections at the end of 2022. Election workers especially were blindsided by the announcement—they did not have much time to prepare for another (unscheduled) election. However, they pulled through and organized a very successful election. They deserve a lot of credit for their hard work leading up to August 8. Voters also showed up in record numbers for a special election (335229 in Cuyahoga County). Issue 1 ended up not passing, with 76.54% of voters voting no.



EARLY IN-PERSON
2023 SPECIAL ELECTION

VOTE CUYAHOGA COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

VOTING HOURS

July 11th - July 28th	Weekdays*	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
July 31st	Monday	7:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.
August 1st	Tuesday**	7:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.
August 2nd-4th	Wednesday - Friday	7:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.
August 5th	Saturday	8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
August 6th	Sunday	1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

*Weekdays are denoted as Monday through Friday.
**Deadline to request an absentee ballot.



September 12 Primary Election

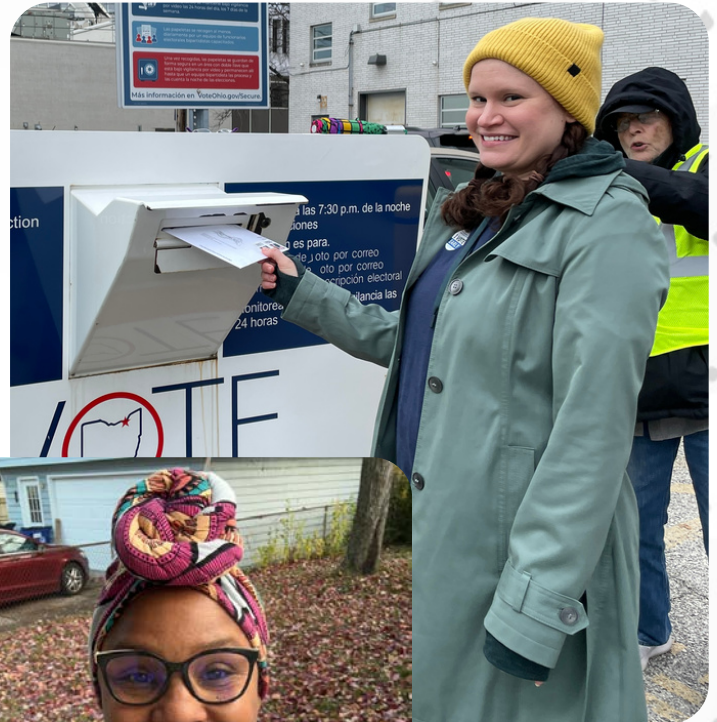
Only some Cuyahoga County residents needed to vote in the September Primary Election, specifically Garfield Heights City Council Ward 2 and Maple Heights City Council District 6 residents. A total of 357 people voted.



November 7 General Election

In Ohio the key issues were Issue 1 (abortion rights amendment) and Issue 2 (recreational marijuana legalization). Cuyahoga County also voted on Issue 5 (Tri-C renewal levy) and Cleveland residents voted on Issue 38 (participatory budgeting). You can refer back to Section III—Campaigns, Issues & Legislation—for a more detailed breakdown of how residents voted on these issues.

The turnout numbers for 2021 and 2023 are on the next page (data from Cuyahoga County BOE). Since 2023 was an odd election year, we didn't vote for executive or legislative candidates at the state and national level, which tend to be a big draw for voters. As such, odd years are considered "off" years since voter turnout is nearly always lower than even years. That is why we are sharing data from 2021 and 2023 instead of 2022 and 2023.



SUMMARY OF OFFICIAL CANVASS

There were a total of 232,149 ballots tabulated for the November 2, 2021 General Election. Below is a breakdown of the ballots counted by category and a percentage of the total vote by category.

Category	Ballots Cast	% of Total Ballots Cast
<i>Election Day</i>	146,686	63.19%
<i>Vote-by-Mail</i>	75,874	32.68%
<i>Early In-Person</i>	6,711	2.89%
<i>Provisional</i>	1,891	0.81%
<i>Post Election Day</i>	403	0.17%
<i>Post Vote-By-Mail</i>	584	0.25%
Total	232,149	

SUMMARY OF OFFICIAL CANVASS

There was a total of 403,221 ballots tabulated for the November 7, 2023 General Election. Below is a breakdown of the ballots counted by category and a percentage of the total vote by category.

Category	Ballots Cast	% of Total Ballots Cast
<i>Election Day</i>	286,991	71.17%
<i>Vote-by-Mail</i>	88,474	21.94%
<i>Early In-Person</i>	21,588	5.35%
<i>Provisional</i>	4,805	1.19%
<i>Post Election Day</i>	44	0.01%
<i>Post Vote-By-Mail</i>	1319	0.33%
Total	403,221	



As you can see, there was a significant turnout increase for every type of voting. One of the most notable increases was the amount of people voting early in person at the Board of the Elections—14, 877 more people voted early in 2023 than in 2021. This means local, state and national efforts (such as Pull Up to the Polls and Vote Early Day) to encourage early voting are working!

The final turnout numbers for 2023 are also extra impressive when you consider that—due to OH HB 458—we had one fewer day of early voting this year, each county is only allowed one voter dropbox, the absentee ballot request window is shorter, and state-issued photo IDs are now required for voting in person. We will continue fighting to repeal these unfair voting restrictions, but we are also proud to say that in 2023 Ohioans did not let these rules stop them when it came to protecting their rights through voting. Imagine how high turnout will be when we aren't restricted!



