

ELECTION DEFENSE SCENARIOS

**HOW WE KEEP
THEIR HANDS
OFF OUR VOTE**



BY DANIEL HUNTER

WITH MESSAGING GUIDANCE BY ASO COMMUNICATIONS

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**WITH MESSAGING GUIDANCE BY ASO COMMUNICATIONS
(ANAT SHENKER-OSORIO, GENEVIEVE ARNOLD, AND JAY MARCELLUS)**

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This guide is for informational and organizing purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice. Its authors are not lawyers or soothsayers. Laws, court rulings, and election procedures vary by state and locality and may change rapidly. Nothing here should be relied upon as a definitive statement of the law. If you encounter a legal issue on or around Election Day, contact a qualified election law attorney.

Some scenarios in this guide reference historical examples of civil disobedience — including cases where people chose to nonviolently resist laws or orders they believed to be unjust. These examples are included as historical record. Readers are responsible for understanding the legal implications of any actions they choose to take and are encouraged to consult legal counsel before engaging in any activity that may carry legal risk.

The legal and electoral information in this guide reflects best understood conditions as of June 2026. Election law is in active flux. Readers should verify current rules with their state and county election offices before Election Day.

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Introduction

You're reading this because you know our vote is at stake. You know most of us can only vote because of hard-won movements by ancestors who risked their lives — because they weren't landholders, men, or white.

You know the current regime wants to stay in power — so they are changing the rules.

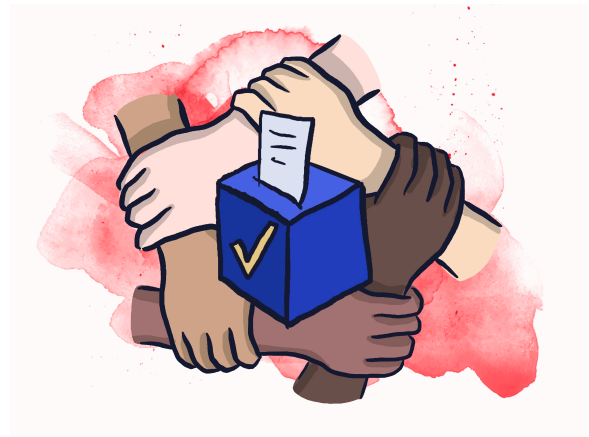
They are stomping on the Voting Rights Act to reduce Black power. Threatening to deploy armed agents at polls. Raiding and investigating nonpartisan voting organizations to make an example of them. And working hard to convince the voting population that they can't vote — or that it won't matter anyway.

You know this — and you want to know what to do.

The good news: This resource offers thinking about how some of this might play out. Each scenario includes 1) background on the threat and sketches of how it could unfold, 2) material to run role-plays or work through “What would you do?” and 3) responses from the U.S. and around the globe that have worked — or at least pushed back effectively.

The bad news: There's no crystal ball. None of us know exactly how this will play out. These scenarios can't cover every option or tell you the best use of your time. You'll have to do the work of making plans that fit your situation.

One thing is clear: The threat is too large to just run our old playbooks. We will need planning, creativity, and each other.



“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” —Lord Acton

Using the Scenarios

This guide will help you be more prepared with what may happen — and options to respond if it does. In many states, election protection coalitions are planning for these scenarios. The Election Safeguards Response Network (ESRN) can connect you to existing local coalitions: bit.ly/esrn_partner.

Which scenarios should I read?

You *could* read this cover to cover. If you're that person, enjoy.

For most: **Study the table of contents to find the most relevant scenarios** — either to your location, your role, or your worries.

If you need more guidance, here are suggestions for your situations:

If...	Try these scenarios
You have mail-in voting	4 (<i>mail-in deadlines</i>)
You're in a state that passed new restrictive voting/ID laws	1 (<i>redistricting</i>) 2 (<i>roll purge</i>) 3 (<i>IDs</i>)
You're in a swing state or close-margin races are expected	5 (<i>box sabotage</i>) 8 (<i>challenges</i>) 9 (<i>disinformation</i>) 12 (<i>recounts</i>) 13 (<i>SCOTUS</i>)
You have robust ICE or National Guard operations	11 (<i>federal agents at polls</i>)
Your region has armed militias or disruptors	10 (<i>armed civilian groups</i>)
Your canvassing board is closely divided or willing to delay/refuse certification	14 (<i>canvassers refuse to certify</i>)
Your election is high-profile or high-stakes	6 (<i>DOJ investigations</i>)
Your locale is a heavily concentrated Democratic voting bloc	7 (<i>location chaos</i>) 15 (<i>federal seizure</i>) 16 (<i>Congress refuses to seat</i>)
You're in DC	17 (<i>control board</i>)
You're in Puerto Rico	18 (<i>feds interfere</i>)

Is preparing worth it?

Think about how firefighters teach exit drills and fire safety in schools. The first reason is obvious: Prepare before the worst happens. But the second reason matters just as much: deterrence. Kids who learn fire safety are less likely to play dangerously with matches.

The same logic applies here. **Being prepared is itself a form of power.**

Uncertain political leaders get moved when they see a determined, organized force ready to act and call out anyone who cosigns with election interference.

Union organizers know, the best way to avoid a strike is to prepare for one — when the bosses see genuine readiness, they make compromises.

So we prepare — to protect the vote, and to make stealing it not worth the cost.

And if you feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of scenarios, remember that **these are not separate threats — they are one coordinated threat**. Voter roll purges make communities more vulnerable to poll chaos. Disinformation makes armed intimidation more effective. Department of Justice (DOJ) investigations weaken the organizations that get out the vote.

Work you do to address any one of these scenarios makes your community more resilient against all of them. You don't have to fight every battle to matter. Start where you are.

What are the key lessons from these scenarios?

If you run through these scenarios, you'll start to see some key patterns. There's predictably a huge role for rapid legal defense, education about people's rights (including poll workers), communication to neighborhoods, and rapid mobilization.

A subtle theme is handling fear. This includes the responsibility of election protection folks to avoid becoming vectors of fear, which can happen if you spread unfounded rumors or place too much trust in institutions that cannot handle this situation.

With the dismemberment of the Voting Rights Act, on full display is that we cannot rely on the courts and electoral mechanisms alone. The great democracy movements like the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Suffrage movements expanded voting rights not only through polite discourse and trusting lawyers — but also through confrontational political protest and nonviolent resistance. These skills will be needed, too.

One of the clearest lessons from every scenario in this guide — and from democratic movements around the world — is this: Illegal and unjust orders only work if people comply with them.

If federal agents arrive with an overbroad or defective warrant, election officials are not obligated to hand over more than what the warrant specifies — and their legal team should be present before they hand over anything. If a canvasser is pressured to refuse certification without legal grounds, their refusal has no legal effect if the board's vote and the required signatures are already complete. If a National Guard unit is deployed illegally to a polling location, they do not have to comply — and local officials and legal observers can document the

violation and call it out publicly, and community presence can make the deployment politically costly.

Noncooperation against injustice is our legal and moral right. It means:

Refusing to implement orders that are illegal or that a lower-level official reasonably believes are illegal or violating ethics — and saying so publicly and on the record;

Not immediately complying with warrants that look faulty, making sure to consult with a lawyer before handing over anything, and scrutinizing every warrant for scope and legal basis;

Continuing to do your job as an election official unless a court order specifically prevents you from doing so — an investigation is not an injunction;

Insisting that National Guard or other armed forces leave a polling location, naming the federal law they are violating (18 U.S.C. § 592), and having that request documented and witnessed;

Committing ourselves to implement the results of the election — using protests as enforcement, if the official processes break down.

Local and state officials who publicly commit in advance to protecting voters — and who publicly name the laws that protect them — make the cost of interference higher.

Each scenario in this guide is different in its details. What they all share are key moments where mobilization matters most — moments where the right action, taken together, can change the outcome. Those moments make up the People's Election Playbook (page 5).

How to develop narrative responses?

After the first edition of this booklet, ASO Communications offered supplementals for each scenario with example Narrative Responses. These are included in this edition.

These narrative responses are examples which you may want to adapt to your own audience or goals.

A narrative response is only as useful as the goal you have set – in other words, you have to first determine *what* it is you want people to do and therefore with *whom* you must communicate. Then, and only then, do you determine what it is best to say and, critically, how to get it heard in the din of the real world.

To come up with your *goals*, ask yourself – what is it I wish people believed, in the context of this scenario, and most vitally what do I need them to *do* in order to prevail?

To come up with your *audience*, ask yourself – who, specifically, do I need to act (primary audience) and who might influence them to do so (secondary audience)?

To come up with your *message* describe the actions of the regime in concrete language and the consequences for us should they succeed, name their motivation, and share a clear call to action for your audience.

For more, see the Hands Off Our Vote messaging guide for the 2026 midterm elections: bit.ly/handsoffourvote.

Last thought

This regime desperately wants you afraid. It wants you to pass that fear along — to spread their bogus rules and invented threats, to get you so overwhelmed that you don't do your humble part. **Don't comply.**

Because here is the other truth: They fear you. They fear activated voters who are engaged. They fear a free people who show up, stay loud, and refuse to be turned away. Go be that.

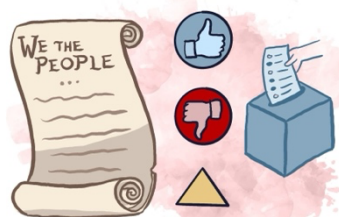
We got this.



The People's Election Playbook

*To hold on to power, they are going to try to keep people from voting. **We are not going to let them.** These actions are foundations that other tactics build on to stop them.*

NOW THROUGH ELECTION DAY	1. Activate the Vote
AUG-NOV	2. Check Your Registration
SEPT-OCT	3. Vote Early — Together
ELECTION DAY • NOV. 3	4. Election Day as a Civic Holiday
NOV. 4 UNTIL ALL VOTES COUNTED	5. Count Every Vote
IF ELECTION RESULTS ARE NOT HONORED	6. Mass Economic Noncooperation



Get registered and ready to vote: [Vote.org](https://www.vote.org)

1. Activate the Vote

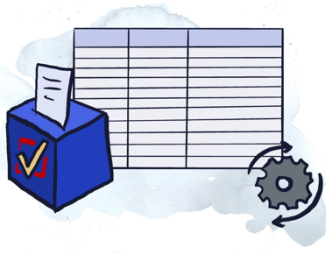
Each of the people's election playbooks starts with this:
Get with at least 3 people to act with you.

Because this is more than just getting out the vote. This includes reminding people why their vote is precious, telling the truth to prepare people for the lies, and participating in efforts like Freedom Summer (blackpowerwarroom.com/freedom-summer/).

At stake: In 2024, approximately 89 million eligible voters in the United States didn't vote. That's more people than votes received by either major-party candidate. If "none of the above" were a candidate, they would have won — which is why we have to reach out to these potential voters.

In her essay "Strategy Memo: The 89 Million" (at freedomtrainers.net/election) Ash-Lee Henderson describes 3 core reasons people don't vote:

- They are structurally locked out (we need to help them vote).
- People rationally withdraw (we need to build them a political home based on the economic despair they feel).
- They ideologically refuse (we need to expand the frame).



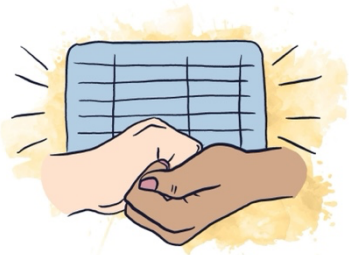
Check your registration:
[Vote.org](https://www.vote.org)

2. Check Your Registration

Prepare your circle of friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers for attempts to take away your vote. **Put it in your calendar to regularly check in with your circle to check up on their voter registrations.**

This is especially true if your state has handed voter rolls to the federal government: Alaska, Arkansas, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming.

The federal government has said it plans to ask those states to purge their voter rolls. Checking once is not enough — check multiple times.



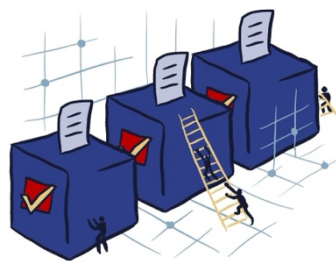
Register your event: [Vote Early Day, Indivisible](https://www.voteearlyday.org)

3. Vote Early — Together

If early voting is available to you, it isn't just convenient, it's smart — especially in this election season. **But don't vote just as an individual — get with at least 3 other people to vote together.**

Call it what you want: *Souls to the polls. A workplace fieldtrip. Friendship bonding time. Parties at the polls. Arrive with 5!* Bring a voter guide ([guides.vote](https://www.guides.vote)). Be visible! Text friends that you voted. Wear a sticker. Share a selfie.

Find your Vote Early Day at [voteearly.org/vote](https://www.voteearly.org/vote). Many are Oct. 27, 2026.



Sign up: [Election.Holiday](https://www.electionholiday.org)

Companies: [Time To Vote](https://www.maketimetovote.org)
([maketimetovote.org](https://www.maketimetovote.org))

4. Election Day as a Civic Holiday

On this civic holiday, vote (if you haven't already) and spend the day helping others vote and protecting our election. Treat Election Day as a *civic* holiday — one where we do our civic duty:

- Vote, if you haven't.
- Be a poll worker or poll monitor ([866OurVote.org](https://www.866OurVote.org)).
- Call or text friends (AKA “vote tripling”).
- Organize block parties to encourage voting and discourage any harassment or intimidation.
- Help escort people to polls.
- Find more volunteer opportunities: [Ground Control](https://www.wearegroundcontrol.org) ([wearegroundcontrol.org](https://www.wearegroundcontrol.org)).



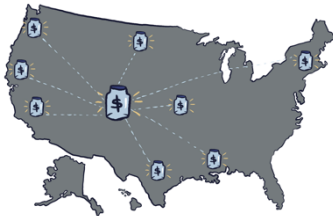
Connect with organizing groups: Indivisible, May Day Strong

5. Count Every Vote

The morning after Election Day (Nov. 4), be ready to make every vote count. Sign up for ballot curing to help votes count. Explain the counting process to impatient friends. Celebrate when votes are counted.

One option: If it's right for your city, organize celebratory events as votes are still being counted. In 2020, Philadelphia famously organized a massive dance party outside of the County Board of Elections — to offer positivity and encouragement and discourage any violence or slander. This could happen at county boards of elections or at other visible, public locations.

Count Every Vote events offer peaceful, visible encouragement and protection for election officials to count all ballots. Post-election threat scenarios often have a common need: people in the streets. This gets that moving.



Connect with organizing groups: Indivisible, May Day Strong

IF ELECTION RESULTS ARE NOT HONORED,

6. Mass Economic Noncooperation

Cheating must never pay. When results were not honored in Ukraine or Serbia or Brazil, people had to mass mobilize in the streets to enforce election results.

We may have to do that here.

In the U.S., May Day Strong has a simple saying: **No work. No school. No shopping.**

Mass economic noncooperation is the leading tool to fix stolen elections. Instead of daily work or school, we take part in ongoing protests and mass mobilization strategies on the street, at state capitals, and at locations of economic impact. Collectively, these tactics isolate vote deniers using all levers of economic pressure until election results are honored.



Redistricting to Erase Representation

Congressional district maps are redrawn to eliminate seats held by Black, Latino, and Democratic incumbents — diluting the political power of communities of color

What Is This Scenario?

This scenario is not hypothetical — it has largely already occurred, with little immediate recourse available.

Redistricting is supposed to happen once a decade, after the census, to account for population changes. That norm no longer holds. In 2025, President Trump pressured Republican-controlled states to redraw their congressional maps mid-decade — not because populations shifted, but to lock in a partisan advantage.

Texas led the way in summer 2025, passing new maps designed to net Republicans 5 additional House seats. California, Missouri, North Carolina, and other states followed, attempting to protect or stymie the slim Republican House majority. This initial wave was slowed after Indiana rejected redistricting attempts.

The new Texas maps, as elsewhere, targeted Black and Latino districts (majority-minority districts).

This process was accelerated after the Supreme Court issued its ruling in *Louisiana v. Callais*. The Court gutted the Voting Rights Act — the legal jewel of the Civil Rights Movement that had, for 6 decades, prohibited states from drawing maps that dilute the voting power of communities of color.

By ruling that such maps were an unconstitutional racial gerrymander, the Court eliminated the primary legal tool communities of color had used to challenge discriminatory maps. A flood of Republican-led Southern states moved immediately (Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, etc.). The loss of Black representation in Congress will be historic — the largest single-election drop in absolute numbers since the defeat of Reconstruction.

Gerrymandering and district manipulation have been used to suppress Black and brown political power throughout American history — from post-Reconstruction rollbacks to the systematic dilution of the 1980s. The playbook: Use the machinery of the state to ensure Black and brown voters count less.

Black activists and others have vociferously fought against these new maps, with some notable wins. After facing hundreds of demonstrators at the South Carolina State House, Republicans decided not to advance (for now) eliminating Rep. Jim Clyburn's majority-Black 6th District — a seat Clyburn has held for 34 years, making him the only Black Democrat to represent South Carolina in the state's congressional history. However, in other states the losses are devastating, and longer-term organizing will be needed.

How This Has Unfolded

State legislatures called into special session. Governors have called the state legislature back from recess to consider new district maps. The stated justification is protecting the state’s “fair share” of House seats or responding to redistricting in other states. The real purpose is eliminating a seat held by a Black or Latino Democrat.

New map adopted after Callais. Following the Supreme Court’s Callais decision gutting the Voting Rights Act, Southern states moved to redraw maps, even cancelling elections already in progress. The new districts pack Black voters from multiple communities into a single seat or split them across multiple districts, diluting their collective voice. Candidate filing deadlines are restarted. Primaries are moved or delayed. Voters who thought they knew who they were electing suddenly find themselves in a different district.

Responses That Have Worked

Indiana, 2025: “You Have to Know Hoosiers.” Watching what was happening in other states, ordinary Hoosiers pushed back against pressure to redistrict. Protests, petitions drives, and testimony campaigns grew for months. Hoosiers sent more than 61,500 messages to state lawmakers opposing the maps. Constituent meetings and town halls became heated over the issue.

When the Indiana governor called a special session in December, protesters flooded the Statehouse. On Dec. 1, over 400 people turned out. Testifiers were a mix of Democrats and lifelong Republicans opposed to the blatant power grab.

Despite pressure from President Trump, all Democrats and 21 Republican senators joined in voting down the redistricting attempt. The lesson: Sustained, broad-based community presence — showing up early, showing up often, and showing up with a cross-partisan coalition — can make even a Republican supermajority think twice about defying its own voters.

Tuskegee, Alabama, 1957–1960: The Town That Fought Gerrymandering. The executive secretary of the White Citizens’ Council of Alabama — also an Alabama state senator — introduced a redistricting bill to redraw the largely Black city of Tuskegee from a simple square to a figure with 28 sides. The act, explicitly introduced to reduce Black voting power, was passed.

Three thousand mostly Black Tuskegee citizens met at Butler Chapel AME Zion Church where they launched an economic boycott of white-owned stores in Tuskegee. “We are going to buy goods and services from those who help us, from those who make no effort to hinder us, from those who recognize us as first-class citizens,” organizer and sociology professor Charles Gomillion declared.

Within weeks the boycott had plunged local sales by more than 75% and put the gerrymandering case in the national spotlight. The state attorney general raided the organizers’ offices and obtained injunctions to outlaw the boycott. But the boycott continued for 4 long years.

Under withering pressure, the courts agreed that the redrawn boundaries violated the Fifteenth Amendment, and the former version had to be restored. It was one of the first cases in which the Supreme Court ruled that a gerrymander was an unconstitutional racial discrimination — and it was won because a community boycotted, organized, and litigated all at once.

