

**2022**  
**Democracy**  
**in Review**



2022

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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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# Message from the Executive Director Erika Anthony

The Cleveland VOTES team introduced our *Democracy in Review* report in 2020. Looking back now, we continue to be shocked that we survived that year. Our team—along with folks locally and across the globe—were combating a relentless pandemic, racial uprisings, and dis/misinformation, all while in the midst of needing to engage residents around the 2020 Census and Presidential Election. Throughout the year it just never felt like we could catch our collective breaths.

And if we are being honest, things have not slowed down. A colleague recently shared a reflection she received from a friend, and it truly resonates with me. She said, “A gentle reminder about why you are utterly exhausted...No one I know began this year (2022) on a full tank. Given the vicious onslaught of the previous two years, most of us dragged ourselves across the finish line frazzled, spent, and running on aged adrenaline fumes...” I appreciate this person’s radical honesty and transparency. We have to not only be honest with ourselves, but we need to do the same when we engage with our communities.

We don’t have all the answers. We have not yet figured out the “10 quick steps to realizing a truly equitable democracy.” And yes, our team and fellow democracy-builders are tired. But we can’t let that deter us. “Why?” you may ask. Because we deserve more. We deserve to not only survive, but to thrive.

So let’s start by stating the obvious. Yes, our democracy is in an incredibly fragile state - some might say it’s on life support. And while the headlines may not give you hope, we encourage you to step away from the screen and appreciate the gifts that are likely just a stone’s throw away from you. The Cleveland community is filled with joyful, passionate and resilient humans. And the Cleveland VOTES team feels incredibly honored to be a part of a beloved community that sees that hope and joy exemplified throughout the streets of this city.


Last year, we witnessed countless acts of democracy showing up beyond elections. While each election is incredibly critical (and we had 3 in 2022!), we must shift our perspective to understand that democracy shows up in our lives daily. We must elevate the importance of the *practice* and hone in on the ways we can more effectively *democratize* our policies and systems. We

choose to celebrate, rather than ‘other’ those members of our community who—for far too long—have been.

Last year, we provided grants to 29 organizations! Our grantee partners were not only educating, connecting and empowering residents to be active for the elections, but engaging with them on some of the most pressing issues they face everyday. Our grantee partners are the *most trusted* members of their communities, connecting with residents on issues related to redistricting, housing justice, COVID-19 vaccines, participatory budgeting and much more! Our ecosystem of partners also advocated for the protection of voting rights, abortion access, racial justice, justice for AAPI members of our community facing racism and violence, equitable environmental justice policies, as well as maintaining the efficacy of statewide, citizen-led ballot initiatives.

Ahead of the 2022 General Election, Cleveland VOTES—in partnership with entities such as the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections and dozens of comrades—celebrated democracy by engaging in numerous civic holidays such as National Voter Registration Day and Vote Early Day. These civic holidays provided an opportunity for partners to find creative ways to engage community members, while educating them about the election, registering/ updating their voter registration information, and encouraging folks to cast their ballots early.

We had our fair share of challenges last year, but we also had many bright spots. As Karen Walrond realized when she wrote a book about the relationship between joy and activism, “there is no one way to change the world.” However, she goes on to say in a June 2022 NPR article (“How to find joy in activism”), “**any time you are led by your values to do purposeful action in the hopes of making the world brighter for other people,**” you’re participating in activism. We encourage each of you to be led by your values. Will you make a mistake? Yes. Will you hit a roadblock? Yes. But maybe most importantly, will you show up with a humble heart, ready to roll up your sleeves and affect change? We hope your answer is yes and you will join us as we continue to get into “good trouble” and work towards a more liberatory state.

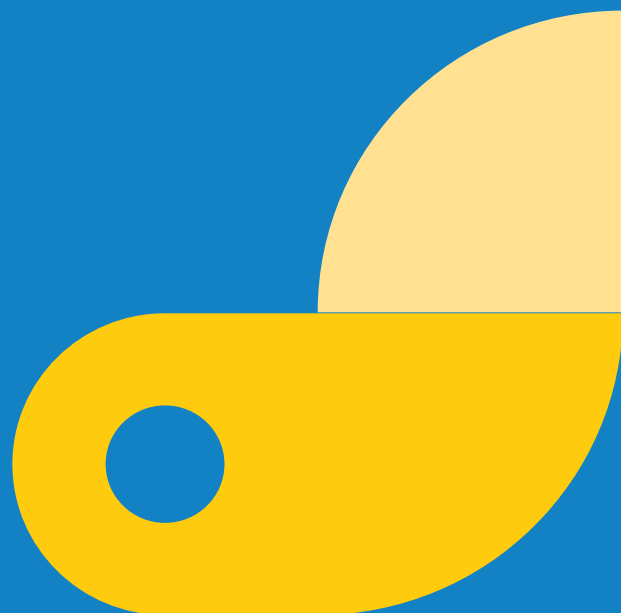
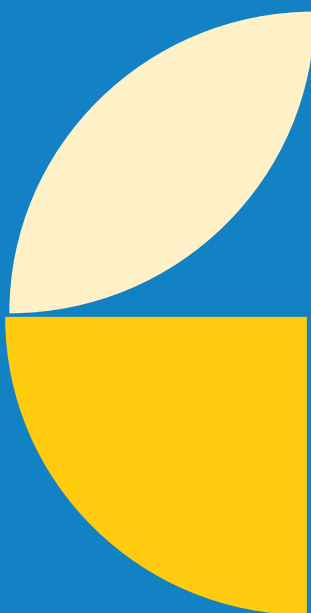



**We must elevate  
the importance of  
practicing democracy  
and hone in on  
more effectively  
democratizing our  
policies and systems.**



# STAFF MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

The Cleveland VOTES team invested a lot of time into the community in 2022. But they also invested in themselves. This past year was full of both individual and collective wins. We welcomed our first team baby, celebrated a graduation, expanded our skill sets, and more. The fluid nature of democracy-building requires us to adapt. So whether it's in our personal or professional lives, you can count on us to remain completely committed to living out our four pillars: Realizing Equitable Civic Engagement, Movement Capacity-Building, Grantmaking and Shifting Power.



# Staff Highlights



Cleveland VOTES added 4 new full-time team members in 2022 (from left to right): a Communications & Narrative Strategist, a Senior Strategist, a Civic Engagement Strategist, and an Operations Administrator.



Operations Administrator Tacha Sako gave birth to a son on Election Day (Nov. 8). His name is Nuri.



Executive Director Erika Anthony was nominated by the mayor to join the Cleveland City Planning Commission (her first meeting was in November).



Civic Engagement Strategist Robin Turner graduated with an M.Ed. in Education from National University.



Communications + Narrative Strategist Brianna Zgodinski received a certificate in Graphic Design for Organizing from Social Movement Technologies.



Senior Strategist Angelique Gates was a featured panelist for “Who Curates Contemporary Art?” a community discussion hosted by the Cleveland Museum of Art.

# Staff Highlights



Cleveland VOTES moved into our first office space in May at 2728 Euclid Avenue.



Cleveland VOTES was recognized as the Young Latino Network's 2022 Partner of the Year at their annual Noche de Guayabera event in July.



