Dear Reader,

When the WA Democracy Hub Advisory Board and I started on the journey to create a long-term agenda for democracy reform, we quickly realized we needed more information about what is happening and how issues impact everyday Washingtonians. We knew that there were dozens of organizations working on aspects of our democracy, we knew trends like voter turnout and campaign spending, and we were already involved in strategies to address significant issues like lack of people of color in elected office. But, how do we connect facts, feelings, issues, and efforts to create a larger narrative about our democracy? How do we reveal a path to a healthy democracy, with connected strategies that build upon each other for a truly transformed democracy?

These questions led us to the Democracy Index. The Democracy Index is part landscape analysis and part strategic planning document made from a series of crowdsourced questions, answers, and recommendations for a new democracy. In the pages ahead, you will see the collective thoughts, priorities, and ideas of dozens of Washington’s residents, nonprofit organizers, and community leaders. Over the course of two years, we gathered the perspectives of 3,300 community members, 90 nonprofit leaders, and close to 75 nonprofit organizations. We spent months pouring over hundreds of pages of data and feedback to create a coherent narrative and path for reform.

This analysis covers a lot - from our judiciary and the intricacies of recusal rules to our voting systems and how different voting machines and software operate throughout our state. Though you’ll see values championed throughout this report, our data covers five main pillars of democracy: elections administration, electoral systems, voting rights, the judiciary, and campaign finance systems. But, this report does not cover every aspect of our democracy. We only answered the questions that were asked, and recommendations were isolated to the data and feedback that was available. Peppered throughout this analysis, we’ve noted where the data falls short or is missing, and where we wished we had more information.

With a mixture of visual data and values-based narrative, we hope this Index will be a valuable compilation of knowledge to inform new and strategic organizing efforts. Whether you are an individual, organization, or a grassroots group who wants to see a healthy democracy in Washington State, we invite you to read what we’re seeing, consider our recommendations, and join with us in our shared journey to build a new democracy.

Sincerely,

Liz Dupee, JD
Director
WA Democracy Hub
The Healthy Democracy Index (the Index) is a first-of-its-kind landscape analysis of our democracy, conducted by the WA Democracy Hub. The Index assesses the health of democracy and government across Washington, by county, measuring the performance of elections and elected leaders to the principles of a healthy democracy created by our movement organizations. It serves as a critical tool to assess the need for reform, communicate that need to stakeholders, and build shared strategy among advocacy groups to coordinate reform efforts.

The following analysis combines original and existing research with thoughts and perceptions of 3,300 Washingtonians surveyed to assess our democracy against our 4Es of Democracy values framework. Is our democracy healthy? If not, what do we need to get us there? Most importantly, what are Washingtonians saying about what they see? The Healthy Democracy Index answers these questions with evidence-based conclusions and recommendations for shared strategy and ongoing tracking of movement priorities.

INDEX STRUCTURE & WHAT TO EXPECT

The Index re-enforces our foundation around shared values instead of issues and is structured to reflect the interconnected nature of our everyday work. We infused this data-heavy report with emotional and aspirational values to illustrate the complexity of issues with our democracy and how they can effortlessly connect. It is our vision that readers will see themselves and their work reflected in the values to better connect across siloed work efforts.

Each data point within the values are coded.

- Thumbs up means things are going well.
- Thumbs down means more work or attention is needed in that area.
- The okay symbol means just that - the result is neutral or simply okay.

THE 4 E’S OF DEMOCRACY

Our Values Framework

We created a crowdsourced values framework for this report through a two-month survey process. Movement members were given three optional value sets with guided questions and space for open feedback. Twenty-five people responded with wide-ranging ideas for our values. The 4Es of Democracy serve as a framework to view individual democracy efforts in a broader context and shape the rest of the Index. We hope you’ll see your work and passions in the following list of values.

OUR DEMOCRACY SHOULD BE:

EQUALLY REPRESENTATIVE

Elected officials are fully reflective of and responsive to our communities. Our elected representatives and government should work for the districts and communities they represent. Each vote should be counted equally, and each representative should be elected fairly and as a result of the will of the people. These values form the very basis of our democracy.