Canada, 1964: Taking Politicians Out of the Process. For most of its history, Canada suffered from partisan gerrymandering. The reform began at the provincial level — Manitoba abolished gerrymandering in 1955 after voters and press alike grew disgusted with maps that gave rural ridings two-thirds of legislative seats despite the population being evenly split urban-rural. Within a decade, the pressure had spread nationally. In 1964, Canada codified independent, non-partisan redistricting commissions into federal law through the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act. Politicians can lodge objections — but they do not draw the lines.

Narrative Responses

Note: If there is a redistricting campaign underway or if you are crafting messages to fight for fair maps in the future, please see this [Redistricting Battle](#) guidance.

Goal: Motivate people to vote despite and in defiance of gerrymandering and build momentum long-term to ban gerrymandering.

Audience: Districts with large Black, brown, and immigrant populations, Southern states, swing states, and districts with close races.

Messages:

- Our leaders are entrusted to carry out the will of the people — not seize power and rule over us. This regime is trying to prevent Black, Brown and new Americans' votes from counting so they can lock themselves in power and decide our futures for us. But they've got another thing coming. We're turning out in record numbers to send a clear message: Hands Off Our Vote.
- Today we vote, tomorrow we draw the line.

- Your vote is your ICE whistle, blow it.
- Your vote is your community, protect it.
- Your vote is your message to this regime, speak it.
- Your vote is your [noun], [verb] it.
- This regime wants to silence us, but it's only making us louder.

What to Prepare

Start here: Find local grassroots groups who are already rapidly responding, like [Black Voters Matter](#), and your state's redistricting watchdog organizations — [ACLU](#) state chapters, [NAACP](#) state conferences, and [LULAC](#) chapters are all monitoring. Find your state's redistricting calendar at [Democracy Docket](#). Then go on the offensive to build economic noncooperation, with campaigns like [Fix It, FedEx](#) ([fixitfedex.com](#)).

Additional options:

- **Show up at the statehouse — early and in numbers.** Indiana and South Carolina both showed that visible, sustained statehouse presence can change how legislators read their political situation. Organize cross-partisan delegations — Republicans opposing the maps for their own reasons are often more persuasive to Republican senators than Democrats alone.
- **Make the case in the district — not only at the capitol.** Reach out to constituents of wavering Republican legislators in their home communities. Organize town halls, letters to local newspapers, and conversations with local civic and religious leaders who have credibility with those legislators.
- **Document how the map was drawn.** Gather testimony from community members about what representation has meant. Gather data comparing old and

new districts by race and community. Note who was in the room when maps were drawn, what guidance came from Washington, and what justification was offered. This record supports both the public argument and the legal challenge.

- **Have a legal team ready to file immediately.** The Callais ruling has severely narrowed but not eliminated constitutional claims; Fifteenth Amendment arguments and intentional discrimination claims remain available.
- **Build toward permanent reform.** Indiana and South Carolina bought time — but leaders in both states have signaled they may try again. Two-thirds of Americans, including most Republicans, support banning gerrymandering. That supermajority is the foundation for a long-term reform campaign. Begin building the coalition now.
- **Even if the map passes — vote anyway.** Jim Clyburn said he would run for an 18th term regardless of what map was drawn. Gerrymandering succeeds

when it convinces people their vote doesn't matter. The answer is to prove it wrong. Register. Turn out. Run candidates. Courts matter, but winning elections even under gerrymandered maps has happened in Wisconsin, North Carolina, and elsewhere. When it does, it sends a powerful message.

- **Organize “We Draw the Line” gatherings** such as house parties or community events where folks draw their own maps based on how they see their communities and what they want in them (e.g. childcare center, hospital, park, etc) and make sure folks pledge to not merely vote but to register and help at least 3 other people to do the same.
- **Organize events where folks walk in the path of ancestors**, for example, as [Black Voters Matter and allies](#) (bit.ly/selmaprotest) did in Alabama after the recent Callais decision to remind participants that others have come before us and forced change and we carry that legacy.



The Voter Roll Purge

Eligible voters arrive at the polls and find they are no longer registered — their vote is either blocked or cast provisionally, with an uncertain outcome

What Is This Scenario?

A common tool to hold on to power in a democracy is to control who can and cannot vote. This can be quite dramatic. In Ivory Coast (2025), 4 major opposition figures were struck from the final voter rolls so they couldn't run or even vote. Ahead of 2013 elections, the Zimbabwean government purged its voter list — then initially kept the roll hidden. Independent analysis found significant anomalies — including registration numbers that exceeded census population in some areas and under-registration in urban opposition strongholds.

American history is filled with this, too, largely as a tool of racial disenfranchisement. U.S. purges have primarily targeted low-frequency voters and communities of color. The NAACP documented that Georgia's "exact match" program disproportionately affected Black, Latino, and Asian American voters. Federal law under the National Voter Registration Act prohibits systematic voter roll purges within 90 days of a federal election. Late purges can be challenged in court immediately.

In 2026, it has a new twist: the federal government actively trying to control voter registration data, or at least building lists to challenge who are accurate voters. The DOJ

has filed suit against more than 30 states demanding unredacted voter rolls — not just names, but Social Security numbers, birth dates, and addresses. Multiple states have refused and are in ongoing litigation.

The federal government is already using these tactics to pressure states to remove voters that *it* thinks are invalid. The lists could later be used to discredit results with claims of mass fraud or forcing the USPS to refuse to send mail-in ballots to the states' lists (another dubious legal move).

Critically, voter rolls are controlled by the state — not the federal government. Many of the feds' current moves are likely illegal violations of the National Voter Registration Act. In most states, voters who have been purged have the right to cast a *provisional ballot* — a ballot that is set aside and counted after officials verify the voter's eligibility.

How This Might Unfold

Mass purge lists generated from federal data. A federal agency generates hundreds of thousands of "suspicious" voter registrations based on cross-referencing Social Security Administration, immigration, or other databases. The list is forwarded to states with demands for

investigation and purge. Some officials purge voters without adequate notice, leaving insufficient time for voters to correct errors or re-register.

Election Day challenges using the data.

Rather than removing voters ahead of time, organized challengers show up at polling places with lists and challenge individual voters' eligibility at check-in, citing the federal data.

Claims of mass fraud. After elections are over, the federal government uses its faulty lists to claim a massive fraud has occurred. This is then pretense for further disenfranchisement from the federal government.

What Would You Do?

It is Election Day. Things have been going fine except that you begin hearing of one, then two, then eventually dozens of people who have previously voted showing up on Election Day and finding that they are not on the voting rolls. Some remembered to try provisional ballot; others just walked away.

You check notes with others around the state and find this is widespread. Perhaps tens of thousands — or more — of voters are getting their names rejected. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Have your state's voter rolls been requested by the DOJ or accessed by a federal data-matching operation?
- What is your state's deadline for checking your registration before Election Day?
- Does your state allow same-day registration? If not, what is the process to challenge if you've been purged?

Responses That Have Worked

Georgia, 2020: Provisional Ballot

Workaround. Georgia's 2020 election enacted strict voter ID requirements. Voting rights groups sued, noting the program by impact targeted Black, Latino, and Asian American voters.

A massive voter education campaign was carried out to prepare people for possible ballot voting problems. Poll workers were taught about the options of provisional ballot voting, and about how to tell people what they needed to do to "cure" (fix) their ballot with ID. Following the election, daily reports were published with the number of provisional ballots cast. Advocacy groups urged voters to take advantage of the 24 hour window to ensure those votes were counted in the final results, and an Election Protection Hotline was available for support.

Organizers credited the strong networks, relationships, and coalitions to support counter efforts to intimidate voters. Amber Bell, with Georgia Project for Community Education, shared that if "a voter had been intimidated or that something was going on, we were able to pick up the phone and there were a network of attorneys, a network of organizers, and a network of supporters that could offer their support."

Belarus, 2020: Poll Workers Refuse to

Sign Falsified Protocols. When Alexander Lukashenko stole the August 2020 presidential election, poll workers were ordered to sign result protocols with blank vote totals — to be filled in later by superiors. Several refused. They would not implement an illegal order.

One worker in Minsk said she refused to sign and walked off the precinct; another was fired on the spot for pointing out

violations during the count. These refusals became early anchors for the broader protest movement that followed — evidence of falsification with names attached.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Ensure those who have their votes challenged are able to cast provisional ballots, cure them, and have their vote counted. Specifically, this means educating voters to ask for a provisional ballot if they encounter challenges and encouraging local election officials to resist pressure to block voters and instead conduct the election freely and democratically.

Audience: (1) Voters who might have their vote challenged, (2) Local election officials who must be motivated to do the right thing and not comply with illegal anti-voter orders, and (3) Other voters in the area who need to be organized to pressure local election officials.

Messages:

- *[Overall to get more folks engaged]*
In America, most of us believe that voters should pick our leaders. But this regime is so desperate to hold onto power that they're trying to keep people from voting, even taking us off the voter rolls based on our races, backgrounds, and zip codes so they can control the outcome of our elections. We know that for democracy to work for all of us, it must include us all. That's why across [STATE or LOCALITY] we are turning out as voters, despite [NUMBER] having been purged. We are proving we know our rights and decide our future by having cast [NUMBER] provisional ballots. And now we are demanding that our local elections officials do their duty and count every vote.

- *[To individual voters]* Your vote is your freedom to have a say in your own future and no one can take this from you. If an election official challenges your registration when you go to cast your vote, ask for a provisional ballot — this is how you protect your freedom to vote today and help ensure the will of the people prevails in this election.
#HandsOffOurVote #CountEveryVote
- *[To local election officials]*
#DoYourDuty. Every eligible voter should have an equal say in the decisions that impact our lives.
- A political party tries to court your vote. An authoritarian regime tries to keep you from voting.

What to Prepare

Start here: [Know your state's voter registration check deadline](https://www.npr.org/voter-registration-2026-mail) (apps.npr.org/voter-registration-2026-mail). Build a “check your registration” campaign for your community — in the weeks before the election, people should [check their registration regularly](https://vote411.org/check-registration) (vote411.org/check-registration).

Additional options:

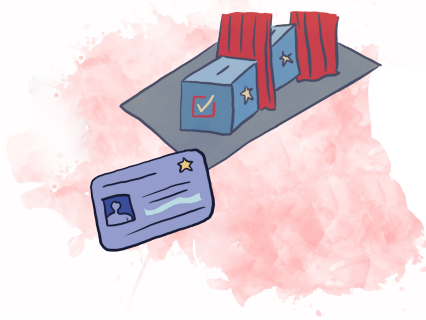
- **Prepare local governments to resist any last-minute purges.** Lower-level officials have to be ready to refuse to implement what they believe is an illegal action by a higher-level body.
- **Set up your own check-in infrastructure.** Deploy volunteers to polling places with phone access to help voters check their registration status in real time and request provisional ballots.
- **Publicize provisional ballot rights aggressively.** Most voters don't know their rights to cast a [provisional ballot](https://democracydocket.com/cases) (democracydocket.com/cases). Make this fact impossible to miss: flyers, texts,

and social media, in every local language, before Election Day.

- **Document every turned-away voter.** Have a simple form. Get the voter's name, address, polling place, time, and what they were told. This builds the foundation for post-election legal action.
- **Conduct your own voter-roll audit.** If you have resources, do a parallel audit in targeted areas comparing official rolls to community knowledge. Create an independent data set.
- **Tell the story as it happens.** Produce regular reports: "X voters purged, Y showed up to vote, Z were turned away." These are critical for the counter-narrative. In Georgia, they tracked daily the number of provisional ballots cast

and how many were cured/accepted to keep momentum in the days following.

- **Provisional, Pass It On** - create a social media "ice bucket" challenge style selfie video campaign where folks talk about what a provisional ballot is, how to request one and then tag 3 friends to do the same.
- **Organize "Do Your Duty" rallies at your local Board of Elections** if officials are refusing to honor and count provisional ballots. For folks who can't come in person, provide a write-in option like postcards or emails so that you can flood these officials with missives. Unlike national-level leaders, local officials are very unused to public engagement and so a little can go a long way.



ID Requirements Arrive Close to Election Day

Voters who have voted for years arrive with valid ID — but are told it's no longer legally sufficient

What Is This Scenario?

Voter ID laws are not new. But the current wave pushes further: requiring birth certificates, passports, or proof-of-citizenship documents that millions of Americans — particularly elderly, low-income, and naturalized-citizen voters — don't have or can't easily produce.

The Brennan Center documents that through May 2026, at least 9 states have enacted 12 restrictive voting laws, 9 of which will be in effect for November (Florida, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Utah, and West Virginia). Several include strict new ID requirements or proof-of-citizenship requirements.

More than 21 million Americans do not have ready access to citizenship documents.

Under the Help America Vote Act, first-time voters who registered by mail may be required to show ID if they did not provide it when registering. When a voter cannot meet applicable ID requirements, they must generally be offered a provisional ballot, which is counted once eligibility is verified under state rules.

ID laws can cause participation and turnout to drop off. When these requirements are passed close to an election, or enforced inconsistently, they further suppress participation on a massive scale. Even the mere threat of them, as last-minute illegal executive orders, could hamper turnout.

How This Might Unfold

New requirement takes effect without adequate voter education. A new ID law is passed months before the election, but voter education resources are minimal. Poll workers receive training, but community outreach is insufficient. Voters who have always used their library card, utility bill, or student ID arrive and are told it's not enough.

Inconsistent enforcement. Poll workers in different precincts apply new requirements differently. Voters who are turned away at one precinct hear that others voted without issue.

Targeted enforcement in specific communities. New requirements are enforced more aggressively in precincts with high concentrations of BIPOC, elderly, or immigrant-community voters.

What Would You Do?

Amid so much noise and election drama, it was easy to miss. But you were still surprised when you talked with your dear neighbor and she was shocked when you mentioned the new ID law.

You begin talking to more people. You realize this is widespread — few people know about this new ID law. Already, you can imagine the long lines at poll stations and many people being turned away. You especially fear for the folks who arrive at the end of their workday to vote — only to realize they don't have sufficient ID to cast their vote. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Has your state passed any new voter ID or document requirement laws that will be in effect for November?
- Which voters in your community are most likely to be affected — and do you have a plan to reach them?
- Does your state have a “free ID” program? Is it accessible to the voters who need it?
- What are the rules about curing and provisional ballots if valid IDs cannot be found?

Responses That Have Worked

Wisconsin, 2016-2020: Voter ID Education and Acquisition Campaigns.

After Wisconsin enacted a strict photo ID law, grassroots community members surveyed DMVs across the state and found that only 3 out of 11 were complying with a court order to distribute voter IDs within a week to residents without birth certificates or other required documents.

In response, civil society and organizing groups ran intensive education and ID acquisition campaigns, bringing the ID process to community breakfasts for low-income residents, and church and community events. Organizers put programs in place to accompany these residents to DMVs and WisDOT locations. Door-to-door canvassing targeted voters who might lack compliant ID.

In 2019 the governor began to explore pathways to eliminate barriers. Officials coordinated messaging, expanded online services, and created a hotline for obtaining a free ID for voting. Following a 3% drop in voter turnout in 2016, in the 2020 election, turnout increased by 6%.

Philadelphia, 2012–2014: Voter ID Requirements Blocked After Litigation Exposed Disenfranchisement Risks. After Pennsylvania passed a strict photo voter ID law in 2012, implementation became a major concern in cities like Philadelphia. Civil rights groups challenged the law, presenting evidence that large numbers of registered voters could be excluded and that the state's ID access system was not sufficiently available before Election Day. Public pressure campaigns shared the real-world impact and scrutinized the court's examination of the issue. Eventually courts issued injunctions blocking enforcement for the 2012 election (and later permanently).

North Carolina, 2013–2016: Documentation Created the Record That Courts Could Not Ignore. After North Carolina enacted a series of restrictive voting measures, civil-rights organizations, community groups, and affected voters systematically documented who was affected and how. Testimony from voters, election officials, and experts helped build a factual record showing the impact of the restrictions. That record became central to litigation challenging the law. In 2016, a

federal appeals court struck down key provisions, finding that they targeted African American voters with remarkable precision. The lesson was that documenting barriers to voting can create both legal accountability and public understanding.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Ensure voters can obtain the necessary ID and know to request and cast a provisional ballot if denied.

Audience: Voters across the state, particularly in precincts likely to be targeted for strict enforcement of new requirements.

Messages:

- In America, voters should pick our leaders. But this regime is so desperate to hold onto power that, with just weeks until Election Day, they've passed confusing new rules and requirements to try to keep people from voting so they can control the outcome of our elections. We know that for democracy to work for all of us, it must include us all. That's why voters across [STATE or LOCALITY] are making sure they have [NAME ID REQUIREMENT] by [DESCRIBE HOW THEY GET IT], and demanding and casting a provisional ballot if turned away.
#HandsOffOurVote #CountEveryVote
- Every eligible voter should have an equal say in the decisions that impact our lives.
- A political party tries to court your vote. An authoritarian regime tries to keep you from voting.

What to Prepare

Start here: [Know exactly what ID your state requires and what exceptions exist](#)

(mapresearch.org/democracy-map/voter-identification-requirements-for-in-person-voting). Run community education ahead of the election. Partner with organizations that can help voters obtain compliant ID. [Learn if your state offers same-day voter registration](#) (rockthevote.org/how-to-vote/same-day-voter-registration).

Additional options:

- **Provisional ballot navigation at polling places.** Station volunteers outside polling places trained to advise voters turned away about what to ask for and how to follow up.
- **Document every denial.** This builds both the legal case and the political accountability case.
- **Make it a community story.** If voters in your community are being systematically denied, make sure local media, state officials, and allied organizations know.
- **Make getting your ID easy.** Set up operations to make it easy to get your ID. If that's not available, at least mix education about how to get ID into the voter registration process and vice versa. Use the opportunity to connect with more people.
- **Use public pressure to support legal challenges.** Bring evidence and grow scrutiny so that court cases are not swept under the rug.
- **Identify as a Voter:** create a social media "ice bucket" challenge style selfie video campaign where folks show off having the new ID requirements met to vote, describe how to do it and tag others to do the same.
- **Create and distribute eye-catching graphics** of which IDs are now required and post physical copies in highly trafficked spots (grocery stores, community centers, malls, etc).



Mail-In Ballot Deadline Changes

Mail-in ballots that voters sent in good faith, expecting them to be counted under existing rules, are no longer counted because deadline rules changed

What Is This Scenario?

This scenario contains a cocktail of legal uncertainty and voter disenfranchisement.

Multiple states have enacted mail voting restrictions in 2026. State receipt deadlines vary; some states accept ballots postmarked by Election Day and received within a certain timeframe after (typically 2 to 3 days), while others require receipt by Election Day itself. In some cases, extended deadlines exist not by statute but through court precedent or consent decrees. Once ballots are received, they must be counted unless there is a specific legal reason (voter signed and dated wrong, signature mismatch, etc.). “Ballot curing” — allowing voters to fix problems with their ballots — is available in some states but not all.

What’s new here is the federal government’s attempt to insert itself. President Trump signed an executive order in March 2026 imposing restrictions on mail voting, including a proof-of-citizenship requirement for voter registration and mandating that mailed ballots be received by election offices no later than Election Day.

In a recent 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court upheld that the executive branch lacks this authority — that federal Election Day

statutes govern when ballots must be *cast*, not when they must be *received*. Grace periods remain for mail ballots postmarked by Election Day. The ruling preserves the receipt-deadline rules in roughly 30 states.

Separately, a federal district court has declared key provisions of Trump’s March 2026 executive order unconstitutional, blocking the administration from directing USPS to withhold ballots or compelling states to use federally compiled citizenship lists. The stakes are high, underscored by Postmaster General David Steiner telling a Senate committee that, under a proposed USPS rule, the agency would refuse to deliver mail ballots to states that decline to hand over their absentee voter rolls to the federal government. That litigation remains ongoing as of writing.

Even with *Watson* decided favorably, significant damage has already been done. Months of litigation created uncertainty that bad-faith actors have exploited.

Further executive or legislative action is possible at any point. Even if courts continue blocking the administration’s efforts, last-minute announcements will throw uncertainty into the mix — for voters, election administrators, and candidates alike.