The background is a solid dark blue. It features several abstract geometric shapes in yellow and light yellow. In the top right, there is a large yellow circle with a smaller dark blue circle inside it, and a light yellow quarter-circle below it. In the bottom right, there is a yellow semi-circle, a light yellow quarter-circle, and a light yellow circle. In the bottom left, there is a light yellow semi-circle and a light yellow leaf-like shape above it.

# TEAM MEMBER STATEMENTS

How did you practice democracy  
beyond elections in your role  
in 2022?

A portrait of Brianna Zgodinski, a woman with long brown hair and black-rimmed glasses, smiling. She is wearing a tan short-sleeved top and a black watch on her left wrist. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**We believe an  
informed person is an  
empowered person.**

# Brianna Zgodinski

## Communications and Narrative Strategist


As Communications + Narrative Strategist, I use social media, newsletters, press releases, and other outlets to make sure Clevelanders have the right resources they need to stay civically engaged during election cycles and beyond. What I have discovered in my role is that people are most likely to stay engaged when they are given resources that are accurate, current, and accessible.

In order to be effective participants in democracy, people need the most accurate information. As we all know, false information has the power to upend the electoral process. So, I have attended trainings and seminars on spotting mis- and disinformation. These extra educational experiences have helped me increase my media literacy, and I have passed this knowledge onto my teammates. Now all content that we create and share is screened for accuracy and trustworthiness by the CV communications team.

It is also vital that the information we share is current. Every day I scan news headlines and social media so that our networks have the latest information on key topics like voting updates, policy changes, and local government news. The relationships I and the rest of the team have formed with local media professionals have also been a major asset when it comes to having access to the most recent information in our community. Furthermore, when we share their work on our platforms, they have been very generous about sharing ours, too!

I have also made major strides in ensuring the content we share is accessible. People can't participate fully in something they don't understand. This past year, I earned a certificate in Graphic Design for Organizers. In our training we learned how to make our designs ADA compliant. I began implementing some of these principles in the second half of this year and plan to make Cleveland VOTES' content fully ADA compliant by 2024.

We believe an informed person is an empowered person. So I will continue doing all I can—attending training, working with media partners, keeping abreast of current events and research, and more—to keep our community empowered before, during, and after elections.

A portrait of Angelique Gates, a Black woman with short dreadlocks, wearing black-rimmed glasses, a nose ring, and large hoop earrings. She is smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a light-colored, patterned top with floral and butterfly designs. Her hands are clasped in front of her.

**I would not be able to do the work without the consistent support and participation of those in the community!**

# Angelique Gates

## Senior Strategist


As the Senior Strategist, I utilize my knowledge and skillset to create a landscape that highlights the direction that Cleveland VOTES is going. This includes partnering with other organizations that share aligned visions, and missions.

These collaborations come in the form of education, and are not limited to presentations and workshops that offer an overview of Equitable Civic Engagement. Working with local institutions, we are creating digital tools that catalog the development of our partners, and their citywide impact.

I am also a member of a statewide cohort that is focused on non-partisan policy agenda development, and issue based conversations that represent our respected organizations. These include members from Ohio Organizing Collaborative, Ohio Voice, and Policy Matters Ohio. Alongside this cohort, I participated in an Economics Jam that offered a creative space to explore ways we can implement a regenerative economy, and redefine streams of funding. Through this project, I was able to connect with professionals across the world, and examine the different relationships our cultures have with money, resources and wealth. I am working adjacent to our Executive Director, and actively seeking ways we reimagine where philanthropy can pivot to.

Spending much of my time reading democracy driven publications, and attending webinars, I am expanding what democracy looks like for me and the community around me. Equipped with the four year strategic plan as a guide, I am measuring our various levels of success in a benchmarking guide.

Lastly, the team at Cleveland VOTES works to connect, empower, and educate all of those in our footprint! I would not be able to do the work without the consistent support and participation of those in the community! Looking forward to 2023, and working with even more partners!



**In order for these  
routine activities to  
become public, citizens  
have to be involved.**

# Robin Turner

## Civic Engagement Strategist

As I continue to learn different things within my role here at CV, some of the ways that I was able to practice democracy beyond the elections was firstly always being a steward for the people. Democratic Practices are variations on the things that happen everyday in communities throughout the city. In order for these routine activities to become public, citizens have to be involved.

As the Civic Engagement Strategist, I must:

- Encourage constant collective learning.
- Identify or name the issues facing individuals in their own terms (i.e. what's valuable to them).
- Frame issues so that a range of actions are considered.
- Make decisions deliberately, which means certain trade-offs are necessary.
- Identify resources that are available, including tangible ones.
- Organize actions in a complementary fashion.

A portrait of Natacha Sako, a Black woman with dark, wavy hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a black and tan vertically striped, long-sleeved top and a gold necklace with a pendant. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**Without women's  
rights, there aren't  
any rights.**



# Natacha Sako

## Operations Administrator

When I found out I was pregnant this past year, I had a hard time thinking about the next steps. It took me about four weeks to really come to a decision on whether this is the best time for me to start a family or whether I should wait. *Roe v. Wade* being overturned in 2022 really struck home for me and was weighing on my mind. Had I waited just a little longer and decided that it wasn't the best time for me to start a family, I wouldn't have had that option.

I love that I had the right and time to make my own decision. The political climate of the United States right now, with the rights of women being taken away, is gut-wrenching. Since the Supreme Court's decision, I have made sure that—any time I can—I amplify nonprofits, individuals, and even my peers that are doing work for women's rights. I have donated. I have marched. I have volunteered. And I will continue to do so. Without women's rights, there aren't any rights.

# 01

## STRATEGIC PLAN AND STATE OF THE DEMOCRACY

Cleveland VOTES was created to fill the voter registration void for individuals incarcerated and re-entering society, and in 2018 our focus expanded to also include an equitable civic engagement framework. Since our founding, we have been steadfastly committed to our tagline - Educate, Connect and Empower. When elected officials are not held accountable and not committed to the community, it leads to a vicious cycle where increased cynicism leads to low engagement and turnout. Our path forward demands elected officials engage and represent community needs.



Together with our partners, we are working towards a more liberated future. So this year we launched a four-year Strategic Plan to outline the steps we will take –together– to reach that future.

Cleveland VOTES • Cleveland, Ohio

# Strategic Plan

## 2022-2026

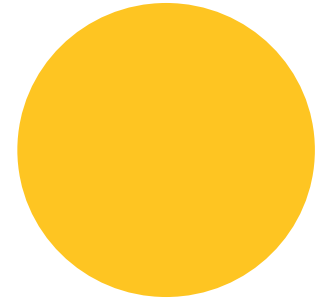
Educate • Connect • Empower

## 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).

**“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.”**

*Erika Anthony*



## 2022 STATE OF THE DEMOCRACY

During the 2022 State of the Democracy we launched and presented our four-year Strategic Plan, as well as announced the grantees of our 2022 Equitable Civic Engagement Fund. This was a two-part event: we hosted a virtual event on June 23rd and an in-person event on June 24th. The in-person event was hosted at Breakforth Studio and catered by The Tomato Guys LTD. Both events provided an opportunity to provide insight on current programming and future goals named in our expansion. We had a number of partners present on their work and the ways our collective efforts have supported a more equitable democracy in Cleveland. It was also a great opportunity for partners to network and meet representatives from local organizations in the civic engagement realm.

