



SHIFTING POWER TO COMMUNITY LEADERS

Building a Healthy Democracy





“It’s time to believe again. It’s time to believe the heart and soul of this democracy can live. With every breath we have, while we still have time, together let’s rise up and do more to build a true one America that works for all of us.”

— REV. DR. WILLIAM J. BARBER II, NATIONAL NAACP BOARD OF DIRECTORS, PRESIDENT & SR. LECTURER OF REPAIRERS OF THE BREACH

What it Takes to Build a Healthy Democracy

A healthy democracy demands and embraces full participation.

This fundamental principle is at the core of our work. At Tides, we strive to build a more inclusive democracy by shifting power to frontline leaders and communities that are systematically prevented from fully participating in the institutions that direct the future of the country.

What It Takes:

- Fighting voter suppression
- Increasing voter participation
- Community organizing
- Inclusive outreach

Fighting Voter Suppression



There's a long history of voter suppression in the U.S., especially in communities of color.

The undeniable surge at the polls in 2020 inspired a wave of anti-democratic proposals. Since then, more than 2,000 laws concerning voting and elections — including who can vote, when and where to vote, and what's required to vote — have been considered across the country. While some failed, **19 states have passed laws** that make it more difficult to vote.

Many of the laws that restrict voting are in states where the non-white voting participation is steadily increasing. And nationwide, **non-white voters have accounted** for more than three-quarters of the total U.S. electorate growth since the 2000 election.

In many states there is an ongoing effort to put in place legislators who aim to control the voting population — making it more difficult for communities of color, young voters, low-income communities, and other groups that demonstrated burgeoning political power to vote by passing laws to restrict participation including:

- › Voter photo ID laws
- › Restricting early voting
- › Voter-roll purges
- › District gerrymandering

Fighting Voter Suppression

Black Voters Matter Capacity Building Institute

Black Voters Matter Capacity Building Institute (BVM), was founded by Cliff Albright and LaTosha Brown in 2016 with a few thousand dollars raised by parents at a local school. It has since developed into a multistate network facilitating voter registration, advocacy, and organizing, with the goal of harnessing and directing the power of Black communities to determine their destiny. But as BVM has grown, so have its needs since voter suppression efforts — both legal and unsanctioned — have intensified.

“We are literally changing our strategies, at a minimum, on a weekly basis — but really on a daily basis — as we’re seeing new threats.”

— CLIFF ALBRIGHT | CO-FOUNDER, BLACK VOTERS MATTER CAPACITY BUILDING INSTITUTE

In 2021 BVM organized the Freedom Ride for Voting Rights tour across the South to honor the 1960s rides and to engage Black voters as they face the numerous proposals to restrict voting.

“We’ve had to double down on the amount of education and awareness raising that we’re doing,” says Albright. “And along with that, it’s the same stuff that we have to do in terms of talking about the issues that are at stake.”

To combat the shifting efforts to prevent Black communities from voting, Albright stresses that BVM has had to be nimble: “Flexibility is key, and Tides has been a big help in that.”

POOLED FUNDING INITIATIVES

Tides Foundation pooled grantmaking initiatives provide funders a means to amplify their impact and support leaders like Cliff Albright and LaTosha Brown on the front lines of change. Voting rights and voter engagement focused funds like the **Healthy Democracy Fund** aim to shift power through trust-based, unrestricted grantmaking in and out of election cycles.



Increasing Voter Participation

“Why does it matter? Nothing changes.” That’s a common sentiment expressed by people who don’t vote.

A quarter of voters in the 2020 presidential election had not voted in 2016. Despite record turnout, there is a persistent gap between white and non-white voter participation that has remained relatively unchanged in the last six presidential elections. In 2020, 70.9 percent of white voters cast ballots compared with only **58.4 percent of non-white voters** — a disparity that will worsen with new restrictive voting laws.

Regardless of issue, from climate change to reproductive rights, full voter participation is crucial to building a representative democracy that tackles issues affecting the daily lives of everyone, not the chosen few. Sustained voter participation requires fighting against ongoing efforts to restrict voting access and supporting community-based organizations and leaders for the long haul.

Building Voter Participation

Vote Early Day

Founded in 2020 by MTV, Vote Early Day is a day of celebration and activation to help Americans vote early. Vote Early Day is a movement of media companies, businesses, nonprofits, election administrators, and creatives, as Bryce Bennett, project director for Vote Early Day, describes them, working to ensure that all Americans have the ability to cast their ballot ahead of Election Day.