EMPOWERING

People actively exercise their civic duties including and beyond voting; like registering, voting and serving for jury duty. People feel they impact policy change and have the confidence that our voices eclipse the needs of wealthy special interests. The responsibility must be on our government and elected leaders to foster that confidence through the passage of laws, programs, and systems that seek to equalize the power between powerful, wealthy interests and everyday residents. This value defines why people choose to participate in our democracy.

EQUITABLE

All branches of government are just, fair, and prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized communities. Institutions and laws are trusted as fairly created and implemented. Our laws create shared economic opportunity and provide paths to a truly equal society. This includes looking at data with an equity lens to close all current gaps on voter registration, voter turnout, elected representation, and equal access to public institutions and influence. This value clarifies how our system of democracy should function for “we the people” to truly become a reality.

EXPANSIVE

Democratic values are strong and promoted in all forms, functions, and systems of public life. Democracy is viewed beyond the act of voting, but in the democratic practice and experience within our public institutions. We celebrate democracy, inclusion, and participation through respectful debate, listening sessions, and participatory decision-making work, which betters not only our government but our society as a whole. Infusing these values into all walks of life fosters understanding, dialogue, and solutions that take into account the needs of the majority of people impacted. This value cements our commitment to a thriving and active democracy.
### Healthy Democracy Index Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Spring - Fall</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>24 individuals were asked:</td>
<td>76 questions collected</td>
<td>3 research groups enlisted</td>
<td>3,300 Washington residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 individuals were asked:</td>
<td>Center for Tech &amp; Civic Life</td>
<td>Washington Community Action Network</td>
<td>in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>deleted duplicates to make 56 measures of a healthy democracy</td>
<td>179 zip codes surveyed</td>
<td>3,300 Washington residents</td>
<td>released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>90 movement members and activists analyzed results and asked:</td>
<td>19 hours of feedback sessions hosted by the Hub</td>
<td>5 hours of final feedback, drafting concluded</td>
<td>Index Released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90 movement members and activists analyzed results and asked:</td>
<td>19 hours of feedback sessions hosted by the Hub</td>
<td>5 hours of final feedback, drafting concluded</td>
<td>Index Released</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Questions:**
- What do you need to know to determine whether democracy is healthy?
- What facts do you need to make recommendations about our democracy?

**Results:**
- 3,300 Washington residents surveyed in 179 zip codes
- 56 measures of a healthy democracy

**Feedback Sessions:**
- 19 hours of feedback sessions hosted by the Hub
- 5 hours of final feedback, drafting concluded

**Champions:**
- Who are or should be champions of this work?
The Index is truly a community built and crowdsourced research project.

Values: Our values frame around the 4E’s of Democracy – equal representation, empowerment, equity, and expansion – were created through a process of surveying, ranking, and synthesizing input from over 25 movement members.

METHODOLOGY & DATA LIMITATIONS

Indicators: Likewise, we worked diligently with a team of over 30 Hub leaders to create the indicators for a healthy democracy, categorized into five pillars:
1) Elections administration
2) Electoral systems
3) Voting rights and access
4) Campaign finance systems
5) The judiciary

Qualitative Research: The project includes perceptions and themes gathered from 3,300 Washingtonians surveyed in person by experienced canvassers. Participants were of voting age (18+ years old), polled through door-to-door contact in 179 zip codes, largely in the Greater Seattle and Vancouver areas.

Results: The results were researched and verified by project researchers and Democracy Hub staff with feedback from 90+ movement members to inform our final analysis.

Campaign Finance Data: is limited to a set of “designated” offices, those holding office from legislative district through statewide office. We do not have finance data for local, municipal offices. Designated Offices are State Representative, State Senator, Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Auditor, Treasurer, Insurance Commissioner, Public Lands Commissioner, Superintendent of Schools, and State Supreme Court Justice.

Limited Access to Raw Data: We used existing data from a number of sources to supplement or add to original research but do not have access to the raw data used to compile those existing data sets. Additionally, the lack of data on undocumented immigrant populations and incomplete information about those with felonies limit our analysis of ineligible voters.

Qualitative Data: Through the door-to-door survey process, certain communities are over sampled while others are undersampled. While age and income are evenly distributed, it’s hard, if not impossible, to extrapolate what certain ethnic groups feel about our democracy.

The choice to go door-to-door instead of targeting certain communities led to results that are representative of age and income, but not ethnicity. We decided to go door-to-door because we wanted the most objective results from typical neighborhoods in the state. In sum, the survey data provides great insight into how a broad age and income range of Washingtonians feel about our democracy.

