



Healthy Democracy Fund



2023 PRIORITIES REPORT



HDF grantee Poder Latinx's vision is to build political power for the Latinx community to become decision-makers in our country's democracy and win on economic, immigrant, and environmental issues.

No Off Years

Our Plan to Ensure Every Voter's Voice Matters.

National organizations parachute into communities before big elections, blanketing the airwaves and flooding voters' phones with campaigns, text messages, and calls. They urge super voters to cast a ballot for their candidate while ignoring infrequent voters. Then, the campaigns pack up their offices and are gone by the Friday after Election Day.

This transactional approach to elections has built neither trust nor power. People at the margins are left to wonder, "Does my vote matter? Is it worth the time and effort to cast a ballot?"

Democracy is built on the collective trust that our votes matter. We build trust, voter by voter and community by community, by showing up, by building local networks, and by working on issues that matter, even when an election is not imminent.

In 2023, the Healthy Democracy Fund (HDF) is prioritizing efforts that build the trust needed to empower voters and unlock power among communities historically denied it. This approach looks like resourcing organizers who talk to their neighbors about voting in local school board elections, advocates who fight to expand voting rights, immigrant-serving organizations that host naturalization classes and register new citizens to vote, organizers that drop everything to provide mutual aid in times of crisis, and leaders who are trained and ready to counter misinformation in their communities.

Every voter's voice matters. HDF is committed to digging deeper to understand which organizations have authentic relationships within overlooked communities, such as rural Indigenous voters, young people not enrolled in high school or college, and non-plurality BIPOC communities that contribute to multiracial majorities in citywide and district elections.

Ensuring that organizers and leaders have the resources to make change every year is how we build and sustain a healthy democracy. That's why the Healthy Democracy Fund is investing in year-round community organizing and civic engagement throughout 2023.

Cover photo: Election Protection volunteers helping voters on Election Day 2022 in Southern Nevada. Photo provided by Silver State Voices.

Who We Are

The Healthy Democracy Fund (HDF) is a Tides Foundation pooled grantmaking initiative that partners with social justice donor networks, national movements, and grassroots leaders focused on building a more just and representative democracy.

The Healthy Democracy Fund invests in civic engagement efforts by granting funds to fill urgent gaps while simultaneously building long-term power in historically underrepresented communities, especially communities of color and young people. Since its launch in September 2019, the fund has directed more than 239 grants totaling over \$17 million to approximately 110 organizations nationwide.

Exercising Power Down Ballot

Local power matters more than ever. The Supreme Court punted authority over abortion access to states. Disinformation campaigns have motivated activists to harass election officials to the point of quitting. School boards have become the epicenter of culture war fights over critical race theory and gender expression. Extreme weather events driven by climate change make public service at the municipal level more demanding every year.

People historically denied power at every level of government need a say at the local level. Yet, the turnout gap between white and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) voters is exacerbated in state and local elections, compared with presidential and midterm elections. Most low-dollar down-ballot campaigns target the rare super voters who have voted in three or more local or primary elections. Unsurprisingly, these super voters skew older, wealthier, and whiter and are more likely to own homes, causing public policy to favor these voters.



HDF grantee One Pennsylvania Education Fund builds collective power by educating and mobilizing their community to become informed and active voters.



Exercising Power Down Ballot, continued

High-income voters have 30–50% higher turnout in local elections than low-income voters, and white voter turnout rates are about 20% higher than BIPOC voters. Seniors over 65 are 15 times more likely to vote in local elections than young voters (ages 18 to 34). Source: Portland State University.

Down-ballot elections can have outsized impact on the validity of future federal elections as well as people’s everyday lives. Supreme Court justices are elected in [24 states](#), where they serve minimum five-year terms and issue rulings on challenges to certification of all elections, including the presidential election.

In states like Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, which have Supreme Court elections, the validity of district maps drawn by the legislature and centuries’ old abortion bans are key issues. Mayoral elections in cities such as Columbus and Philadelphia create a platform for BIPOC leaders to share how they want federal infrastructure funding to be spent in their communities and provide an opportunity to build citywide teams to get out the vote. Fighting mis- and disinformation in school board elections will inform a playbook for countering disingenuous narratives aimed to suppress the vote within working-class communities in the 2024 presidential election.