Election initiatives we engaged with

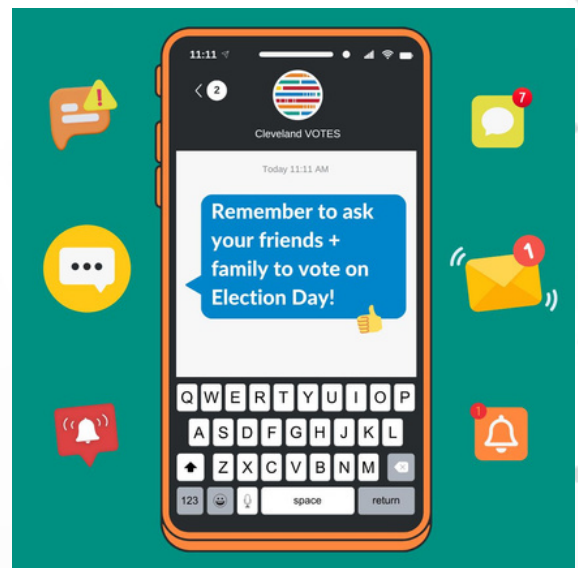


ELECTION PROTECTION

Over the past several years, there has been a disturbing increase in the number and scope of attempts to suppress the votes of tens of thousands of American citizens (sometimes by illegal, intimidating practices). Election Protection makes sure that every American can make their voice heard, even when anti-voter rules try to get in the way. Every election year, Common Cause mobilizes thousands of Election Protection volunteers to help Americans navigate the voting process and cast their votes without obstruction, confusion, or intimidation. This past year, Common Cause placed thousands of volunteers on the ground, and recruited a team of legal experts to staff their 866-OUR-VOTE hotline [source: Common Cause]. From August-November, Cleveland VOTES helped promote Common Cause’s volunteer recruitment efforts through our social media channels, newsletter, and in-person events. We also shared the voter protection phone number several times.

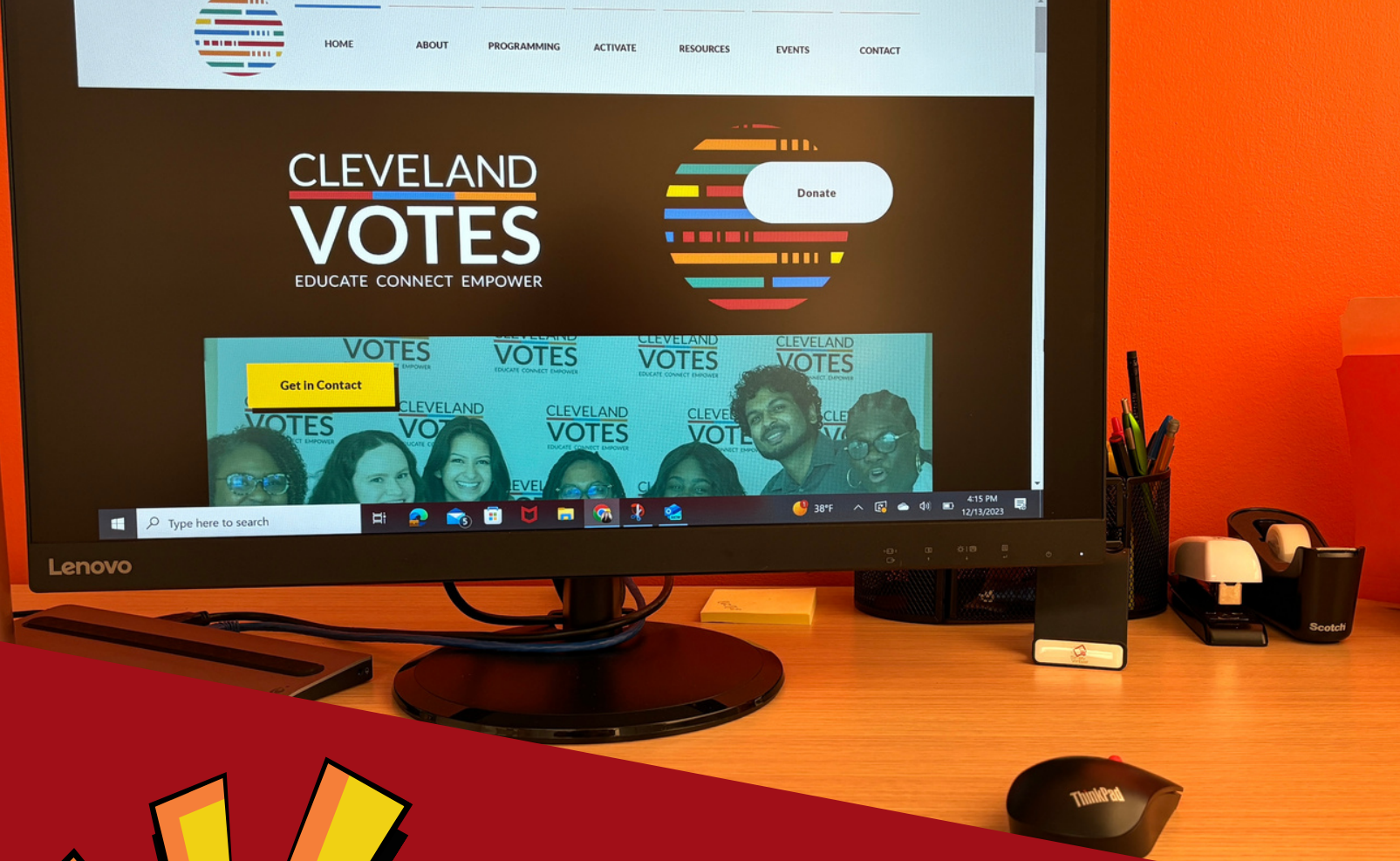
VOTE TRIPLING

For the past few years the Cleveland VOTES staff has engaged in “vote tripling” on Election Day, a tactic where you ask voters to text or call 3 friends + family members and tell them to vote, too. Instead of standing outside of polling places like we did in 2022, though, the team incorporated vote tripling while doing phone banking for Issue 38—after we talked about the benefits of participatory budgeting, we ended the phone call by asking the person to encourage their social network to vote.





