



DEMOCRACY IN REVIEW

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Cleveland VOTES is a nonpartisan democracy building and mobilization entity that aims to strengthen civic muscle and power to ensure we have a more informed, participatory, and cohesive community.

Our work is communal and co-created with fellow democracy builders.

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**MESSAGE FROM
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



**CLEVELAND LOCAL CAMPAIGNS,
ISSUES, AND ENDORSEMENTS**



PARTNER ACTIVATION



**2021 ADVOCACY,
LEGISLATION, AND RESEARCH**



2022 OUTLOOK MESSAGE

Message from the Executive Director

Before there was a 'Cleveland VOTES' - we engaged in amplifying the importance of voting for a specific audience - returning citizens. Through this work, they soon realized that there was a gap in supporting nonpartisan engagement in the city of Cleveland. As such, they evolved to focus on engaging nonprofits that were serving/supporting historically disenfranchised and marginalized communities.

It is clear that democracy is suffering both locally and nationwide. And while the polarization of democracy and civility may seem more pronounced since the 2016 Presidential election, we contend that what we are witnessing is emblematic of this country's deep-seated entangled history. At its core, our country and its attempt to realize democracy is predicated on truth and reconciliation. Our inability to identify and acknowledge the root causes continues to create racial inequity and power imbalances. As we begin to reflect on our own evolution, we would be remiss not to also challenge the practices of democracy building, as well as civic engagement. After a few years of engaging with nonprofits and supporting their nonpartisan engagement - we began to reflect and ponder how we could further refine our efforts.. As we began to explore and research different models - we came across a report produced by the Kirwan Institute. The report was a guide for transformative change and very much aligned with our aspirations of realizing an equitable democracy. An excerpt of that report states the following:

"Fundamentally, equitable civic engagement is about leveling the power dynamics of a place, giving voice to those previously alienated and excluded from the civic process. The importance of understanding power structures, how to build power, and how to leverage power are all vital to creating equitable civic engagement initiatives and facilitating real community change."

-Ohio State University's Kirwan Institute

The global pandemic challenged us in many ways but has also thrust us into new areas of possibility that we will continue to nurture into our future work. This year has also demonstrated the importance of trust and relationships. We shared a common (albeit unfortunate) bond with our partners and the community at large. The coronavirus is for many, the most devastating crisis they have endured in their lifetime. Honoring trusted messengers and connecting culture to equitable civic engagement has proven effective this year.

Reflecting over the last year, the team ended 2021 with much appreciation and gratitude. Grounding and centering ourselves with a spirit of hopefulness is critically important - especially since our country, the state, and our beloved city have been through much turmoil in the last year and a half. Living and managing through multiple pandemics necessitates that we pause and focus on our purpose. We remain driven, encouraged, and honored to work with such amazing partners who are working diligently to realize equitable democracy for themselves and our community at large.

Welcome to the Movement,

Erika Anthony

Erika Anthony,
Executive Director





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CLEVELAND LOCAL CAMPAIGNS, ISSUES, AND ENDORSEMENTS



Exercising your civic muscle may look different for each person; however, we strive to elevate as many entry points as possible that will ultimately foster equitable democracy.

The entry points serve as a catalyst resulting in dynamic conversations and creative solutions that align with the community's values and vision. While some run for elected office and others serve as community organizers, elevating the narratives of current coalitions is another way to be civically engaged. Check out some of the coalitions and initiatives we proudly endorsed in 2021.



Clevelanders for Public Comment

Clevelanders for Public Comment

Clevelanders for Public Comment ("CPC") began with the simple idea that democracy-building requires public participation. CPC hoped that its thoughtfully researched and crafted policy proposal would offer a partial cure for the diseases of democracy in our city. By inviting and encouraging public participation in the affairs of government, CPC believed democracy in Cleveland could be strengthened by offering residents the opportunity to speak directly to all members of the City Council.

On January 29, 2021, residents of all 17 wards wrote a letter calling on Cleveland City Council to adopt a public comment period at committee and full council meetings. CPC then brought together a diverse group of more than 30 organizations ranging from civic and advocacy organizations to labor unions and hundreds of residents across every zip code and ward in Cleveland. CPC built broad community support for its policy proposal. On October 4th, 2021, after eight months of advocacy and organizing, Cleveland City Council allowed public comment for the first time in nearly 100 years.

This is an important win to increase resident voices in decision-making, but there is more work to do. CPC will continue to advocate for a robust public comment policy to be adopted as an ordinance rather than a rule and to ensure there is a fair and transparent sign-up process for public comment at committee meetings.



Cleveland Documenters

Cleveland Documenters

Cleveland Documenters ACTivated in Cleveland in 2020 to provide citizens with details of our public officials' meetings. Full transparency is one of the pillars of our democracy, and Cleveland Documenters tirelessly work to exemplify information sharing to the general public. Since their inception in Cleveland, Cleveland Documenters equipped more than 280 Greater Clevelanders to create a new public record by documenting local government meetings in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. The work of the Documenters elevates the importance of democratizing data, increasing accessibility, and prioritizing resident-led engagement. Cleveland Documenters also created free guides, tools and held community training to help make civic information accessible to all residents.