HDF is focused on making the electorate in down-ballot elections reflect the population of the communities represented by local and state officials. By investing in the capacity to educate and engage voters on the issues that hit closest to home in 2023, HDF and our network of grantees can get ready to mobilize at a larger scale in 2024.

Nurturing Pathways for Citizenship & Civic Participation

More than [800,000 immigrants became US citizens in 2021](#), joining the nearly 240 million eligible voters across the country. Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Virginia rank among the top 10 states with the highest number of naturalizations.

Still, more than [9 million green card holders are eligible to naturalize but have not yet become citizens](#). Green card holders from Mexico and El Salvador have the highest median time as green card holders before naturalization. Increasing fees for naturalization have caused some immigrants to put naturalization on pause, and the pandemic shut down naturalization ceremonies and created bottlenecks.

To expand the electorate in 2024 and empower new Americans, HDF will prioritize grantmaking to organizations rooted in immigrant communities that connect English to speakers of other languages and citizenship classes with voter registration, education, and engagement. Many immigrants come to the US from countries with vastly different political systems. Trusted organizations educate new Americans on how to register and cast a ballot while including information on who and what is on the ballot.



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Advocating for an Inclusive Democracy Amid a Decade of Voter Suppression

The [2013 Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*](#) opened the floodgates to a decade of voter suppression at the state level. Before this decision, the Voting Rights Act required jurisdictions with a history of discrimination to submit any proposed changes in voting procedures to the Department of Justice to ensure the change would not harm minority voters. In *Shelby v. Holder*, the Supreme Court ruled that the formula that determines which jurisdictions are covered by these requirements to be unconstitutional and allowed Congress to update this formula.

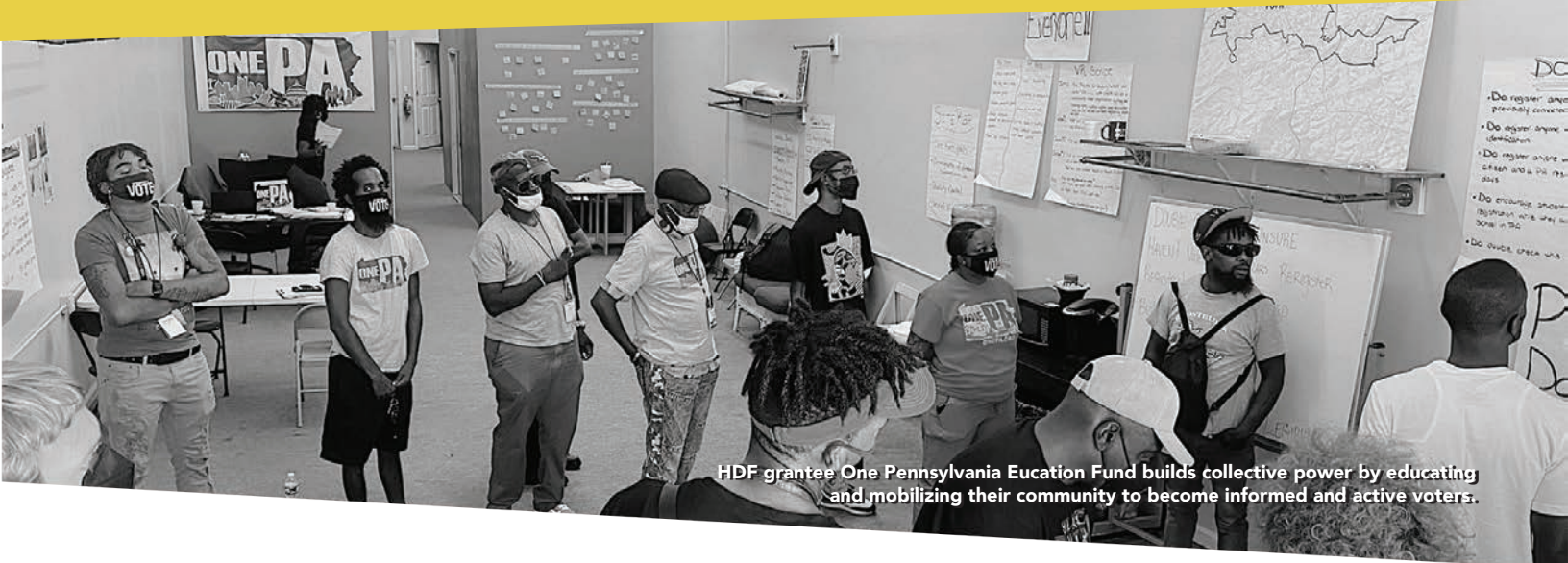
Congress has not acted in the past 10 years and has allowed this crucial part of the Voting Rights Act to wither away, state by state. In the past decade, 35 states have enacted restrictive voter ID laws. In 2022 alone, eight states enacted restrictions, ranging from shortened deadlines for voter registration to increasing barriers to voting by mail, and seven states passed laws that allow for partisan interference with fair elections. The majority of these states would have been covered under the Voting Rights Act before the Shelby decision.