COMMUNICATIONS

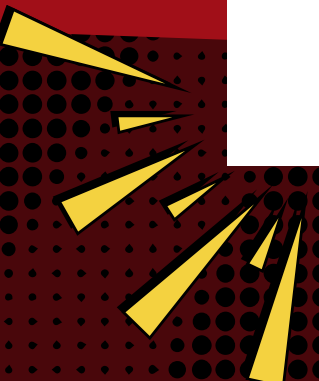
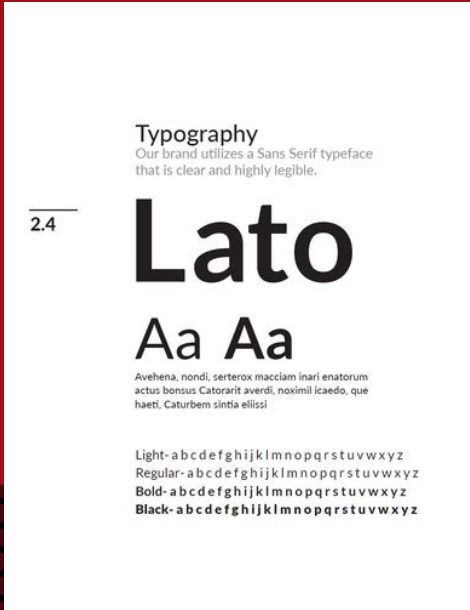
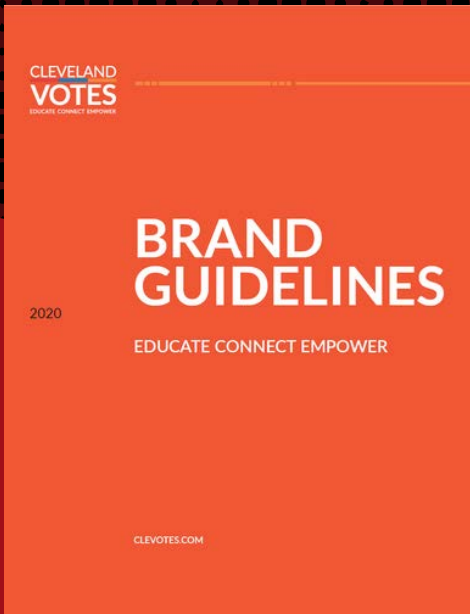


Our communication channels were busy this year! In the midst of providing democracy updates to our networks, we launched a new blog (#CommitToCle), started the process of redesigning our website, and updated our brand guidelines. These changes are meant to better meet the evolving needs of our increasingly diverse community.



Brand Refresh

In mid-2023, we worked with SunnyBlu Art Agency to update our Brand Guidelines. The new brand vision includes more vibrant colors and bolder, easier to read fonts that have been incredibly effective at grabbing people’s attention when we’re sharing important voter information, elevating new initiatives, or pointing out current threats to our democracy. We also feel the guidelines reflect our commitment to making civic engagement celebratory and accessible.



CLEVELAND VOTES

EDUCATE CONNECT EMPOWER

BRAND GUIDELINES

CLEVELAND VOTES

ABOUT

2023

Cleveland VOTES
IS A NONPARTISAN, DEMOCRACY-BUILDING, AND MOBILIZATION ENTITY THAT AIMS TO STRENGTHEN CIVIC MUSCLE AND POWER TO ENSURE A MORE INFORMED, PARTICIPATORY, AND COHESIVE COMMUNITY.

The initiative invests in entities working to expand voter registration, accessibility, and participation by integrating the practice of equitable civic engagement through the success and measurable outreach efforts of its partners, collaborators, and grantees.

Our brand guidelines Please email media@clevotes.com if you have questions about any of the guidelines listed herein.

Created in partnership with SunnyBlu Art Agency

CLEVELAND VOTES

FONT

LATO All Caps Regular Lato Lower Case Regular
 LATO All Caps Bold Lato Lower Case Bold
 LATO Regular Italicized

ARCHIVO BLACK
Archivo Black

CLEVELAND VOTES

COLOR PALETTE

PRIMARY COLORS

- #DE4343
- #0085CA
- #FF883E

SECONDARY COLORS

- #009081
- #FFC915
- #A14F8C

TERTIARY COLORS

- #F68B9
- #343434 MATTE BLACK
- #FFDF8 OFF WHITE
- #FABB86

ACCENTS

- #000000 BLACK
- #F2FE8 OFF WHITE
- #FFFFFF WHITE

CLEVELAND VOTES

WEBSITE


Like our Brand Guidelines, our website is also experiencing a makeover (also designed by SunnyBlu). Our Home page, About page, and Contact page have been updated and redesigned. And we added a new Programming page that currently has information about the Democracy Collective. Everything is designed to be more user-friendly based on feedback we've received about our site. We are aiming to have the rest of the updates done before election season next year. During that time we plan to add more voting resources, a 2024 election guide, and our narrative strategy plan.