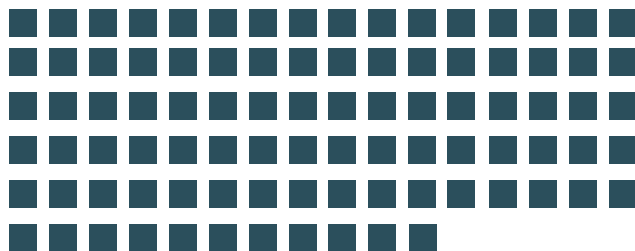
## FAST FACTS

State of the Democracy and Strategic Plan



THE 2022-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN IS CLEVELAND VOTES **FIRST** OFFICIAL STRATEGIC PLAN

**141** PEOPLE ATTENDED STATE OF THE DEMOCRACY (VIRTUALLY AND IN-PERSON)



# 2022 CAMPAIGNS, ISSUES AND ENDORSEMENTS

Practicing democracy beyond elections looks different for each person. For us, it often means promoting coalitions, projects, and campaigns that we believe will ultimately foster equitable democracy.

Some of these campaigns required only a single day of engagement (e.g. #GivingTuesday), while others have required more in-depth focus, people power, and long-term planning (e.g. Participatory Budgeting Cleveland).





CLEVELAND  
VOTES  
EDUCATE CONNECT EMPOWER

CLEVELAND  
VOTES  
EDUCATE CONNECT EMPOWER

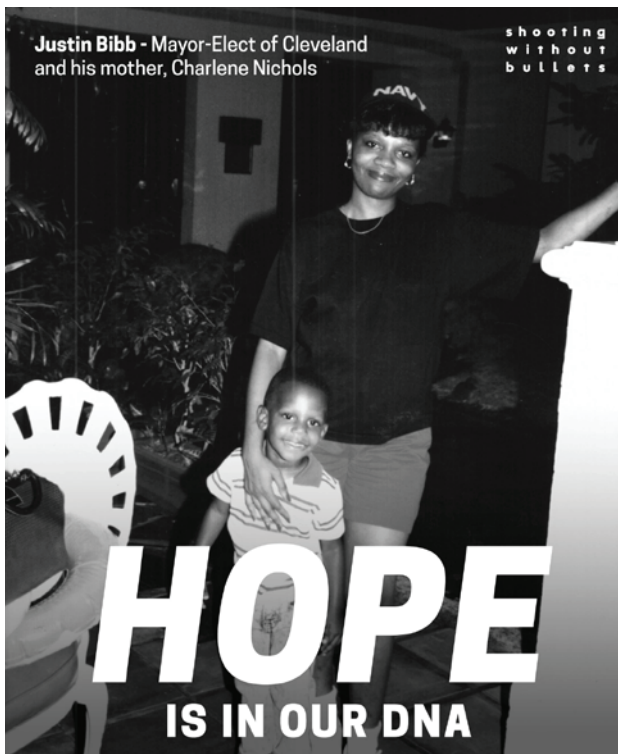
CLEVELAND  
VOTES  
EDUCATE CONNECT EMPOWER

TEAL LILTASWIT  
MUBAKIRAN



EDUCATE CONNECT EMPOWER

Regardless of the time and involvement they require, our goal for 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 PROJECTS, COALITIONS, AND INITIATIVES WE ENDORSED IN 2022

### Hope is in Our DNA

Hope is In Our DNA is a multi-iterative, public art initiative created by Shooting Without Bullets (SWOB), in partnership with ThirdSpace Action Lab and Cleveland VOTES to elevate Cleveland's Black history and catalyze racial equity and civic engagement efforts across our communities. SWOB unveiled Hope Is In Our DNA at the ceremonial swearing-in of Mayor Justin Bibb on January 8, 2022.

A component of our four pillars is to make more space for art/creative activism, and we plan to increase our involvement with projects like the one above during the next few years.

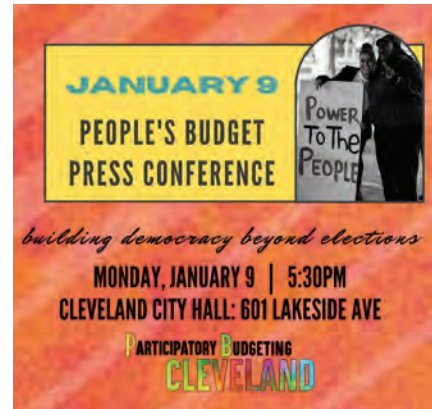
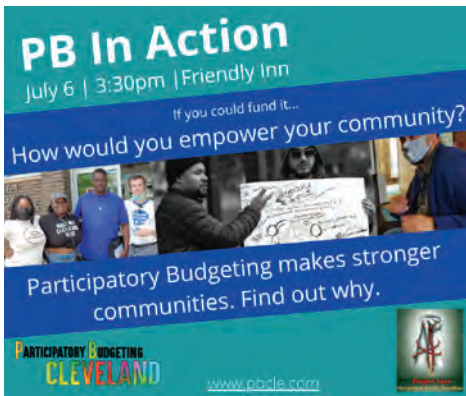


### Participatory Budgeting Cleveland

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 energy and momentum over the last 18+ months with a goal of winning the collective campaign to start participatory budgeting in Cleveland. Cleveland VOTES is part of a grassroots effort to build a people's budget in Cleveland on the use of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) stimulus funds.





PB CLE is a broad coalition of 700+ individuals and 60+ organizations focused on making sure that the people of Cleveland aren't just subjects of the policy and budget conversation, but also directors of the conversation. A coordinating committee meets every Monday evening to discuss how to make participatory budgeting a reality in Cleveland, and smaller groups spin off from there to get things done. Cleveland VOTES was an early endorser and has been amplifying the Coalition's efforts since last year. Since spring of 2022, we have stepped into a more prominent leadership role, supporting outreach and political strategy, as well as hiring a temporary consultant to support the coalition's overall work. To date, the staff involved have primarily included our Executive Director and Civic Engagement Strategist.

Since the campaign launched in 2021, the PB CLE Coalition has advocated and met with members of City Council to encourage them to support PB which would enable residents to decide how to use a percentage of

the American Rescue Act Plan (ARPA) funds through a participatory budgeting process. We were elated in summer of this year when Mayor Bibb announced that he was recommending a \$5 million allocation of ARPA funds to support the Civic Participation Fund, which would fund the City's first participatory budgeting pilot.

The PB CLE Coalition has been working with the City of Cleveland's Center for Economic Recovery (CER) staff, as well as members of the Mayor's Cabinet, to develop a proposal and ultimately legislation that was introduced to City Council on Monday, January 9, 2023. The legislation was sent to the Finance, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion committee for a hearing on January 23, 2023. At the time of this publication, the legislation is currently on hold. Before the meeting, PB Cle held a press conference and rally on the steps of City Hall. The Cleveland VOTES team was there along with dozens of enthusiastic supporters from the community. We encourage you to join the movement, learn more and check out media coverage on the PB CLE website.