A decade of congressional inaction after the Shelby decision means that the future of voting rights lies at the state level. Congressional inaction will almost certainly continue in the next two years. Following the 2022 midterm, divided government at the federal level foreclosed on the possibility for a national expansion in voting rights, such as the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

In 2023, HDF is prioritizing voting rights advocacy at the state level. The 2022 midterm elections created new opportunities and challenges for voting rights advocates. Pro-voting rights majorities in Michigan and Minnesota provide opportunities for policy change. The [Michigan legislature is considering passage of a bill](#) that would expand voting rights for people with disabilities and people whose primary language is not English while protecting voters from intimidation at the polls. The State of Minnesota passed a [law restoring voting rights for more than 55,000 formerly incarcerated people](#), starting on July 1, and legislators are considering a campaign finance law that would challenge foreign-influenced corporations from interfering in elections. Meanwhile, voting rights advocates in Nevada are defending their victories from previous legislative sessions, under a newly divided government.



TakeAction volunteers collecting signatures for the Housing Equity Now St. Paul (HENS) campaign to establish rent control measures in the city.



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Countering Mis- and Disinformation Targeted at BIPOC & Young Voters

Pervasive misinformation and disinformation about the 2020 election led to the insurrection on January 6, 2021. Unfortunately, mis- and disinformation will likely continue to threaten the integrity of our elections and take new forms. Although political conspiracies existed long before social media, the dominance of social media as the primary source of news and information enables mis- and disinformation to spread more quickly and widely, especially on unaccountable tech platforms.

In 2023, HDF is prioritizing the preparation to counter mis- and disinformation campaigns targeted at BIPOC communities, immigrants, and young people. Mis- and disinformation can take many forms: election denial following the 2020 presidential election, claims of rampant voter fraud, and exaggerated statements about crime. These polarizing, racialized narratives use fear as a tool to stoke division and serve to demotivate and confuse voters. For example, 20 people were arrested for voter fraud in the 2022 Florida midterm due to confusion about eligibility and exemptions within the new voting rights restoration policy. These arrests created a climate of fear among people already marginalized in our democracy.

Misinformation refers to false or inaccurate information. Disinformation refers to false information which is deliberately intended to mislead.

HDF is prioritizing strategies to prepare and inoculate trusted community organizations and leaders against these mis- and disinformation campaigns. Investing in community organizations in 2023 means that these leaders will have the tools and training to monitor mis- and disinformation and counter false narratives if and when they begin to spread in 2024.

Activating Gen Z & Millennial Voters

According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University, voters ages 18–29 turned out in the 2022 midterm election at the [second-highest rate in almost three decades](#), just trailing behind the peak in 2018. Aggregate youth voter turnout in nine electorally competitive states (Florida, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin) was 31%, which exceeded national youth voter turnout of 27%. This turnout difference demonstrates the impact of youth voting on many close elections, but it also shows how much power young people are leaving on the table, if fewer than 1 in 3 young voters cast a ballot in 2022.

[A post-midterm report by Murmuration](#) found that Gen Z primarily relies on social media for news instead of more traditional media platforms, especially YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, each of which outperform network and cable news by a factor of two. This same report showed that upholding reproductive rights had higher salience among Gen Z voters than voters older than 26.

[By 2028, Millennials and Gen Z will make up a majority of the eligible voters](#), and HDF is prioritizing investment in the structures and narratives to ensure that young voters meet their potential. Statewide high school and campus organizing efforts at organizations like Leaders Igniting Transformation, JOLT Texas, and the Ohio Student Association develop nimble movement leaders year-round while activating voters on- and offline. Meanwhile, national organizations such as the Alliance for Youth Organizing provide training on advocacy and technical assistance on finance and operational support to these state and local organizations. Organizations such as NextGen America have built networks of social media influencers to share salient information with a large audience of Gen Z voters. Sustaining this elevated youth turnout since 2018 requires a healthy ecosystem of youth organizations capable of developing leaders and activating new voters in person and online.