Participatory Budgeting

PB CLE (“Participatory Budgeting Cleveland”) is a grassroots campaign that began in the spring of 2021 when Congress announced the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) and the City of Cleveland’s allocation of \$512 million in funding. Participatory Budgeting is a way to enable residents to vote on how they want public money spent in their community. PB CLE is a broad, multiracial, grassroots coalition of individuals and groups that is grounded in values of community wisdom, democracy, racial justice, and resident-led recovery. The goal of PB CLE is to establish a Participatory Budgeting process that will enable Cleveland residents to decide how \$30.8 million (representing Cleveland’s poverty rate) in ARPA funding will be spent in the community. The vision of PB CLE is to see a permanent Participatory Budgeting process that is a part of the city’s annual budget cycle moving forward to redistribute power to the residents of Cleveland, particularly those most marginalized. A range of grassroots and nonprofit groups in support of the PB CLE campaign organized a series of virtual house parties in May-June 2021 to source ideas from 150+ residents on how they’d like to see ARPA funds spent. From there, PB CLE hosted virtual information sessions on Participatory Budgeting and held an outdoor in-person event focusing on practicing participatory budgeting in action in October 2021. In November 2021, over 60 organizations and hundreds of Clevelands, including Mayor Justin Bibb, endorsed PB CLE’s request that the City of Cleveland allocates \$30.8 million from ARPA funding towards a Participatory Budgeting process.



Top: Participatory Budgeting Coalition retreat held on July 31, 2021
Bottom: Participatory Budgeting Event on October 23, 2021, at Luke Easter Park

Participatory Budgeting CLE functions as an evolving body of organizers operating as committees focusing on education, outreach, and political engagement to local civic and political leaders in city and state governance. Since its inception, PB CLE has organized, informed, and included resident voices about allocation and participatory budgeting practices, as well as received funding from the Participatory Budgeting Project to continue its grassroots efforts throughout the American Rescue Plan Act funding allocations and beyond. Visit www.pbcle.com to learn more about Participatory Budgeting, local earned media on the campaign, a list of endorsers, and PB CLE updates.

Ohio Environmental Council and Alliance for the Great Lakes

In July 2021, following the development of the Cleveland Comprehensive Environmental Policy Platform and corresponding Resident Engagement Toolkit, organizations collaborated to host the Cleveland Mayoral Candidate Forum: For a Healthier and More Equitable Environment. All seven Cleveland mayoral candidates participated in the virtual forum hosted by Ideastream Public Media reporter and producer Justin Glanville. During the event, candidates provided opening and closing remarks in addition to answering a series of questions sourced from community members and advocates on topics related to environmental justice, water, land and green space, infrastructure and transportation, as well as energy and air quality. More than 450 people, representing every zip code in the city of Cleveland, registered to attend the event online or at an in-person community watch party. The Ohio Environmental Council and Alliance for the Great Lakes were proud to partner with dozens of organizations and community-led groups, including Cleveland VOTES, to carry out this important work ahead of the November 2021 elections.

Seeing friends and neighbors at my polling place, sharing voter information and engaging in the voting process brings me joy. The act of coming together as a community to vote and ensure others have the understanding and resources to do the same makes my heart happy.

Emily Bacha, Ohio Environmental Council

Rank Choice Voting

Normally, when we vote we cast a ballot, we vote for our top candidate in hopes that he/she/they will have enough votes to be elected into office. In 2021, Rank Choice Voting Ohio connected with us to advocate for an alternative way that we vote for candidates. Just like any other decision we make, we usually have our first choice, second choice, third choice, and so forth, so why can't voting operate the same way? Rank Choice Voting Ohio is an organization working with voter registration partners to advocate for a more equitable way to vote.



Rally Event on October 22, 2021

Issue 24

Citizens for Safer Cleveland mobilized to bring forth police accountability into the City of Cleveland. With the killings of Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, George Floyd, Brianna Taylor, and many more fallen members of our community, the purpose of this effort is to bring accountability to our city's police force. Since its inception, Citizens for Safer Cleveland obtained the needed valid signatures to have their proposal officially become a ballot initiative in the 2021 General Election. On November 2nd, 2021, Cleveland voters voted in support of issue 24 and the city must now establish a civilian police review board that will review police misconduct. The passing of this ballot initiative now positions the city to be one step closer to preventing the police from policing themselves and it serves as a model for other cities nationally to adopt.

60 Local Organizations and Hundreds of Clevelanders endorsed PB CLE's request

\$512 MILLION IN FUNDING
Allocated by ARPA and the City of Cleveland

280
Cleveland Documenters

\$30.8 MILLION IN ARPA FUNDING
will be spent in the community

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PARTNER
ACTIVATION





We empower partners doing the work to educate and connect the city to voter educational resources and programs.

We serve as a grantor, providing grants for voter registrations, voter mobilization, general operations, and civic holidays. We are committed in the elevation of our grantees and partners' work. In 2021, we were recognized more than 37 times in the media for our work by platforms such as The Land, Ohio Spectrum News 1, and more. Learn more about the amazing organizations Cleveland VOTES worked with in 2021.