How This Might Unfold

Executive order claims mail-in ballots illegal — but the order is illegal. A last-minute Trump executive order or state executive action limits mail ballots. Though the change is stopped by the courts, confusion reigns and is used as evidence of election tampering.

Late legislative action. A state legislature passes a law tightening mail ballot deadlines or restrictions, effective immediately. Election officials don't have time to educate voters or change procedures.

What Would You Do?

Millions of voters put their ballots in the mail 10 days ago, expecting them to arrive by the deadline they knew about. Then, the rule changes. After delayed court rulings over the status, the deadline suddenly moves to Election Day itself — no longer postmarked by Election Day, but physically received by Election Day. Suddenly, millions of ballots in transit are at risk of not being counted. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- What are your state's current mail ballot receipt deadlines?
- If the deadline changed, how many voters would likely be affected?
- What's your rapid communication plan to tell voters of any changes?
- Does your state have a "ballot curing" process — a way to fix rejected ballots?

Responses That Have Worked

19 State AGs (then 23+), 2025–2026: Coalition Lawsuits Block the Mail Ballot Executive Orders. When Trump signed his

first elections executive order in March 2025 — demanding proof of citizenship for voter registration and requiring all mail ballots be received (not just postmarked) by Election Day — the response was immediate and multistate. California Attorney General Rob Bonta and Nevada AG Aaron Ford led a coalition of 19 state attorneys general in filing suit in the District of Massachusetts in April 2025. The coalition argued that the Constitution's Elections Clause gives power over federal elections to states and Congress, not the president — and that the order would disenfranchise millions of eligible voters, particularly veterans, overseas citizens, the elderly, and people with disabilities who depend on mail voting.

A series of escalating battles followed: after the initial injunction, the administration issued an even broader executive order; Washington State filed its own separate legal challenge; and the coalition, now grown to 23 attorneys general, filed suit again against the new order.

The lesson: A coordinated multistate legal counteroffensive, filed fast and framed on constitutional grounds, can win injunctions and delay — if not permanently stop — dangerous executive overreach.

Philippines, 2022: Tsek.PH Fact-Checks Deadline Disinformation in Real Time.

When false claims circulated on social media about mail and absentee ballot deadlines for overseas Filipino workers in the 2022 presidential election, a large coalition of civil society and media networks published corrections within hours through partner outlets, social media, and SMS. They had established a verified 400-outlet network before Election Day specifically for this purpose.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Wherever possible, ensure voters mail their ballots early or hand-deliver ballots to drop boxes, track the receipt of their ballot, and cure their ballot, if needed.

Audience: Voters across the state.

Messages:

- In America, voters should pick our leaders. But this regime is sowing confusion about mail-in voting in an effort to keep people from voting and keep our votes from counting so they can control the outcome of our elections. Voters across [STATE] say Hands Off Our Vote. We're mailing our ballots early or hand-delivering our ballots to drop boxes, denying this regime any excuse to decide our futures for us and seize more power. #HandsOffOurVote #CountEveryVote
- Every eligible voter should have an equal say in the decisions that impact our lives.
- A political party tries to court your vote. An authoritarian regime tries to keep you from voting.

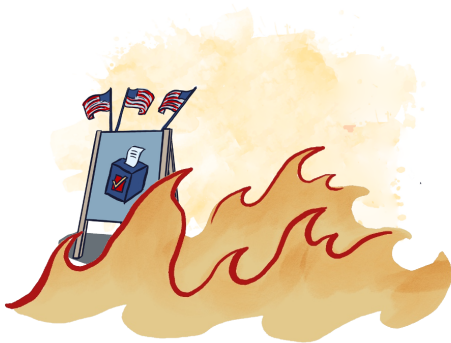
What to Prepare

Start here: [Know your state's current mail ballot receipt deadline](https://apps.npr.org/voter-registration-2026-mail) (apps.npr.org/voter-registration-2026-mail) and when ballots must be mailed. Subscribe to updates from your state and county election offices. Create a simple graphic or document

explaining your state's mail ballot rules that you can share widely.

Additional options:

- **Monitor for deadline changes.** If the Watson case is decided or a new executive order is announced, track changes in real time.
- **Rapid voter education.** If deadlines change, immediately push corrected information through every channel: text, social media, email, phone calls, door-to-door. Get the word out within hours.
- **Ballot tracking support.** [Help voters track their ballots](https://vote.org/ballot-tracker-tools) (vote.org/ballot-tracker-tools), if available. Encourage voters to use official ballot tracking systems. Create a hotline for voters to call if they're worried their ballot was not received.
- **Know the ballot curing process.** [Learn whether your state allows ballot curing](https://ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/table-15-states-with-signature-cure-processes) (ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/table-15-states-with-signature-cure-processes): fixing signature mismatches, dating errors, etc. Prepare to help voters cure their ballots if needed.
- **Plan for the chaos.** Given the current situation, encourage voters to mail-in early or hand-deliver ballots to drop boxes instead of mailing them. Do this well before Election Day.
- **I Vote Early or Early Bird Gets the Vote:** create a social media "ice bucket" challenge style selfie video campaign where folks show themselves talking about the mail-in deadline, voting by mail very early and/or taking their ballot to local drop boxes.



Sabotage of Drop Boxes and Bomb Threats

Early voting sites are disrupted — drop boxes damaged or voting system databases compromised — affecting ballots already cast and suppressing future early voting

What Is This Scenario?

Voter registration databases are protected under federal law. Unauthorized access is a crime. If a database is compromised, election officials must notify voters and have procedures to verify eligibility even if the database is offline.

Drop boxes are public property or must be accessible to voters. Removing them without adequate notice is illegal.

However, given very close elections, targeted acts of sabotage could affect results — and certainly could further erode trust and turnout.

Polling places have seen an uptick in bomb threats. On Election Day 2024, several dozen polling places across Georgia, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania received bomb threats, some requiring evacuations. In each case, election officials deployed backup procedures: extended voting hours, provisional ballots, and redundant systems. The National Task Force on Election Crises later concluded that in most instances, the impact to voters was minimal.

At the same time, resources to combat interference are down. Federal election security grants have fallen from a high of \$425 million to just \$15 million in 2025. That's a dramatic reduction that leaves counties with aging equipment and no federal help to replace it.

Courts have held that voters unable to vote due to polling-place failures through no fault of their own are entitled to relief — including extended hours. Emergency provisional ballots must be offered when a polling place cannot function normally.

How This Might Unfold

Database compromise affects voter registration. A cyber-attack or unauthorized access compromises the voter registration database in a county or state. Early voting sites can't verify voter eligibility. Voters are turned away or given provisional ballots.

Drop boxes vandalized or removed. Drop boxes in specific communities are damaged, removed, or locked. Voters show up to return ballots and find they can't.

Early voting site closes. An early voting location closes due to an alleged emergency (bomb threat, equipment failure, facility closure). The closure affects thousands of voters who had planned to vote there.

What Would You Do?

A friend tells you that a nearby ballot box had a pipe bomb stuffed into it. At first you figured it was some kid — but when a second happens at another location across town, you start to worry.

Police say they are investigating, and election officials huddle. But a friend pulls you aside and asks what else can be done. You start to put your mind to the question.

What do you do?

Key planning questions:

- Who has authority to declare an emergency and extend early voting hours?
- What is the protocol for notifying voters who planned to use the affected drop box or site — or to attempt to find voters who voted at that location to try again?
- What is the legal standard for accepting or rejecting ballots from a damaged or tampered drop box?
- At what point does a second incident trigger a national response rather than a local one?
- How do you notify voters quickly without amplifying fear or suppressing turnout further?

Responses That Have Worked

Arizona, 2022: Drop Box Monitoring and Repair. When drop boxes were vandalized or had mechanical problems, election

officials immediately repaired or replaced them. Civil society organizations stationed observers at drop boxes to document any problems. When problems occurred, they were reported in real time and fixed within hours.

Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, 2026: Explosive Device Detonated — Voting Continued Anyway. On the morning of May 19, 2026 — Pennsylvania’s primary — someone threw an explosive device outside a suburban polling station. No one was injured. Voting was not interrupted. Officials kept the polling location open, directing voters to enter through a side entrance while law enforcement secured the perimeter. Seventeen additional explosive devices were later found in the suspects’ truck. County officials said afterward that they had planned for bomb threats as part of their Election Day emergency preparedness.

Georgia, 2024: 60+ Bomb Threats, Zero Precincts Permanently Closed. On Election Day 2024, Fulton County alone received 32 bomb threats — some by email, some by calls to 911. Sites were evacuated as protocol required. But in each case, voting resumed. The threats originated from Russian email domains. The FBI had pre-briefed election officials that bomb threats were in the likely planning scenarios, meaning counties had already walked through their response protocols before Election Day.

Nigeria, 2023: Youth Volunteers Physically Defend Polling Stations. In multiple Lagos constituencies in the 2023 election, community and Labour Party youth volunteers physically formed protective circles around ballot boxes after armed men attacked and burned several stations. Their presence at the sites didn’t prevent all attacks — but it stopped some and reduced overall fear.

Elsewhere, local coordinators and youth volunteers fanned out, using phone trees and WhatsApp to redirect affected voters to nearby still-functional stations and tell them about provisional processes. This spontaneous peer coordination, not official instruction, kept many voters from simply going home.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Ensure that people still vote and do so as safely as possible, and that they understand we can and must join together to defeat this authoritarian regime.

Audience: Voters in areas under threat and nearby precincts who could be mobilized to act as peaceful observers.

Messages:

- A political party tries to court your vote. An authoritarian regime tries to keep you from voting.
- The will of the people prevails when “we the people” stand with and for each other, across races, places and parties.
- This cowardly regime is spurring violence at the polls to keep Black, Brown and new Americans from casting their votes so they can seize more power and control the outcome of our elections.
- *[In case of intimidation or threats of violence]* We know what keeps us safe: living in communities where we come together to protect our freedoms and our neighbors whether in our streets or at our polling sites. This regime wants to spread fear and sow chaos to keep us from voting by spurring their supporters to potential violence so they can control the outcome of our elections and seize more power. That’s why we’re coming together to vote in record numbers and act as peaceful observers at our polling

places. We will turnout, protect our neighbors, and see the will of the people prevail. #HandsOffOurVotes
#HandsOffOurNeighbors

- *Or,* Across races, places and parties, most of us believe that violence has no place in our communities or our elections. We want every eligible American to be able to cast our ballots and have them counted, without fearing for our lives or our loved ones. That’s why we’re coming together to protect our polling places, by having groups of volunteers stand as witnesses while our neighbors go inside to exercise their freedom to vote. We will turn out in record numbers, protect our neighbors, and see the will of the people prevail. #HandsOffOurVotes
#HandsOffOurNeighbors.

What to Prepare

Start here: [Know when early voting and mail voting start in your area](https://vote411.org/plan-your-vote) (vote411.org/plan-your-vote). Identify vulnerable drop box locations (isolated, low-traffic, in targeted communities). Know your election office’s procedures for database failures and early-voting site closures.

Research has demonstrated that organized groups of third-party observers do diminish state and vigilante violence by altering the social incentives for would-be perpetrators.

Additional options:

- **Monitor early voting and mail infrastructure.** Deploy observers to early voting sites and drop boxes starting day 1. Document any disruptions immediately.
- **Have legal backup ready.** Identify a lawyer who can file emergency motions immediately if a legal challenge freezes

mail ballot processing. This motion should be filed within hours.

- **Support voters whose ballots are at risk.** If there's a legal challenge affecting ballots, create a tracking system so voters know whether their ballot is counted. Be transparent.
- **Have a drop-box backup plan.** If drop boxes are damaged or removed, identify alternative locations where voters can return ballots (election office, satellite early voting sites, etc.). Communicate this immediately.
- **Help voters adapt.** If early voting sites close or mail voting is disrupted, help voters hand-deliver ballots, request new ballots, or vote in person later. Have rapid communication ready.

- **Organize a Present at the Polls community effort** to volunteer for shifts in key locations such as polling sites or drop box locations to be a watchful, peaceful presence as folks go to vote.
- **Where appropriate, organize Party at the Polls celebrations with music, food trucks, and games for kids** at locations targeted for violence. This approach known as “tactical frivolity” has proven successful at deterring threats and violence.
- **Organize a buddy pledge** where people less likely to be targeted agree to accompany people at far higher risk to a drop box or polling site.



DOJ Election Fraud Investigations

Criminal investigations announced against election results, election officials, or civic organizations — designed not to result in charges, but to cast doubt and create justification for future actions

What Is This Scenario?

This scenario is about dishonest investigations, used as a pretext for other more egregious scenarios. Trump is beginning this. Without any evidence, on June 4, Trump claimed Democrats are stealing the California primaries, repeating the lies in multiple venues. This is coupled with a shady statement from the U.S. attorney saying they are working with the FBI on multiple election fraud investigations.

Then on June 11, FBI agents raided the Cleveland offices of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, a pro-democracy organization that helps register voters in that state. Agents allegedly went to the homes of staff and even volunteer canvassers — sometimes with subpoenas, sometimes without — and pressed for information and electronic devices.

Even if the administration never files charges, the threat in all these cases creates a pretext for any number of interference attempts. It will further reduce election officials' morale and plunge trust in the electoral system.

The Brennan Center documented that 3 new DOJ task forces have been created specifically around elections: the Weaponization Working Group, the NJ Election Integrity Task Force, and the DC Election Accountability Unit. They are “poised to enable election interference by investigating perceived adversaries, targeting election officials, and casting doubt on election systems.”

Federal investigations do not give the government the right to stop election administration. An investigation is not an injunction. Election officials can and should continue their work unless a court order specifically prevents them from doing so.

Organizations served with subpoenas have legal rights: to challenge overbroad subpoenas, to seek protective orders limiting disclosure, and to continue operating while litigation proceeds. Because the investigations are about narrative, it's important to push back publicly — not merely defending against accusations of fraud, but explaining that the goal is election interference and institutionally assaulting our elections.

How This Might Unfold

Pre-election announcement targeting a swing-county election director. DOJ announces an investigation into alleged fraud in a swing county. No charges. No evidence. The director is not suspended — but the announcement dominates local news for weeks.

Investigation targeting a GOTV organization. A major voter registration organization is served with a federal subpoena demanding donor lists, staff records, and communications.

Post-election announcement creates certification pretext. After Election Day, DOJ announces a fraud investigation in a county with a narrow voting result. County canvassers use the investigation as grounds to delay certification.

What Would You Do?

Two days before the election, the DOJ announces it is investigating election fraud in your county. No charges are filed. No evidence is released. But the announcement is made.

The press trumpets the news: *Election Officials Under Federal Investigation*. A dark cloud is cast on all of the election — backed by only vague statements around fraud.

The investigation becomes the justification for every other interference mechanism in this guide. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Which voting rights organizations in your state have been publicly targeted?
- Is your state attorney general willing to challenge DOJ overreach?
- How bold are officials willing to be in challenging a public narrative?

Responses That Have Worked

Minnesota Officials, 2026: Continued Doing Their Jobs Publicly. In January 2026, the DOJ issued grand jury subpoenas to Governor Tim Walz and a handful of other leading officials — targeting them for their opposition to federal immigration raids, not for anything election-related. Each went on the record immediately. Attorney General Keith Ellison: “I will not be intimidated, and I will not stop working to protect Minnesotans.” Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey: “In Minneapolis, we won’t be afraid.” Walz framed it as “political theater” and refused to be drawn in. Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty had already publicly warned that she would prosecute any ICE agents who broke the law at polling places. Far from silencing the officials, the overreach of the subpoenas became the story — and each public statement of defiance became the counter-narrative that made the DOJ’s investigation look like what it was: intimidation, not investigation.

Ohio, 2026: FBI raids voting rights group. When the FBI raided the offices of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative earlier this year, people across the state and country united to go on offense with a comprehensive campaign: #HandsOffOhio. See more at HandsOffOhio.org.

Arizona, 2022: Defamation Lawsuits. Kari Lake repeatedly and falsely blamed Stephen Richer, the Republican Maricopa County Recorder, for her gubernatorial loss. Rather than just defending himself, he went on the offense: He sought not only damages but a court order declaring her statements false and requiring her to delete them from social media. Lake ultimately declined to even contest liability, and the case settled. But the offensive strategy was important for resetting the narrative.

Georgia (the country), 2024: Opposition Continues Operating Publicly After Government Threats. After the October 2024 disputed elections, the Georgian Dream party threatened to outlaw opposition parties — specifically accusing them of “treason.” The threat of treason was significant, and language intended to send the opposition leaders underground.

Instead, folks became *more* public. They held press conferences and legal challenges, and they headlined protest rallies held in Tbilisi and around the country. The public nature of continued operation — rather than going underground — was key in building public support for the opposition.

Otpor, 1999-2000: Empty Boxes Expose a Paranoid Regime. After Serbian authorities raided grassroots group Otpor’s offices and confiscated their computers and files, the group turned the repression into a public spectacle. Anticipating their opponent’s moves, Otpor publicly announced it would move back into its offices on a specific date, daring police to act again. When moving vans arrived as promised, drawing spectators and media, police rushed to stop them and tore open the boxes — only to find them empty. Otpor immediately seized the moment, framing the raid as proof of the regime’s paranoia and desperation, turning what could have been another grim confrontation into a moment of public humiliation for the authorities.

Ukraine, 2004: Refusal to Halt the Electoral Process Despite Fraud Allegations. During the disputed presidential runoff, authorities amplified false claims that cast doubt on the vote and smeared election officials. Citing this, they delayed reporting results.

Opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko didn’t wait for them to fill the space with their lies. No vague claims of fraud justified halting

democratic procedures. He unambiguously named this as a tactic to steal election results.

The response was maximalist noncooperation. Protesters occupied central Kyiv for weeks, creating a sustained, highly visible presence that functioned as a parallel civic authority. Institutions were forced to respond.

The opposition refused to accept any delay as neutral; instead, they framed it as a tactic to overturn results and met it with continuous public action and legal escalation. Ultimately, the pressure compelled Ukraine’s Supreme Court to change course and order a new vote. The key lesson: Stay active in contesting the narrative using formal and outside channels, focusing the burden back onto those invoking investigations.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Harness DOJ attempts at intimidation to inspire voter defiance and increase participation. Keep the anti-voter “fraud” narrative from taking hold among conflicted voters by having a clear, proactive counter.

Audience: Voters in the precinct/county/state where officials or organizers have been targeted by the DOJ. Conflicted voters who may be susceptible to “fraud” narratives.

Messages:

- In America, we believe voters should pick our leaders. But this regime is deliberately attacking election officials and voting rights organizations in an effort to keep us from voting and keep our votes from counting so they can control the outcome of our elections. We’ve seen this playbook before: they

lose, they lie, they lash out. What happens next is up to us. Our country is strongest when all of us show up, speak out, and refuse to be intimidated.

Together, let's turn out in greater numbers than ever before and demand:

#HandsOffOurVote

#HandsOff[LOCATION]

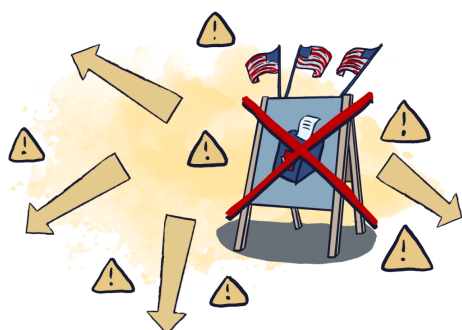
- We've seen this playbook before: they lose, they lie, they lash out. When voters reject them, they go after the organizations that make voting accessible and the officials who ensure our votes are counted.
- A political party tries to court your vote. An authoritarian regime tries to keep you from voting.

What to Prepare

Start here: Know which legal organizations in your state are tracking DOJ targeting of election officials. The [Brennan Center](#), [Democracy Docket](#), and your [state ACLU](#) are monitoring — subscribe to their alerts. Be prepared for community mobilization, and do not hesitate to frame the opposition's moves for the public.

