



Free markets. Real solutions.

How we have engaged

Policy Studies

1. [Restoring Losers' Consent: A Necessary Step to Stabilizing our Democracy](#)
2. [Prioritizing Achievable Federal Election Reform](#) (alongside *Bipartisan Policy Center, American Enterprise Institute, Unite America and Issue One*)
3. [Partisan Election Review Efforts in Five States](#) (alongside *Brennan Center for Justice and Protect Democracy*)
4. [The Case Against Restricting Voting Access](#)
5. [A Primer on H.R. 1, the "For the People Act of 2021"](#)

Testimony

1. [In OPPOSITION to Florida's 2022 elections omnibus](#), outlawing ranked-choice voting and reducing access to absentee ballots (SB 524)
2. [In SUPPORT of Rhode Island's "Let RI Vote Act,"](#) creating more options for voters, eliminating red tape and improving election security (S 2007)
3. [In SUPPORT of New Hampshire's HB 1264](#), allowing ranked-choice voting in primary and municipal elections

Media

1. [Houston Chronicle: "Opinion: Texans shouldn't have to choose between extremes. It's time for ranked choice voting"](#)
2. [Tampa Bay Times: "Florida Republicans should stand up for voter freedom"](#)
3. [RIGHTWisconsin: "Wisconsin Election Reforms Worth Pursuing"](#)
4. [Inside Sources with Boyd Matheson: "A New Bipartisan Framework for Election Reform"](#)
5. [Bob Harden Show: "Voter Freedom in Florida"](#)

Events

1. ["Exploring Electoral Innovation: Righting Electoral Dysfunction with Healthy Competition"](#)
2. ["Restoring Losers' Consent: How Do We Stabilize Our Democracy?"](#)

EXPLAINER

A Republic, If You Can Keep It: The Pressing Need for Electoral Reform

June 2022

Summary

The R Street Institute is committed to the idea that free markets and limited, effective government are the foundation of American prosperity. Unfortunately, our electoral system is not producing a healthy political culture; instead electoral dysfunction has become a driver of uncertainty and a roadblock to prosperity. This electoral dysfunction leads to governance dysfunction, and all Americans—regardless of political ideology—are worse off for it.

The problem is widespread

Both parties now consider elections to be less about adjudicating policy differences and more about serving entrenched tribalism, which leads to difficulty accepting defeat. Many Republicans believe that Democrats cannot win legitimately, and they are willing to construct barriers to the ballot in the name of "voter integrity." Meanwhile, many Democrats claim that common-sense election reforms are "voter suppression"—or worse. The result is that prudent election reforms—those that make elections more open to voters, increase voter confidence and ensure representative candidates—often fail to see the light of day.

The answer takes all of us

Solving our electoral dysfunction will require reformers of all stripes to turn the temperature down around elections and grow a movement dedicated to the following principles:

Principle #1: Casting a ballot should not be frustrating

- Simplify the voter registration process with online portals and automatic updates when voters interact with government agencies
- Allow voters to decide how they want to vote with permanent, no-excuse absentee voting, accessible drop boxes and robust early in-person voting
- Develop online tracking tools to give voters confidence that absentee ballots are received and counted
- Provide free IDs for voters to use both in-person and when voting absentee
- Reduce confusion and promote turnout by holding all regular elections in November

Principle #2: Trustworthy processes make for trustworthy outcomes

- Improve the accuracy of voter rolls by coordinating between states and by contacting voters who have failed to participate in consecutive federal elections
- Protect our elections from hackers and foreign agents by prohibiting online voting
- Ensure proper tabulation through mandatory paper backups and risk-limiting audits
- Provide voters with faster results by pre-processing ballots received before Election Day and requiring all ballots to be returned by Election Day
- Preserve our "laboratories of democracy" by maintaining local, nonpartisan control over elections

Principle #3: Winning candidates should be broadly appealing

- Give all voters the power to winnow down candidates through open primaries
- Explore ways to give voters more voice and more choice with systems like ranked choice voting
- Encourage candidates to exhibit virtue through gracious behavior toward losers in victory and humbly accepting the results in defeat
- Promote electoral competition and develop public trust with non-partisan redistricting commissions
- Uphold the First Amendment's free speech protections and ensure all voices are heard by standing against campaign financing restrictions and candidate speech codes

Contact Us

Learn more about how R Street is engaging with electoral reform and how you can work with us by visiting www.rstreet.org/connect.