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 is to provide grants to nonprofit organizations committed to educating, connecting, and empowering voting-age residents in the Greater Cleveland area. We seek organizations that are committed to democracy building, racial equity, and participatory practices. Ultimately, we seek to shift power while catalyzing innovation and inclusive strategies to

strengthen the social fabric of our community. In 2021, we disbursed 30 grants totalling \$195,000 to nonpartisan, non profit organizations that facilitated voter education, voter registration, or mobilization work in Cleveland. The purpose of the Equitable Civic Engagement Fund is to provide organizations, with varying levels of capacity and experience the ability to resource their equitable civic engagement strategies. While some of our grantee partners solely focus on voter engagement, many of our partners are multi-issue organizations which speaks to the intersectionality of our work.



30 TOTAL
GRANTS
\$195,000

2021 Grantee Cohorts

For our 2021 grantmaking cycle, we issued Requests for Proposals (RFP) in March, May, and October 2021. This year, we introduced a new grantmaking platform (Submittable) to streamline our internal review process, as well as provide a user-friendly platform for applicants to submit their information. We made available our scoring rubric to ensure transparency for each applicant. Applicants had the opportunity to choose from (3) different funding levels that corresponded with the type of activity they intended to implement. The categories included: 1) Educate + Engage (up to \$3,000), 2) ACTivate + Mobilize (up to \$7,500), and 3) Capacity Building (up to \$10,000). Additionally, our Vote Early Day Request For Proposal provided one-time grants up to \$500.

Our 2021 grantee cohort was very diverse; partners were engaging audiences that represented a wide range of demographics. Additionally, collectively our grantee partners engaged nearly every ward throughout the city and in some cases countywide. We encouraged our applicants to review our #Commit2CLE toolkit for inspiration and strategies for consideration. The range of strategies included: Culture + Narrative (i.e. art activism, storytelling, creative engagement, etc.), Digital Engagement and/or Digital Media, Digital + Relational Organizing, Nonpartisan Education + Training, Nonpartisan Voter Engagement and/or Mobilization, One Time Events (civic holidays, COVID-19 vaccine sites, food distribution sites, movie nights, etc.), Print Guides and/or Materials, and Research. Please see below for the full list of our 2021 grantee partners.



Top: St. Paul Ame Church, Your Voice Matters Voter Engagement Forum
Bottom: Image of OCA Cleveland

April 2021 Grantees

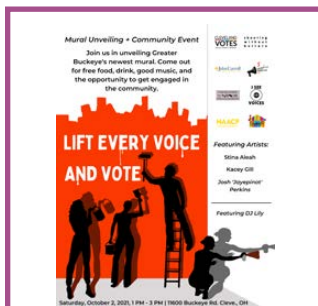
Alpha Kappa Alpha Alpha Omega Foundation \$3,000	Greater Collinwood Development Corporation \$10,000	League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland \$10,000	Midtown Cleveland, Inc. \$7,500
NAACP - Cleveland Branch \$10,000	Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless \$7,500	Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates (NOVA) \$10,000	Old Brooklyn Development Corporation \$7,500
Promise of Democracy Foundation \$10,000	OPAWL \$10,000	Tremont West Development Corporation \$10,000	Smart Development \$10,000

July 2021 Grantees

Towards Employment \$10,000	Hawken School \$3,000	Bellaire-Puritas Development Corporation \$7,500	Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) \$10,000
Delta Sigma Theta - Greater Cleveland Alumni Chapter (GCAC) \$7,500	#AGreaterBuckeye \$3,000	Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry \$10,000	The Land \$10,000
The Martha and Tonya Johnson Legacy Project \$7,500	Fair Elections Center \$10,000	Nueva Luz Urban Resource Center \$7,500	

Our Engagements

In 2021, we participated in over 30 different forms of engagements with local partners. We served as a host for SPARK! 2021, a speaker at City Club of Cleveland, a collaborator with the Cleveland Leadership Center with young professionals, and more. Many of these engagements consisted of organizations interested in elevating the importance of voting, the 2021 elections, how they can ACTivate with their community members! Learn more about our engagements in this section.



Bottom Left: Lift Every Voice and Vote Event
 Bottom Middle-Left: Toward Employment "Why I Vote" Campaign
 Bottom Middle-Right: NAACP Cleveland Branch and Popeyes Chicken Voter Registration
 Bottom Right: Empowering Youth Exploring Justice's 2022 Townhall

2021 Engagement Organizations

- Cleveland Leadership Center: OnBoard
- Cleveland Leadership Center: Look up to Cleveland
- Cleveland Leadership Center: SPARK! Grit to Great
- Cleveland Leadership Center: Campus Cleveland Summer
- Case Western Reserve University's Know Your Neighbors
- Center for Civic Engagement and Learning at Case Western Reserve University
- Case Western Reserve University: 2021 Town Hall by Gund Foundation
- Junior League of Cleveland
- Rank the Vote Ohio
- Black Environmental Leaders Association
- The Center for Community Solutions
- Mobilize the Vote NEOhio
- Cleveland Council on World Affairs
- Mastery School of Hawken
- Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association
- 3 Team Alliance (Cleveland's Browns, Guardians, and Cavaliers)
- Woodhill Laundry Coop
- Leadership Ohio
- Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Kent State University
- Cleveland Public Library
- Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, CDC Executive Directors
- EYEJ: Empowering Youth, Exploring Justice
- Cleveland Neighborhood Progress
- Cleveland Power of Sport Summit (NFL Draft)
- 2021 FreshFest Festival
- Cuyahoga County National Park
- The Land
- Ideastream After Jackson's Podcast
- Informative Action Committee
- Interfaith Alliance: Janus Small and Associates Post-Election Dialogue
- John Carroll University
- Cuyahoga Office of Reentry's 2021 Reentry Week
- Nonprofit VOTE/National Voter Registration Day
- Cleveland Foundation
- City Club of Cleveland