“Vote Early Day is a fun, inviting, and engaging event that breaks through the noise.”

— BRYCE BENNETT | PROJECT DIRECTOR, VOTE EARLY DAY

“Voter disinformation and constantly changing election laws stop people from having a chance to share their voice in our democracy. When people vote early, they can overcome those barriers, but when they wait until the last minute, sometimes they don’t.”

Why is early voting so important? Quite simply, it expands access to the democratic process. During the 2020 election, **69 percent of voters nationwide** cast their ballot by mail and/or before Election Day. And **studies** and data have shown that early voting and weekend voting expand access for Black Americans, particularly in the South, and are favored both by **Latinos and Asian-Americans**. As much as Vote Early Day is a celebration of voting, it’s also about information and practical assistance. As Bennett says, Vote Early Day’s mission is to do “everything we can to lower the barrier for entry to our democracy, to make sure that more people feel welcomed into it and eager to cast their ballot because of it.”

FISCALLY SPONSORED PROJECT

As a fiscal sponsor to Vote Early Day and more than 130 projects, Tides Center helps organizations bring their visions to life. Fiscal sponsorship extends 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status while providing operational expertise and the means to receive tax-deductible philanthropic gifts.



Community Organizing

Power begins at the state and local level.

Despite the 2020 election having the **highest voter turnout** of the 21st century, democratic participation is often sporadic, pegged to the four-year cycle of the presidential elections, even though municipal and state elections have arguably more impact on our lives.

For example, in two of the country's largest cities, New York and Los Angeles, the dropoff in voting from national to local elections was significant. In 2021, 21 percent of New York's electorate voted in the mayoral election compared to 55 percent in the national elections in 2020.

In Los Angeles, 70 percent voted in 2020, but participation fell to 30 percent in the mayoral election in early 2022. In addition, in local elections, non-white voters are often under-represented.

At Tides, we support leaders on the front lines and seek to build community power on the issues and elections their communities care about. Whether it means going door to door, closing the digital divide through multi-language texting, or creating neighbor-to-neighbor phone banks, community leaders are the experts and the key to effective community organizing. That's why investing in leadership development at the local level is so critical.

Community Organizing

The Movement Voter Fund

The Movement Voter Fund (MVF) supports nonprofit and community-based organizations across the country with voter engagement, specifically those that work to build power in BIPOC, immigrant, LGBTQ+, youth, student, working class, rural, and other communities. The fund is a nonprofit affiliate of the Movement Voter Project.

“The support of Tides enabled us to do the c3 parts of civic engagement: supporting nonprofit and community-based organizations across the country with voter engagement.”

— DARRELL TUCCI | VICE PRESIDENT OF DEVELOPMENT, THE MOVEMENT VOTER FUND

The model is built on partnerships with donors who want advice on how to invest in grassroots organizing and capacity building, and to support grassroots groups with deep organizing and civic engagement. A coalition of organizations MVF funded played a pivotal role in organizing around reproductive justice and helped deliver the surprise vote in August to keep abortion legal in Kansas. Tides’ Collective Action Fund vehicle allows MVP to move nimbly and quickly in service of grassroots partners.

“We’re looking to build long-lasting power in low-income communities and communities of color all over the country and increase the amount of people voting,” says Tucci. MVF’s efforts aim to advance social and racial equity, economic fairness, and environmental sustainability in the U.S. to strengthen democracy.

FUND MANAGEMENT & GRANTMAKING

Tides Foundation supports social change leaders like the Movement Voter Fund with comprehensive fund management and grantmaking programs, transforming innovative ideas into strategic, highly impactful philanthropy. Additionally, a number of Tides donor partners have chosen to support the Movement Voter Fund from their Tides donor advised funds.



Inclusive Outreach

This is a critical moment for the future of the United States.

Centuries of systemic racism and classism have created disenfranchised communities while politicians stoke divides across race and class for personal gain. This has never been more true than in recent years. But if our democracy is to meet its full potential, the current situation cannot continue. Across the country organizations are banding together to bridge superficial divides, break free of these debilitating cycles, and create enduring change.

At Tides, we are investing in anti-racist organizations and BIPOC-led organizations that are building the power of disenfranchised communities across race and leading the way to inclusive democracy. Our vision is to build a powerful multiracial movement connected by shared values and issues that impact us all.