Quick Stats

Website visits: 4000+
Most popular page: Homepage

WHAT WE DO

Watch this video by SunnyBlu Art Agency to learn more about our history, work, and culture.




Erika Anthony
Executive Director

Where we've been.

History of Cleveland VOTES

Co-Founders Erika Anthony and Crystal Bryant created Cleveland VOTES to fill the voter registration void for individuals incarcerated and re-entering society. While our organization was founded in 2014, for the first couple of years we operated as a project and over the years have evolved into a critical organization in the democracy-building ecosystem.

Get in Contact




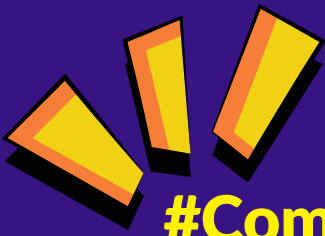
Read About Our Vision

Our Mission

Cleveland VOTES is a nonpartisan, democracy-building movement that works to reconstruct and strengthen power through active participation of our collective partners. Guided by a system of networks, we promote informed, action-oriented mobilization that shifts power towards Equitable Civic Engagement and Infrastructure.

EDUCATE • CONNECT • EMPOWER





#CommitToCle: A Democracy Blog

Why did we turn #CommitToCle, our annual voter engagement guide, into a blog?

When we first conceived of our [#CommitToCleveland Toolkit](#), it was a response to the crises we were all experiencing in 2020. Starting with the global health pandemic, to the canceling of our in-person Primary Election in March, to the continued racial injustices, to supporting efforts for the 2020 Census and Presidential Election. It was a free document that people could read/download from anywhere. The toolkit would come to provide those interested in community activation straightforward practices that included dozens of case studies on nonpartisan civic engagement.



Over the past year or so, though, we've noticed some drawbacks of how we publish our toolkit. One of the drawbacks is the volume of information presented in each toolkit. At first glance, it can feel a little overwhelming (especially if you consider that over half of Clevelanders are functionally illiterate). This creates an issue with equitable access. But the blog format allows for us to use many different methods for sharing information, like videos, interactive graphics, image descriptions, interviews and more.



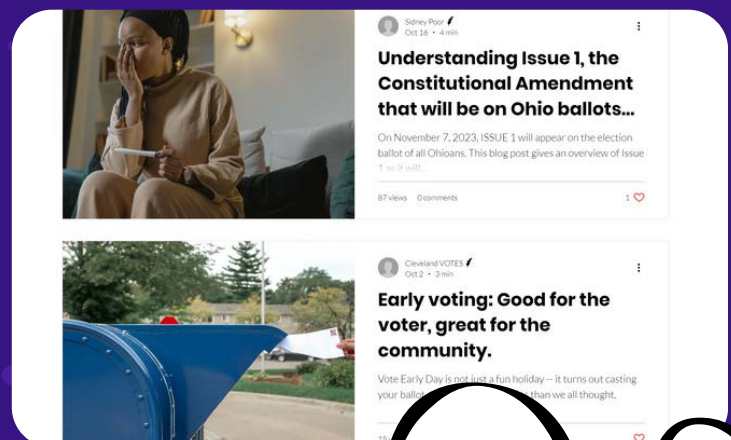
Another drawback of publishing a voter guide as a static document is that democracy is not static (especially in Ohio). Something that we recommend in a published guide could suddenly no longer be valid due to the whims of legislators (like the new voter ID changes that resulted from [HB458](#)). Sharing voter engagement information through a blog, though, will allow us to better accommodate the ebb and flow of democracy.

Also, under our Realizing Equitable Civic Engagement Pillar that we outlined in our [2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#), we identified the importance of strengthening our narrative and storytelling practices. While we highly value quantitative data to tell our collective stories, hearing directly from community partners and residents is equally important to shifting power and reimagining a more liberated future.

Here are some of the blog topics we covered in 2023:

- Upcoming programming + campaigns from CV
- CV staff + partner highlights
- Civic engagement opportunities
- Local + state voting policy updates
- Helpful nonpartisan GOTV tips
- Civic holiday ideas

We are looking forward to seeing how #CommitToCle will evolve in 2024!





Quick Stats

Launch date: April 11

Total posts written: 16

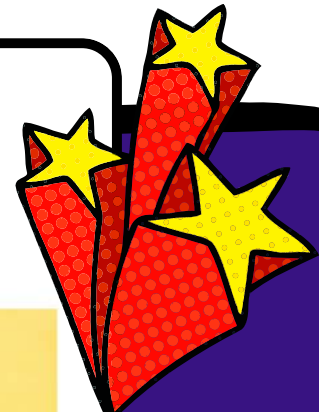
Total number of views: 1,015

Most Popular Post

The August Special Election: Why we're having one and why you should care.

No one expected that Ohio would have a special election in 2023. So when we found out there would be one in August, we knew we had to write a special explainer blog post, especially since the rights of Ohioans were on the line. It ended up being our most read article!

The August Special Election: Why we're having one and why you should care.





Democracy Journal: A Cleveland VOTES Newsletter



Our newsletters don't just give the latest updates about CV team members—they also provide vital election information, partner announcements + updates, the latest legislation news, and more.

Quick Stats

Total newsletters released: 35
Subscribers: 1,533

Important Election Announcements + Information

Happy Vote Early Day! Here is how you can cast your ballot early.