Demographic Data: Our demographic analysis of certain portions of the report are limited due to lack of information. We have noted where information is lacking, and where applicable, we have made recommendations to create available demographic data.
Major themes centering trust, money’s influence, the judiciary, and reflective democracy emerged throughout our research. Our in-person survey showed deep mistrust in our courts and the voter’s ability to create policy change. Those surveyed seek fairness and structural change in our government over everything else. A majority don’t see themselves reflected in their candidates or elected officials, but many still vote because they understand its value and importance - even in this political atmosphere where money appears to rule who runs, who is elected, and who succeeds in office.

The quantitative measures reinforce a lot of these feelings of distrust, too. For example, most itemized contributions to campaigns and candidates were over $500 in 2016, and over two-thirds of our state’s voting technology is not capable of the structural changes Washingtonians seek. While our democracy has long been a model for other states, and our newest set of voting reforms puts WA at the forefront of voting access WA at the forefront of voting access - there is still significant work to be done in distinct areas to increase goodwill and civic participation, raise awareness of our judiciary, and open more avenues for candidates of color to be supported and win elected offices.

On the positive end, our ballot initiative process is still highly rated with those surveyed. Folks know that voting is a right, and more often than not, understand their ballots when they are sent to them. Quantitative measures show that white women have achieved parity in elected office, and the more qualified judicial candidate wins elections 90% of the time. We see that folks find it easy to register, but desire ways to make it less complicated to vote, and often use a voter’s guide to make informed decisions. Those surveyed vote more often than not, and even though they mostly believe money controls elections in the state, they know their vote still matters.

While Washington State is leaps and bounds ahead of other states in some areas of democracy, we still have work to do to increase reflective representation, ensure the impartiality of our courts, and open avenues to build trust among voters. With a long-term approach that includes grassroots organizing, education, and advocacy at all levels of government, we can build a healthy and truly representative democracy.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The following themes arose from our research and feedback sessions with movement members. They form the backbone of our work in the coming years.

**MAJOR THEMES**

**DISTRUST IN GOVERNMENT**
Qualitative data points to strong levels of distrust in the political process, electoral systems, and a hunger for structural reform. The quantitative data backs this up with voter turnout that decreases with income, high average political contributions, and low levels of diversity in all three branches of our government. By creating more avenues to affect policy beyond the vote, increasing civic education, and increasing opportunities for diverse candidates to win elected office - we can change that. Because, to inspire trust in government, we must build a trustworthy government.

**DISTRUST IN OUR VOTING SYSTEMS AND POLITICKING**
Almost two thirds of those polled are in favor of term limits and paid postage on ballots, don’t see a party that supports their ideals and identities, and wouldn’t know how to run for office if they wanted to. This points to a strong desire for fundamental shifts in our democracy and political process. From the way we recruit candidates, to the way we vote and appoint leaders, we must examine each facet of our democracy and change it appropriately to open doors for every person to get connected and meaningfully participate.

**UNFAIR COURTS**
Two-thirds of individuals polled do not know whether, or do not think, their judges and prosecutors are reflective of their communities. Combined with legislative and nonprofit attempts to infuse partisanship in our courts, and a lack of groups working to defend our courts, we risk decreasing the independence and fairness of our courts. Through creation of a strong advocacy base to watch our courts, protections against self-interest, and explorations of different ways to recruit and seat judges, we can protect our courts from the forces seeking to make them less fair and independent.

**CORROSIVE INFLUENCE OF MONEY IN POLITICS**
Over and over again, our data points to money as a factor in the low trust and hunger for change in our democracy. Those polled overwhelmingly believe their vote matters less than a wealthy person’s, that money controls elections their states, and they do not believe they can raise money to run for office. Paired with high average political contributions, million dollar races for initiatives and offices up and down the ballot, it is apparent that money in our political system is corroding the public’s trust and sense of hope. By creating avenues to equalize money’s impact on the campaign process, and by taking a hard look at how to decrease the influence of independent expenditures, we can increase trust and work to level the playing field in our campaign finance field.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A HEALTHY DEMOCRACY

The following recommendations arose from our feedback sessions. While this list covers many facets of our democracy, it does not list all possible strategies or policies. Rather, the following list represents priorities that would increase trust and respond to specific issues revealed through our shared analysis.