Additional options:

- **Public support for targeted officials.** When a federal investigation is announced, the immediate community response should be visible, vocal support.
- **Counter the pretext immediately.** Specifically refute the alleged facts with actual evidence. Don't let the allegation stand uncontested. And don't be caught within their frame — if this is about them trying to steal the election, say so.
- **Legal counter-offensive.** Organizations with resources should immediately challenge any overbroad subpoenas and announce they are doing so publicly. Filed lawsuits can be both legal strategy and counter-narrative.
- **Targeted groups: Don't be afraid to be public.** Accusations are intended to breed silence and complicity — neither should be done. You are safer if you move with public support. The courts will move too slowly to clear your name. Stay active in framing the story with press conferences, and align strategies with outside citizen pressure.
- **Protest and get loud.** Rather than only responding to the accusations — often impossible since they may be made with only vague statements — stay on the offensive with clear statements about what is happening politically.



Last-Minute Voting Location Chaos

Voters show up at the polling place they've always used but are turned away and redirected to a new location

What Is This Scenario?

Rule changes are legal. Polling place changes happen. But when they happen late, without adequate public notice, the effect is voter suppression. This especially harms turnout in communities with high concentrations of first-time voters, elderly voters, or voters without cars.

In Dallas County, Texas, on March 3, 2026, Republican Party officials unilaterally eliminated countywide voting for primary Election Day — reverting to a precinct-based system that voters hadn't used in years. Voters who showed up at the wrong location were redirected.

The Dallas County Elections Department, working with the League of Women Voters, deployed nonpartisan “election navigators” to at least 75 polling locations on Election Day morning. The navigators had tablets to look up each voter's correct precinct and could text the address directly to a voter's phone. Nearly 13,000 texts were sent to redirect voters that day. A county judge temporarily extended voting hours at Democratic polling sites. Following widespread criticism and voter frustration, county election officials and both parties moved toward restoring countywide voting for the May 26 runoff.

Still, more than 1,750 Democratic ballots cast during court-ordered extended hours were set aside pending litigation — and ultimately not counted after Dallas County Democrats withdrew their lawsuit, citing the Texas Supreme Court's hostility to the case.

Voters who show up at the wrong location due to an administrative error or rule change are generally entitled to a provisional ballot. Courts may order extended polling hours when voters have been disenfranchised through official conduct rather than voter error. But that requires voters knowing when they should stay in line and, at minimum, to vote by provisional ballot.

The Callais decision means voting location disruption will occur in many places in 2026.

How This Might Unfold

Polling place moved with minimal notice.

A location is changed weeks before Election Day. Notice is sent by mail. On Election Day, hundreds arrive at the old location.

Precinct-based voting imposed late. In counties that have used countywide vote centers for years, a rule change reimposes precinct-based voting shortly before Election Day.

What Would You Do?

You've voted at the same community center for 12 years. This November, without adequate notice, that polling place doesn't exist anymore. You arrive, and there is nobody there — just a sign taped on that says, "Not a current polling place."

You look online and realize it's been moved 4 miles away. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Has your county or state made any changes to Election Day voting rules since the last general election?
- Do you know which voters in your community are most vulnerable to confusion from a rule change?
- What networks of communication are most critical for reaching vulnerable voters?

Responses That Have Worked

Nevada, 2020: Election officials adapted to rapid procedural changes during the pandemic as the state expanded mail voting for all active registered voters in the general election. Counties had to quickly communicate updated rules around ballot delivery, return methods, and deadlines to a large and dispersed electorate. To reduce confusion, election offices relied on multiple communication channels, including official websites, mailed notices, press briefings, and coordinated outreach through local media.

Georgia, 2020: Election Workers and Observers Document a Highly Scrutinized Election. Unprecedented election changes and absentee voting due to the COVID-19 pandemic caused an array of

uncertainties. Counties implemented those changes, but also election administration staff tracked issues, timelines, and procedural incidents through official logs and reports required under state and federal election administration rules.

Poll workers followed established procedures, including issuing provisional ballots when required under Georgia law. These provisional ballots were then processed through the standard post-election review process. Steps could later be dissected for accuracy.

The broader lesson: Document procedural issues—through official logs, incident reports, and election records. This is a key part of ensuring transparency and supporting later review, audits, and legal accountability.

Philippines, 2022: Parish-Based Rapid Notification. When the Commission on Elections in the Philippines faced polling-place confusion and technical issues during the May 2022 presidential election, Catholic Bishops activated its parish-based network to push real-time, accurate polling-station information to communities. Unlike official channels, the parish network reached rural voters within minutes. The same network also collected signed affidavits from voters who witnessed irregularities.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Ensure that people still vote, either by getting redirected to the correct polling location, staying in line for extended polling hours, or by provisional ballot — and that they understand these are intentional barriers erected by this regime to keep them from voting.

Audience: Voters in areas with tight races and/or swing states.

Messages:

- Every eligible voter should have an equal say in the decisions that impact our lives. But this regime knows they're losing, so instead of courting our votes, they are putting up barriers, [INSERT SPECIFIC ATTACK, e.g., "changing our polling locations last minute"] to keep us from voting. They want to seize more power, controlling our elections so they can declare themselves the winner. But we're saying Hands Off Our Vote and [INSERT DESIRED ACTION - e.g., "staying in line"] to ensure the will of the people prevails.
- This regime wants to keep [insert locally relevant identity here, e.g., "Ohioans"] from voting because they know that we are strongest when all of us show up, cast our ballots, and have equal say in our futures.
- Despite the barriers the regime is putting up to keep us from voting, we're coming together from [insert local areas that reflect a diversity of race and place, e.g., "from Milwaukee to Superior"] to demand free and democratic elections. #IVoteAnyway #StillIVote #UnstoppableVoter.

What to Prepare

Start here: [Monitor your county election website](https://vote411.org) (vote411.org) for changes to polling places, [equipment](https://verifiedvoting.org) (verifiedvoting.org), or voting rules — starting now. Sign up for any county voter notification system. Create community networks where people can prepare to rapidly communicate news of any changes with each other. Know your state's rules on provisional ballots. Model the actions you want repeated by showing voters who have confronted obstacles and cast their ballots anyway.

Additional options:

- **Deploy your own navigators.** Station volunteers outside affected polling places early on Election Day to redirect voters and explain what happened.
- **Create rapid-response communication channels.** A group text or Signal chain can push updated polling location information within minutes.
- **Know the judge.** Emergency court orders extending polling hours are granted by local judges. Your legal contact should be able to file within hours of a disruption.
- **Document every voter affected.** This builds the case for an extension and post-election accountability.
- **Prepare your election workers for bumps.** If you're in a place where these last-minute changes are likely, talk to your election workers about how changes will get communicated.
- **Scope out existing communication networks in your community to formulate plans to spread accurate information** about where people can vote, how to cast provisional ballots (if needed), and where to assemble for organizing. Many communities have active sub-reddits, local newsletters, WhatsApp groups, mutual aid/ICE watch Signal groups, school and church-based email lists and so on. Connect to leaders in these communities and create a modernized "phone tree" to decide who will disseminate information to whom with an ask to pass it along.
- **Create a repeated social media refrain** and have folks post selfie videos of themselves having successfully voted in a new location and/or with a provisional ballot to spread the word to others. Possible slogans here could be #StillIVote #IVotedAnyway #UnstoppableVoter.



Mass Voter Challenge Campaign

Thousands of trained challengers fan out to polling places and early voting sites, filing challenges to voters' eligibility in large numbers — slowing lines, discouraging voters, and creating confrontation

What Is This Scenario?

In Georgia in 2020, Republican challengers filed more than 360,000 voter challenges in a single county — attempting to remove voters from the rolls weeks before the election. Similarly, in Arizona in 2022, organized challenge campaigns were deployed in specific communities.

Trump has since announced an expanded “Election Integrity Army” for 2026. He boasted his army could make election challenges in every state, larger than ever before.

Legally, challenges must have legitimate legal basis — not just a name on a list. Challenges based solely from someone’s database with dubious claims are legally insufficient in most (but not all) states. Poll workers can and should dismiss frivolous challenges. But even that may not be sufficient.

Organized groups cause delays, make polling places seem chaotic or unsafe, harass election workers, and create conditions for confrontation that discourage other voters from waiting in line. Federal law prohibits voter intimidation regardless of source (52 U.S.C. § 10307(b)), but without enforcement, the intimidation may succeed.

How This Might Unfold

Targeted precincts flooded with challengers. In precincts with high Black, Latino, or immigrant-community concentrations, organized challengers arrive at opening. They challenge voter after voter based on federal data-matching lists. Each challenge requires adjudication. Lines form. Voters leave.

Challengers create a hostile atmosphere. Even without filing formal challenges, the presence of organized observers who visibly scrutinize voters creates psychological pressure. Voters with any uncertainty may leave rather than face the interaction.

Written challenges overwhelm the system. Bulk challenge letters arrive at county boards demanding large lists of voters be removed. County officials must respond to each challenge. Staff is diverted. Other work stops.

What Would You Do?

Days before the election, you hear of “lists” floating around with names of many voters and teams of challengers being organized. On Election Day, it’s clear the plan: Dozens show up at polling places as volunteer

“challengers.” Working from a list, they challenge hundreds of voters — arguing that they are voting illegally, are illegal, don’t match their ID, are fake, etc.

The complaints are extensive, creating delays and disrupting the voting process. In some polling stations, the challengers are kicked out — but then they just drive to another location and continue. More and more are sent all over.

You expect that later, bulk letters will be sent to county boards of elections demanding that large lists of voters be challenged or purged from the rolls. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- In your state, how many challenger objections can be filed at a polling place?
- Does your county have a process for flagging frivolous challenges and removing them quickly?
- Do you have trained observers who understand challenge procedures in your state?
- How will poll workers identify and dismiss legally baseless challenges?
- How can grassroots volunteers respectfully interact with the challengers to tie up their time?

Responses That Have Worked

Georgia (the country), 2024: Observer Networks Document Challenger Behavior. After the October 2024 election was disputed, Transparency International Georgia’s observers not only tracked official irregularities but specifically documented the behavior of ruling-party proxies at polling stations — who were intimidating

voters and election workers. By publishing these observations in real time — naming locations, times, and methods — civil society created an accountability structure that made repeat behavior riskier.

Indonesia, 2024: Civil Society Monitoring of Coordinated Digital Operations. Ahead of Indonesia’s February 2024 presidential election, coordinated social media manipulation was a well-documented threat. Networks of paid operatives — known locally as “buzzers” — were recruited to manage fake profiles and amplify messaging on behalf of campaigns. Civil society organizations responded by banding together to identify hoaxes and coordinated inauthentic behavior, providing voters and election workers with accurate, nonpartisan information. The Damai Coalition of independent civil society organizations mobilized its networks to monitor harmful content online and design risk assessments for conflict-prone areas. Major platforms including Meta and TikTok implemented special election content moderation policies, though consistently identifying coordinated activity remained difficult.

Belarus, 2020: Activists Monitor the Monitors. After the August 2020 election, Belarusian civil society monitoring group Viasna documented not only ballot fraud but also the behavior of the state officials orchestrating it — compiling names of election commission chairs, district supervisors, and Interior Ministry liaisons at specific precincts who had ordered falsification. The “naming the responsible parties” strategy created individual accountability beyond the systemic level. It also made it harder for mid-level officials to simply follow orders without personal consequence.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Ensure voters cast their votes and have them counted.

Audience: Precincts with high numbers of Black, Latino, AAPI, Native and/or new Americans.

Messages:

- No matter our race, place or party, every voter should have an equal say in the decisions that impact our lives. But this regime is inciting their supporters to bully and intimidate poll workers, spread lies to keep us from voting, and use mass voter challenges to cancel the votes of Americans who don't look, live or love like them. They know they're losing, so they're lying and lashing out to try and control the outcome of our elections and seize more power. We're joining together to say Hands Off Our Vote — turning out in record numbers, demanding every vote is counted, and ensuring the will of the people prevails.
- This regime wants to keep Black, Brown and new Americans from voting so they can seize more power and control the outcome of our elections.
- If they think they can keep [INSERT RELEVANT IDENTITY HERE, e.g., “Kentuckians” “Black Americans”] from voting, they've got another thing coming. We're exposing their lies, turning out in record numbers and demanding every vote is counted to ensure the will of the people prevails.

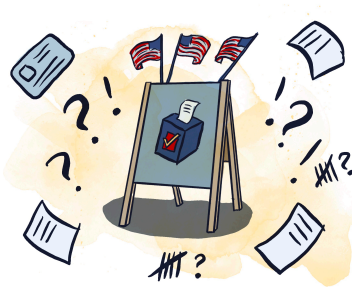
What to Prepare

Start here: Learn your state's specific rules for challengers. Make sure your area has enough trained legal observers. Develop a plan for training poll workers on handling challenges. To ensure people turn out despite this, take care to avoid threatening

imagery or rhetoric that portrays these challengers as invincible.

Additional options:

- **Deploy legal observers at precincts where challenges are expected.** Their job is to document challenge activity, flag legally deficient challenges to election officials, and ensure that challengers aren't exceeding their authority.
- **Make the “integrity army” visible before Election Day.** Research whether challenger operations are being organized in your area. Publicize the tactics and expected locations.
- **Voter reassurance materials.** Distribute simple materials in every language used in your community explaining that challengers have no authority over voters and voters can request a poll worker if they feel uncomfortable.
- **Counter-presence at targeted precincts.** Deploy trained, friendly observers to polling places you expect to be targeted to support voters and document any voter intimidation.
- **Conduct Know Your Rights at the Polling Place trainings** that also include information on filming for legal witnessing and social media amplification.
- **Organize volunteers to take shifts for a Present at the Polls community effort** to be a watchful, peaceful presence. This creates a community feel and research shows it may de-escalate threats and/or violence using social pressure. This could include deliberate absurdity, such as having people dressed in inflatables or other costumes.
- **Where appropriate, organize Party at the Polls celebrations with music, food trucks, and games for kids** at locations targeted for mass challenges.



Disinformation Flood: Wrong Place, Time, Day

Targeted voters — particularly in Black, Latino, and immigrant communities — receive false information about polling location, or date, and some believe it and stay home

What Is This Scenario?

In August 2020, conservative operatives sent robocalls to Detroit-area residents warning them that voting by mail would put their information in a police database and expose them to mandatory vaccines. The calls specifically targeted Black voters.

The local NAACP chapter was early to catch this. Alongside other neighborhood outreach, they used an already set up peer-to-peer text program using high-frequency Black voters to directly contact targets of the calls.

Eventually, the two operatives behind the scheme were caught and convicted. But the fast reaction helped minimize the damage.

Similar “stay home” robocalls reached an estimated 800,000+ voters in swing states in 2020.

In 2024, an AI-generated robocall using President Biden’s cloned voice told New Hampshire voters not to vote in the primary.

In 2026, the same technology is cheaper, more accessible, and harder to attribute.

Knowingly spreading false information about voting is a crime under most state laws and potentially federal law (18 U.S.C.

§ 594, § 10307). The FCC has specific rules about AI-generated voices in political calls.

That said, the damage may still be done.

How This Might Unfold

Wrong place, wrong date robocall.

Automated calls or texts go to voters in targeted precincts giving wrong information about polling location, hours, or date. Targeted to communities that skew Democratic.

AI deepfake of a trusted figure. A voice that sounds like your city councilmember or pastor tells people that there have been “problems” at local polling places and says that voting will be extended for tomorrow (a falsehood).

Threat-based disinformation. Messages — in Spanish, in Creole, in multiple languages — warn immigrant-community voters that ICE will be present at polling places and checking citizenship status. Or (perhaps as devastatingly) allies of good will hear rumors of ICE at polls and quickly pass them along on social media, thinking they’re doing people a service when they’re just spreading falsehoods intended to keep people from polls.

What Would You Do?

Your phone rings the night before Election Day. A recorded voice says, “Because of long lines, your polling place has been moved.” It gives a new address. You write it down and go there the next morning.

That address doesn’t exist. The call was designed to keep you from voting. You text some friends and realize thousands of these calls have gone out across your county.

What do you do?

Key planning questions:

- What are your community’s different channels of rapid response information about voting?
- What social media, texting, or other chains of communication do you have?
- Do you have a relationship with the press that allows you to push corrections fast?
- Is there a local number to call to verify Election Day information and rumors?

Responses That Have Worked

Flint, Michigan, 2020: Election Day Disinformation. On Election Day, Flint residents received robocalls falsely telling them that due to long lines at the polls, they should wait and vote on Wednesday. There is no Wednesday voting.

Attorney General Nessel and Secretary of State Benson both issued immediate public corrections, and Governor Whitmer released a statement warning that an unknown party was deliberately spreading misinformation. The FBI announced it was aware of the calls and investigating. Flint’s mayor issued a public statement reminding residents that Election Day was that day. Again, local

networks activated — local pastors posted a video alerting their congregations. The impact from the robocalls appeared minimal.

Prediction Markets, 2026: Platforms Cut Off Paid Misinformation. Following California’s primary election, conservative influencers who were paid to promote prediction market apps Kalshi and Polymarket began spreading unfounded claims of election fraud to their audiences.

Civil society pressure and public scrutiny pushed both platforms to act. Kalshi updated its policies to prohibit paid creators from calling into question the integrity of an election result. Polymarket informed affiliates that denying election results violated their terms of service against false and misleading information, and asked 2 paid creators to remove sponsorship tags.

This illustrates a pressure point: Prediction markets depend on accurate outcomes to function, giving them a direct financial incentive to not let their brands become vehicles for delegitimizing results. When that conflict became visible and public, the platforms moved.

Brazil, 2022: Platforms Remove False Information. Brazil’s election had heated up, and social media was regularly used by a major party to amplify false information. Civil society consistently pressured platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok to remove such material. Brazil has stronger laws than the U.S. against producing false information, which accelerated their campaign. As a result, those platforms removed such material, and follow-up pressure made sure that information stayed removed.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Ensure targeted voters have the correct information to cast their votes and that they understand the regime is intentionally spreading lies in an effort to keep them from voting.

Audience: Targeted voters, especially in Black, Latino, AAPI, Native American and immigrant communities, that receive false information about polling location or date.

Messages:

- *Overall Guidance:* DO NOT repeat, repost or reshare, even to debunk, their disinformation. This means avoiding fact checks or myth busting. Instead, to inoculate against disinformation, address the core concern/fear with a shared value and use stories instead of centering facts and statistics. For additional information on responding to disinformation: bit.ly/combat-disinfo.
- This regime wants to keep people from voting based on our races, backgrounds and genders so they're spreading lies about when and where we should cast our ballots. Tell them Hands Off Our Vote by casting your ballot at [insert correct location] by [correct date].
- The regime knows they're losing, so instead of courting our votes, they are trying to keep us from voting. They want to seize more power, controlling our elections so they can declare themselves the winners before we even cast our votes. Your correct polling place is [insert correct location].
- When this regime knows they're going to lose at the polls, they spread lies to keep us from voting. But we're joining together to ensure the will of the people prevails and casting our ballots by [insert correct date] at [insert correct polling location].

What to Prepare

Start here: Establish your community's "truth hotline" before Election Day: a number people can call to verify voting information, or use [866-OUR-VOTE](https://866-OUR-VOTE.org) (866ourvote.org). Know your [county election board's number](https://usvotefoundation.org/election-offices) (usvotefoundation.org/election-offices). Sign up for alerts from your Secretary of State.