**“Democracy is too important to confine to Election Day. It’s time to take democracy beyond elections. In a city where civic participation is at risk, participatory budgeting ensures the public has real power to make real decisions. This investment in our civic infrastructure moves us closer to fulfilling the democratic promise that in our city, every voice matters.”**

*-Jonathan Welle, a member of the Participatory Budgeting Cleveland Coordinating Committee*

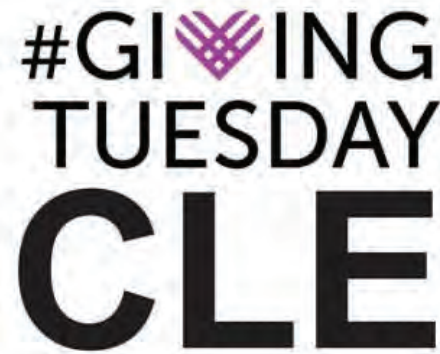
## Cleveland Homeless Bill of Rights

On August 9, Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless (NEOCH) hosted a “Homeless Bill of Rights Teach-In,” during which they co-presented the Homeless Bill of Rights with the Cleveland Homeless Congress. The Homeless Bill of Rights adds protections against discrimination for people experiencing homelessness in Cleveland; memorializes specific rights belonging to people experiencing homelessness; and adds “homeless status” to the list of protected classes in housing, public accommodations, employment, and anti-discrimination ordinances [Source: NEOCH]. Cleveland VOTES’ staff signed the petition to turn the proposed protections into local law, and we have elevated the petition on social media.



## #GivingTuesday

During the month of November we provided virtual support to the local #GivingTuesday coalition, #GivingTuesday Cle. Since 2018, nonprofits and volunteers across Cleveland have celebrated a city-wide day of generosity in collaboration with the global Giving Tuesday movement. This effort has been supported by countless donors and volunteers, growing and evolving each year [Source: Giving Tuesday Cle]. Cleveland VOTES helped GT Cle promote its messaging and event information by reposting their content on our social media accounts.



## FAST FACTS

Local Campaigns, Issues, and Endorsements



THE CLEVELAND HOMELESS CONGRESS WAS PARTIALLY FUNDED BY OUR EQUITABLE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FUND



AN ESTIMATED **24,000+** CLEVELANDERS ARE HOMELESS OR EXPERIENCING SEVERE HOUSING INSECURITY

**60+**

LOCAL AND STATE PARTNERS HAVE ENDORSED THE PB CLE CAMPAIGN

**70%**

OF POLLED OHIO VOTERS SUPPORT PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

# STATE AND NATIONAL PROJECTS, COALITIONS, AND INITIATIVES WE ENDORSED IN 2022

Cleveland doesn't exist in an issue vacuum—many of the challenges that affect us are impacting our state and nation, too. In 2022 we joined state partners in decrying racist statements made by politicians, asking our Governor to take a public stand against anti-Asian violence, sharing election protection information with our networks, working together to execute a polling place vote tripling (PPVT) program, and sharing crucial information about the Ohio Supreme Court races.



## Open letter to the Tim Ryan campaign on “One Word” ad

In March 2022, Cleveland VOTES joined Asian American, Pacific Islander (AAPI), and allied community leaders, educators, families, workers, professionals, small business owners, legislators, students, writers, artists, and everyday people who were profoundly disappointed in the \$3.3 million “One Word” TV advertisement released by Democratic Congressman and U.S. Senate Candidate Tim Ryan. In “One Word”, Rep. Ryan aggressively repeats the word “China”, claiming the Chinese government is responsible for “pink slips and price increases” that harm American workers. Intentionally or not, this ad builds upon long-standing racist and demonizing narratives about people of Chinese and Asian descent, which have contributed to a dramatic increase in anti-Asian hate crimes since 2020 . Cleveland VOTES signed onto an open letter organized by the Asian American Midwest Progressives that expressed these sentiments to Ryan.



## Open letter to J.D. Vance campaign on “Mexican” ad

During his campaign for the U.S. Senate, J.D. Vance ran a 30-second ad that started with the questions “Are you a Racist? Do you hate Mexicans?” In response, Cleveland VOTES’ partner and grantee Young Latino Network called on Latino/a/e/x leaders and allies across the state of Ohio to condemn and denounce Vance’s behavior. Cleveland VOTES signed onto an open letter that YLN directed to Vance in April 2022. The letter condemned Vance’s behavior while simultaneously amplifying the contributions of Mexicanos throughout the state of Ohio.



## Sign-on letter: Stand against Anti-Asian racism and violence

On April 1, 2022, Cleveland VOTES partner OPAWL collected statewide organizational sign-ons for a letter to Governor Mike DeWine and the Ohio State Legislature, demanding concrete action to ensure the safety, recovery, and resilience of Ohio's Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities following the shooting and murder of 6 Asian women in Atlanta. Cleveland VOTES stood with other partners and allies and demanded that the State of Ohio act quickly and meaningfully to ensure that the concerns of Asian and AAPI communities across Ohio are heard at all levels of government.



## 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 (including in our early voting radio ad).



## Vote Tripling

On Election Day, Ohio Organizing Collaborative (OOC) in partnership with Vote Rev Action Fund (VRAF) and other partners (including Cleveland VOTES) worked together to execute a polling place vote tripling (PPVT) program. PPVT is an easy and effectively proven way to generate tens of thousands of warm relational contacts. The tactic involves 3 steps:

1. Volunteers stand outside of targeted polling locations
2. As voters are exiting the polling locations, volunteers thank voters for voting and ask them to remind 3 friends and family members to vote
3. Volunteers incentivize voters with a sticker or some other small token



Before the 2022 Midterm Election, Cleveland VOTES served as the primary lead organization in Cleveland. We hosted 3 training sessions to prepare our volunteers to have positive interactions with voters leaving their polling locations. We secured 17 volunteers, who covered 13 polling location sites in Cleveland. By working together with other state partners, our groups were able to generate 22,959 total relational contacts in 6 key counties: Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lucas, Montgomery, and Summit.



## Ohio Supreme Court 2022

The Ohio Supreme Court is the last line of defense for our democracy. Our state's highest court determines whether elections are free and fair and whether district lines have been rigged to favor certain political parties and skew our elections. So in 2022 Ohio Voice asked its state partners (including Cleveland VOTES) to educate their networks about the importance of the Ohio Supreme Court races in the 2022 Midterm Election. OV created a helpful social media kit and website, which we shared via our newsletter and social media account between August and November.

## FAST FACTS

State and National Campaigns, Issues and Endorsements

# 456

NUMBER OF TIMES THE ELECTION PROTECTION HOTLINE GOT SHARED DURING OUR MIDTERM ELECTION RADIO AD CAMPAIGN

# 22,959

NUMBER OF RELATIONAL CONTACTS OUR VOTE TRIPLING VOLUNTEERS MADE ON ELECTION DAY

# 03

## PARTNER ACTIVATION

One of Cleveland VOTES' primary roles in the community is serving as a grantor, providing grants for voter registrations, voter mobilization, general operations, and civic holidays. This year we had two grantmaking opportunities: the Equitable Civic Engagement Fund and the Advancing Equitable Environmental Justice and Democracy Incubator. Even after distributing the funds, we remain committed via our Community of Practice sessions - providing guidance/support and elevating our grantees' work.