Elected officials are fully reflective of and responsive to our communities. Our elected representatives and government should work for the districts and communities they represent. Each vote should be counted equally, and each representative should be elected fairly and as a result of the will of the people. These values form the very basis of our democracy.

FOR AN EQUALLY REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Majority/Minority Districts: An electoral district where the majority of the electorate are people of color. Proponents of this type of district contend that communities of color are usually communities of similar interests, and thus, would elect candidates that amplify their needs and solve their problems. Those against argue that creation of these districts is gerrymandering and can act to consolidate a single type of vote, and therefore, dilute that vote in other nearby jurisdictions. We recommend the creation of these districts because they amplify traditionally marginalized voices and increase reflective democracy.

Proportional Representation: A type of electoral system where seats are gained in a legislative body according to the number of people who vote for them.

Districted Elections: A structure for elections that divides municipalities, counties, and states into subdivisions, so people elect representatives to serve a smaller part of the jurisdiction as part of a larger legislative body. Districted elections allow distinct communities to elect representatives who come from their communities and, thus, know and care about their issues. Judges often require districted elections after Voting Rights Act challenges because they often result in more reflective candidates than at-large districts.

Judicial election reform: New policies, rules, and changes to our judicial election system that would increase its fairness, independence, and improve its responsiveness to the community and the rule of law.

Improve Recusal Rules: Policies, norms, and practices that cause or incentivize a judge to remove themselves, or be removed, from hearing a case. We recommend creating more stringent penalties for judges ruling in their self-interest and methods for the public to hold judges accountable for conflicts of interest.

Bar Ratings & Judicial Candidate Questionnaires: Bar associations analyze the past decisions, actions, and other aspects of judicial performance and give numerical or alphabet grades to candidates for judicial office. When available and accessible, voters can use bar ratings to decide whether to support a judicial candidate for office based on performance.
FOR AN EMPOWERING DEMOCRACY

**Alternative Voting Systems:** different structural and procedural methods to cast individual ballots, such as ranked choice voting, approval voting, and proportional representation. We recommend further research about various voting systems, their impact on communities of color and women, and rates of participation in new voting systems.

**Prepaid Postage:** In Washington, we have mail-in ballots. Prepaid postage would add a stamp or another form of state-subsidized postage symbol to each ballot. In theory, this would remove the financial cost associated with voting and remove the burden of locating a stamp, thereby allowing more people to vote and increasing voter turnout.

**Candidate Recruitment and Training:** Groups, organizations, and programs to encourage potential candidates to run for office, to educate candidates on the political process, and to support newly elected officials in what to expect in their first years in office. We recommend an intentional focus on recruitment and training in communities of color, particularly with women of color.

**Full Rights Restoration:** Laws lifted or made to allow all people eligible to vote, regardless of their interaction with the criminal justice system. In Washington, a constitutional amendment is needed to overturn this long-standing disenfranchisement.

---

People actively exercise their civic duties including and beyond voting; like registering, voting and serving for jury duty. People feel they impact policy change and have the confidence that our voices eclipse the needs of wealthy special interests. The responsibility must be on our government and elected leaders to foster that confidence through the passage of laws, programs, and systems that seek to equalize the power between powerful, wealthy interests and everyday residents. This value defines why people choose to participate in our democracy.
FOR AN EQUITABLE DEMOCRACY

Candidate Recruitment and Training: Groups, organizations, and programs to encourage potential candidates to run for office, to educate candidates on the political process, and to support newly elected officials in what to expect in their first years in office. We recommend an intentional focus on recruitment and training in communities of color, particularly with women of color.

Prepaid Postage on ballots: In Washington, we have mail-in ballots. Prepaid postage would add a stamp or another form of state-subsidized postage symbol to each ballot. In theory, this would remove the financial cost associated with voting and remove the burden of locating a stamp, thereby allowing more people to vote and increasing voter turnout.

Measurement of Candidate and Campaign Demographics: A program or group that would actively count the ethnicity, income, and other variables about elected officials and campaign consultants. Measuring candidate and campaign consultant demographics is helpful to understand who is representing us and which communities are left out of elections and campaigning.