IT'S VOTE EARLY DAY

Updates in Advocacy, Legislation + Research

Issue 1 Updates

YES on 1
ISSUE

Ohioans United for Reproductive Rights

The Democracy Edit: What We're Reading, Watching + Listening to Right Now




A voter guide to Ohio's Nov. 7 general election
Ideastream Public Media

Innovation Ohio report shines light on Ohio's 'missing voters'
Nick Evans

Cleveland VOTES Election News + Announcements

Cleveland VOTES hosts 2nd annual Pull Up to the Polls



Cleveland VOTES Partner Updates + Resources

Bike Cleveland organizing "Roll to the Polls" event to celebrate early voting






Social Media

Quick Stats

Total original campaigns created: 19
 Total posts: 415
 New followers: 1200+

GET TO KNOW OUR GRANTEEES

CLEVELAND VOTES

ARAB AMERICAN VOTER PROJECT

Equitable Civic Engagement Fund

2023

IT'S THE LAST DAY TO APPLY FOR THE

EQUITABLE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FUND

Today is the last day to apply for the 2023 ECEF. Visit clevotes.com to apply.

Application Submission Deadline: Today @ 5pm

CLEVELAND VOTES

PLEASE JOIN CLEVELAND VOTES FOR...

GUMBO COALITION COCKTAIL HOUR

April 1
 Parnell's Irish Pub
 5:30-7pm

Planning on watching Gumbo Coalition at the Cleveland International Film Festival?

Join us for drinks, discussion + democracy before the film!

RSVP
<https://bit.ly/gccocktailhour>

CLEVELAND VOTES

Myths vs Facts About Youth Voting

MYTH #2
 "Voting is so easy! Young people are just refusing to vote."

FACT #2
 Navigating complicated voting laws, policies & procedures, especially for the first time, can restrict ballot access for young people.

November General Election 2023

It's Election Day!

Polis will be open 6:30am-7:30pm

Make sure you have 1 of these:
 --An Ohio driver license
 --An Ohio state ID card
 --An interim identification form issued by the BMV
 --A U.S. passport or passport card
 --A U.S. military ID card, Ohio National Guard ID card, or U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ID card (that includes the voter's name and photograph)

Need Assistance?
 (216) 443-VOTE
www.443vote.us

CLEVELAND VOTES

greater Cleveland Alumnae Chapter

Who was a "democracy hero" in 2023?

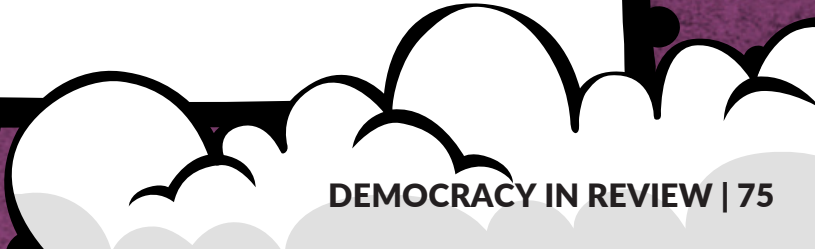
Tag them in the comments and let them know why you're grateful.

CLEVELAND VOTES



Notable Campaign

In August, Civic + Creative Engagement Intern Sabrina Wicker created a special campaign that debunked common myths about youth voting, such as lack of interest. The campaign was shared across our social media channels ahead of the General Election.



Out of Office Messages

The CV staff likes to use our out of office replies as an opportunity to educate folks about the history of the holiday being celebrated as well as elucidate the ethical and cultural implications of being a participant in that holiday. As they say, freedom is not free.

Dear Partner,

Thank you for your email. The Cleveland VOTES offices are closed in observance of Independence Day. We will reopen on July 10.

In the meantime we recommend reading and listening to the resources below as you reflect on the complex feelings that this holiday can bring for so many people. May they help you feel proud about the progress the U.S. has made while also giving you the courage to hold the country accountable for continuing to withhold rights from women, people of color, immigrants, and the LGBTQ+ community.

[This is How You Should Approach the Fourth of July](#)

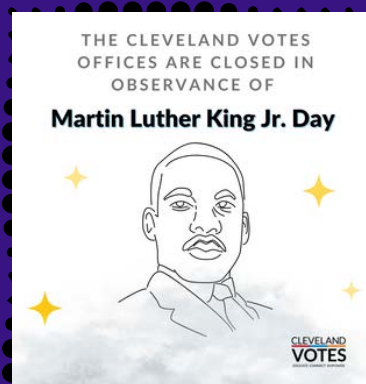
[People's History of Fourth of July](#)

[Do American Indians Celebrate the 4th of July?](#)

[July 4 Reflection: Women's Contributions](#)

[On July 4, recognize the Black and Indigenous soldiers who helped win the Revolutionary War](#)

However you choose to acknowledge July 4th, we hope you have a joyful and restful week.



Dear Partner,

Thank you for your email. The Cleveland VOTES office is currently closed. The staff is resting after an exciting and intense election season and also spending the Thanksgiving holiday with friends and family. We will resume normal hours on Nov. 27.