**CHECK**  
YOUR VOTER  
REGISTRATION



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**FREE**  
TAKE ONE



**#VoteReady**



**REGISTER**  
TO VOTE



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**REGISTER TO VOTE**

NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION

Become a  
Poll Worker  
• Serve your community  
• Defend the right to vote  
• Earn money  
• Can help more people

Keep reading to learn more about the dedicated organizations Cleveland VOTES financially supported in 2022.



## 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 (ECEP) 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 2022, we disbursed 23 grants totalling \$150,000 to nonpartisan, non-profit organizations that facilitated voter education, voter registration, or mobilization work in Cleveland. We hosted a kick-off meeting without cohort at the end of June, as well as Community of Practice sessions in July and August. We made ourselves available in September–October for 1:1 office hours to support our grantees with our goals. In November we hosted a post election debrief session and gathered in December for a thank you lunch. Here are some of the projects our grantees used their ECEF dollars for:

- Voter registration in neighborhoods with past low turnout
- Civic holiday events (National Voter Registration Day, Vote Early Day, etc..)
- GOTV media (e.g. ads, billboards, and fliers)
- Civic education programs for urban youth and college students
- Translated voting materials for community members who don't speak English as a first language
- Education and transportation services for elderly voters
- Civic participation training for clergy, faith leaders, and other community leaders
- Disinformation and misinformation educational campaigns
- Homeless Congress community meetings
- An informational campaign to elevate the importance of the Supreme Court race
- An educational campaign about the newly drawn Ohio legislative districts

# Equitable Civic Engagement Fund Grantees

**\$6,000**

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Alpha Omega Chapter

**\$3,000**

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity

**\$7,500**

Asian Services in Action

**\$4,500**

Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging

**\$5,000**

Civic Literacy Initiative

**\$5,000**

Community of Faith Assembly

**\$8,000**

Council on American-Islamic Relations

**\$7,500**

Fair Elections Center

**\$3,000**

League of Women Voters

**\$3,000**

Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry

**\$8,000**

Midtown Cleveland, Inc.,

**\$8,000**

Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless

**\$7,500**

Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates

**\$8,000**

OCA Greater Cleveland Chapter

**\$7,500**

Ohio Women's Alliance

**\$7,000**

Participatory Budgeting Cleveland

**\$9,000**

Promise of Democracy/Ohio Voter Fund

**\$7,000**

ReNOUNce DeNOUNce Gang Intervention Program

**\$8,000**

Showing up for Racial Justice Ohio

**\$4,000**

SOS (Strengthening our Students)

**\$7,000**

The Land

**\$7,000**

Tremont West Development Corporation

**\$9,000**

Young Latino Network

**“Cleveland VOTES is a supportive umbrella organization that knows how to get the job done of promoting equitable access to the ballot while building enthusiasm in the community for what the fruits of true democracy can look like in America.”**

*Julia Shearson, Executive Director of CAIR (Cleveland Chapter)*

**“We were able to successfully support our priority audience with the ECEF grant because it allowed us to focus on the densest area in our neighborhood with the most Spanish-speaking households with unregistered voters (which is Metro North). During our outreach, we provided forms necessary for registering people to vote, updating their current address, and/or completing absentee ballots.”**

*Dharma Valentin, Community & Equity Organizer at Tremont West Development Corporation*

**“After receiving the ECEF grant, we plan on continuing our civic engagement efforts throughout the year, providing more education and understanding of the election process and its importance to this community.”**

*Lisa Wong, President of OCA Greater Cleveland*



## 2022 ADVANCING EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY INCUBATOR

In September, Cleveland VOTES was pleased to announce a new initiative focused on synergizing the efforts of Black, Indigenous and Persons of Color (BIPOC)-led or serving nonprofits committed to advancing equitable environmental justice and democracy in the Greater Cleveland area. With the new Environmental Justice cohort, we aim 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. While Cleveland VOTES has historically focused heavily on the elevation of the civic process, we know that in order to foster a more equitable democracy, other social conditions must be interwoven into our work. As such, understanding the gravity of climate and environmental justice and the adverse effects it imposes upon the health of our community is critical to the cultivation of a healthy democracy.

Beginning August, Cleveland VOTES sought out a few nonprofits that are committed to advancing and developing a shared Awareness + Activation Campaign. We hosted a few meet and greet sessions to introduce ourselves, share more about this pilot incubator and ascertain interest from prospective applicants. Those organizations were then invited to apply to be part of the EJ co-hort, which also included funding for approved environmental justice initiatives and projects. The incubator commenced in September 2022 and will finish in March 2023. The cohort meets bi-weekly for our Community of Practice and over the next few months, we aim to create a shared campaign. We aim to collectively contribute to increasing knowledge around the issues identified by the cohort, as well as activate their base of members. At the conclusion of this incubator, we intend for each partner to have tactical skills and tools that will transcend beyond our time together.

## EJ Cohort Members

*Each received \$8,500*

---

Birthing Beautiful Communities

---

Cleveland Tree Coalition

---

Concerned Citizens Organized Against Lead

---

Empower Youth, Exploring Justice

---

Journey on Yonder, LLC

---

See You at the Top



## FAST FACTS

Partner Activation



PEOPLE OF COLOR IN NORTHEAST OHIO ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY SYSTEMIC ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES—THIS PAST YEAR MAYOR BIBB DECLARED THE CLEVELAND LEAD PAINT CRISIS “PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE.”

**\$201,000**

TOTAL GRANT AMOUNT DISBURSED FOR ECEF AND EJ COHORT

# 04

## COMMUNITY ACTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Partnerships and collaboration are essential to a thriving democracy. In 2022, 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 2022 elections, and learning how they can live out democracy beyond elections. Our team answered the call. We spoke at Cleveland Pride, City Club of Cleveland, and the Baldwin Wallace Brain Center for Community Engagement. 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.





*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.*

## ORGANIZATIONS, INITIATIVES, AND INSTITUTIONS WE ENGAGED WITH IN 2022

AIGA (National Design for Democracy Committee)	Fair Elections Center	Ohio Women's Alliance
AKA Sorority, Alpha Omega Chapter	#GivingTuesday Cle	Ohio Voter Fund/Promise of Democracy Foundation
All in for Ohio	Golden Ciphers Youth Development & Cultural Arts Center	Ohio Voice
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity	Greater Cleveland Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta	Participatory Budgeting Cleveland
Asia Services in Action	Greater Cleveland Sports Commission	Policy Matters Ohio
Baldwin Wallace University	Hawken High School	Pride in the Cle
Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging	Heights Bicycle Coalition	Project LIFT Services
Bike Cleveland	Journey on Yonder, LLC	The Raben Group
Birthing Beautiful Communities	The Land	ReNOUNce DeNOUNce Gang Intervention Program
Carmen's Harvest Festival	League of Women Voters Greater Cleveland	See You at the Top
City Club of Cleveland	Legal Aid Society of Cleveland	Shooting Without Bullets
Civic Literacy Group	LGBT Community Center	Showing Up for Racial Justice
Cleveland Council on World Affairs	Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry	The Spot Youth Empowerment Organization
Cleveland Documenters	Marshall Project	Signal Cleveland
Cleveland Foundation	Midtown Cleveland, Inc.	Social Justice Institute
Cleveland Fresh	Mobilize the Vote NEO	St. Clair Superior Development Organization
Cleveland Leadership Center	NAACP Cleveland	Strengthening Our Students
Cleveland State University	National Kidney Foundation	ThirdSpace Action Lab
Cleveland Tree Coalition	National Voter Education Week	Trayvon Martin Foundation
Common Cause	National Voter Registration Day	Tremont Arts & Culture Festival
The Community Builders	Nonprofit VOTE	Tremont West Development Corp.
Community of Faith Assembly	Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless	Trinity Cleveland
Concerned Citizens Against Lead	Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates	United Way of Greater Cleveland
Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park	Northwest Neighborhoods CDC	Vote Early Day
Council on American-Islamic Relations	Ohio Debate Commission	Voting Matters
Cuyahoga Community College	OCA Greater Cleveland	Young Latino Network
Cuyahoga County Reentry Week	Ohio Environmental Council	YWCA Greater Cleveland
Election Hero Day	Ohio Fair Courts	
Empower Youth, Exploring Justice		