The Cleveland Foundation Shared Power Interview with Co-Founder, Erika Anthony





Informative Action Committee

The Informative Action Committee, a program of Cleveland VOTES hosted a mural unveiling on October 2, 2021, on E. 116th and Buckeye called Lift Every Voice and Vote. Lift Every Voice and Vote was held in partnership with the NAACP - Cleveland Branch, Shooting Without Bullets, John Carroll University, Neighborhood Connections, and A Cultural Exchange. Local artists revealed a new piece around the importance of voting. Additionally, the event consisted of local artists performances, free food and drinks, music by DJ Lily Jade, and voter education/registration and community resources.. Artists that performed and unveiled their work are: Josh "Jayepinot" Perkins, Stina Aleah, Kacey Gill, Maurice "Losp" Philpolt Jr., and Shatara "Mixxedrose" Jordan.

Top-Left: National Voter Registration Day partner picking up their Cleveland VOTES NVRD Swag Bag at the Board of Elections on September 9, 2021
 Top-Right: National Voter Registration Day 2021 Flyer
 Bottom-Left: Lift Every Voice and Vote



National Voter Registration Day

September 28, 2021

Cuyahoga County Events

<p>Nueva Luz Urban Resource Center, the Galilean Theological Center and Hispanic UMADAOP September 25 4 pm Location TBD*</p> <p>Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Greater Cleveland Alumnae Chapter Crimson & Ice Cream September 25 1-3 pm Faith Community United Credit Union 3550 E. 93rd St Cleveland Battle of The Bands September 25 6PM Bedford Bearcat Stadium, 481 Northfield Rd, Bedford</p> <p>Young Latino Network ¡Salud! Hispanic Heritage Month Health Fair/NVRD September 26 1-5 pm Lin Omni Parking Lot at 3167 Fulton Rd, Cleveland</p> <p>Rocket Mortgage Field House September 28 5- 7 pm 1 Center Court, Cleveland</p>	<p>OCA Greater Cleveland Chapter September 25 3-6 pm 3224 Payne Ave, Cleveland September 28 1-4 pm 2999 Payne Ave, Cleveland</p> <p>Mobilize the Vote September 25 3-6 pm 9702 Madison Ave, Cleveland</p> <p>September 26 12:30-2:30 pm 717 E 125th St, Cleveland</p> <p>September 27 1:30-5 pm Springbrook, 1675 Ansel Rd, Cleveland</p> <p>St. Vincent Charity Hospital Food Giveaway September 28 11:30 am-5 pm 24th & Community College, Cleveland</p> <p>September 29 1:30-5 pm Miles Pointe, 11860 Miles Ave, Cleveland</p> <p>CMSD High Schools 16 High Schools September 27-October 1*</p>	<p>Cleveland Public Library (in partnership with Delta Sigma Theta Sorority) September 28 10:30 am- 6 pm Voter Registration Table 25 Library Branches*</p> <p>League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland September 28 TBD* 1600 Hampton Rd, Rocky River</p> <p>Bishop Cosgrove Meal Service September 28 11:30 am 1736 Superior Avenue, Cleveland</p> <p>Cuyahoga County Board of Elections September 28 8:30 am—4:30 pm 2925 Euclid Ave Cleveland September 28 10 am—2 pm Mayfield Library 500 Scm Center Rd, Mayfield North Royalton Library 5071 Wallings Rd, North Royalton Strongsville Library 18700 Westwood Dr, Strongsville</p> <p>East Mt Zion Baptist Church October 1 10 am—3 pm</p>
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*For updated information regarding this visit our Facebook Event

National Voter Registration Day 2021

As a Northeast Ohio National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) Captain, Cleveland VOTES aimed to register voters in Cuyahoga County ahead of the 2021-22 elections and grow the electorate with equity. Local elections make a huge impact on our daily lives and this year Cleveland voter voted for offices that have been filled for quite some time, particularly mayor, city council seats, and Congressional District 11. In 2020, people across the country witnessed how their cities and towns responded to COVID-19 bringing even more light to the role of local government. As a State Captain, Cleveland VOTES supported NVRD partners in collaboration with the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections and the City of Cleveland with training and technical support, particularly for groups new to voter registration. Planning sessions were held on August 10, August 24th, and September 16, 2021 from 5:30pm - 7:30pm and were hosted virtually from the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections located at 2925 Euclid Avenue and Cleveland VOTES' remote offices.

One of our newest partners in 2021 was MetroHealth and Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates: Earlier this year, the Cleveland VOTES team received outreach from MetroHealth - our County's largest nonprofit, public health care institution. A few select key staff members were seeking guidance on developing and implementing a civic/voter engagement strategy at select clinics that are located in parts of the City of Cleveland with low voter participation. While this strategy goes beyond NVRD, we are incredibly proud of what MetroHealth accomplished on NVRD. They had an engagement at (3) locations throughout the city and to support this engagement, we partnered them with a veteran partner - Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates (NOVA). NOVA, a long-standing Cleveland VOTES partner was able to provide training and on the day support to the MetroHealth team. Collectively, we had over 30 National Voter Registration Day partners this year and we collectively gathered over 2,265 registration cards and 1,615 online registrations.



