MOBILIZING COMMUNITY POWER AND VOICE IN 2021 AND BEYOND

An equal voice for all.

The pillars of American democracy are under attack. Across the country, lawmakers and powerful interests are seeking to suppress the votes—and the voices—of communities who are historically underrepresented due to systemic discrimination and marginalization. These forces are peddling disinformation and cynicism, manipulating congressional districts, and dismantling pro-voter policies that expand voting access for all.

As a nation, we should be making it easier—not harder—for ALL citizens to participate in our democracy, and especially communities of color, young people, and other underrepresented voices.

At the Tides Healthy Democracy Fund, we are working to advance and defend everyone’s right to a voice and a vote—because a just and equitable society depends on it. We believe we can only solve the big issues of our time—economic inequality, racial justice, and climate change—if we have a democracy that is responsive to all of its people. Join us in the ongoing work of fostering a healthier, more inclusive, and more reflective democracy.

FOUR MAIN PRIORITIES FOR 2021

The surge in voting among communities of color and young people in the 2020 elections is something to celebrate, but it also raised urgent questions.

Among the biggest... How can we keep building the power and influence of the New American Majority in the face of ongoing efforts to silence its voice through voter suppression, racist gerrymandering, disinformation campaigns and more?

The Tides Healthy Democracy Fund is partnering with aligned donor networks and movement leaders to find sustainable solutions to this pressing question for 2021 and beyond. In strategic locations across the country, we’re working to:

1. **Build the enduring strength of community-led, multi-issue civic engagement groups so they can break free from the boom-and-bust cycles of election-year funding and achieve lasting gains in power and representation for their communities.**

   “The boom-and-bust cycle of funding for civic engagement affects our ability to run programs. We need unrestricted, multiyear support to focus on our mission and better plan for long-term goals.”

   RAY MURPHY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PENNSYLVANIA VOICE
Go on the offense to protect and advance pro-voter reforms in states where gains are possible, while defending against a wave of voter suppression laws targeting people of color, young voters, and other groups.

“In the wake of people exercising their power in record numbers in 2020, we are seeing governments create oppressive policies to restrict voting access. Off-cycle funding is critical to our efforts to organize and build power in support of a racially just and accessible democracy.”

ASHLEY MARSHALL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, FORWARD JUSTICE

Ensure a fair redistricting process following the 2020 census by fighting partisan gerrymandering and ensuring that district lines are drawn in ways that protect the power of communities of color and other underrepresented groups.

“Many people of color do not see government or the process working for them. Fair redistricting can foster greater participation, increase trust, and ensure that public officials better represent communities’ interests.”

CATHY DUVALL, INITIATIVE MANAGER, FAIR REPRESENTATION IN REDISTRICTING

Counter disinformation campaigns that seek to sow division, create uncertainty and doubt, and reduce support for policies that can help all communities thrive.

“The current policy environment provides a unique opportunity to change the systems that encourage the spread of disinformation and build resiliency to disinformation in our communities. We need to take advantage of this moment.”

AMBER FRENCH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MEDIA DEMOCRACY FUND/DISINFORMATION DEFENSE LEAGUE

The stakes could not be higher. With your support and our partnerships with donor networks and movement leaders, the Tides Foundation’s Healthy Democracy Fund grantmaking is creating a shift to a government and a democracy of, by and for all of the people.
GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

NEW GEORGIA PROJECT

Activating the “Super Voters”

“If you stay ready, you don’t have to get ready.”

Nse Ufot, who leads the New Georgia Project, says that’s the number-one lesson from a 2020 election cycle when multi-issue civic engagement groups like hers helped spur record turnout among voters of color and other targeted groups. As Georgia lawmakers moved quickly in early 2021 to pass laws that would suppress voting, the New Georgia Project rapidly had to shift gears.

After fighting anti-voter proposals that state leaders were determined to—and did—pass, New Georgia Project launched a “corporate accountability” campaign to encourage leading businesses to speak out against the measures. Among the results: the CEOs of leading Georgia businesses like Coca-Cola and Delta Airlines issued strong statements in opposition to the new law; and the New Georgia Project is now sharing lessons and ideas with other states fighting a wave of similar proposals.