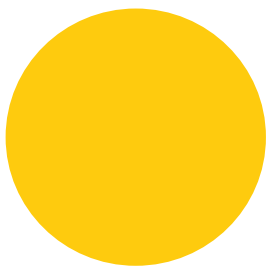


**OFFICIAL BALLOT**

Vote for the best one.

1. Candy	2. Pet	3. Color
<input type="radio"/> Reese's peanut butter cup	<input type="radio"/> Dog	<input type="radio"/> Red
<input type="radio"/> Snickers	<input type="radio"/> Cat	<input type="radio"/> Blue
<input type="radio"/> Skittles	<input type="radio"/> Fish	<input type="radio"/> Purple
<input type="radio"/> Hershey's	<input type="radio"/> Hamster	<input type="radio"/> Pink
<input type="radio"/> Twizzlers	<input type="radio"/> Bird	<input type="radio"/> Black
<input type="radio"/> M&M's	<input type="radio"/> Snake	<input type="radio"/> White
<input type="radio"/> Sour Patch Kids	<input type="radio"/> Bunny	<input type="radio"/> Green
<input type="radio"/> Milky Way	<input type="radio"/> Guinea Pig	<input type="radio"/> Orange
<input type="radio"/> Starburst	<input type="radio"/> Ferret	<input type="radio"/> Yellow
<input type="radio"/> Twix	<input type="radio"/> Lizard	
	<input type="radio"/> Horse	

**CLEVELAND VOTES**  
EDUCATE. CONNECT. EMPOWER.





## CIVIC HOLIDAYS

Here at Cleveland VOTES we believe that democracy should be celebrated and that joy is a radical act. So we extend this joy during the civic holidays that we celebrate with the community. Whether the event was celebrated online (like Vote Hero Day) or in-person (National Voter Registration Day, Vote Early Day), we made sure that joy showed up. This year (with the help of community partners) we celebrated National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, Vote Early Day, and Election Hero Day. Each of these holidays were opportunities to educate, empower, and uplift the community.

**“The path to a more equitable democracy starts with us reclaiming joy. Joy must be felt by all, therefore it’s our collective responsibility to do our part to realize this joyful spirit in ourselves first, and together with our fellow community members.”**

-Erika Anthony

2022 Greater Cleveland Events	
<p>Please join us Sept. 17-23, 2022 as we #CelebrateDemocracy in Greater Cleveland! Nearly 60 partners will register community members and ensure they are #Ready4Ballot for the General Election. The events listed are confirmed as of Sept. 12th. For the most up to date info - please scan the QR code or click here.</p>	
<p><b>9/17/2022   SAT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ohio Voter Fund/Promise of Democracy Foundation ..... 10:00AM 50 Park St. Church, Cleveland, OH 44115</li> <li>YWCA Greater Cleveland ..... 10:00AM 7033 Franklin Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44102</li> <li>OCA Greater Cleveland ..... 11:00AM Aila Park, E. 50th &amp; Payne Ave., Cleveland, OH</li> <li>Tremont Arts &amp; Culture Festival ..... 11:00AM 1500 Park, S. Lorain Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113</li> <li>Cleveland Fresh ..... 12:00PM 3070 Somers Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113</li> <li>Cuyahoga County BOE ..... 12:00PM Cleveland, OH 44113</li> <li>Ohio Voter Fund/Promise of Democracy Foundation ..... 12:00PM 1777 East 58th St., Cleveland, OH 44103</li> <li>Renovus Democracy Camp Intervention Program ..... 3:00PM 12200 W. 55th, Cleveland, OH</li> </ul>	<p><b>9/19/2022   MON</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobilize the Vote NEO ..... 10:00AM Multiple events may be found at: <a href="https://www.clevelandvotes.com/2022/09/16/voter">https://www.clevelandvotes.com/2022/09/16/voter</a></li> <li>Ohio Voter Fund/Promise of Democracy Foundation ..... 11:00AM 1940 Lee Rd., Cleveland Heights, OH 44115</li> <li>YWCA Greater Cleveland ..... 3:00PM 4209 Proquest Ave., Cleveland, OH 44103</li> </ul>
<p><b>9/18/2022   SUN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lakko Coffee ..... 9:00AM 2375 Lorain Ave., Cleveland, OH</li> <li>Cuyahoga County BOE ..... 12:00PM Tremont Arts &amp; Culture Festival/Tremont's Lincoln Park 1200 S. Lorain Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113</li> <li>SOS Strengthening Our Students ..... 12:00PM 7701 Quincey Ave., Cleveland, OH 44104</li> <li>Continuance for Cuyahoga Valley National Park ..... 4:00PM 4040 Reviewer Rd., Peninsula, OH 44264</li> </ul>	<p><b>9/20/2022   TUE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cuyahoga County BOE ..... 8:30AM Cuyahoga County Board of Elections 2925 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115</li> <li>Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry ..... 9:00AM 4825 Superior Rd.</li> <li>CSU Office of Civic Engagement ..... 10:00AM 2121 Euclid Ave., Student Center 2nd Floor, Hovorka Cleveland, OH 44115; Student Center and Berkman Hall</li> <li>Cuyahoga County BOE ..... 10:00AM Helen Riggs Senior Center, 2501 Liberty Rd.</li> <li>Cuyahoga County BOE ..... 10:00AM Shoreville Branch of Cuyahoga County Public Library 18705 Hovorka Dr., Shoreville, OH 44130</li> <li>NOVA ..... 10:00AM MetroHealth, Bookbinder Health Center 6430 Broadway Ave., Cleveland, OH 44125</li> <li>United Way of Greater Cleveland ..... 10:00AM 1331 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, OH</li> <li>Aila Services in Action (ASAI) ..... 11:00AM Aila Park, 2999 Proquest Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114</li> <li>Cleveland State University ..... 11:00AM 2212 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115</li> </ul>
<p>LEGEND: ■ Host ■ Partners</p>	

## National Voter Registration Day

National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) 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 2022 (which we spread over a week from Sept. 17-23) 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 2022 was a success! Working with partners for NVRD instead of working alone is unique to Cleveland VOTES. ED Erika Anthony has even received attention this year 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.