In the meantime, we hope you will join us in reflecting on the complex history of Thanksgiving and redefining what celebrating it means to us and our communities. We recommend the resources below:

[How to tell kids the real story behind Thanksgiving](#) [Article/Clip]

[Thanksgiving from an Indigenous Perspective](#) [Article]

[An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States](#) [Book]

[Native America](#) [Television series]

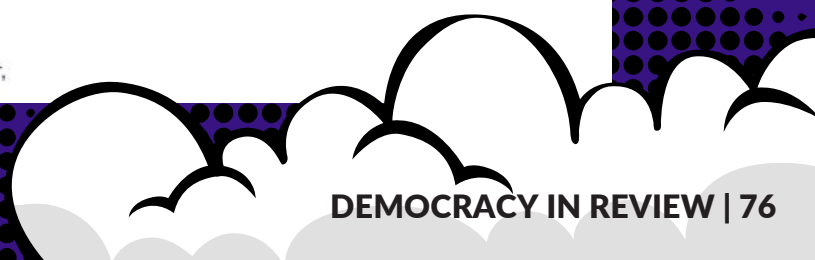


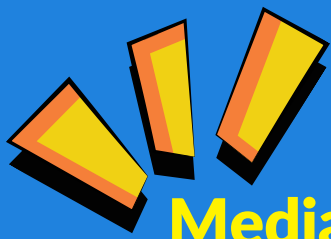
Dear Partner,

Thank you for your email. We are out of the office for the Labor Day holiday weekend and can not respond. Labor Day is an annual celebration of the social and economic achievements of American workers. The holiday is rooted in the late nineteenth century, when labor activists pushed for a federal holiday to recognize the many contributions workers have made to America's strength, prosperity, and well-being. We are honoring their hard work by practicing rest.

I will be available again on Sept. 5 and look forward to following up with you then.

In power,





Media Engagements

Media outlets often reach out to hear our perspective on issues like voter turnout, getting #VoteReady, and community engagement tips. Here are some of the outlets we were featured on in 2023.



Erika Anthony is a co-founder and executive director of Cleveland Votes, a local voter advocacy organization. (Spectrum News 1/Nora McKeown)

1. News 5 Cleveland
2. Signal Cleveland
3. Spectrum News
4. BlackAnthropy Podcast
5. WOJU 95.9 FM
6. Destination Cleveland
7. Sound of Ideas

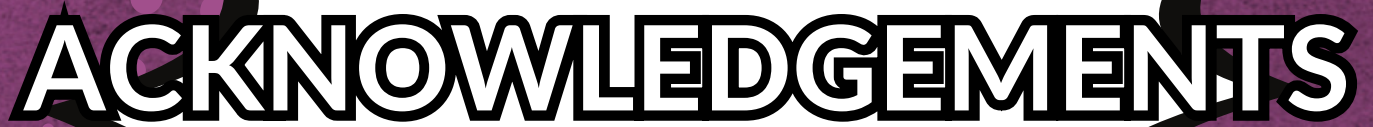
“

When we think about all that happened in Northeast Ohio this year with the unexpected Special Election this summer and all the issues in the November General Election, I do think we have to celebrate all that my fellow voting practitioners were able to accomplish with voter turnout, even if the turnout numbers seem 'low' compared to the rest of the region and world.

”

Erika Anthony

Sound of Ideas, Nov. 14



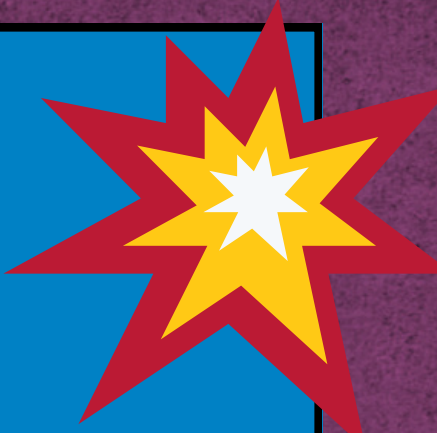
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the Cleveland VOTES team, we extend our immense gratitude to all those that invested in and supported our organization's mission. Our journey towards a more liberated future necessitates that we work in collaboration with value-aligned democracy builders. In addition to partners mentioned throughout this report, please take a moment to appreciate those recognized below. Cleveland VOTES is committed to supporting small/locally owned businesses, particularly those that are women owned and led by BIPOC members of our community. We encourage you to retain the services for the businesses listed below.

2023 CLEVELAND VOTES TEAM

CLEVELAND VOTES FULL-TIME STAFF

1. Erika Anthony, She/Her, Executive Director + Co-founder
 2. Lique Gates, She/They, Senior Strategist
 3. Natacha Sako, She/Her, Operations Administrator
 4. Robin Turner, She/Her, Civic Engagement Strategist (tenure through the end of 2023)
 5. Brianna Zgodinski, She/Her, Communications + Narrative Strategist
- 

FELLOWS + INTERNS

1. Sidney Poor, Civic + Creative Engagement Senior Intern
2. Yugan Sakthi, Democracy Fellow
3. Sabrina Wicker, Civic + Creative Engagement Intern

ONGOING CONSULTANTS

1. Kirby Broadnax, Democracy Collective Facilitator, Independent Consultant
2. Crystal Bryant, Co-Founder + Advisor
3. Ahlon Gonzalez, Creative Activism Cultural Strategist Consultant, Independent Consultant
4. Hubay | Dougherty
5. Lisa McAloney, Grant Writing Consultant, NEOH Solutions
6. Andrianna Sheriff, Social Media Manager, Independent Consultant
7. Kailah Ware, Creative + Web Consultants, SunnyBlu Art

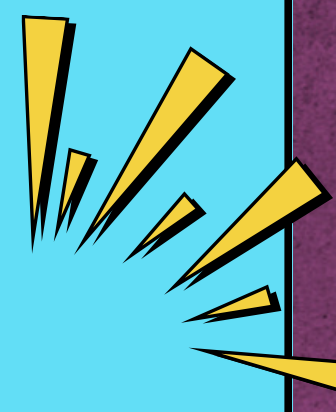


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6. Rudy Duran, Rudegraphy
7. Bianca Edwards
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11. LGBT Community Center Greater Cleveland
12. Brenda Lopez
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14. MAGNET
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17. Evan O'Reilly, Participatory Budgeting Organizer
18. Roaming Biscuit
19. Submittable
20. ThirdSpace Action Lab