Additional options:

- **Activate your trusted messenger network.** If disinformation is circulating, the fastest counter is your pastor, union president, or school principal pushing correct information through their own channels.
- **Document and report every instance.** Screenshot, save, and report to your state attorney general, state election board, local lawyers, the [FCC](https://fcc.gov/consumers/guides/filing-informal-complaint) (fcc.gov/consumers/guides/filing-informal-complaint) (for robocalls) and social media platform trust and safety teams.
- **Pre-load your community with correct information.** Push verified polling place, hours, and ID information multiple times in the week before the election — through every channel you have.
- **Pre-load your community with inoculation.** Especially if you have reason to believe they may be targeted, tell them. This is another reminder of how powerful their vote is — and a chance to reassure them about the value of early voting and regularly checking their voter registration. Alert allies to be careful before spreading rumors.
- **Pressure platforms for removal.** While they may not immediately remove the material, they have a role and an obligation, and their carelessness

shouldn't be an excuse for them to not be named and shamed for their participation in vulgar actions.

- **Create a repeated social media refrain and have folks post selfie videos of themselves having successfully voted** in a new location and/or with a provisional ballot to spread the word to others. Possible slogans here could be #VerifiedVote #TruthVotes #Verify2Vote or something along these lines.
- **Scope out existing communication networks in your community to**

formulate plans to spread accurate information about where people can vote, how to cast provisional ballots (if needed), and where to assemble for organizing. Many communities have active sub-reddits, local newsletters, WhatsApp groups, mutual aid/ICE watch Signal groups, school and church-based email lists and so on. Connect to leaders in these communities and create a modernized “phone tree” to decide who will disseminate information to whom with an ask to pass it along.



Armed Civilian Groups at Ballot Drop Boxes or Polling Places

Voters are intimidated away from drop boxes or polling places by organized, armed, or surveilling civilian groups — suppressing participation without any direct confrontation

What Is This Scenario?

In fall 2022, a national network of “drop box watchers” coordinated on Telegram with militia groups stationed people at drop boxes across Maricopa County, Arizona. Two members were photographed in full tactical gear. Voters reported being followed and having license plates recorded. Leaked Telegram messages from group leaders said: “2022 was only a warm-up.”

In 2026, Trump has announced an expanded “Election Integrity Army.” Right-wing extremists have taken this as directions for intervention in the elections.

It is a federal crime to “intimidate, threaten, or coerce” anyone voting or trying to vote (52 U.S.C. § 10307(b); 18 U.S.C. § 594). Conduct that a reasonable person would find threatening — including being photographed, followed, or closely surveilled — qualifies.

That, of course, requires enforcement and prosecution — but it does provide legal standing for interventions.

How This Might Unfold

Quiet surveillance. Two to four people with cameras and notepads station themselves at a drop box. They photograph voters and record license plates. Entirely intimidating.

Armed presence. One or more members are openly armed. They may approach voters or simply stand where they can be seen. Almost certainly illegal voter intimidation.

Live-stream doxxing. Video and photos are uploaded to social media in real time. Voters are identified and accused of being “mules” (people improperly handling multiple ballots).

What Would You Do?

You’re dropping off your mail ballot at an official drop box. Standing nearby are 2 or 3 people in tactical gear. One holds a camera. Another is writing down license plates. They don’t stop you. They may not say anything. But you feel watched. You feel unsafe. You turn around and leave.

This is voter intimidation — even without a single word spoken. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Are there drop boxes or polling places in your community that are isolated, low-traffic, or in areas where a small group would be visibly intimidating?
- Do you have a legal contact who could file for an emergency injunction within 48 hours?
- Could you mobilize 20 friendly, visible people to a drop box location within a half hour?

Responses That Have Worked

Arizona, 2022: Emergency Injunctions and Deploying Counter-Presence. Arizona Oath Keepers, along with other militia and armed civilian groups, photographed voters and recorded license plates. The intent was clear: voter intimidation and dissuasion.

Organizers filed lawsuits, calling for a ban of these activities around polling sites. Initially the federal judge ruled against the ban. But civil society would not let the issue go. Civil society organized counter-presence operations — friendly, visible volunteers at drop boxes and polling places with bright “I voted” shirts and friendly gear.

Organizers ran an election protection hotline, offered translation at polling stations, and held a clear 75-foot perimeter around polling stations to shield voters from ongoing intimidation and campaigning. They handed out water and snacks and intentionally tried to counter intimidation. Media covered this, which helped move public opinion and reassure people.

Under a second challenge, the judge eventually enacted a ban.

Philadelphia, 2020: The Counting-Room Vigil. During the post-Election Day ballot

count, partisan observers and campaign representatives attempted to challenge procedures and slow the counting. Rumors of bombs and armed actors whipped through Philadelphia. Election workers and officials continued processing, despite heightened tension.

To boost the morale of ballot counters inside, hundreds of residents gathered outside for a festive celebration of the counting happening inside the Pennsylvania Convention Center. This was not a one-hour protest — it was a visible, sustained presence marked by loud music and dancing.

The positive, family-friendly energy was beamed for all to see — organized community support to affirm confidence in the process and the workers inside. The message directed toward election workers was consistent: “We see you, keep going.”

Ukraine 2024: Police Remove Armed Observers. When armed civilian observers stationed themselves at polling places, election officials acted fast. Armed observers cannot be present at polling places — it can only intimidate. So police were called, and, in cases where the observers didn’t immediately leave, they were arrested.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Ensure that people still vote and do so as safely as possible.

Audience: Voters in and near the threatened precincts.

Messages:

- Across races, places and parties, most of us believe every American should have the freedom to cast our ballots and have equal say in our futures. But this regime is inciting their supporters to bully voters at the polls based on what we look like

or where we live, hoping to keep us from voting so they can control the outcome of our elections and grab more power. We want every eligible American to be able to cast our ballots and have them counted, without fear. That's why we're coming together to protect our polling places, by having groups of volunteers stand as witnesses while our neighbors go inside to exercise their freedom to vote. We will turn out in record numbers, protect our neighbors, and see the will of the people prevail.

#HandsOffOurVotes

#HandsOffOurNeighbors.

- The regime knows they're losing, so instead of courting our votes, they are trying to keep us from voting by inciting their supporters to bully Americans casting their ballots. They want to seize more power, controlling our elections so they can declare themselves the winners before we even cast our votes.
- A political party tries to court your vote. An authoritarian regime tries to keep you from voting.

What to Prepare

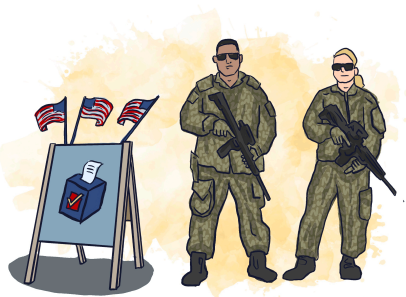
Start here: [Know the drop boxes and polling places in your area](#) (vote411.org/plan-your-vote). Find a law firm willing to file an emergency restraining order before early voting begins. [Know your state's legal buffer distance](#) (ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/electioneering). Publicize [866-OUR-VOTE](#) (866ourvote.org) (866-687-8683) widely. Track right-wing activity in your area ([Bridging Divides Initiative](#) (bridgingdivides.princeton.edu) can help). Plan to hold a post-counting festive event to support ballot counters.

[Research has demonstrated](#) that organized groups of third-party observers diminish

state and vigilante violence by altering the social incentives for would-be perpetrators.

Additional options:

- **Deploy a “Friendly Presence” team** — 10 to 20 people in bright, welcoming T-shirts at at-risk drop boxes, handing out water and materials.
- **Counter the doxxing.** If surveillance groups are live-streaming voter information, document it and report it to platforms and law enforcement simultaneously.
- **Prepare a post-election counting festival** with music and a DJ to support the ballot counters, especially if results are anticipated over days beyond the election.
- **Document everything.** Date, time, location, number of people, equipment, behavior, any voter who turned away.
- **Train people to Know Your Rights at Polling Places**, including how to film what is happening both for legal witness and social media amplification.
- **Organize volunteers to take shifts for a Present at the Polls community effort** to be a watchful, peaceful presence. This creates a community feel and research shows it may de-escalate threats and/or violence using social pressure. This could include deliberate absurdity, such as having people dressed in inflatables or other costumes.
- **Where appropriate, organize Party at the Polls celebrations with music, food trucks, and games for kids** at locations targeted for violence. This approach known as “tactical frivolity” has proven successful at deterring threats and violence.
- **Organize a buddy pledge** where people less likely to be targeted agree to accompany people at far higher risk to a drop box or polling site.



Federal Agents at or Near Polling Places

Federal immigration agents or National Guard troops appear at or near polling places, creating a climate of fear that suppresses turnout — particularly among Latino, BIPOC, and immigrant-community voters

What Is This Scenario?

Steve Bannon said in February 2026: “You’re damn right we’re gonna have ICE surround the polls come November.” Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said she had not heard the president consider it, but then-DHS Secretary nominee Markwayne Mullin said that ICE could be sent to polling places in the event of a “specific threat.” Bannon later described ICE’s airport deployment as “perfect training for the fall of 2026.”

Reports of ICE activity near voting locations during the 2026 primary season raised alarms about what November could look like. In Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, a primary polling site was delayed in opening after ICE agents conducted an immigration operation nearby. In San Antonio, Texas, local law enforcement conducting an arrest near a primary polling site fueled rumors of ICE activity — a reminder that even unrelated enforcement can trigger fear and confusion among voters. And in Philadelphia, the local Homeland Security Investigations office sits within a half-mile radius of at least 3 polling precincts — meaning voters in those neighborhoods may encounter federal agents without any deployment being “planned” at all.

Federal law is unambiguous: Deploying federal “troops or armed men” to any location where voting is taking place is a federal crime, punishable by up to 5 years in prison (18 U.S.C. § 592). Voter intimidation by any person — including federal agents — is also a federal crime (18 U.S.C. § 594).

However, who would enforce that — and how?

It is likely that any deployment of federal agents is primarily about intimidation — more so than overt violence. But ICE in particular, which has acted more and more as an unregulated, private wing of the executive branch of the federal government, could be deployed into neighborhoods in terrifyingly overt ways. A mix of these could cause a diffuse chilling of voter turnout — through nearby ICE operations, local law enforcement overreach, and misinformation.

How This Might Unfold

Federal agents stationed near polling places. ICE or other federal agents are visible in the vicinity of polling places in communities where ICE has previously operated. They do not enter the polling place, but their presence is unmistakable.

Checkpoint near a polling place. A federal immigration enforcement checkpoint is set up near — not at — a polling place on Election Day morning. These checkpoints could be relatively passive (casually checking IDs), or very active scenes of violent enforcement.

Local or state law enforcement deploy to polling sites or otherwise. While election codes vary, in many jurisdictions local law enforcement has wide legal rights to show up at polling places to maintain order. However, in California in 2026, for example, a sheriff illegally seized ballots in an attempt to investigate perceived election fraud.

National Guard “crowd control” deployment. In a city under partial National Guard deployment, troops are sent to the vicinity of multiple polling places, likely places with heavy concentrations of Black and brown voters.

Ongoing immigration operations impact voter turnout and voting processes. This may be perhaps the most likely — with ICE executing high-profile routines near and on Election Day, causing a diffuse chilling effect on voters.

What Would You Do?

You walk toward your neighborhood polling place. As you turn a corner, you see 3 heavily armed federal agents in uniform. You cross the street to avoid them, but they follow you with their eyes — watching as you enter your polling place.

You don’t know if they’re there to arrest someone or just to be visible. You don’t know if they’re checking papers. You aren’t even sure if they’re ICE or who. Your heart races with fear. That is the point. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Which places in your community are in or near areas that have already seen ICE operations?
- Does your state have specific legislation protecting voters from federal agent interference at polls?
- Could you push accurate information to your community within minutes of a federal agent sighting?
- Could you mobilize 20 friendly, visible people to a drop box location within a half hour?

Responses That Have Worked

Los Angeles, 2025: Community Monitoring of Immigration Enforcement.

In 2025, immigration enforcement activity increased significantly in the Los Angeles area. Rapid-response networks were formed that encouraged residents to report suspected immigration enforcement activity. These networks distributed information through hotlines, volunteers, and community alerts. Public visibility, preparation, and documentation increased accountability and helped community members understand options to handle federal immigration authorities.

DuPage County, Illinois, 2026: A County Clerk Goes Public and Sets Up a Hotline.

Ahead of Illinois’ March 2026 primary, DuPage County Clerk Jean Kaczmarek held a news conference declaring that federal immigration agents would not be allowed to interfere with DuPage County elections “in any way,” called out the intimidation threat by name, and cited the federal statute making it a crime to deploy “troops or armed men” to any location where voting is

taking place, punishable by up to 5 years in prison.

Her office set up a dedicated hotline for residents to report sightings of any immigration agents or federal personnel at polling locations or early voting sites. She also announced that if federal agents were spotted, her office would instantly notify election judges, alert “rapid responders on the streets,” and push information to voters via social media. DHS pushed back publicly against her statements. She did not back down. The combination of preemptive public statement, concrete legal grounding, a voter hotline, and a rapid-response protocol is one model to copy.

U.S., 2026: Local Governments Refuse Cooperation. Mayors and county sheriffs can publicly state — before Election Day — that they will not cooperate with illegal federal agent presence at polling places in their jurisdiction, and that any such presence will be reported and challenged. Many district attorneys and other locally elected top prosecutors have joined the [Fight Against Federal Overreach](https://www.federaloverreach.org/) (FAFO — <https://www.federaloverreach.org/>).

Minnesota’s Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty stated clearly, “If ICE officers are dispatched to polling places in Hennepin County to frighten voters away from the ballot box, my office will investigate, and we will charge.”

Larry Krasner, district attorney of Philadelphia, said, “We will prosecute ICE agents who break the law. There is no category of American who gets to operate above it.”

The group includes officials in Travis and Dallas counties in Texas; Pima County in Arizona; Fairfax, Arlington, Portsmouth, and Norfolk in Virginia, and more.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Ensure that people still vote and do so as safely as possible, and that they understand we can and must join together to defeat this regime.

Audience: Naturalized citizens or voters who live in mixed status families or have other reasons to rightly fear the presence of armed agents.

Messages:

- No matter our races, backgrounds, or genders, every American should have an equal say in the decisions that impact our lives. But this regime is sending [ICE/the National Guard] to the polls to keep Black, Brown and new Americans from casting their vote so they can seize more power and control the outcome of our elections. We’re ensuring the will of the people prevails, making sure every voter can vote and that every vote cast is counted.
- This cowardly regime is trying to keep specific groups from voting, including Black, Brown and new Americans, so they can seize more power.
- A political party tries to court your vote. An authoritarian regime tries to keep you from voting.

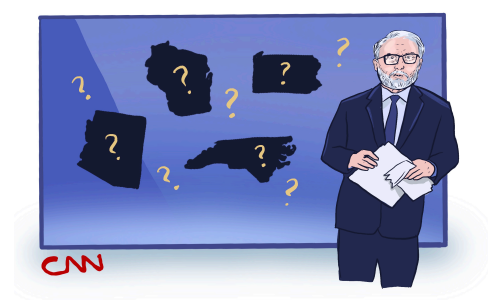
What to Prepare

Start here: Know which polling places are in areas with high ICE or National Guard activity already (nearby facilities, etc.). Connect with immigrant rights organizations. Know your sheriff’s position on cooperating with federal enforcement. Get information from [Bridging Divides Initiative](https://bridgingdivides.princeton.edu/) (<https://bridgingdivides.princeton.edu/>) about local threat levels.

Research has demonstrated that organized groups of third-party observers do diminish state and vigilante violence by altering the social incentives for would-be perpetrators. Many communities have formed ICE watch groups in response to the occupation of Minneapolis, and in this scenario it may be helpful to connect to leaders in these spaces — many of these folks are already trained to maneuver an ICE encounter.

Additional options:

- **Establish a rapid response network before Election Day.** Set up a text tree or Signal group for immediate alerts if federal agents appear near polling places. Many of these that have been set up for rapid response for ICE may need to be primed to be ready again.
- **Have legal observers at at-risk polling places as soon as they open.** Observers deter violations by their very presence, and they can document any that occur.
- **Push “know your rights” materials — and alternative ways to vote.** For example, push voting early using mail-in ballots if that’s an option.
- **Ask city and election officials to go on record** (federaloverreach.org). A public statement from local law enforcement that they will enforce voter protection laws changes the dynamic.
- **Discourage spreading rumors.** Well-meaning people spreading unverified ICE sightings can suppress turnout as much as actual ICE presence.
- **Deploy a community team** — 10 to 20 people in bright, welcoming T-shirts at at-risk drop boxes, handing out water and materials, creates warmth through numbers, supporting refusal to be afraid.
- **Train people to Know Your Rights at Polling Places**, including how to film what is happening both for legal witness and social media amplification.
- **Organize volunteers to take shifts for a Present at the Polls community effort** to be a watchful, peaceful presence. This creates a community feel and research shows it may de-escalate threats and/or violence using social pressure. This could include deliberate absurdity, such as having people dressed in inflatables or other costumes.
- **Where appropriate, organize Party at the Polls celebrations with music, food trucks, and games for kids** at locations targeted for violence. This approach known as “tactical frivolity” has proven successful at deterring threats and violence.
- **Organize a buddy pledge** where people less likely to be targeted agree to accompany people at far higher risk to a drop box or polling site.



Recounts, Hand Counts, and Ballot Curing

One or more races end up close enough to trigger automatic or requested recounts, hand counts, or ballot curing processes — creating enormous demand for legal coordination and volunteer work, and creating opportunities for interference

What Is This Scenario?

Close elections invite speculation. In this political environment, they spiral quickly into claims of fraud and theft. The result is that great attention needs to be placed on the mechanics of recounts, hand counts, and ballot curing.

The 2020 Georgia Senate runoffs required months of recounts, hand counts, and legal battles. The 2024 North Carolina Supreme Court judicial race remained unresolved due to recount questions.

In certain places, Election Day margins are narrowing. The risk of a super-close race triggering a recount is significant.

Recount procedures vary by state. Most states have automatic recount thresholds (usually 0.5% or less). Recount procedures are spelled out in state law and typically involve the following: A request is made, the election authority conducts the recount, observers from both sides are present, and results are certified.

Hand counts must follow the same procedures as recounts and are subject to the same rules about observers and documentation.

Ballot curing procedures vary by state. Most states allow voters to fix problems with their ballots (signature mismatches, missing dates, etc.). Some states give direct notification to voters; some do not. Either way, the state's outreach is never sufficient — and so a ground game is needed to help people cure their ballots.

How This Might Unfold

Automatic recount triggered. A race margin falls below the automatic recount threshold. The recount process begins. It will take weeks. Questions arise about which ballots get recounted, how the recount is done, and who observes it.

Hand count requested. A campaign or observer requests a hand count of ballots instead of relying on tabulation machines. The hand count raises new questions about which ballots to hand count, how to count them, and whether hand counts match machine counts.

Ballot curing process becomes a battleground. Ballots with irregularities (signature mismatches, missing dates, etc.) need to be “cured” — voters are notified and given a chance to fix them. The curing

process becomes contentious. Questions arise about which ballots qualify for curing, how voters are notified, and how much time they have to respond.

What Would You Do?

Election results are in. One race is decided by 475 votes out of 2.3 million cast. Hand counts have been requested. Alongside that, ballots with irregularities need to be “cured” — given back to voters to fix. The process will take weeks. Suddenly you realize — thousands of voters need to be activated again to make sure their votes get cured. Doing so will require hundreds of volunteers, multiple legal teams, and constant media attention.

This scenario combines legal complexity, time pressure, and public scrutiny in ways that create opportunities for interference and mistakes. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- What are the automatic recount thresholds in your state?
- How long do recounts take? Who administers them?
- What is the “ballot curing” process in your state? How are voters notified of problems with their ballots?
- Do you have the volunteer infrastructure to support a recount? Do you have lawyers ready to litigate recount procedures?

thin margins. Election officials, once they had done a recount, documented the procedures meticulously and were largely transparent, knowing the process was being politicized.

Under Georgia law, curing primarily applied to absentee ballots with signature problems (missing signature or mismatched signatures from voter records). It’s called a “signature cure.” The state provided lists and reached out usually by mail, sometimes by phone or email if available. The catch: Voters had only 3 days after Election Day to cure.