This year over 35+ organizations signed up to be an official Greater Cleveland NVRD partner. We had 19 organizations serve as the host for an event(s), 9 organizations partnered with other entities to host an event and 7 organizations promoted the civic holiday with their networks. Our 55+ partners hosted 73 events! Some of them previously served as NVRD partners with Cleveland VOTES and some of them were new partners who heard about us from colleagues or our social media channels. The partners either hosted their own NVRD event or supported and partnered with other organizations who were hosting events. Some of the notable highlights of our partners efforts and events include: music performances, free pizza, an arts & culture festival, vaccine clinics, ice cream socials, parties in the park, and registration drives at grocery stores and coffee shops.

Our outreach efforts combined resulted in our partners collecting 7411 voter registrations, 2669 online voter registrations and 146 Vote-by-mail applications.

## National Voter Education Week

This was Cleveland VOTES' first 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]. While participating in NVEW this year, Cleveland VOTES helped local voters learn to find their polling location, understand their ballot, make a plan to vote in-person or by mail, and more.

**NATIONAL VOTER EDUCATION WEEK**

YOU CAN FIND EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO COMPLETE YOUR VOTING CHECKLIST AT [NATIONALVOTEREDUCATIONWEEK.ORG](https://nationalvotereducationweek.org)

- MONDAY**  
#VOTERREADY Register to vote or check your status!
- TUESDAY**  
#MAILREADY Request your mail-in ballot!
- WEDNESDAY**  
#VOTEPLANREADY Make a voting plan! (when, where & how)
- THURSDAY**  
#BALLOTREADY Check to see what will be on your ballot!
- FRIDAY**  
#ELECTIONREADY Level up your voter engagement!

#NationalVoterEducationWeek NationalVoterEducationWeek.org

overview:

**#VOTEPLANREADY**

- Make sure you have a plan set in place.
- If it's available to you, vote early!
- Make sure you know your voting location.
- Bring any required ID.

Call or text: 866-OUR-VOTE or tweet @866OURVOTE if you experience issues.

Learn more at [NationalVoterEducationWeek.org](https://NationalVoterEducationWeek.org)

There are resources to help!

#NationalVoterEducationWeek 5/5



## Vote Early Day/Pull Up to the Polls

Vote Early Day (VED) 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 received a grant from VED for \$5,000. The grant helped us partially fund “Pull Up to the Polls,” an early voting celebration held on October 29 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 Lekko), children activities, VED swag, and just general encouragement. ThirdSpace Action Lab, All Voting is Local Ohio, and the NAACP Cleveland branch partnered with us on the event and helped the festivities run smoothly. Bike Cleveland and Heights Bicycle Coalition also hosted a group bike ride to the BOE in honor of the event (“Pull Up to the Polls... with Pedals”). Everything was delightfully documented by photographers Francisco DeJesus and Shomari Blythewood. The total number of early voters that day was 1,336.



## Election Hero Day

Election Hero Day 2022 was another first for Cleveland VOTES. Election Hero Day is a national day of recognition on November 7, 2022. On this day, 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]. This past year Cleveland VOTES signed on as an EHD partner and honored Elia Burgos—the Bilingual Community Outreach Coordinator at the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections— as a local election hero. CV Advisory Board members Daniel Ortiz and Melaak Rashid also took time to thank Ms. Burgos via video for her commitment to early voting, election integrity, and advocacy for ESL voters.

## FAST FACTS

Community Engagement

**10,000+**

VOTER REGISTRATIONS COLLECTED DURING NVRD WEEK

**1,336**

EARLY VOTES CAST ON VOTE EARLY DAY

**73**

NVRD EVENTS HOSTED



**146**

VOTE-BY-MAIL APPLICATIONS COLLECTED DURING NVRD WEEK



**21,100**

IMPRESSIONS ACHIEVED WITH NVRD RADIO AD



**30+**

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS CONDUCTED

**2**

NEW CIVIC HOLIDAYS CELEBRATED





CLEVELAND  
VOTES

## MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

With the addition of a Communications + Narrative Strategist, Cleveland VOTES was able to expand its media outreach this year. For example, we made use of radio ads for the first time to promote National Voter Registration Day, Vote Early Day, and early voting hours at the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections. Thanks to generous donors, we achieved over 2M impressions with our 3 radio ad campaigns. Several local media outlets also wanted to hear our perspective on issues like voter turnout in Cleveland, Ohio's legislative maps, and the criminal justice system in Cuyahoga County. Here are some of the outlets we were featured on in 2022:

- 96.5 WAKS [Kiss Cleveland]
- 105.7 WMJI [Magic]
- 106.1 WAKS [Cleveland's REAL Hip-Hop & R&B]
- 1100 WTAM [Cleveland's News Radio]
- 89.7 WKSU [Ideastream Public Media]
- Cleveland Observer
- Belt Magazine
- The Real Deal Press
- News 5 Cleveland
- The Land
- Cleveland Jewish News

# 05

## 2022 ADVOCACY, LEGISLATION AND RESEARCH

Promoting democracy beyond elections can be difficult if you have to fight anti-democracy legislation at the same time. Unfortunately, in 2022 we still had to dedicate a lot of labor and attention to protecting our vote. Here at Cleveland VOTES, we (alongside several local and state partners) have been contending with three voter suppression bills this year. These pieces of legislation seek to reduce equitable access to the ballot and make it harder for voters to engage. You may read more about these bills below.

While it is important to advocate for more equitable policies, we should note that this advocacy would not be possible without quality research to back up our actions. So we have been grateful to policy research organizations (such as our partner, Policy Matters Ohio) for all of their hard work this year.







THE CITY OF CLEVELAND

CITY OF CLEVELAND

2022

Thanks to the countless hours they have spent researching and talking to Ohioans, we can confidently say we know what Ohio voters want. And they want fair elections.



## SUB. HB294

In November 2022, Republican members of the House Oversight Committee rushed to pass Substitute House Bill 294 before the end of the year. As we explained in Democracy in Review 2021, HB 294 was originally presented by the Ohio Legislature in response to the 2020 General Election. The provisions of HB 294 included 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. Sub. HB294 was supposed to be an improvement on the first version of the bill, but it would still make it more difficult for our most vulnerable community members to vote. Cleveland VOTES has been vocal about being against the bill on social media and has provided tools for contacting legislators. For the most recent information on Sub. HB294, follow the Ohio Voter Rights Coalition.



## SUB. HB458

Sub. HB294 has not been the only voter suppression legislation we have been fighting. On December 6, more unnecessarily strict voting requirements were slipped into House Bill 458. The bill was originally created by the Senate Local Government & Elections Committee to eliminate August special elections. But then additional voting restrictions were added to the bill during the Lamé Duck Session in December. The Ohio House worked overnight on Dec. 14 and passed the bill while most Ohioans were asleep. Mike DeWine signed it into law on Jan. 6, 2023.

When the bill gets codified, voters will lose the freedom to register to vote and vote with an alternate form of ID such as a utility bill, government document, or paycheck. Voters will also lose the freedom to vote provisionally with the last four digits of their social security number and have their absentee ballots thrown out if their ballots are not received by the close of polls on Election Day. Several Ohio organizations (including CV partner Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless) filed federal lawsuits against DeWine after he signed the bill. We are supportive of these legal efforts and will be paying close attention to how the new voting policies will evolve in 2023.