Increasing Translated Voter Materials: Voter information pamphlets, ballots, dropboxes, and other documents used for voting should be translated into as many languages as possible to make sure all voters have the requisite information in languages they understand. We recommend a standard advocated for by groups around the country - if there are more than 7,500 individuals or 3% of the population that speaks a language that is not English, voting materials ought to be translated into that language.
FOR AN EXPANSIVE DEMOCRACY:

Small donor public financing: A system of rules, laws, and practices that create a state or locally funded method for residents to support candidates for elected office financially. Enacting policies such as Democracy Vouchers and public matching systems help to increase the community’s power in choosing who is on their ballot.

Participatory budget & lawmaking: A method of decision-making where all people included provide input into the ultimate decision. For example, a participatory lawmaking program in Ireland allows citizens to submit proposals to become law. People vote on those proposals, and the top voted laws become law. Participatory decision making could be used to make law, decide a budget, criminal justice and sentencing, and other areas where many voices are better than a few.

Democratic values are strong and promoted in all forms, functions, and systems of public life. Democracy is viewed beyond the act of voting, but in the democratic practice and experience within our public institutions. We celebrate democracy, inclusion, and participation through respectful debate, listening sessions, and participatory decision-making work, which betters not only our government but our society as a whole. Infusing these values into all walks of life fosters understanding, dialogue, and solutions that take into account the needs of the majority of people impacted. This value cements our commitment to a thriving and active democracy.
QUAL REPRESENTATION
Elected officials are fully reflective of and responsive to our communities. Our elected representatives and government should work for the districts and communities they represent. Each vote should be counted equally, and each representative should be elected fairly and as a result of the will of the people.

Threats to equal representation arise:
- when elected leaders are out of touch with their constituencies
- when elected leaders aren’t diverse
- when districts are drawn to give an advantage to one group over another
- when our voting systems don’t make room for innovations that increase opportunities for a diverse candidate base
- when groups are intentionally excluded from the vote
- when ballots are designed in misleading or confusing ways

**WHAT WE KNOW**

- Low residual vote rate
- Over half of survey respondents have never spoken to an elected official about a legal or policy issue
- Low levels of competition
- A large number of at-large positions
- Lack of structural capacity to establish new voting methods
- Big gaps in knowledge and organizing around our courts

**WHAT WE DON’T KNOW**

- How diverse our pipeline of candidates and elected representatives are compared to the overall population
- How many people are excluded from the right to vote due to undocumented status
- How many ballots are rejected - from where, and whether patterns emerge in the data in what geographies, or whether patterns exist

Our data revealed low levels of competition and diversity in elected office, large numbers of at-large elected positions, lack of infrastructure to establish new voting methods, and big gaps in knowledge and organizing around our courts. The data contained in this section is crucial because it influences representation and whether people can and want to vote, run, and participate in the electoral process.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EQUALLY REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY**

**Majority/Marginalized Districts:** An electoral district where the majority of the electorate are people of color (POC). Proponents of this type of district contend that communities of color are usually communities of similar interests, and thus, would elect candidates that amplify their needs and solve their problems. Those against argue that creation of these districts is gerrymandering and can act to consolidate a single type of vote, and therefore, dilute that vote in other nearby jurisdiction. We recommend the creation of these districts because they amplify traditionally marginalized voices and increase reflective democracy.

**Proportional Representation:** A type of electoral system where seats are gained in a legislative body according to the number of people who vote for them.

**Districted Elections:** A structure for elections that divides municipalities, counties, and states into subdivisions, so people elect representatives to serve a smaller part of the jurisdiction as part of a larger legislative body. Districted elections allow distinct communities to elect representatives who come from their communities and, thus, know and care about their issues. Judges often require districted elections after Voting Rights Act challenges because they often result in more reflective candidates than at-large districts.

**Judicial Election Reform:** New policies, rules, and changes to our judicial election system that would increase its fairness, independence, and increase its responsiveness to the community and the rule of law.

**Improve Recusal Rules:** Policies, norms, and practices that cause or incentivize a judge to remove themselves, or be removed, from hearing a case. We recommend creating more stringent penalties for judges ruling in their self-interest and methods for the public to hold judges accountable for conflicts of interest.