Civil society scoured the list for connections to make sure a voter on the list knew that they had to fill out a cure affidavit and confirm their identity. Results were uneven but vital in a close election.

North Carolina, 2024: The Ballot Curing Transparency. When a close judicial race required addressing ballots with defects, North Carolina election officials were transparent about which ballots qualified for curing (missing information, missing witness signature, and certain other errors — but not a late arrival or ballots where the voter had forgotten to sign).

Many community groups had experienced the curing process before. It’s in every election, but with heightened scrutiny the county boards of elections wanted to be more deliberate and transparent. Community groups organized neighbors to canvas voters who had cures — hoping to catch folks who had missed the state’s alert via mail.

Responses That Have Worked

Georgia, 2020-2021: The Recount Machine. The presidential election and subsequent runoff elections produced razor-

Narrative Responses

Goal: Get voters to check the status of their submitted ballot and take action to correct where needed.

Audience: Primary audience: people whose votes could be contested based on where they voted. Secondary audience: people in the surrounding precincts who could be mobilized to demand all votes are counted, including those that had to first be cured, and, if necessary, observe any recount process.

Messages:

- [For voters whose ballots are under scrutiny] In America, voters pick our leaders, our leaders should not pick which votes to count and which to cancel. But this regime knows they're losing, so they want to toss out the votes of [SPECIFIC VOTES UNDER SCRUTINY, e.g. "new Americans" "folks in South Central"] so they can declare themselves the winner and seize more power. What happens next is up to us. Every voter in [PLACE] can have equal say in your own future by [PROVIDE INSTRUCTION TO CHECK BALLOT STATUS AND CURE BALLOT]. #CountEveryVote #VoteCheckCure
- [To mobilize a broader audience to demand all votes are counted] In America, voters pick our leaders, our leaders should not pick which votes to count and which to cancel. But this regime knows they're losing, so they want to toss out the votes of [SPECIFIC VOTES UNDER SCRUTINY, e.g. "new Americans" "folks in South Central"] so they can declare themselves the winner and seize more power, regardless of the will of the people. What happens next is up to us. That's why we're joining together to tell our local election officials to count every vote and allow the will of the people to prevail. #CountEveryVote #EveryVoteCounts
- They lose, they lie, they lash out.

- This regime is trying to keep our votes from counting so they can overthrow the will of the people and declare themselves the winner.

What to Prepare

Start here: [Know your state's automatic recount thresholds and procedures](https://ballotpedia.org/Election_recount_laws_and_procedures_in_the_50_states) (ballotpedia.org/Election_recount_laws_and_procedures_in_the_50_states). Know whether your state uses hand counts or machine recounts. Know the ballot curing procedures in your state — who gets notified, how much time they have.

Have lawyers identified who can handle recount litigation. Know the state judge who would hear recount disputes. Identify volunteer infrastructure that can support a recount — you'll need observers, people who can help voters with curing, and communication capacity in neighborhoods.

Additional options:

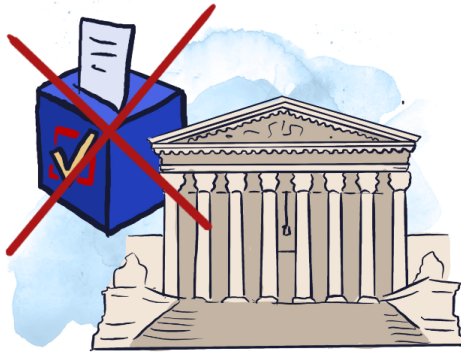
- **Deploy observers for the entire recount process.** Not just for Election Day — for weeks afterward during the recount.
- **Have a rapid-response legal team.** Questions about recount procedures, ballot curing, and counting processes will arise. Have lawyers ready to file emergency motions.
- **Communicate transparently about the process.** Publish recount procedures, schedules, and preliminary results. Transparency reduces disputes and opportunities for interference.
- **Help voters with ballot curing.** If ballots need to be cured, help voters understand the process and get their ballots fixed in time.
- **Use all the channels available to tell people about ballot curing.** Door-to-

door. Media blitz. Even public protests and parties are an opportunity!

- **Scope out existing communication networks in your community to formulate plans to spread accurate information** about where people can vote, how to cast provisional ballots (if needed), and where to assemble for organizing. Many communities have active sub-reddits, local newsletters, WhatsApp groups, mutual aid/ICE watch Signal groups, school and church-based email lists and so on. Connect to

leaders in these communities and create a modernized “phone tree” to decide who will disseminate information to whom with an ask to pass it along.

- **Create a repeated social media refrain and have folks post selfie videos** of themselves having successfully checked their vote and cured it. Possible slogans here could be #VoteCheckCure #VerifiedVote #VoteThenVerify or something like this.
- **Organize a #CountEveryVote effort** to have people act as count observers.



SCOTUS Intervenes to Stop or Overturn Counting

An emergency appeal reaches the Supreme Court asking it to halt counting of specific ballots or reverse a certification — effectively freezing results while litigation proceeds

What Is This Scenario?

The most dramatic case of this is *Bush v. Gore* (2000), when the Supreme Court halted the Florida recount and effectively decided the presidency.

In 2020, the Trump campaign filed multiple emergency motions with the Supreme Court seeking to stop counting or exclude mail ballots. Voting rights organizations had counter-briefs prepared and filed within hours. The speed of response and strength of arguments was critical in both public narrative and legal efficacy. The Court rejected Trump's emergency motions.

But the composition of the Court has changed significantly since 2020 — with 3 Trump appointees now seated.

The Supreme Court has power to grant emergency stays in extraordinary circumstances. But courts have generally held that halting vote counts creates irreparable public harm and is not appropriate in ordinary election disputes.

How This Might Unfold

Emergency stay filed to freeze counting. During or immediately after Election Day, the DOJ files an emergency motion asking the Court to halt counting of mail ballots or ballots from a specific jurisdiction, pending litigation. The Court issues a stay, freezing the count.

Motion to reverse a certification. After state certification has been completed, an emergency motion is filed asking the Court to reverse the certification based on alleged fraud or procedural violations. The Court agrees to take the case on an emergency basis, halting any transmission of results to Congress.

What Would You Do?

An emergency appeal reaches the Supreme Court filed by the DOJ asking the Court to halt counting of mail ballots from targeted jurisdictions. The Court, citing procedural or constitutional grounds, takes up the case on an emergency basis.

Results are frozen while litigation proceeds. A call is made by some to let the courts play

it out. But you fear the courts will be merely political instruments.

You don't know when a result will be handed down. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- What is the Supreme Court's recent trajectory on election emergency appeals?
- Do you have a rapid alert system already set up for mobilization in the streets?
- Could your group and national allies organize a rapid response at the Supreme Court building if needed?

Responses That Have Worked

Thailand, 2023: Move Forward Refuses to Accept Constitutional Court Rejection.

When Thailand's Constitutional Court unanimously rejected Move Forward's petition challenging the parliamentary blocking of Pita's prime-ministerial nomination, the party did not dissolve or go quiet. It publicly announced it would remain in opposition, continue fighting for constitutional reform, and hold the ruling system accountable at every turn. When the Constitutional Court later dissolved Move Forward entirely (August 2024), its members reconstituted under a new party name within days — People's Party — continuing the same political program.

Malawi, 2019–2020: The Courts Needed To Be Corrected, So the Streets Didn't

Stop. When incumbent President Peter Mutharika was declared the winner of Malawi's May 2019 election, the fraud was visible to the naked eye — result tally sheets across the country had been altered with correction fluid, new numbers written over the originals. Opposition candidates

immediately challenged the results in court. The court refused any injunction and Mutharika was inaugurated anyway.

A constitutional case was allowed to go forward, but the belief was that the courts were merely delaying to allow the government to better secure its position. The pressure had to come from the streets.

Human rights groups organized thousands of people to the streets on a regular basis to campaign against the botched election outcome. The protests were sustained and moved from just protests to rolling strikes across the country — teachers, sanitation workers, truck drivers, and airline staff all held separate strikes. The mounting economic pressure could not be ignored.

The government tried to ban the demonstrations outright, but the courts — now nervous about the growing discontent — refused an injunction against the protests. Activists were arrested and returned immediately to the streets.

After many hot months of protests and growing economic instability, in February 2020, the Constitutional Court nullified the 2019 election results. A fresh election was held in June 2020, and the opposition won.

The Malawi case illustrates something critical for this scenario: When courts move slowly or against you, the function of public protest isn't just pressure — it's oxygen. It keeps the legal case legitimate, visible, and costly to bury.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Mobilize millions to engage in a general strike and sustained protests that apply sufficient pressure to force the regime to back down.

Audience: Base nationally for mass mobilization.

Messages:

- In America, we value our freedoms. But the MAGA Justices on the Roberts Court have overthrown the will of the people so they can lock this MAGA regime and their billionaire backers into power. By joining together in the streets and shutting down business as usual – from New York to Nevada, Kentucky to California, Alabama to Arizona – the many must defeat the money and protect our freedoms, our families, and our futures.
- #WeDecide #CountEveryVote #FreedomOverFascism
- Americans of all races, places, and parties demand a government of the people, by the people, and for the people — not a regime of the bullies, by the bribes, for the billionaires.
- We will not rest until we, the people, prevail over this regime of the bullies, by the bribes, for the billionaires.
- The will of the people is clear and must prevail.

What to Prepare

Start here: Know which legal organizations monitor Supreme Court filings in real time.

[Democracy Docket](https://democracydocket.com/)

(democracydocket.com/topic/litigation) is perhaps the most responsive for election-related filings. Have the direct number for your state’s attorney general’s office — they can file counter-briefs on behalf of the state if needed. Connect to groups like [May Day Strong](https://maydaystrong.org/) (maydaystrong.org), [Sunrise](https://sunrisemovement.org/)

[Movement](https://sunrisemovement.org/) (sunrisemovement.org), or [Indivisible](https://indivisible.org/) (indivisible.org) for rapid mass mobilization. Prepare protest and strike scenarios.

Additional options:

- **Monitor and document.** If a Supreme Court emergency filing is made, document what is being asked for and how absurd the legal theory is.
- **National media.** If the Supreme Court appears to be intervening in counting, make it a national story immediately. This is the kind of crisis that should generate a rapid national response.
- **Mass presence at the Supreme Court.** If the Court moves toward unprecedented emergency relief, being present at the Supreme Court building — with phones, documentation, visible witness — matters.
- **Build local and national networks for activation.** Prepare your networks for protests, strike activation, and other escalated responses to such a coup scenario.
- **Scope out existing communication networks in your community to formulate plans to spread accurate information** about where people can vote, how to cast provisional ballots (if needed), and where to assemble for organizing. Many communities have active sub-reddits, local newsletters, WhatsApp groups, mutual aid/ICE watch Signal groups, school and church-based email lists and so on. Connect to leaders in these communities and create a modernized “phone tree” to decide who will disseminate information to whom with an ask to pass it along.



Canvassers or Governors Refuse to Certify

One or more canvassers or state elected officials refuse certification, citing unsubstantiated fraud claims. A deadlock or refusal delays certification and throws results into legal limbo

What Is This Scenario?

After everyone votes, a group of canvassers (local or state officials—often members of a bipartisan board) have to formally review and finalize election results. Their job is not to re-run the election or investigate broad allegations, but to ensure that vote totals from precincts are complete, properly documented, and legally compliant. This process, called canvassing, is typically quiet and boring, a key administrative step.

After that, the county results are sent to the state. There they are officially certified, typically by the secretary of state or governor, and officially sent to Congress.

If a governor were to refuse to issue a certificate of election, then in theory, that seat in Congress is considered vacant during Congress' key steps of electing its speaker of the House. If enough such seats were made “vacant,” it could swing the majority. There is no precedent of such a refusal at the statewide level.

In almost every state, certification is a ministerial duty — canvassers and state leaders must certify unless there is a specific, documented, legal reason not to. Personal doubts, political pressure, and unsubstantiated fraud claims don't qualify.

Refusal at the local level is rare. On Nov. 17, 2020, the Wayne County Board of Canvassers in Michigan met to certify results. In a nearly unprecedented move, 2 Republican members voted no. Under hastily organized withering public pressure, the 2 members reversed course. Within 30 minutes, Trump called to pressure them to rescind. But it was too late — the certification had already been transmitted.

Refusals have typically been reversed quickly, by courts if necessary.

In 2026, pressure on canvassers will be greater. Trump has pardoned nearly 80 people who participated in 2020 certification obstruction and over 1,500 people charged in connection with Jan. 6.

How This Might Unfold

One canvasser holds out. A single member refuses, citing vague irregularities. The board deadlocks. Results go to the state board. Days of legal uncertainty follow.

Multiple counties, coordinated. In a swing state, several county boards refuse to certify in the same week, using nearly identical language. Courts are flooded. State certification deadlines loom.

States in coordinated strategy refuse to issue election credentials. The nation narrowly elects a new House. Citing vague concerns about fraud or contested election results, several states attempt to delay credentialing results, in order to tip the balance of members-elect to flip the outcome of the Speaker vote and thereby control the House.

What Would You Do?

The votes have been cast and counted. A candidate won. But the count doesn't become official until a local board of canvassers — usually 2 to 5 people — formally certifies it. Certification is supposed to be routine.

You don't think much of this process — until you hear that 2 members are about to refuse to sign. Suddenly this is a big deal, and their initial vote ends in just a few minutes.

They don't need evidence. They just refuse. A county's results — sometimes hundreds of thousands of votes — hang in the balance while lawyers and whoever is at their local board argue. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Who are the canvassers in your county? What is their history?
- What is your state's certification deadline — and what happens if the board deadlocks?
- Is a legal organization already watching your county board?
- Who can you rapidly mobilize — and to do what?

Responses That Have Worked

Detroit, 2020: Sustained Public Comment.

Two Republicans on the Wayne County Board of Canvassers voted to block certification of Detroit's results, citing discrepancies of a few dozen votes out of hundreds of thousands cast. Had this held, Detroit's votes would not have been counted.

Word spread immediately through pre-existing organizing networks. Hundreds of residents flooded the Zoom public comment session — so many that the meeting capacity had to be expanded past 300 — and gave testimony for hours. The board reversed course and certified unanimously.

But it wasn't over. Minutes after the meeting ended, Trump and RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel called the 2 canvassers personally, pressuring them not to sign the certification document. The canvassers left the room and never returned to sign — but Michigan law only required the vote itself plus signatures from the chair or clerk, so their walkout had no legal effect.

Alongside this, when Michigan Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey and House Speaker Lee Chatfield were summoned to the White House by Trump — a thinly veiled pressure campaign to get them to block certification — activists did not wait quietly for them to go. More than 2 dozen activists swarmed Shirkey at Detroit Metro Airport as he printed his boarding pass, chanting, "Protect our vote!" and holding signs reading, "Certify the results" and "Shame on you." When Shirkey arrived at Reagan National Airport in Washington, he was met by a second group of protesters asking, "What did Trump promise you?"

When the two issued their post-meeting statement, they confirmed they had found nothing to change the outcome and would follow Michigan law. The public accountability — before and after the meeting — made it much harder for them to come home and quietly flip.

When Michigan’s full results went to the state board for certification in Lansing, residents drove a caravan around the Capitol honking horns and carrying signs urging the board to certify. The state certified, and the results held.

Michigan, 2024: Preemptive Lawsuit Forces Canvasser to Swear He’ll Certify.

Certification fights don’t have to wait until election night to be addressed. In August 2024, a Kalamazoo County canvasser publicly told the *Detroit News* that he would refuse to certify the presidential election if it unfolded the way 2020 had — “No. And that’s why I’m there.” Rather than wait for the crisis, the ACLU of Michigan filed a preemptive lawsuit in Kalamazoo County Circuit Court on behalf of 2 local voters, asking a judge to declare that canvassers are legally required to certify based on vote totals and nothing else. Within a week, the canvasser signed a sworn affidavit promising to certify. The ACLU dropped the suit. The senior ACLU attorney called it “the simple ministerial duty of grade-school math.” The lesson: Threats to refuse can be neutralized before election night, not just during it, through preemptive legal action paired with public pressure to make the refusal costly before it happens.

Arizona, 2020: Governor Certifies and Silences the Call. Arizona’s 2020 presidential results were certified on Nov. 30, with Republican Governor Doug Ducey signing the paperwork declaring Joe Biden the winner. As Ducey signed, his phone rang. The ringtone — “Hail to the Chief,” which Ducey had set specifically so he

would never miss a call from the White House — played for a moment before he pulled the phone from his pocket, silenced it, and kept signing. He finished the certification and called Trump back afterward.

Trump had earlier called in to an Arizona election hearing and attacked Ducey, and later blasted him on Twitter for “betraying the people of Arizona.” Ducey responded publicly, writing that he’d sworn an oath to uphold the law and that he took his responsibility seriously. Later reporting revealed that in a subsequent call, Trump tried to pressure Ducey to overturn the results by finding enough fraudulent votes to overcome his narrow loss in the state. Ducey refused.

The certification had already been transmitted. It was too late.

Two years later, when Arizona’s 2022 results were certified, Ducey said: “This is a responsibility I do not take lightly. It’s one that recognizes the votes cast by the citizens of our great state.”

Ukraine, 2004: Local Officials Name the Fraud. After Ukraine’s rigged presidential runoff, the country’s Central Election Commission certified a fraudulent result — declaring Yanukovich the winner over Yushchenko despite massive documented irregularities.

For a critical few days, the outcome hung in the balance. But city councils in Lviv, Ternopil, Vinnytsia, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Kyiv passed resolutions refusing to recognize the result, each declaring Yushchenko the legitimate winner. Other councils joined. Each refusal made the next easier, and collectively they built an irrefutable public record that the fraud could not simply be absorbed as a settled fact.

This was amplified by massive street protests. Hundreds of thousands of citizens flooded Independence Square in Kyiv. They came in the bitter cold, setting up tent cities and field kitchens, wrapping themselves in orange scarves and ribbons that became the movement's symbol. Estimates put the crowds in Kyiv alone at over a million people — as protests spread to dozens of cities.

The Orange Revolution, as it became known, was highly disciplined in its nonviolence, knowing that any outbreak of violence would give authorities a pretext to crack down and shift the narrative away from election fraud. Marshals kept order within the crowds. Protesters brought their own food, their own supplies, and their own sound systems.

Backed by mass street protests and a Supreme Court challenge, the pressure worked — a new election was ordered and Yushchenko won.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Mobilize massive, targeted public pressure on the wavering individuals to do their duty and certify the results.

Audience: Voters in the affected election.

Messages:

- In America, voters pick our leaders, our leaders do not pick and choose which votes to count and which to cancel. But because [LOSING CANDIDATE] lost, [HE/SHE] is lying, lashing out, and lobbying [NAME OF BOARD] to betray their oath and overturn the will of the people. The voters of [PLACE] have spoken and elected [CANDIDATE]. Now we must [CTA] to ensure

[BOARD/OFFICIALS] do their duty and certify the results. #DoYourDuty

- The will of the people is clear and must prevail.
- [@OFFICIAL] The people have spoken. Do your duty so we can all move forward.

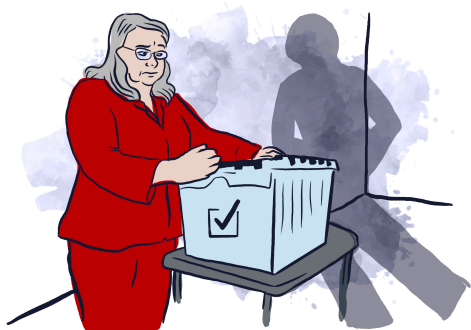
What to Prepare

Start here: Know your canvassers' names, history, and affiliations (ballotpedia.org). Look up your state's certification timeline and deadlines (ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/election-certification-deadlines). Identify a legal organization willing to file an emergency motion if needed. Get on your county canvassing board's meeting notification list. Prepare for prolonged street action to enforce results.