**“We will witness—and many of us will experience—extreme barriers to the ballot and disenfranchisement. It is going to take an all hands on deck approach to help voters understand what is happening.”**

Kayla Griffin, All Voting is Local Ohio State Director



## HJR6

Right after the 2022 Midterm Election, Secretary of State Frank LaRose and State Representative Brian Stewart proposed HJR 6, which seeks to change the Ohio Constitution so future ballot initiatives—both citizen-led and now those led by the General Assembly—require at least 60% approval of voters for passage [Source: ACLU Ohio]. HJR 6 would make it much harder (and more expensive) for Ohioans to pass new amendments. Cleveland VOTES publicly voiced its opposition to this anti-democracy resolution alongside several other local and state partners, such as Policy Matters Ohio, Innovation Ohio, Ohio Organizing Collaborative, and League of Women Voters.

On December 13, Erika Anthony joined several Ohio organizations in protesting House Joint Resolution 6 at the State Capital. In the end, the bill didn't have enough votes to pass (for now). We will still be keeping an eye on HJR 6 in 2023. The Ohio Voter Coalition website is providing updates on the resolution.



## FAST FACTS

Advocacy, Legislation, and Research

**100** OHIO ORGANIZATIONS PROTESTED HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 6 AT THE STATE CAPITAL

**70%** PERCENT OF ALL OHIO VOTERS DEMANDED LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS BE DRAWN FAIRLY AFTER THE 2020 CENSUS

THE OHIO REDISTRICTING COMMISSION FAILED

**5x**

TO CREATE A FAIR LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT MAP

# 2022 ELECTIONS





## May 3 Primary

This year’s Ohio Primary Election was certainly unique. It was split into two days on May 3 and August 2. Voters were instructed by Secretary of State LaRose that they would need to cast a ballot on both dates. The split dates were a consequence of the Ohio Redistricting Commission’s inability to pass constitutional legislative maps. The May 3 ballot featured candidates running for congressional, statewide, and local precinct positions. Positions in a specific area, such as a county commissioner and town referendums, were also on the ballot. In Cuyahoga County, 161,341 people cast ballots in the May 3 Primary (18.5% of registered voters) [Source: Cuyahoga County Board of Elections].

## August 2 Special Primary Election

The second day of the Primary Election decided all state legislative positions (like state senators and representatives at the Ohio Statehouse). A total of 92,042 ballots were cast (10.53% of registered voters).

## November 6 Midterms Election

Some of the contests that Cuyahoga County residents voted on during the November 6 Midterms include Governor, U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, Auditor of State, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Ohio Supreme Court, County Executive, and several local judge seats. Some of the ballot measures were Issue 1 (Determining bail amounts based on public safety), Issue 2 (Citizenship Voting Requirement Amendment), the Cleveland Metro Park District Tax Levy, and the Cleve-Cuy County Port Auth Tax Levy. The number of ballots cast in Cuyahoga County was 404,940 (46% of registered voters).



# 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 business listed.





**CRESCENT  
DIGITAL**

System  
Design Support



## 2022 CLEVELAND VOTES TEAM

### Cleveland VOTES Staff

**Erika Anthony,**  
*She/Her, Executive Director  
+ Co-founder*

**Lique Gates,**  
*She/They, Senior Strategist*

**Natacha Sako,**  
*She/Her, Operations Administrator*

**Robin Turner,**  
*She/Her, Civic  
Engagement Strategist*

**Brianna Zgodinski,**  
*She/Her, Communications +  
Narrative Strategist*

### Fellows and Interns

**Sidney Poor,**  
*She/Her, Civic and Creative  
Engagement Intern*

**Sam Bowen,**  
*He/Him, Student Intern*

**Ankita Paudel  
Bishwakarma,**  
*She/Her, Democracy Fellow*

### Ongoing Consultants

**Andrianna Sheriff,**  
*Independent Social  
Media Consultant*

**Crystal Bryant,**  
*Co-Founder and Advisor*

**Lisa McAloney,**  
*NEOH Solutions (Grant  
Writing Consultant)*

**Jacinda Walker,**  
*designExplorr (Creative Director  
+ Website Consultant)*

**Evan O'Reilly,**  
*Participatory Budgeting Organizer*

**Hubay | Dougherty,**  
*Legal Counsel*

### Project-Based Consultants

**Brianna Schillero  
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# Closing Thoughts From Cleveland VOTES

Dear Cleveland Community,

As we stated in our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan opening letter, the path to a more equitable democracy starts with us reclaiming joy. Joy must be felt by all. Therefore, it's our collective responsibility to do our part to realize this joyful spirit in ourselves first and together with our fellow community members. As Lauryn Hill so eloquently asks, "How we gonna win if you ain't right within?" Acts of joyful expression can take many forms, from simple acts of compassion, empathy, and forgiveness to grace, kindness and respect.

Cleveland VOTES also implores each of you once again to think about democracy beyond elections. Our collective efforts must be rooted in individual purpose. While there are those of us that may have more 'formal roles' in community building and civic engagement, there is actually space for all members of our community to contribute to the fabric of our civic culture.

We must continue to have those courageous and tough conversations with our families, friends, neighbors, etc... about who belongs and what current practices/policies may be 'othering' portions of our community. A strong democracy necessitates that we have safe and stable housing, health care accessibility, flourishing educational opportunities, and an environment that is safe for generations to come.

So what can you do now? Here are some suggestions:

- Reflect, rest and rejuvenate. Since democracy-building work is hard, we invite all of our partners to join us during this period of ease + reflection. *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto* is a great guidebook for getting started on your intentional rest journey.
- Stay connected with our organization and the dozens of democracy builders in our community by signing up for our newsletter, give us a follow on social media, or check out our Linktree page for current initiatives and campaigns that need your help.
- Attend a public meeting, where you'll learn about what your local government is doing and how you can connect.

- Can't make it to a meeting in real time? Follow the Cleveland Documenters and catch up on their meeting recaps via their website or Twitter.
- Call and connect with your local public officials (State, County and/or City). Tell them about the issues that are important to you and your community. Make noise about current and proposed policies that you think are unfair. (Or, if you like something that your official(s) are doing, let them know that, too!)

Join a local advocacy effort (please note this is not an exhaustive list, just a few suggestions):

- Participatory Budgeting Cleveland
- Northeast Ohio Worker Center
- Care Response Efforts with REACH and Policy Matters Ohio
- Cuyahoga County Jail Coalition and Black Lives Matter Cleveland
- Fair Districts Ohio
- Ohio Voter Rights Coalition
- ACLU Ohio
- Honesty for Ohio Education
- Ohioans for Reproductive Freedom

Cleveland VOTES envisions a community where our collective work will power a transformation toward a more liberated future, offering access to tools that produce increased efforts in civic education, engagement, and advocacy. We will continue to work with intentionality to amplify the voices of our neighbors, ensuring we have a more informed, participatory, and cohesive community. You can learn more about how we plan to make this vision a reality by checking out our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan and completing our Digital Activation Budget!

Onward to a more equitable democracy,  
The Cleveland VOTES Team



## FUNDERS

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