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 2. Mordecai Cargill, ThirdSpace Action Lab
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 5. Rachel Dissell, Signal Cleveland, The Land, Cleveland Documentors
 6. Donte Gibbs, The Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park
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 8. Leah Hudnall, The Legacy Perspective
 9. Molly Martin, Participatory Budgeting Cleveland
 10. Deidre McPherson, Assembly for the Arts
 11. Daniel Ortiz, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
 12. Meelak Rashid, Smart Development, Inc.
 13. William Tarter, Jr., The Center For Community Solutions
 14. Karis Tzeng, MidTown Cleveland, Inc.
 15. Gloria M. Ware, Get the Bag, LLC.
 16. Shanelle Smith-Wingham, KeyBank
- 

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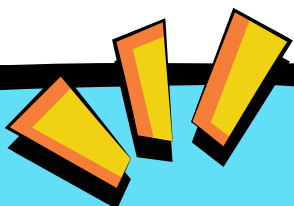


**CLOSING THOUGHTS
FROM CV**



On behalf of our entire team and Advisory Board, thank you for taking the time to read *Democracy in Review 2023: Defending Our Democracy*. While we are preparing for what we know will be a whirlwind of a year, let's continue to remember that democracy extends far beyond elections. We are at a pivotal moment in Cleveland. We believe our collective work will power a transformation toward a more liberated future and that requires shifting the culture. We recently read a quote from Movement Generation that really resonated with us: "If it's not soulful, it's not strategic". Our friends at ThirdSpace Action Lab (two of which are members of our Advisory Board) start each meeting with a 'soul check'. This is an incredibly important practice to remind ourselves that much has been sacrificed and folks put their souls on the line to serve the community. Keeping that as our north star is the moral imperative!

We must shift the mindset from this is being done to us, but instead by us. We ARE the people that make up this democracy. Our voices must not only be heard, but appreciated and valued. Creating creative and participatory pathways for engagement necessitates that we unsubscribe from the status quo. Embrace the unknown and set forth on a more liberatory path. One of the initiatives we are continuing to build out this year is our cultural strategy initiative, which will include creative activism and narrative change.



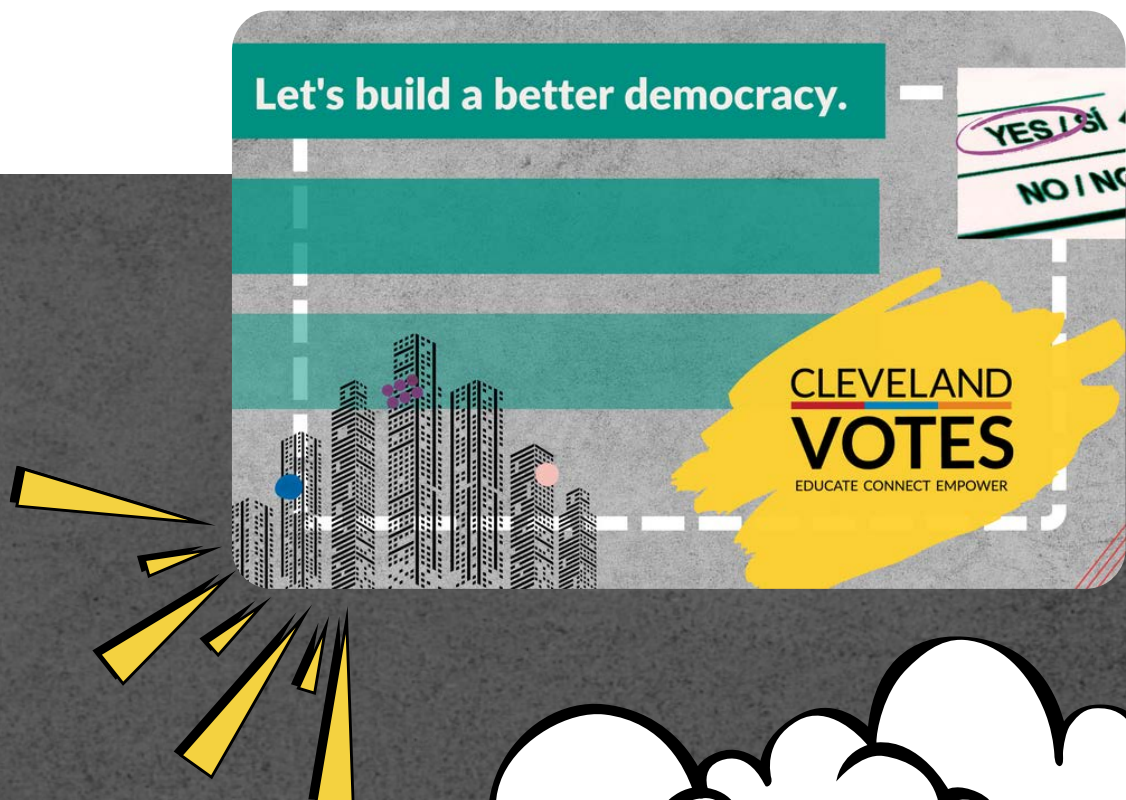
Transforming people from "consumers of democracy to agents within it" is a primary goal of power-building work. Participating in shared cultural activities builds relationships and a sense of agency that can be carried into other settings.