**Bar Ratings & Judicial Candidate Questionnaires:** Bar associations analyze the past decisions, actions, and other aspects of judicial performance and give numerical or alphabet grades to candidates for judicial office. When available and accessible, voters can use bar ratings to decide whether to support a judicial candidate for office based on performance.
EQUITY IN RACES THAT INFLUENCE REPRESENTATION

Equitable practices and systems impact whether one person really does mean one vote. When competition for office is low, and incumbents remain unchallenged, new and diverse people become reluctant to run, and elected officials don’t have to work hard to stay in office. When people can’t talk to their representatives, or they remain in office too long, people don’t think their leaders really know or care about their needs. When leaders and campaign staff aren’t diverse, the people who lead us often don’t look like us. When courts are made less fair and independent, they stop paying attention to the rule of law and the needs of the people. And most importantly, when the right to vote can be taken away, it is no longer a right.

UNCONTESTED RACES IN 2016

Contested races, when more than one person runs for a seat, challenges incumbents to remain their best selves while giving voters an opportunity to elect a better representative. On the one hand, if the incumbent is well respected by their constituency, having a challenger might not be necessary. On the other hand, how will we know if the incumbent is the best choice unless someone runs against them? This is how contested races help to ensure that the best person is in office. By promoting diverse candidates to run in contested races, we can ensure that the most qualified candidate is elected each term.

COMPETITIVE RACES

Competitiveness, how much advantage one candidate has over another in funding and votes, can help us understand the candidate landscape and how realistic their chances are at winning office. This data shows that most races in 2016 were not competitive, though many had more than one person running for that specific seat. Competitiveness can be measured by total money raised, votes counted, a number of campaign contributions, and whether more than one person runs for that office. Data about funding for candidates, whether one candidate vastly outspends another, is below. We’re primarily concerned with campaign contribution competitiveness because of the deep concern about campaign finance reflected in our door-to-door surveys. We used Follow The Money’s Competitiveness Index (CI) to analyze competition in our state.

HOW MANY RACES FOR OFFICE WERE COMPETITIVE IN 2016?

| How many are competitive? | 33  | 23.2% |
| How many are Non-competitive? | 109 | 76.8% |

Among The Non-Competitive Races:

| How many are uncontested? | 32  | 22.5% |
| How many were contested? | 77  | 54.2% |

Source: FollowTheMoney.org, Competitiveness Index (CI)

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPETITIVENESS

Competition in elections, more than one person running for office on somewhat of an equal monetary playing field, is essential for two primary reasons. First, competition increases engagement and participation in elections among the electorate, often long after the election is over. Secondly, competition often increases a candidate’s efforts to win their campaign. Candidates are more likely to canvass door-to-door to get their ideas out, incumbents are more likely to communicate what they’ve done for their jurisdictions, and both are more likely to take public positions on issues when they know they may lose a vote by staying silent. In short, those seeking elected office in a competitive field have to strengthen their outreach and campaign efforts to win votes.

In Washington, there are low levels of competition across the board. These dismal numbers dissuade candidates from wanting to run for office, perpetuate incumbent apathy and disincentivize grassroots campaigning. This causes people to be disengaged, disaffected, and ignorant to what’s going on in their communities and whether better representation is possible. As a matter of trust, we must increase competition in office. Through investments and support of candidate training groups, we can help encourage more competition for elected office and give voters more choice in who will represent them.
MULTI-MEMBER, SINGLE-MEMBER, AT-LARGE, AND DISTRICT ELECTION

HOW MANY COUNTY SEATS ARE ELECTED AT-LARGE & BY DISTRICT?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of District</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single member district, At-Large</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single member district, Districted</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown / did not respond</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Types of election districts are essential to ensure equal representation. Every vote should hold the same weight and the lines we draw to designate voting districts can create a disproportionate voice for one group over another – and its often communities of color and lower-income communities who find themselves at a disadvantage. Though most folks know about issues with gerrymandering, several aspects of the redistricting process itself have proven problematic and racist in application. At-large elections, those that elect one person jurisdiction-wide instead of by small districts within that jurisdiction, have been proven over and over again to dilute the votes of people of color (POC) and marginalized communities. United States Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg called at-large voting systems “second-generation barriers” to equal representation. Single member districts have a similar effect. Single member districts, or jurisdictions drawn to elect one person to a multi-member body, can also be drawn to dilute certain votes from marginalized communities. Single member districts have been successfully challenged under the Voting Rights Act for their racist impacts. If drawn carefully and correctly, single-member districts can help amplify traditionally marginalized community voices through the creation of majority marginalized/minority districts.