HDF grantee Alliance for Youth Organizing's partner, Engage Miami, registering voters.

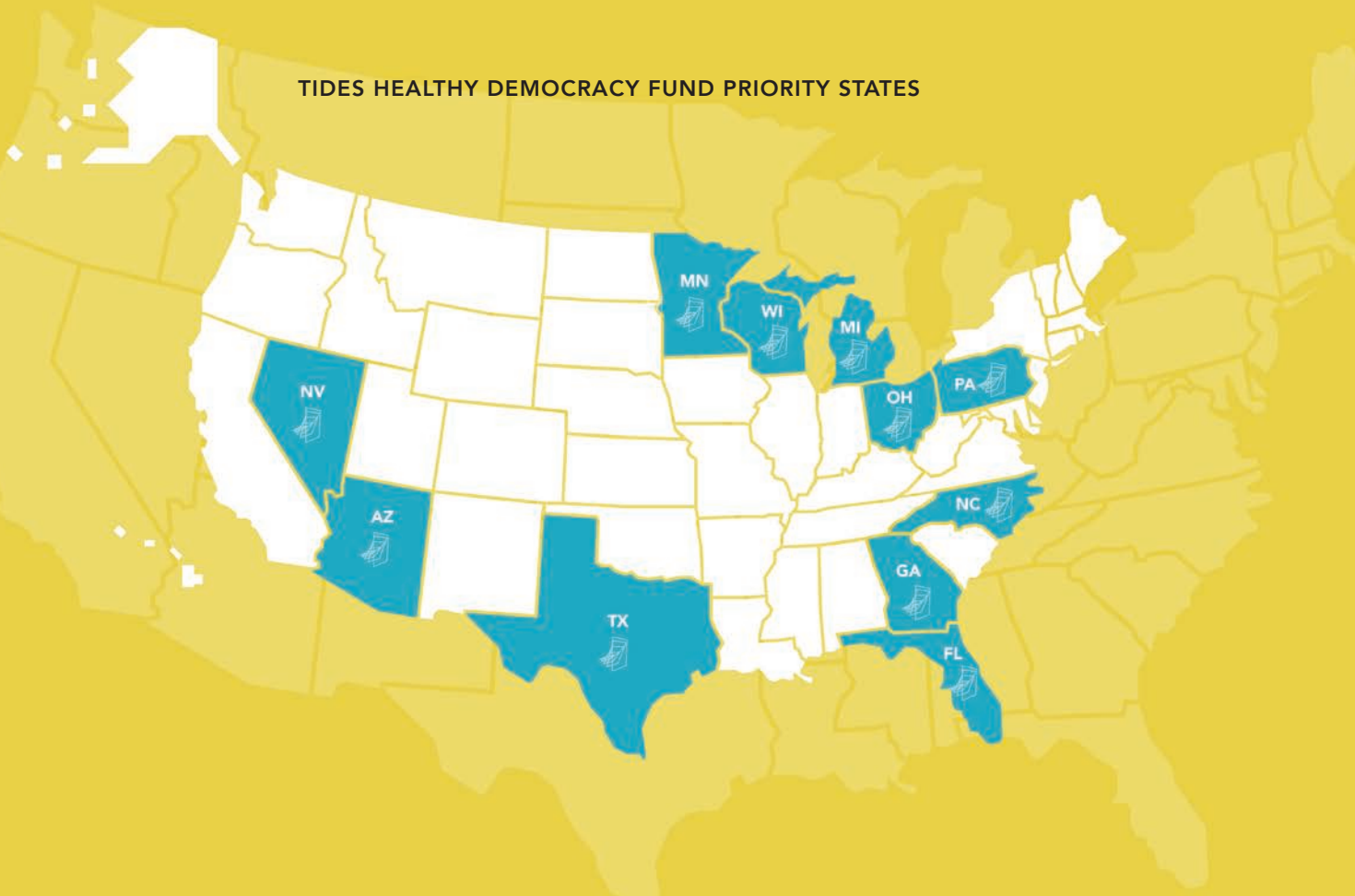
Priority States

HDF is focused on opportunities for power building in states with rising numbers of people of color, young people, and low-income people. HDF prioritizes 11 states where a rising majority of people of color, youth, and economically disadvantaged people face barriers to exercising their democratic voice.