We invite you to think about how you plan to be an agent of change this year. Whether this is a plan for you as an individual or organizationally, there are many on-ramps to affect change!

- **Stay #VoteReady:** It's never too early to register/confirm/update your voter registration. And while you're at it, remind your family and friends to do the same! Do you know someone who will turn 18 before the Election? Share your knowledge and walk them through the voter registration process.
- **Get Connected:** Who are your elected officials? Whether it's your City Councilperson, County, State or Federal representative, you should know them and they should know you! You can sign up for their newsletter or reach out via email or phone.
- **Stay Informed (and Inform Others):** Be sure to sign up for local, trusted news outlets like the Buckeye Flame, Cleveland Observer, Signal Cleveland or The Land. If writing is your jam, perhaps you can develop a piece on a topic of interest to you (especially if it's a topic not many people know about). Have a little more time on your hands? Consider signing up for Cleveland Documenters, who record City Council meetings. We also allow our folks to collaborate with us for posts on our voter engagement blog, #CommitToCle. Email media@clevotes.com for more information.
- **Get Involved:** There are dozens of organizations in Cleveland seeking volunteers to support their cause/issue. Reach out to one of our partners featured in this report and ask how you can volunteer. And not all volunteer activities are in person—there are also opportunities to conduct virtual phone/textbanking from the comfort of your home! if you need help/guidance/recommendations, feel free to reach out to us.
- **Stay Activated:** Getting involved with your community should not feel like an overwhelming task—it can be fun and good for the soul! Perhaps you can host a debate watch party, invite friends to discuss the issues on your ballot, encourage your employer to provide time off for voting, or participate in public comment at a local council meeting.

Onward,

Cleveland VOTES

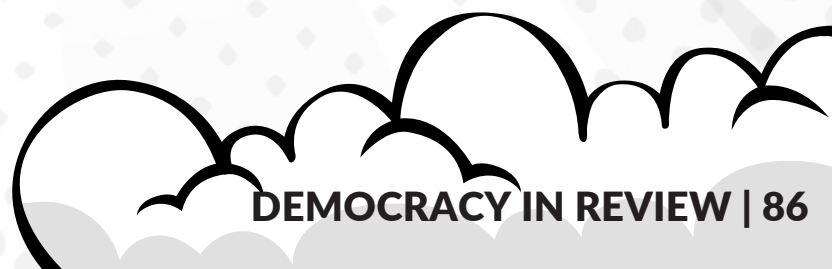


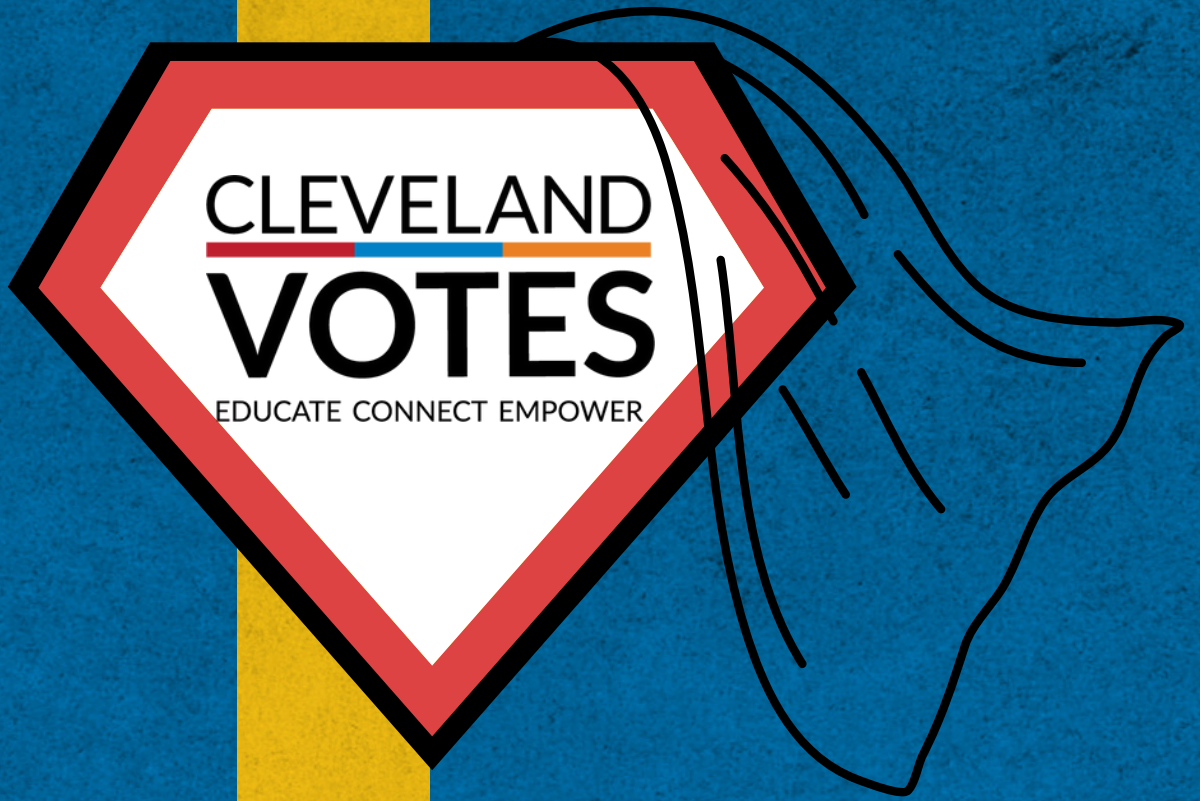
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