WHAT IT TAKES

Inclusive Outreach

Rural Civic Engagement Grantmaking Program

The challenges facing rural America have been escalating for more than 40 years; yet, they have been largely ignored. Among them are lack of access to quality healthcare and education, corporate disinvestment, wealth inequality, infrastructure decline, environmental degradation, and political dysfunction.

While many of these issues overlap with those facing urban communities in the Midwest and the South, the construct of an “urban-rural divide” has often been used to keep these under-resourced communities from uniting in common cause. Tides Rural Civic Engagement grantmaking program is rooted in local communities and in developing local leaders who can help solve the problems that are deeply felt by the people who live there, and who can bridge divides both regional and racial as rural communities are more diverse than they are often portrayed: **24 percent** of rural residents are people of color.

Our work focuses on a set of states where powerfully organized rural communities have the potential to change outcomes that impact people’s lives, and where democracy is under threat. The initiative prioritizes social justice by investing in efforts led by and centered in rural BIPOC communities and by supporting programs that build multiracial working-class movements.

FUND MANAGEMENT
& GRANTMAKING

Through donor advised funds, Tides Foundation helps donor partners create targeted grantmaking strategies like the Rural Civic Engagement grantmaking program. Dedicated philanthropy advisors provide experience, support, and a connection to a broad social impact network, transforming innovative ideas into strategic, highly impactful philanthropy.



Tides Invests Beyond the Boom & Bust

A thriving democracy requires sustained civic engagement.

The second Tuesday of November in even years is not the only touchpoint — it requires daily action in communities, local and large. Success for democracy organizations requires persistent organizing and outreach every day of every year, a commitment that's difficult to sustain during the dramatic drop-off in funding following heated elections. Without continuous funding, organizations often have to lay off staff and ramp down operations, ultimately losing savvy leaders and critical momentum.

That's why Tides is working to fill in those gaps and support frontline groups as they have the knowledge and know-how to build local leadership and create the long-term results necessary for true movement building.

Moving beyond the boom and bust of election year funding can ensure that our democracy does not wither, but has the nourishment to continue to bloom, reaching its full vibrant potential.

Democracy & Civic Engagement Work at Tides

960+

Grants out
YTD Q3 2022

\$10M

Rural Civic Engagement Program
YTD Q3 2022

\$16M+

Healthy Democracy Fund
Total granted as of Q3 2022

\$112M+

Total granted
YTD Q3 2022

> Fiscally
Sponsored
Projects

> Fund
Management
& Grantmaking

> Strategic
Consulting
Services

> Impact
Investing

> Pooled Funding
Initiatives

WHAT WE DO

Healthy Democracy Fund

As a grantmaking initiative, the Healthy Democracy Fund is more than a pooled fund. We are a partnership of donors, professional program strategists, and movement leaders all committed to creating a healthier, more inclusive democracy. With expert, community-informed management and a focus on strengthening organizations and movements for the long haul — in and out of election cycles —

the Healthy Democracy Fund is a key partner in building long-term power for marginalized and underrepresented communities.

Through HDF, we support 501(c)(3) public charities, fiscally sponsored projects and 501(c)(4) social welfare organizations for their charitable activities, which increases the impact of your charitable dollars. Unlike many DAF providers or community foundations, we don't shy away from funding nonpartisan voter registration, voter turnout, and policy advocacy. Through our Collective Action Fund model, we embrace funding of nonpartisan election work, ballot initiatives, and direct and indirect lobbying. We work closely with our 501(c)(4) partner Tides Advocacy. We embrace risk and creative problem-solving, all in service of building the power and voice of marginalized communities.

Donate to Tides Healthy Democracy Fund
donatenow.networkforgood.org/tidesfoundation

\$16M+

Total granted as of Q3 2022

84

Grantee organizations

The Healthy Democracy Fund is a Tides Foundation grantmaking initiative committed to fostering a more inclusive democracy and shifting power to historically underrepresented communities.



Healthy Democracy Fund grantee Ohio Organizing Collaborative's mission is to organize Ohioans and build transformative power organizations for racial, social, and economic justice.



Partner with Us

If you're a donor who craves a flexible and strategic partner for your democracy grantmaking, or you're a movement leader needing infrastructure support and fiscal sponsorship, consider becoming a Tides partner.

tides.org/partner-with-tides