RideShare2VOTE

Transportation continues to be a factor that hinders citizens from exercising their right to vote. Casting your ballot should be a seamless process and similarly, getting to your polling locations safely and affordably is integral. We partnered with RideShare2VOTE to provide free rides to Cleveland voters in October and November to help voters cast their vote for the November 2nd General Election. During each ride, riders were educated on who and what is on their ballot to ensure they felt comfortable and empowered before casting their vote.



Vote Early Day

Vote Early Day is a civic holiday founded on the principle of mobilizing voters to vote early in their respective communities. In 2021, millions of Americans in all 50 states were eligible to vote early but the rules -- both for in-person and by-mail options -- vary widely all over the country and have been changing recently in some states. This confuses and prevents voters from casting their ballots unless we help our friends and neighbors know their options to vote early. In 2021, Vote Early Day was celebrated on Saturday, October 23rd, one week before Halloween to ensure maximum participation. We served as an official community liaison and disbursed \$3,500 in grants to seven organizations to support organizations to mobilize around Vote Early Day.

Top-Right: RideShare Driver and Rider in October 2021

Bottom: Young Latino Network and Plexus Vote Early Day at the Midtown Tech Hive on October 28, 2021 Flyer



2021 Vote Early Day Subgrantees

- Toy Treasures LTD
- National Congress of Black Women Greater Cleveland Chapter
- Young Latino Network
- Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates
- East Mount Zion Baptist Church
- New Sardis Primitive Baptist Church
- OCA Greater Cleveland

OCA Cleveland Vote Early Day Celebration on Asiatown on Saturday, October 23, 2021

03

2021 ADVOCACY,
LEGISLATION
AND RESEARCH





Advancing a pro-democracy agenda and protecting our freedom to vote is essential to realizing an equitable democracy. Unfortunately, in 2021 we must continue to advocate and organize to protect our vote. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, more than 425 bills with provisions that restrict voting access were introduced in 49 states in the 2021 legislative sessions. And of those bills introduced - 19 states have enacted 33 laws that will make it harder for Americans to vote.

Here in Ohio, we are also contending with two bills that seek to reduce equitable access to the vote and make it harder for voters to engage. You may read more about these bills below. Coupled with our efforts to advocate for equitable policies, it is vital to conduct qualitative and quantitative research to drive our programs and strategies. We are proud of the partnerships formed this year and will continue to share our findings with our partners and the community at large.



Participatory Budgeting' in Action event on October 23, 2021



A resident dropping off their ballot at the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections dropbox

HB 294

In early 2021, the Enact Ohio Election Security and Modernization Act, known as HB 294, was introduced in the Ohio Legislature. HB 294 was presented in response to the 2020 General Election. The provisions of HB 294 include eliminating the use of drop boxes 10 days before an election, shortening the absentee ballot request window by 7 days, cutting early voting hours, abolishing prepaid return postage for absentee ballots, requiring ID for absentee ballots, and more. Ultimately, HB 294 is an attack on our democracy and will hinder voters from easily voting. Every Cleveland voter should have the opportunity to smoothly cast their vote safely amid COVID-19. Stay up-to-date about HB 294 by following our state partner Ohio Voice.

HB 387

In August 2021, HB 387 was introduced and was deemed an 'election integrity bill, but instead, it would turn the clock back on nearly everything that has been done over the past 16 years to make it easier to vote in Ohio. This bill is even more extreme than HB 294 and according to advocate Camille Winbush of Ohio Voice, "It certainly is frightening and it includes a whole host of extreme

provisions, and that will take Ohio backward." Some of the proposed changes include: 1) doing away with drop boxes at boards of elections entirely, 2) chopping the current 28-day early voting period that's been in place since 2015, to 13 days in 2022 and to six days after that, 3) It would bring back the requirement that voters provide an excuse such as illness or travel outside the state to cast an absentee ballot, and 4) the bill would also ban the Secretary of State from mailing out absentee ballot applications to all Ohio voters, as has been the practice in elections in even-numbered years since 2012.

Our state's c3 table, Ohio Voice issued a call to action in September 2021 that encouraged partners to stand in solidarity and exercise our collective power to send a message to our legislators. Instead of taking us backward, Ohioans need to look forward by making these equitable improvements: 1) expand access to drop boxes by permitting counties to have more than one secure ballot drop box that is accessible 24 hours a day, 2) modernize our absentee ballot system by permitting Ohioans to request absentee ballot applications online, 3) permit counties to have the option of more than one early in-person voting location, and 4) create fair legislative maps that allow voters to choose their representatives, not the other way around.

Analysis of Recent Elections in the City of Cleveland (2014-2020)

Cleveland VOTES, Ohio Progressive Collaborative Education Fund, and the George Gund Foundation partnered with Clarity + Campaign (lab) to analyze the recent elections in the city of Cleveland. The election results analyzed 2020, 2016, and 2014 election results on three different levels: citywide, by wards, and by precincts. Additionally, the research analyzed voting trends and explored factors that may affect voting behaviors. To refine civic engagement efforts, the data was shared with the civic engagement partners, community development corporations, and other community organizations throughout the year. Cleveland VOTES will continue to work in partnership to develop more data and research in this space and foster spaces so that we can make better data-informed decisions in 2022.