HDF prioritizes funding multi-issue, civic engagement organizations that are community-led and community-driven, focusing on states where there are opportunities for BIPOC-led, local groups to:

- / Protect election integrity and help dismantle voter suppression
- / Build trust, connection, and ongoing engagement with voters of color and young voters
- / Advocate on issues that build community power and improve people's lives
- / Build and sustain local leadership and community capacity for the long haul
- / Protect election integrity and help dismantle voter suppression
- / Create momentum and break down polarization and disinformation for stronger pro-voter policies

TIDES HEALTHY DEMOCRACY FUND PRIORITY STATES



Grantee Highlights

The Healthy Democracy Fund is proud to support state and local organizations that use year-round voter engagement, policy advocacy, and base-building to shift power in their communities.

TakeAction Minnesota

TakeAction Minnesota is a statewide, multiracial grassroots organization advancing justice and equity through organizing, policy, and campaigns, with offices in St. Paul, Duluth, and St. Cloud. Their deep canvassing model has created a formidable bloc of voters capable of electing legislative champions and holding elected officials accountable to campaign trail promises. TakeAction Minnesota members and allies have been organizing to end Minnesota's disenfranchisement of people on probation and parole since 2015. This year, Minnesota's governor signed the Restore the Vote bill into law, re-enfranchising more than 55,000 people unfairly stripped of their most basic voice, their vote in our democracy.



Wisconsin Conservation Voices - Native Vote

The Native Vote program of Wisconsin Conservation Voices works to combat historic voter disenfranchisement and contemporary barriers to voting through voter registration, education, and voting rights advocacy. Native Vote partners with tribal governments, community leaders, and others, and has successfully increased voter participation in Native communities. In 2023, HDF supported Native Vote to educate voters ahead of the historic Supreme Court election.





Grantee Highlights, continued



One Pennsylvania

OnePA is a multiracial, intergenerational, and multi-issue membership organization, made up of workers, students, parents, seniors, people with disabilities, and retirees excited to learn, collaborate, and build power together. This year, OnePA is building momentum by mobilizing voters for the Philadelphia mayor's race, Pittsburgh district attorney's race, and an open seat on the state Supreme Court. The state Supreme Court has settled high-profile election-related lawsuits, including attempts to gerrymander congressional districts and efforts to block certification of the 2020 presidential election. OnePA is also registering more than 10,000 new voters primarily in working class Black neighborhoods, and developing community leaders to fight for worker rights, fair housing, and environmental justice.



Rural Arizona Engagement

RAZE advances civic education, engagement opportunities, and voter registration in rural communities in Arizona. In 2022, RAZE's work to meet the unique challenges of rural voters contributed to higher statewide turnout than in 2018. Losing a polling location can force some rural voters to travel 50 miles to vote, and poll worker recruitment is challenging in sparsely populated areas. Political polarization and social isolation have made rural Arizona into "ground zero" for mis- and disinformation campaigns, on critical race theory, election denial, and other conspiracies. To overcome these challenges, RAZE is getting a running start on the 2024 election cycle by training trusted leaders, recruiting poll workers early, and holding house meetings and town halls on local issues.



Poder Latinx

Poder Latinx is a multistate civic and social justice organization rooted in Florida, Georgia, Arizona, and Washington dedicated to building and strengthening the political power of the Latinx community to win on economic, environmental, and immigrant justice. In 2023, Poder Latinx is building the Latinx electorate through citizenship and voter registration programs, advancing advocacy campaigns through federal legislation implementation programs, and developing the next generation of civic leaders through their civic empowerment programs to set them up for a robust 2024 voter engagement campaign.

Thank you.

Tides Foundation's Healthy Democracy Fund works 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. Your generous partnership supports the ongoing work to foster a healthier, more inclusive, and more representative democracy. We thank you.



About Tides

Tides is a nonprofit and philanthropic organization dedicated to advancing social justice. We work across the social sector to shift power to leaders, communities of color, and other historically excluded groups who face systemic barriers. Applying our equity-centered lens and leveraging our vast network of changemakers, we work to strengthen the impact of our partners by offering services like fiscal sponsorship, donor advised funds, impact investing, and grantmaking.

TakeAction Minnesota

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