At the same time, the New Georgia Project is focusing on a nonpartisan campaign to get out the vote in hundreds of municipal elections across Georgia in 2021. Ufot views the 2021 contests as critical in ensuring that communities of color stay engaged in the lead-up to the 2022 mid-term congressional races.

“One of the central goals of the New Georgia Project is to create what we call ‘super voters’ who vote in every election in which they are eligible,” Ufot said. “We believe that’s the only way to make lasting change at all levels of government.”

Ufot said her organization needs strong, sustained support to keep playing both offense and defense on issues at the core of American democracy. Noting that her largest expense is staff, she said groups like the New Georgia Project for too long have had to “make things happen with pennies and peanuts.”

“The progressive infrastructure in the deep South is criminally underfunded,” Ufot said. She expressed hope that donors who supported the New Georgia Project’s work in 2020 will keep supporting it and other grassroots civic engagement groups as they look ahead to 2022 and beyond. “Right now we are facing a well-funded and coordinated attack on our democracy and the infrastructure of elections. We need resources so we can fight back.”
GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

MAKE THE ROAD PENNSYLVANIA

Activating Voters Via One-On-One Organizing

For the organizers and activists at Make the Road Pennsylvania, building power in immigrant and Latinx communities requires nonstop engagement and outreach. In the lead-up to 2020, Make the Road was an important player in Pennsylvania’s enactment of reforms that expanded access to mail-in voting and no-excuse absentee voting. Now, Director Maegan Llerena and her team are keeping a watchful eye on proposals from state lawmakers to dilute and dismantle Pennsylvania’s pro-voter policies.

Pennsylvania’s current governor has said he opposes these measures, but, “We have to be vigilant,” said Llerena. “We need to make sure we keep the pressure on the governor to veto any bill that will restrict voting for our communities.”

Make the Road Pennsylvania also is keeping the pressure on for additional pro-voter reforms, like easier early voting and countywide voting, which would allow residents to vote anywhere in their home county. In addition, the group is deeply engaged in the high-stakes redistricting fight in Pennsylvania. Its focus: ensuring that Latinx and immigrant communities aren’t shortchanged when the state redraws the post-census lines for its congressional districts.

As if that’s not enough, Make the Road Pennsylvania is constantly battling disinformation intended to strike fear into immigrant communities. “Our communities really are a prime target when people want to discourage voting and keep people from speaking out for their interests,” Llerena said.

Following a historic 2020 election when Make the Road Pennsylvania reached tens of thousands of voters via phone calls and digital advertising, Llerena said a strong and sustained organizing operation is going to be critical to its continued success. She said she is happy the organization has been able to hold onto its core canvassing team of nine field staff in 2021, thanks to sustained donor support. Working in Allentown, Reading, and Philadelphia, cities that are home to large numbers of immigrants and people of color, these organizers engage residents on issues that are important to them.

“That kind of one-on-one organizing is really at the heart of what we do, and it’s something we need to keep doing year in and year out,” Llerena said.
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ABOUT THE TIDES HEALTHY DEMOCRACY FUND

The Tides Healthy Democracy Fund (HDF) is a charitable fund that partners with social justice donor networks and movement leaders focused on building a more just and reflective democracy by investing in long-term civic engagement efforts in historically underrepresented communities, especially communities of color, young people, and the economically disadvantaged. Since September 2019, the fund has directed more than 70 grants totaling over $5 million to 50 organizations nationwide.

During the 2020 election cycle, the Healthy Democracy Fund supported grantee partners to educate and mobilize voters and achieve important wins on these and other issues. Now we are working to protect those gains and ensure lasting improvements in representation and voice for communities that have been shut out of the halls of power for too long.

Whether you choose to donate to the Healthy Democracy Fund or partner with us on direct grants from your donor advised fund, we share the same urgency and mission: protecting our democracy and moving the needle toward justice.

To learn more about our priorities email us at healthydemocracy@tides.org.

STAY IN TOUCH. We’d love your feedback on our work. Email us at healthydemocracy@tides.org.