Co-Founder Erika Anthony speaking at City Club of Cleveland forum.

Residents from various demographics (residents, community leaders, Black and Brown residents, etc.) participated in these focus groups and surveys. The data reveals that Cleveland voters are justifiably apathetic about government because they want the city government and their elected officials to address the issues they care most about. Clevelanders are in fact voting but the issues they care about must be addressed and resolved to further strengthen our democracy.

Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself.

-Policy Matters Ohio

We've all seen the headlines regarding voter turnout in Cleveland. In September 2021, Cleveland's primary election saw voter turnout increase from 2017 numbers but still ran below a 20% turnout. Voting turnout was also alarmingly low for the latest 2020 Presidential Election. By the time we engage in this forum, Cleveland will have decided on a new mayor for the first time in 16 years—and the turnout will understandably spark more debate over the civic health of Cleveland.

Understanding Residents' Civic Behavior and Motivation Research

Cleveland VOTES, Policy Matters Ohio, and HIT Strategies collaborated to better understand the city of Cleveland residents' civic behavior and motivation. HIT Strategies gathered surveys completed by Cleveland voters to hear their views on voting and more. HIT Strategies conducted an analysis of the Cleveland residents' thoughts and opinions about the state of democracy, civic engagement, and more.

Erika Anthony is the co-founder of Cleveland VOTES and in 2019 became the Executive Director of the Ohio Transformation Fund. Erika has been at the forefront of civic engagement in Northeast Ohio for years. Her most recent work centers around developing relationships with trusted stakeholders that are most proximate to historically disenfranchised and marginalized residents and



grounding those relationships in the realities of our social fabric. While some of the election-related data may lead us to question whether Cleveland voters are apathetic – recently commissioned research elevates that Cleveland voters are not apathetic. They care deeply about their community and believe that collective power needs to be amplified and equitably distributed to affect change.

So, what exactly is needed at this moment? How might we all reimagine the future of equitable civic engagement and democracy-building? And how do we collectively work towards increasing voter engagement in future elections and beyond?

In sum, the City Club of Cleveland forum garnered at least 120 participants in person at the City Club of Cleveland office. Additionally, 79 people joined the livestream, and another 48 viewed the forum in our archives after the program. Lastly, thousands of more listeners joined us on 90.3 Ideastream Public Media, and the rebroadcast on WVIZ PBS.



ThirdSpace Action Lab at the City Club of Cleveland Forum

120 Participants in person at the City Club of Cleveland

2021 Elections

In 2021, Cleveland and surrounding suburbs experienced several elections: the May 4 Special/Primary Election, August 3 Special Election, September 14 Primary Election, and November 2 General Election. Get educated about the 2021 elections in this section.



May 4th Election

Surrounding communities outside of Cleveland, specifically North Olmsted, Rocky River, Kirtland, Madison, Strongsville, Seven Hills, and Fairview Park, hosted a Special Election on May 4th, 2021. Many of the items that residents in these communities voted for centered around school levies and more. Learn more about the May 3rd Primary Election [here](#).

August 3rd Special Election

As a result of Marcia Fudge being appointed the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under the Biden Administration, her seat as the U.S. House of Representative for the 11th Congressional District in Ohio warranted a Special Election. 7 individuals ran in the Special Election, specifically, Shontel Brown, Nina Turner, Jeff Johnson, John Barnes, and Laverne Gore, Felicia Washington Ross. Ultimately, Shontel Brown won the Democratic nomination while Laverne Gore won the Republican nomination.



Left: Josh Perkins and Stina Aleah, revealing the mural on E. 116th and Buckeye in Cleveland, Ohio.
Right: Cleveland resident getting information about COVID-19

September 14th Primary Election

Cleveland and surrounding areas held a Primary Election for their elective offices. Most notably, Cleveland held a primary election for several city council positions and the mayoral position. Specifically, the two candidates that garnered the votes in their respective wards advanced to the General Election. Similarly, 7 candidates ran for office—specifically, Justin Bibb, Ross Dibello, Basheer Jones, Kevin Kelly, Dennis Kucinich, Zack Reed, and Sandra Williams. Learn more about the September 14th Primary Election.

3
ELECTIONS
IN 2020

7 
INDIVIDUALS
RAN IN THE
SPECIAL ELECTION



November 2nd General Election

The candidates that advanced from the September 14th Primary Election appeared on the ballot on November 2nd. Candidates Justin Bibb and City Council President Kevin Kelly were the two candidates for the Cleveland mayor, with Justin Bibb being victorious. Notably, the 2020 November General Election experienced a higher voter turnout of 23% than in previous General Elections. Additionally, 5 of the 17 wards in Cleveland received new individuals being victorious as well. In January 2022, Mayor Justin Bibb and our new City Councilmembers were sworn in to office. Lastly, Issue 24, a Citizens for a Safer Cleveland ballot initiative mandating the city to establish a civilian police review board that will review police misconducts passed and became a major victory nationally for combating police brutality and accountability. [Learn more about the November General Election here.](#)