Additional options:

- **Make canvassers visible before they refuse.** A "Meet Your Canvassers" campaign creates accountability before anything goes wrong.
- **Fill public comment — with substance.** Mobilize organized, factual public comment with legal argument and evidence.
- **Activate elected officials.** Ask city council, county commissioners, state legislators, and governors (or secretaries of state) to go on record before certification day.
- **Show up outside.** Organize a sustained, visible presence at the building — a vigil, not a one-hour rally.
- **Get ally elected officials to speak up about the certification process.** Help make the process known, and apply pressure to act right.

- **Organize dozens of activists to bird-dog officials who are considering blocking certification**, filming them in public places and non-violently confronting and shaming them with demands like “do your duty.”
- **Escalate nationally — fast.** Contact every group you can think of to raise the heat immediately.



Federal Seizure of Ballots or Election Equipment

FBI or federal agents appear at a county elections hub and seize ballots, voting machines, or voter rolls — breaking chain of custody and casting doubt on results

What Is This Scenario?

On Jan. 28, 2026, FBI agents arrived at Fulton County, Georgia’s elections hub with a warrant. They loaded 700 boxes of 2020 ballots, tabulators, and voter rolls onto trucks. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard — who has no domestic law enforcement authority — was present.

No chain-of-custody inventory was taken. Election security expert David Becker noted that the seizure “destroyed the provenance of the evidence.” UCLA law professor Rick Hasen called it a “test run for 2026.”

Details here matter. The warrant was overly broad and based on disputed allegations. Fulton County later argued that the affidavit omitted key evidence and that the seizure lacked adequate chain-of-custody protections. Those claims remain contested in court.

What remains clear is that election officials need to call lawyers to the scene immediately — and certainly not cooperate beyond what the warrant specifies.

State election records — including ballots — are property of the state. Federal agents

need a warrant to seize them. Warrants must be specific and supported by probable cause. An overbroad warrant can be legally defective and challengeable immediately.

How This Might Unfold

Pre-election seizure of past ballots. FBI arrives before November, seizing past-cycle ballots or equipment to “investigate” prior fraud. This breaks the chain of custody and casts doubt on election integrity.

Post-election seizure. After Nov. 3, federal agents arrive to seize current-year ballots, voting machines, or tabulators — citing an “ongoing investigation.” The seizure may be used as pretext to prevent certification.

Equipment examination. Federal officials request or demand to inspect or retain voting machines for a “security review.” The machines are returned weeks later, too late to recertify them.

What Would You Do?

FBI agents pull up to your county elections warehouse. They have a signed warrant from a judge. They load boxes onto trucks. Hours later, they're gone — and with them are the ballots thousands cast.

No one knows where they went. No chain-of-custody inventory was taken. The county elections board can no longer satisfy voters that those ballots are secure. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Does your county have secure, documented chain-of-custody procedures for storing ballots?
- What is your county's legal response plan if federal agents arrive with a warrant?
- Is there a lawyer who understands what federal agents can and cannot legally seize from a state election facility?
- How many people can you mobilize to protest such an extreme move?

Responses That Have Worked

Fulton County, 2026: Lawsuit Filed Immediately. Within days of the seizure, Fulton County filed a motion in federal court to force the DOJ to return the materials. The lawsuit created a public record and resulted in a court-ordered return.

Commissioner Marvin Arrington Jr. went on record publicly and immediately — naming exactly what had been taken and what the problem was. His statement was the anchor for national coverage.

Myanmar, 2021: Parallel Government Established While Junta Seizes State Apparatus. After the military junta seized all state buildings, records, and election commission materials in the February 2021 coup, deposed parliamentarians formed an alternative structure, eventually called the National Unity Government (NUG). They claimed constitutional authority and began operating ministries, issuing laws, and maintaining international diplomatic contacts — all while the junta held the physical election materials.

This dual sovereignty model shows how political legitimacy can be maintained even after physical control of election infrastructure is lost.

Serbia, 2023: Monitoring Organizations Preserve Digital Records. After the December 2023 elections, election monitors immediately archived and secured all their digital observation records — videos, photos, irregularity logs, and observer reports — on external servers outside of the country. They anticipated that Serbian authorities might attempt to demand or access their internal data.

If the chain of custody were broken, the digital records they preserved may be the only remaining evidence. The preservation of independent records outside state reach is an election-integrity equivalent of breaking chain of custody — protecting it rather than surrendering it.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Force federal agents to return the ballots immediately and reinforce the authority of local election officials, not the ruling regime, to count the votes and determine the winner.

Audience: Primary audience: immediately impacted voters in the districts under threat. Secondary audience: people in strategically located municipalities and/or regions who can be organized to engage in effective non-violent direct action in solidarity with the impacted community or communities.

Messages:

- Most of us believe voters should pick our leaders, our leaders should not force their way into power against our will. But this regime just stole our ballots in an effort to keep our votes from counting. They know they're losing, so once again they're lying and lashing out in the hopes of locking themselves into power. [PEOPLE OF PLACE - e.g., Michiganders] of all races, backgrounds and parties say Hands Off Our Vote. We are joining together outside of [FACILITY] and we will not leave until every vote is returned, counted by our local election officials, and certified so the will of the people prevails.
- #HandsOffOurVote #CountEveryVote #FreedomOverFascism
- A political party tries to court your vote. An authoritarian regime tries to keep your vote from counting.
- This regime has already robbed us of our health, wealth, and freedoms, and now that voters have rejected them they've stolen our ballots in an effort to lock themselves into power.
- The regime knows they lost in [LOCATION], so they are seizing our ballots to stop our local election officials from recognizing the will of the people.

What to Prepare

Start here: Ask your [county attorney](#) ([usvotefoundation.org/election-offices](#)): “What is our legal response plan if federal

agents arrive?” Make sure your election director has a personal relationship with the county attorney. Know the federal district judge who handles emergency filings. [Train election officials](#) ([protectdemocracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Advocates-Election-Explainer_2026.pdf](#)) to scrutinize a warrant and call trusted lawyers before handing anything over.

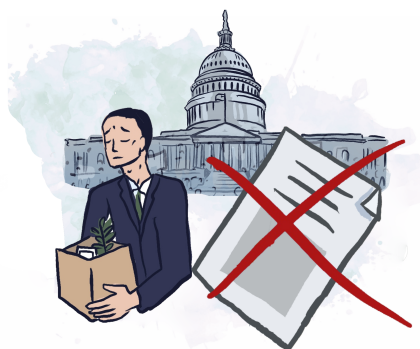
Additional options:

- **Have officials go on record publicly and immediately.** If a seizure happens, the public statement must be fast, specific, and name the following: what was taken, how chain of custody was broken, and why this is legally problematic.
- **Community presence at elections facilities.** Organizing visible community presence outside elections offices — to witness, document, and publicize — creates accountability.
- **Document, document, document.** If possible, document anything moving out of your chain of custody. At minimum, take pictures of any interactions.
- **National alert, immediately.** Call national activist organizations, major election groups, and media channels simultaneously. Prepare for ongoing protests at key facilities.
- **Scope out existing communication networks in your community to formulate plans to spread accurate information** about where people can vote, how to cast provisional ballots (if needed), and where to assemble for organizing. Many communities have active sub-reddits, local newsletters, WhatsApp groups, mutual aid/ICE watch Signal groups, school and church-based email lists and so on. Connect to leaders in these communities and create a modernized “phone tree” to decide

who will disseminate information to whom with an ask to pass it along.

- **Conduct Know Your Rights at the Polls trainings**, including how to best document what is happening for both

legal and publicity reasons. Organize trainees for a Present at the Polls community effort to volunteer for shifts at polling sites to witness, document, and live stream what is going on via social media.



Congress Refuses to Seat Incoming Winners

Following DOJ reports and unfounded fraud allegations, the new House refuses to seat some newly elected representatives from the opposing party

What Is This Scenario?

This strategy is unlikely to happen without a long ramp-up of accusations of fraud and bitterly contested election results.

When picturing this scenario, people often cite Adelita Grijalva, who won the 2025 special election in Arizona’s 7th congressional district. Speaker Mike Johnson claimed he could not administer her oath during the government shutdown (a patent falsehood). After 7 weeks, the House reconvened and she was sworn in. Nobody argued that she lost the election or that Arizona’s certification was invalid.

Some people imagine a version of this. However, post-election, the scenario is different. During the midterm session, the speaker has greater leeway. Post-election there are particular procedures and rules to follow.

Technically the House disbands at noon on Jan. 3, 2027, and needs to be reconstituted. A series of normally routine steps unfolds: The clerk calls the roll of members-elect, and a quorum has to be obtained. A new House is now official. The first act is selecting a speaker.

Outside of trying to prevent certification (scenario 14), contesting seating before the

speaker is chosen has no modern precedent — neither due to challenging election contests nor challenging credentials.

Once the speaker is selected, seating is guided by a series of sometimes murky laws. Article I, Section 5 states: “Each House shall be the Judge of the Elections, Returns and Qualifications of its own Members.” A refusal to seat has never resulted in a shift of the balance of power.

A rare case of refusal to seat shows some limits. In 1967, the House voted 307–116 against seating Adam Clayton Powell Jr. due to accusations of misusing public funds. He took his case to the Supreme Court, where he won, in a case called *Powell v. McCormack*. The Court ruled that the House can only judge whether a member-elect meets the Constitution’s 3 explicit qualifications: age, citizenship, and residency.

Challenging this precedent would require enormous political pressure, likely a loud public narrative with massive claims of stolen election.

Courts have been extremely reluctant to interfere with this process — treating it as a “political question” that Congress must resolve internally. The only enforcement mechanism in real time is people power.

How This Might Unfold

Attempting to tilt the balance of power after the speaker is selected. Control hinges on a single seat. The minority claims fraud in several majority-held districts, demanding investigations and pressuring the new speaker to act against their own party.

A majority tries to pad its margin. Majority members challenge minority members based on unproven fraud claims.

Attempting to tilt the balance of power before the speaker is selected. The outgoing speaker uses arcane and twisted arguments to delay or retain control — an extreme and largely unprecedented overreach.

What Would You Do?

Election results indicate the House will change hands. The president repeatedly alleges fraud and pressures his party to reject the results.

The outgoing speaker suggests refusing to seat key members-elect from the opposition, citing obscure procedural mechanisms. Members of their party do not rule it out.

Something like this has never been tried before, and it is unclear how it would happen — or how far it would be pursued.

It's 5 days before the House is seated. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- This strategy requires narrative cover. What narrative strategies would indicate this strategy is actually being planned?
- Which members of Congress have committed to honoring election results?
- How do you mobilize when some people say, “Let the process play out”?

Responses That Have Worked

India, 2019: Opposition Walkout and Public Resistance. When the Indian government attempted to suppress opposition through parliamentary manipulation, opposition parties walked out en masse and organized public demonstrations. The visibility and sustained resistance made the strategy politically costly.

Georgia (the country), 2024: Opposition MPs Formally Renounce Parliamentary Seats. Rather than enter a parliament whose election they considered fraudulent, opposition parties filed formal documents canceling their own electoral mandates. Leaders said publicly: “We will not go to that parliament, and we will not let Georgian Dream announce itself as the legitimate representative of the Georgian people.” This was not an informal boycott — it was a formal legal act specifically engineered to make it impossible to register the seats. While its impact was mixed, the strategy is a replicable one.

Venezuela, 2024: Multiple Countries Recognize González as President-Elect Instead of Seating Maduro. When Maduro was inaugurated for a new term in January 2025 despite the disputed election, multiple countries refused to recognize the new government and continued recognizing González as the legitimate president-elect. This diplomatic nonrecognition — the international equivalent of refusing to seat a winner — created a sustained legitimacy challenge to the Maduro government.

South Korea, 2024: Citizens and Lawmakers Physically Force Their Way Into Parliament to Vote Down Martial Law. On the night of Dec. 3, 2024, President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial

law and deployed security forces to the National Election Commission's offices. Special forces soldiers sealed the National Assembly, helicopters landed on the roof, and almost 300 soldiers tried to lock down the building.

The public response was immediate. Flag-waving protesters braved freezing temperatures to keep vigil through the night outside parliament in defiance of the order. Crucially, they weren't passive — they physically blocked soldiers from advancing and created enough friction to buy lawmakers time to get inside.

The Election Commission itself denounced the move as unconstitutional and pushed back — showing another way election administrators can support truth-telling.

At least one opposition lawmaker had to climb over a 1.5-meter fence to enter the assembly because police blocked him even after he showed identification proving he was a member of parliament. Parliamentary staffers blocked soldiers with sofas and fire extinguishers. All 190 lawmakers present voted to lift martial law, and Yoon reversed the decree within 6 hours.

But the protests didn't stop there — they escalated strategically. When Yoon survived a first impeachment vote after members of his own party boycotted the chamber — leaving the motion just short of the required 200 votes — demonstrators pledged to continue their civil movement until he was removed. University students held protests in front of the ruling People Power Party headquarters with banners reading, "Participating in blocking impeachment is a crime."

Trade unions called a national strike — which further escalated the pressure. They had tested their muscles over months and found that civic organizations and ordinary

citizens heeded their call. Protests in the streets and economic pressure grew.

The sustained pressure worked. On Dec. 14, lawmakers voted 204 to 85 to impeach Yoon. Outside parliament, at least 200,000 people had gathered — K-pop anthems rang out, and protesters wept and embraced as the result was confirmed. Fourteen months later, Yoon was convicted of leading an insurrection and sentenced to life in prison.

The South Korea case illustrates a critical dynamic: The first wave of protest stopped the immediate seizure of power; the second, sustained wave of escalating public pressure broke the political coalition protecting the president. Neither wave alone was sufficient. Together, they were decisive.

Narrative Responses

Goal: Mobilize massive, targeted public pressure on key members of Congress to demand they do their duty and seat the winners.

Audience: The pro-democracy base nationally, and constituents of specific vulnerable members of Congress who have not publicly committed to honoring the results.

Messages:

- In America, voters pick our leaders, our leaders do not pick which voices to heed and which to silence. But because the ruling regime lost, they are lying, lashing out, and trying to lock themselves into power by blocking the will of the people. This is treason, a betrayal of the American people. The people have spoken and elected officials across parties must do their duty and seat our duly elected representatives.
- #DoYourDuty #VotersDecided

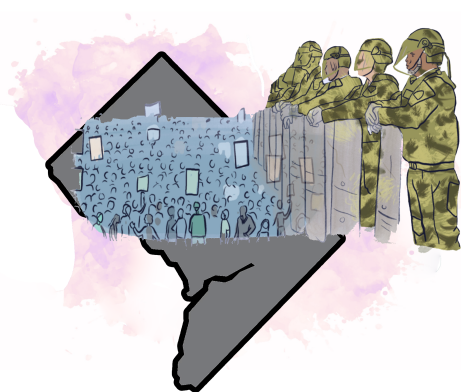
- The will of the people is clear and must prevail.
- **[@OFFICIAL]** The people have spoken. Do your duty and honor the will of the people.

What to Prepare

Start here: Know which representatives won their seats by the smallest margins. Track federal investigations of those members and their campaigns. Know which House and Senate members have publicly committed to honoring election results. Look to groups like [May Day Strong](http://maydaystrong.org) (maydaystrong.org), [Sunrise Movement](http://sunrisemovement.org) (sunrisemovement.org), or [Indivisible](http://indivisible.org) (indivisible.org) for rapid mass mobilization.

Additional options:

- **Prepare a massive public presence in Washington if needed.** If Congress moves to refuse to seat incoming members, this is a national call-to-action moment.
- **Make it visible and sustained.** Congressional refusal to seat members-elect must be treated as a constitutional crisis — not a procedural matter. Sustained presence at Capitol Hill, state capitals, and media are necessary.
- **Organize opposition walkouts.** If the refusal proceeds, opposition members can walk out en masse and organize publicly. The walkout itself becomes the story.
- **Gain international recognition.** Using all the documentation and evidence, ask international allies to honor the election results and recognize the Senate-elect and House-elect leaders as duly appointed leaders.
- **Keep pressure up.** This strategy is one of the most escalated scenarios and therefore requires a broad mix of pressure tactics: boycotts, strikes, mass marches. These would need to be organized and sustained over time.
- **Bird-dog members of Congress who have not publicly committed to honoring the results.** Film and peacefully confront them whenever they make a public appearance, shouting demands like “do your duty” and asking questions like, “will you uphold your oath?” For members who have publicly stated they will not seat winners, ask more shaming questions, like “how much are you being paid to betray the American people?”
- **Organize daily rallies and strikes at the Capitol until the winners are seated.**
- **Organize daily rallies, strikes, and protests in the districts where members unwilling to honor results live.** Power map which major businesses, civic institutions, and even famous former residents such as actors, musicians or sports figures, matter in that place and pressure them to speak out and join in on your actions.



DC: Override of Home Rule Election

Using a pretext of “fiscal emergency” or “public safety crisis,” the federal government activates or reconstitutes the DC Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority (the “Control Board”), giving it sweeping operational authority to override local election administration

What Is This Scenario?

The DC Control Board existed from 1995 to 2001. It gave the federal government sweeping operational authority over DC’s budget, operations, and policies during a financial crisis. While formally dissolving in 2001, the authority granted to Congress remains in the statute.

Trump has floated canceling the 2026 elections and has demonstrated willingness to use emergency declarations to bypass normal procedures.

Congress retains constitutional authority to review and block DC legislation within 30 days. However, DC residents have constitutional rights as voters, and any effort to suppress DC voting rights would likely face litigation challenging it as a violation of voting rights protections.

The DC Control Board statute remains on the books but requires an act of Congress or a certification by the CFO of financial distress to reactivate — though an emergency declaration might be used to claim inherent authority to activate it, and the current Congress is unlikely to block such a move.

How This Might Unfold

Federal emergency declaration citing “crime” or “fiscal crisis.” The president declares a federal emergency affecting DC, citing crime rates or budget instability. Using that emergency declaration, the president attempts to activate the Control Board and transfer election administration authority to federal officials.

Control Board override of DC Board of Elections. The reconstituted Control Board, using its statutory authority, attempts to impose requirements on DC’s election administration — changing rules, demanding new procedures, or taking direct operational control.

Congress blocks DC election law. Congress overturns DC legislation related to elections — for example, changing a local law expanding early voting or mail voting.

What Would You Do?

The president declares a federal emergency “due to crime” and, alongside some financial accusations, uses that to activate

the DC Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority.

The Control Board, created by Congress in 1995, gave the federal government sweeping operational authority over DC during a fiscal crisis. A reconstituted or newly empowered version is used to override the administration of DC — they announce the mayor-elect cannot be sworn in.

This extreme breach is mentioned in national news but, amid other crises, largely drowned out. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Which DC elected officials are prepared to resist Control Board override of election administration?
- What is the legislative status of Home Rule protections?
- Which organizations are prepared to meet an escalation like this with ongoing resistance?

Responses That Have Worked

Washington, DC, 1982: Residents Build the Institutions They Were Denied.

Frustrated by continued congressional control over local affairs, DC residents voted to draft a state constitution and establish the framework for a future state government. Black Washingtonians, who made up the majority of the city's population, played a central role in the effort. Elections were held for shadow senators and representatives despite the fact that Congress did not recognize the positions.

The institutions held no formal power, but they served as a persistent assertion that democratic legitimacy comes from the

governed, not from congressional permission. This did not achieve all its goals, but it established the practice of electing “shadow” senators and representatives who would advocate for statehood and created an enduring institutional framework for the statehood movement.

Catalonia, 2017: Regional Government Holds Referendum Despite Federal Court Ruling.

The Spanish Constitutional Court declared Catalonia's independence referendum illegal before it was held. The Catalan regional government proceeded anyway on Oct. 1, 2017. When Spanish national police arrived at polling stations to physically seize ballot boxes, Catalan citizens formed human chains around polling stations, placed their bodies between police and the ballot equipment, and in many stations successfully continued voting for hours. The referendum was not legally recognized, but the act of holding it — and protecting it physically — is one of the most fully documented examples of a regional government's noncooperation with central suppression of a democratic vote.