Currently, the Washington state legislature uses the first past the post form (FPTP), or post form, of multi-member districts (MMD) on the house level, whereby voters in the 49 house districts elect two members each. Experts often argue, however, that post forms of multi-member districts elect one person to a specific seat. Per constitutional mandate, all countywide election districts are not true MMDs because they elect a single member to a specific seat. Per constitutional mandate, all countywide election districts are single-member seats with over two-thirds being single member-at-large and less than a quarter being districted.

“The efforts to reduce the impact of minority votes, in contrast to direct attempts to block access to the ballot, are aptly described as “second-generation barriers” to minority voting. Second-generation barriers come in various forms. One ... is adoption of a system of at-large voting in lieu of district-by-district voting.”


THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING SCHEMES, LINES, AND HOW WE DRAW THEM

When used to divide and discriminate, at-large voting, single-member, and multi-member districts have been found unconstitutional in violation of the 14th Amendment when they allow the ethnic majority to elect all representatives of the district, either by bloc voting or another method that consolidates the vote by marginalized/minority lines.

ALTERNATIVES TO AT-LARGE VOTING, SINGLE, AND MULTI-MEMBER DISTRICTS

Many advocates around the world recommend proportional representation, where parties gain a number of seats in direct relation to the number of people voting for them. There are many ways this could work, and outcomes differ according to the type of proportional representation scheme. At it’s most fundamental, if 60% of people support party A, party A gets 60% of the seats in the legislative body. Many countries use forms of proportional representation including Belgium, Finland, and Denmark. British Columbia has been considering a shift to proportional representation for over a decade.

The easiest way to avoid discrimination is to transition from at-large voting methods to districted elections. In Yakima, WA, the shift from at-large to district elections resulted in more representation for the city’s Latinx population.

Another way to create fair districts is to advocate for a full Census count. The US Census helps states understand where populations live, which allows those responsible for redistricting, Washington Redistricting Commission, to see the impact of where lines are drawn. Because redistricting rules require maps to be drawn to preserve “areas recognized as communities of interest,” knowing where residents can help draw accurate lines and create majority marginalized/minority districts.

RESIDUAL VOTE RATE BY STATE AND COUNTY

Residual vote rates are the number of votes that cannot be counted in a race due to errors such as multiple votes in one race, invalid marking, or missed voting marking. Errors arise when the ballot design is misleading, when voters don’t feel knowledgeable enough about the race to vote, and when voters don’t think their votes will matter enough to make an impact.

In Washington, the residual vote rate for state offices is lower than the national average. Outliers do exist, however. For example, Garfield County has a 4.1% residual vote rate and Columbia County is at 2.1%.

- Average presidential residual vote rate nationwide: 1.6%
- WA 2016 presidential residual vote rate: 1.4%

Residual vote rates matter because they show us how prepared and willing people are to vote up and down the ballot. If a ballot is confusing, people might stop using it, the same as if the ballot is too long. Watching for increased in residual vote rates can help us identify and address gaps that keeping people from fully participating in the vote.
Equal representation is threatened when people cannot, or do not know how to reach their elected representatives. Our survey data shows that most folks have not talked to an elected representative and this lack of contact often leads to a lack of attention to the issues that matter most. Additionally, the vast majority are in favor of term limits for state House and Senate. The lack of term limits and other structural changes to our governing bodies can erode trust and hope in a different, better future.

**We Asked...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever spoken to an elected official about a legal or policy issue?</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you in favor of term limits for House and Senate?</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Courts and the Judiciary**

Financial Influence over the Supreme Court

A fair and impartial judiciary is a critical and often overlooked branch of our democracy. In Washington State and nationally, a record number of dollars are being spent on judicial elections. Reasons for this upward trend are vast and reflect a broader interest among the nation’s wealthiest donors to have sway over who controls the law and lawmaking process. With increased costs to run for office, we see more negative campaigns, more misinformation shared, and more opportunity to politicize elected positions that are traditionally nonpartisan.

In Washington State, Supreme Court race spending hit the one million dollar mark on 2012. Since then, we’ve seen million dollar races become the norm, but this can change if we re-examine how we elect judges. For example, a judicial public financing system could help provide necessary funds for judges to campaign independently. Alternatively, we could eliminate judicial elections and create a merit selection system to appoint judges. These shifts in how we elect judges could help decrease the influence of independent expenditures and empower programs to steer a targeted and informed campaign narrative. A merit selection system would reduce the amount spent on campaigns overall because judges would no longer have to run for office.