17
WARDS
 REPRESENTED

372,624
RESIDENTS
 COUNTED IN
 THE US CENSUS
 BUREAU



Left: Mayor Justin Bibb taking a picture with DJ Lily
 Top-Right: Local Cleveland artist, Maurice "Losp" Philpott Jr, performing
 spoken word at the Lift Every Voice and Vote on October 2021
 Bottom-Left: Gwen Stembridge (She/Her) celebrating voting with her
 Ohio Voting Sticker

15 DEMOCRACY FACTS IN CLEVELAND



1 NEW MAYOR OF CLEVELAND, MAYOR JUSTIN BIBB

23%
voter turnout in
General Election 2021



30
NATIONAL VOTER
REGISTRATION
DAY PARTNERS

120 City Club
Forum attendees

33 Cleveland VOTES
grantees in 2021

280
Cleveland Documenters
sharing public records

\$512 million
given as part of the American Rescue Plan Act



19,186 **VOTERS**
reached
in 2021

425

voting suppression
bills presented nationally



5 NEW
City Council
members

\$3,500

awarded for
Vote Early Day

Public comments allowed
for the 1st time in nearly

100 years



30

speaking engagements
with local organizations

3,880
VOTERS

registered on National
Voter Registration Day



EQUITABLE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FUND GRANTED

\$195,000

04

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT





"...trusting the people is
the indispensable
precondition
for revolutionary change."
—Paolo Freire

NETWORK ORGANIZING — MAKING CHANGE
COMMUNITY TO GO
TWO TRUTHS
On the one hand, we want to take action on the other hand, we want to build community.

OPEN SPACE
4 Principles and 1 Law
Principles:
1. Whosever comes to the right people.
2. Whosever happens on the way.
3. Whosever is able to see the right way.
4. Whosever is able to see the right way.

Cleveland VOTES is a nonpartisan democracy building and mobilization entity that aims to strengthen civic muscle and power to ensure we have a more informed, participatory, and cohesive community. Our work is communal and co-created with fellow democracy builders.

We invest 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. Co-Founders Erika Anthony and Crystal Bryant, created Cleveland VOTES to fill the voter registration void for individuals incarcerated and re-entering society. Partnerships and collaboration have vastly expanded to include dozens of organizations at the national, state, and local levels. To learn more, visit us at clevotes.com



Cleveland VOTES Staff

- Erika Anthony, She/Her, Executive Director
- Crystal Bryant, She/Her, Co-Founder & Advisor
- Devonta Dickey, He/Him, Strategic Communications and Engagement Manager

Supportive Team

- Andrianna Peterson, Social Media Consultant
- Alaina Battle, Photographer
- Lisa McAloney, Grant Writing Consultant
- Hannah Mosley, Photographer
- Alissha Wilson, Graphic Designer
- Jacinda Walker, Digital Strategist Consultant

Advisory Board

- Maria Bruno, Equality Ohio
- Evelyn Burnett, ThirdSpace Action Lab
- David Busch, Cuyahoga Community College
- Mordecai Cargill, ThirdSpace Action Lab
- Kelsi Carter, Shooting Without Bullets
- Rachel Dissell, John S. Knight Fellow, NEOSOJO, and Cleveland Documenters
- Gwendolyn Garth, Kings and Queens of Art
- Donte Gibbs, The Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park
- Juan Goodwin, Hands Across Cleveland
- Nina Holzer, Cleveland Housing Network
- Leah Hudnall, Ohio Climate Justice Fund
- Molly Martin, Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless
- Shawnda Moye, The Roaming Biscuit
- Melaak Rashid, Smart Development
- Karis Tzeng, Midtown Cleveland Inc.
- Alesha Washington, George Gund Foundation
- Shanelle Whigham, KeyCorp

April 2021 Grantees

- Alpha Kappa Alpha Alpha Omega Foundation
- Greater Collinwood Development Corporation
- League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland
- Midtown Cleveland, Inc.
- NAACP - Cleveland Branch
- Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless
- Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates
- Old Brooklyn Development Corporation
- Promise of Democracy Foundation
- OPAWL
- Tremont West Development Corporation
- Smart Development

July 2021 Grantees

- Towards Employment
- Hawken School
- Bellaire-Puritas Development Corporation
- Showing Up for Racial Justice
- Delta Sigma Theta - Greater Cleveland Alumni Chapter (GCAC)
- #AGreaterBuckeye
- Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry
- The Land
- The Martha and Tonya Johnson Legacy Project
- Fair Elections Center
- Nueva Luz Urban Resource Center



OUTLOOK MESSAGE

2022 Elections Calendar

The Ohio Secretary of State officially announced the 2022 election calendar. We are slated to have elections for the U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, Ohio Governor, State Senate, State House of Representatives, State Supreme Court, Intermediate appellate courts, and upcoming ballot measures. Essentially, the entire state will have a Primary Election on May 3, 2022, and the General Election on November 8, 2022. To learn more about the 2022 Ohio Elections, review the Ohio Secretary of State's Calendar.

2022 Outlook Message

To actualize Equitable Civic Engagement, we encourage you to do the following: embrace the gifts of diversity, realize the intersectionality of race, power, and injustice, practice radical hospitality, foster trust-building and commitment, honor dissent and embrace protest, and lastly, adapt to community change.

Message from Cleveland VOTES

In 2021, we had barely caught our collective breaths from 2020 before we pivoted our energy towards our local elections. For voters in the Greater Cleveland area, we had the opportunity to participate in four elections: May Primary Election, August Special Election, September Primary Election, and the November General Election. In between our elections, we also witnessed incredible organizing and engagement around demands to obtain public comment at City Hall, participatory budgeting for our public funds at the City of Cleveland, and the call to action for accountability with law enforcement, and newly elected City Council members and a new mayor.