Nigeria, 2023: Governors in Opposition States Refuse to Implement Federal Election Commission Directives.

Several governors from opposition-held states in Nigeria's 2023 election refused to facilitate federal directives they believed were designed to advantage the ruling APC party. While not a complete blocking action, the partial noncooperation by state executives with federal election administration created meaningful friction in the disenfranchisement machinery.

What to Prepare

Start here: Connect with experts on DC Home Rule and voting rights. Monitor

Congress and the federal government for any emergency declarations that might affect DC. Know the fiscal status of DC's government. Look for rapid response plans from [Free DC](https://freedcproject.org) (freedcproject.org).

Additional options:

- **Make DC disenfranchisement a national story.** Federal interference in DC elections is a story about the denial of self-governance to a majority-Black city. It should be told that way, loudly, to national audiences.
- **Constituent pressure on every member of Congress.** If a Control

Board reactivation is threatened, every member of Congress has constituents who care about democracy. Use that leverage.

- **Make the DC fight a coalition issue.** Organizations in states with full voting rights should stand in solidarity with DC publicly and visibly.
- **Seat your mayor anyway.** Refuse to cooperate with such unjust actions and, like Catalonia, hold your own elections or your own swearing-in process anyway.



Puerto Rico: Federal Interference with Commonwealth Election

Federal agents obtain, examine, or seize Puerto Rico's voting machines or election records — casting doubt on the commonwealth's election infrastructure

What Is This Scenario?

Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory, not a state. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens but cannot vote for president. Puerto Rico elects its own governor, legislature, and a non-voting resident commissioner to the House.

In 2025, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) under Tulsi Gabbard obtained Puerto Rico's voting machines for examination, citing "publicly reported claims" of "discrepancies and systemic anomalies." Puerto Rico election officials "voluntarily" handed over the equipment. No evidence of fraud or foreign interference was found. The precedent — federal examination of a jurisdiction's election equipment based on unsubstantiated "claims" — is now established.

Puerto Rico's resident commissioner is a non-voting member of the House. A disputed PR election result could theoretically be used to affect congressional math — making PR elections more strategically relevant.

Puerto Rico's elections are administered by the PR State Elections Commission under Puerto Rican law. The federal government's legal authority over PR elections gives it greater latitude to intervene in territorial matters than in U.S. states.

Puerto Rico officials could have challenged the 2025 ODNI seizure of voting machines in federal court — asserting that PR, as a self-governing commonwealth, has authority over its own election equipment.

PR communities in the states vote in large numbers, and federal interference with PR's elections affects American citizens in those states as well.

How This Might Unfold

Pre-election seizure of PR voting machines. Using the 2025 ODNI examination as precedent, federal agents request or seize PR voting machines before November for a new "security review." The machines are returned late or not at all, disrupting the election.

Post-election challenge to PR resident commissioner result. If the PR resident commissioner race is close, federal officials announce a fraud investigation into PR's election administration. This creates precedent for challenging the seating of PR's member of Congress.

Full federal oversight imposed. Federal agents assert operational control over PR's election administration, citing the need for "security review." Elections are administered under federal supervision.

What Would You Do?

The news is huge in Puerto Rico. Just days before the election, federal agents seize PR voting machines, claiming a massive investigation of "voting irregularities" and vague claims of tampering.

Outside of PR and the diaspora, the news is barely mentioned. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Are Puerto Rican civic organizations connected to national election protection networks?
- If federal agents arrived at PR elections offices, who would respond — locally and nationally?
- Is PR's resident commissioner in contact with voting rights organizations about this risk?
- Have folks inside PR talked with Puerto Ricans in the States about these and other possibilities — so people are ready to mobilize?

Responses That Have Worked

Vieques, Puerto Rico, 1999–2003: Federal Government Controls the Land, but Not Its Legitimacy. After a civilian security guard was killed during a Navy training exercise, residents of Vieques launched a sustained campaign of civil disobedience against decades of military occupation and bombing. Protesters established encampments inside restricted military zones, repeatedly entered federal property, and risked arrest in large numbers. Puerto Rican civic organizations, religious leaders, elected officials, and diaspora communities joined the campaign.

The federal government maintained legal authority over the island, but the political cost of continuing operations grew steadily. The resistance began escalating its demands for full independence, which spooked U.S. federal leaders. After years of sustained resistance, the Navy ended bombing exercises and withdrew from Vieques. The lesson: A determined local population can make federal control increasingly difficult to sustain, even when formal legal authority remains unchanged.

Philippines, 1986: Independent Election Monitoring Preserves the Truth When Official Institutions Will Not. After a snap presidential election widely criticized for fraud, the Marcos government declared victory and moved to certify the result. Independent election observers conducted their own nationwide vote tabulation and reported substantially different results.

This spark moved beyond just institutional channels. Election computer technicians publicly walked out of the government's tabulation center, alleging manipulation of official returns. Opposition legislators refused to legitimize the certification

process and left parliament in protest. The story was clear: This is being stolen.

Without that clarity led by protests from people inside, it would have been harder to mobilize the full breadth of the population. Protests grew in the streets, confident in their analysis of what was happening. The official result remained in place temporarily, but confidence in it collapsed.

When Cardinal Jaime Sin — one of the country’s most trusted public figures — broadcast a direct appeal over Radio Veritas calling on ordinary Filipinos to take to the streets and support the military defectors who had broken with Marcos, millions responded. Crowds surrounded the military camps where the defectors had taken refuge, forming human shields against tanks and troops loyal to the regime. Soldiers were unwilling to fire on nuns, priests, and civilians offering them food and flowers. That mass physical presence — bodies in the street as a form of protection and moral witness — was decisive. Following a mass uprising, the Marcos regime fell and Corazon Aquino assumed the presidency.

What to Prepare

Start here: Connect with Puerto Rico civil society organizations — [Centro de](#)

[Periodismo Investigativo](#) ([periodismoinvestigativo.com](#)), [LatinoJustice PRLDEF](#) ([latinojustice.org/en](#)), and [ACLU of Puerto Rico](#) ([aclu-pr.org](#)). If you are working in communities with large Puerto Rican diaspora populations (New York, Florida, Chicago), make this scenario part of your coalition work.

Additional options:

- **Make federal interference in PR elections a national story.** Federal interference with PR’s elections should be treated as an attack on the rights of American citizens in those states as well.
- **Organize the diaspora.** Puerto Rican communities in the states have electoral power and influence.
- **Legal challenge immediately.** Any federal seizure or forced examination of PR election equipment should be challenged in federal court immediately, citing the Fulton County litigation as precedent.
- **Coalition building.** Organizations in states with large Puerto Rican populations should stand in solidarity with PR, publicly and through constituent pressure on their representative.

Bonus: 1-Day Scenario Planning Agenda

Here is a sample training agenda to help people explore these threats. Times are not included since the length of exercises depends on the size of your group, trust with each other, expertise with this material, and how deep you wish to go. Typically, with this design, you could run 2 to 4 scenarios in depth in a 1-day session.

We strongly suggest not running these exclusively inside organizations or groups, but cross-silo — so people can benefit from understanding the different interventions needed and how they can best work together.

You can view additional agendas at freedomtrainers.net/election.

Before the Day Begins

Pre-training setup checklist

- Confirm MC and brief them on chants/songs list
- Review local election calendar: key dates, key officials, key vulnerabilities
- Confirm any local election lawyers attending; brief them on fishbowl format, if appropriate
- Materials to run the scenarios
 - Select scenarios to explore in this group
 - Scenarios cards? Placards?
- Prepare list of resources already in the ecosystem
 - For example, Signal threads or signup sheet for real-time comm infrastructure
 - List of public-facing existing structures
 - Bring public plans from state tables or other coordinated structures
- Set up room in clusters (not rows) to enable easy breakout groups

Welcoming

MC leads arrival energy (begin as people filter in, no formal start needed)

The MC opens by teaching and leading 1 or 2 chants or call-and-response songs — choosing high-energy material that could actually be used on the street. This is not just warm-up; this is a skill-transfer moment. Participants are learning tools they may use at a rally, a polling location vigil, or a mobilization.

Lead Trainer: “Welcome, everyone. We are so glad you’re here.”

We are gathered because our votes are under attack. The Supreme Court re-opened the door to racial gerrymandering, and the Trump administration has taken 2020 ballots, demanded voter rolls from 30 states, and threatened elections officials. There are a myriad of attacks on the election process and accusations of fraud in honest elections. Those in power are already

working to prevent people from voting in an attempt to hold onto power. Protecting our vote requires all of us working together, starting right now — and “all of us” really means all of us.

We come from different places. Some of us are deeply partisan. Some of us represent nonpartisan organizations. Some of us are here wearing 501C3 hats. This space is being held as a **C3-safe space**, which means we are not taking partisan stances as a group today. Individuals may hold their own views, and different organizations in this room may operate differently — but as a group, we are here to protect the vote process and enforce the will of the voters.

Our focus today is about the legal pathways — supporting voters, protecting the vote, helping election officials ensure every vote is counted, and stopping the theft of the election. Our goal today: to uphold the will of the voters.

We are not trying to convince each other of our different strategies. Some of us know the power of civil disobedience. Some believe in litigation. Some believe in mobilizing in the streets. Some are focused on getting out the vote. All of these may matter at different moments. We are here to understand how we function as an **ecosystem** — how we harmonize and support each other.

Some of us will share everything. Some will share selectively. All of that is okay. What matters is we leave here better positioned to act together.

Tomorrow, there is a second training on nonviolent direct action and enforcement tools for post-election scenarios. Everyone is invited, regardless of your comfort level with nonviolent direct action — it is an important set of skills to understand, even if it’s not your first tool.

“Who Else” (Sometimes Called “Stand Up/Sit Down”) (20 min)

A classic warming activity. Trainer leads from the front — start with 3 or 4 examples and then throw it open to participants.

Facilitator leads stand up (or put your hand up) if...

- You represent a grassroots organization
- You are an advocate or community organizer
- You work in electoral or voting rights law
- You work in voter registration or get-out-the-vote
- You’ve done election protection work before
- You’ve never done this before and you’re figuring it out as you go
- (open to participants — anyone can call one out)
- You’ve been worried about this election
- You believe there are people trying to suppress votes in our community right now
- You believe there are people already working to steal or subvert this election
- You believe that together, we can stop them

[Close on the affirmative — the last stand-up should land on solidarity and shared purpose.]

Elections: What Do We Know / What Are We Wondering?

The strength of this tool is that it helps the group say some things they already know — so you don't have to repeat them. You can underline and underscore, but it allows a chance for you to hear where the group is thinking.

Ask the group: “What do we know about these upcoming elections? And what are we wondering?”

Make a list.

FRAMING: The Authoritarian Threat: Context & Framework

This section is drawn from [Freedom Trainers' material](#) on where we are in the authoritarian cycle. Supporting materials are from freedomtrainers.net/election, especially the [Election Defense Training](#). The presenter should review the source material thoroughly.

Core framing points to cover:

1. We are already in it. Political violence and election subversion are not abstract fears. Threats, intimidation, doxxing, harassment of election workers — these are already happening and have been escalating. Understanding the pattern helps us respond strategically rather than reactively.

2. It's vital to understand the authoritarian playbook on elections. Aspiring autocrats try to subvert elections through multiple overlapping tactics: voter suppression, disinformation, intimidation of officials and poll workers, procedural manipulation, and — if all else fails — contesting or ignoring results. These are not independent acts. They're part of a system.

3. Today's focus is on protecting the vote before and on Election Day. Today we are focused on: How do we build the ecosystem, practice scenario response, and strengthen our collective capacity to protect the vote?

4. History is on our side — if we're organized. Movements that are broad, disciplined, strategic, and nonviolent have a strong track record. This is not wishful thinking — it is documented across dozens of countries.

5. Close with examples or stories of some of the successful (or even partially successful) pushback happening now locally, or recent examples, such as:

- 2020 “Count Every Vote” experiences
- Active work around the country replacing retiring poll workers
- Getting folks to go to local boards of elections, pressuring them to do their jobs
- Pushback on the fraud narrative (when Ohio was under attack, thousands of groups responded)

If you don't have a better story, one to tell:

Detroit, 2020. Two Republicans on the Wayne County Board of Canvassers voted to block certification of Detroit’s results, citing discrepancies of a few dozen votes out of hundreds of thousands cast. Had this held, Detroit’s votes would not have been counted.

Word spread immediately through pre-existing organizing networks. Hundreds of residents flooded the Zoom public comment session — so many that the meeting capacity had to be expanded past 300 — and gave testimony for hours. The board reversed course and certified unanimously.

But it wasn’t over. Minutes after the meeting ended, Trump and RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel called the 2 canvassers personally, pressuring them not to sign the certification document. The canvassers left the room and never returned to sign — but Michigan law only required the vote itself plus signatures from the chair or clerk, so their walkout had no legal effect.

Alongside this, when Michigan Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey and House Speaker Lee Chatfield were summoned to the White House by Trump — a thinly veiled pressure campaign to get them to block certification — activists did not quietly wait for them to go. More than 2 dozen activists swarmed Shirkey at Detroit Metro Airport as he printed his boarding pass, chanting, “Protect our vote!” and holding signs reading, “Certify the results” and “Shame on you.” When Shirkey arrived at Reagan National Airport in Washington, he was met by a second group of protesters asking, “What did Trump promise you?”

When the two issued their post-meeting statement, they confirmed they had found nothing to change the outcome and would follow Michigan law. The public accountability — before and after the meeting — made it much harder for them to come home and quietly flip.

When Michigan’s full results went to the state board for certification in Lansing, residents drove a caravan around the Capitol honking horns and carrying signs urging the board to certify. The state certified and the results held.

Run the Scenarios

At this point, the group is ready to dive into playing out some scenarios. Pick a scenario. Then pick a format that you think will be effective for that scenario. Two examples:

(From Scenario 14: County Board of Canvassers Refuses to Certify)

*Room has a mixture of roles: lawyers, grassroots, election administrators. They have already done work in large groups, so they decide to challenge people by getting into **affinity groups/sector caucuses**. Each will make their plans and share back.*

(From Scenario 15: Federal Seizure of Ballots or Election Equipment)

*Facilitator sees the group isn’t comfortable with confrontation. So decides to pick **parallel lines role-play** so each person can have a 1-on-1 confrontation with an agent.*

<i>Facilitator uses the “What would you do?” scenario:</i> The votes have been cast and counted. A candidate won. But the count doesn’t become official until a local board of canvassers — usually 2 to 5 people — formally certifies it. Certification is supposed to be routine. You don’t think much of this process — until you hear that 2 members are about to refuse to sign. Suddenly this is a big deal, and their initial vote ends in just a few minutes. They don’t need evidence. They just refuse. A county’s results — sometimes hundreds of thousands of votes — hang in the balance while lawyers and whoever is at their local board argue. What do you do? <i>Facilitator puts people in their groups (for this scenario, it’s Legal, Local Grassroots, Out-of-County Mobilization, and Election Officials & Politicos).</i> <i>The debrief ends up being intense — as the groups have friction over strategy and goals. This is a critical moment to help everyone see each other, find ways to harmonize, but also not slow each other down — speed will be critical.</i>	<i>The facilitator adapts only slightly from the “What would you do?” scenario:</i> FBI agents pull up to your county elections warehouse. They are direct, mean, and insistent, threatening that any interference will be cause for arrest. They have a signed warrant from a judge. They tell you, an election worker, that they have to be permitted to load boxes onto trucks. What do you do? <i>The facilitator debriefs on feelings — and yes, what are things to say (“I need my lawyer to come down and read the warrant — I cannot release custody of anything without that.”).</i> <i>But the facilitator focuses on the emotional readiness for a confrontation like this. Helps with grounding people.</i>
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Format Options for Trainers

There are at least 4 formats you can consider. Use different formats for different scenarios to keep it fresh:

Format A — Large Group / Tabletop Everyone hears the scenario. Random roles are assigned across the room. The group works through: Who does what? Who calls whom? What’s the public-facing response? What’s the legal response? What’s the street response? *Best for: Opening scenarios. Builds shared vocabulary. Good when the room is large and diverse.*

Format B — Affinity Groups / Sector Caucus People break out by sector: legal/electoral, community organizations, unions/labor, faith, direct action groups, media/comms. Each group works through the scenario from their sector’s perspective. Groups then report back. *Best for: When you have genuine diversity of sectors in the room. Helps people find their lane and understand that of others.*

Format C — Fishbowl A mixed group of 5 to 7 people from different sectors works through the scenario in the center of the room while others observe. Debrief with the full group after. *Best*

for: When you have legal/electoral folks who can model realistic constraints. Also great for helping community groups see how lawyers think — the friction is productive and instructive.

Format D — Role-play it Some scenarios are very helpful to see played out — and to have some set of actors (or the whole room) experience the hostility or tension, so they're not facing that kind of tension for the first time when it happens to them. Role-plays may include parallel lines role-play or individual role-plays. Detailed instructions for leading these are at freedomtrainers.net/election.

Trainer's Note on Fishbowl: If lawyers are in the room, a fishbowl early in the day helps them set context for legal constraints — as long as they are reasonable partners. Some tension between “Here's what the law allows” and “Here's what the streets need” is healthy and instructive, especially for community groups assessing how to navigate those relationships. If the lawyers you have are likely to be combative or dismissive, consider saving the fishbowl for later when some rapport has been built.

What Do We Already Have?

Make sure to provide some space for people to share in the large group about connections and pieces of information your group already has. Depending on the size of this group, this may need to be very carefully managed or even figured out ahead of time.

This prevents duplication and surfaces hidden resources in the room.

Messaging Practice

Knowing what to do is only half the work. *How* you talk about election protection — to your community, to the press, to persuadable officials — shapes whether people show up or stay home in fear.

There's been some excellent messaging guidance specifically for the 2026 elections: bit.ly/handsoffourvote. That messaging is designed to help pro-democracy communicators stay on offense rather than getting trapped defending process.

Give some time for practicing how people communicate to each other (this could be a role-play or application practice with some of the scenarios already). If possible, feedback from an expert will be ideal.

The short version: When talking about what's happening to our elections, lead with *what we're protecting* (the ability of people to choose their own representatives), name *who is doing what and why*, and end with *a specific action* the listener can take. Avoid leading with process, machinery, or abstract fear. Every communication is an opportunity to strengthen trust — not just convey information.

Toward Closing: Build a Timeline

Draw a horizontal line from NOW and toward the ELECTION. Add a few markers (e.g., 3 months out, 1 month out, 1 week out, ELECTION DAY, 1 week after, 1 month after, 3 months after).

At each point, ask: What relationships must exist by this date? What training has happened, with how many people? What legal preparations are in place? What does your communications infrastructure look like? Who in your community knows what to do and has practiced it?

Push for specifics, not generalities. Not “Build coalitions” — but “The labor council has signed a joint defense pledge with the county bar association.”

Then, stress-test that plan: What if it happens faster than expected? What if 2 scenarios happen at once? Add a second color of stickies for backup plans at each stage.

High-Priority Next Steps

Each person leaves with 3 concrete commitments for the next 30 days. For example, election officials might commit to identifying legal counsel on 24-hour call, documenting chain-of-custody protocols before any challenge, and knowing which court to go to first if a warrant arrives.

What is the one thing that, if it isn’t done in the next 30 days, makes everything else on this timeline impossible? Write it down. Assign it. Leave with a name and a date.

Closing Question

Options for a closing circle or reflection question:

- What is the one thing you’re leaving with that you didn’t come in with?
- What is one thing you’re going to do differently in the next 30 days because of today?
- What is one relationship in this room you want to deepen?

Trainer also surfaces and distributes:

- Scenario Guide (link / printed excerpts)
- Local election-protection hotline numbers
- Next steps, such as Signal thread QR code, if appropriate, or other ways to stay in touch.