While we swiftly moved into our grantmaking and programmatic strategies - we also decided that we needed to continue our efforts to better understand the electorate in Cleveland. Thanks to an investment from the George Gund Foundation - we worked closely with Policy Matters Ohio and HIT Strategies to examine the behaviors and motivations of voters in Cleveland. Additionally, continue to strategize and innovate effective ways to improve our communication strategies, we are grateful for the new partners in our community who are elevating equitable access to information and the stories of Clevelanders thanks to organizations like Partners such as Cleveland Documenters and The Land are new and innovative organizations that are contributing to the social fabric of democracy-building,

As a core element to our work, our team continued to offer training and participate in engagements to share information, strategies, and tips on nonpartisan civic and voter engagement. In addition to these offerings, we also organized and galvanized partners throughout the city to celebrate civic holidays such as National Voter Registration Day and Vote Early Day. Our work is dynamic and intersectional; we are also proud of the collective efforts that led to the installation of a new mural focused on the power of the vote in E.116th and Buckeye in the Buckeye-Shaker neighborhood. It's critically important that we engage artistic and cultural activists to serve as co-creators to our collective engagement strategies. While we cannot address every structural barrier that voters may be facing, we've led and supported several efforts over the years to address the transportation barrier for some voters. This year, we partnered with the national organization - RideShare2Vote and offered free transportation to the Cuyahoga County Board of

Elections and polling precinct on Election Day.

Our organization provided grants to organizations to support their civic and voter engagement programs. Through a competitive Request for Proposal process, our Equitable Civic Engagement Fund (ECEP) granted \$195,000 to 30 nonprofit organizations; grant sizes ranged from \$500 - \$10,000. In addition to the investment, we convened our grantee partners once a month for a Community of Practice. We piloted our Community of Practice in March of 2020 when our in-person election was canceled due to the global pandemic and we had to quickly pivot our plans to galvanize voters for the absentee/vote by mail only election.

As we have observed and our recently commissioned research elevated - we must emphasize collective power and showcase to our community that the ability to make real change are key elements to persuading infrequent, high-potential voters to get engaged and to vote. Infrequent, high-potential voters need to hear that their voices matter and that taking action can lead to real, measurable change in their communities. This is why deploying resources to organizations that are trusted members of the community is so critical to realizing equitable democracy. Our grantee partners are proximate to some of the most historically disenfranchised and marginalized members of our community.

Our team's ability to work in and with our community allows us to shift and share power. We are not experts, but instead are active listeners and learners to the needs of our community. We creatively experiment and innovate programs and strategies that meet the needs of our community. Despite the barriers and challenges we may be facing, we must challenge ourselves and our partners to always think beyond election day. How and where does democracy show up in our everyday lives? The ACT of voting is only part of the equation, we must also foster a social fabric that embraces democratic processes and policies aimed towards advancing healthy and thriving communities. We must also acknowledge that confronting racism directly and building a fully inclusive democracy are completely intertwined.

Cultivating a social fabric that celebrates and embodies a culture of equitable democracy requires all of us to contribute to the solution. It requires that we shift our mindset and commit to being in a deep relationship with each other. Embracing this new social fabric also necessitates that we seize the opportunity to adopt a new power paradigm in our thinking; this shift is more participatory and peer-driven.

Resources

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Website:

cle4publiccomment.com

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Documenter

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Website: www.pbcle.com

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Website: <https://clevelandenvirotokit.org/>

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Website: <https://www.rankthevoteohio.org/>

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Website: <https://safercle.org/>

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Website: <https://www.instagram.com/lospost216/>

Website: <https://www.instagram.com/mixxedrose/>

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Website: Are you

Registered to Vote?

Tuesday is National Voter

Registration Day

Website: National Voter

Registration Day at Rocket

Mortgage Fieldhouse

Website: Students Lead

Voter Registration Day

Efforts

Website: Mt. Zion Church

Cleveland Hosted Voter

Registration Event

Website: National Voter

Registration Day Activity in

Asia Plaza

Website: Cleveland State

University Encourages

Community to Vote

Website: <https://rideshare2vote.com>

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Powerpoint: Hagner

Cleveland Election Analysis

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Powerpoint: Hagner

Cleveland Election Analysis

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Website: <https://www.wvxu.org/politics/2021-08-26/commentary-whats-really-behind-house-bill-387-limits-early-voting-access>

commentary-whats-really-behind-house-bill-387-limits-early-voting-access

Website: boe.

cuyahogacounty.gov

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<https://www.policymattersohio.org/blog/2021/10/28/the-power-of-all-of-us>

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Website: www.ohiosos.gov/

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Website: <https://clevelandcitycouncil.org/>

Website: <https://cleveland.documenters.org/>

Website: <https://cle4publiccomment.com/>

Website: <https://www.pbcle.com/>

Website: <https://www.informativeaction.com/>

Website: <https://rideshare2vote.com/>

Website: <https://www.clevotes.com/branded-assets>

FUNDERS

Foundations and Philanthropic Organizations:



Saint
Luke's
Foundation



Cleveland VOTES

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