**Election Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Supreme Court Election Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$1,060,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$175,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$1,288,379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$889,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$417,034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attempts to Change Policy Related to Judges and/or Prosecutors**

In the 2015-16 session, we saw bills introduced to make our Supreme Court partisan, to reduce the number of Supreme Court justices, to limit judicial terms in office, create recusal rules, establish election districts, and to repeal the Supreme Court’s authority to regulate the Washington State Bar Association.

The Legislature has the power to change many aspects of our judiciary, from how and whether judges are elected, to regulations for spending and recusal. It is important to track bills intended to impact our courts because changes in these laws can directly affect their impartiality and independence. Similar to our state, attempts to infuse partisanship in the judicial process have taken hold in handfuls of other states. For example, North Carolina is among the states to pass bills creating partisan elections for judges, which has negatively impacted advocacy and court opinions in the state. Though these bills did not move in WA, we must keep watch for more attempts to erode the fairness and independence of our courts.

**What’s in a Name?**

2012 saw record spending and controversy when incumbent Supreme Court Justice Steven Gonzales ran against new candidate Bruce Danielson. Though Danielson, a perennial candidate in his county, raised no money and was rated unqualified by the local bar association, he still received 43% of the vote. Why? Likely racism. Most analysts agree the white sounding name led some people to falsely believe he was more qualified for the position. This disgraceful moment in our state’s history is a shameful reminder that racism still impacts who leads us. When we’re aware, we can name and solve the problem.

**15-16 HB 1051** Would make Supreme Courts partisan
**15-16 HB 2784** Reduces the number of Court justices to 5
**15-16 HJR 4217** Limiting term to two four-year terms
**15-16 HJR 4201** Election districts

**15-16 HB 1350** Creates election districts for partisan elections
**15-16 HB 2030** Discipline in the event of failure to self-disqualify
**15-16 SB 6255** Dissolves WSBA, shifts all regulation of lawyers to Supreme Court

---

25 - Equal Representation - Healthy Democracy Index
DO JUDGES & PROSECUTORS REFLECT OUR COMMUNITIES?

When asked whether survey respondents felt judges and prosecutors reflect their communities, only ~30% of people responded “yes.” Though we didn’t ask why participants felt this way, this number is important because it directly impacts trust that people put in the judiciary. If people don’t know or believe that the members of the judiciary reflect and serve their communities, we must not only find out why but work to change the conditions that keep people disconnected and distrustful from and of our courts.

COMPETITION & QUALIFICATION IN JUDICIAL RACES

As noted earlier, competition in races is important because it gives voters a real choice in who represents them. Competition decreases when one candidate has a significant set of advantages over other candidates in the same race. We used Follow the Money’s Competitiveness Index to look at recent Supreme Court races in Washington.

Our State Supreme Court has high numbers of uncontested races and low numbers of competition. Some argue that competition isn’t always needed when there is a good representative in office. However, we remain proponents for increased competition to ensure the best person is in office. We recommend increased awareness around judicial races and the creation/promotion of judicial candidate pipelines to increase the number of people running for office.

It can be hard to decide which judge to vote for when little is known about the judge or their record. Knowing the qualifications of a judicial candidate is another critical factor in ensuring fair and impartial courts. Using available bar ratings of judges, we found that the more qualified candidate won an astounding 90% of the time. Often, judges are only rated when running for office and being considered for federal appointments. These evaluations by local or state bar associations, take into consideration; educational attainment, types of cases decided, and experience at trial or on the bench. Voters may use these ratings to make an informed choice when judicial decision records and other facets of their work are not often publicly known.

Bar ratings and information about judicial decisions are not available for all judges in Washington State, so we recommend increased tracking and measurement of judicial decisions and records through the creation of bar ratings and judicial questionnaires. With more information about who we’re electing to decide the law, we can choose more judges that will serve and reflect our communities.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF THE JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS

We were unable to find updated and accurate demographic information about our elected judicial officials including judges and prosecutors. The most relevant information we could obtain was from 2010 and measured only certain ethnic groups at the trial, appellate, and supreme court levels.

2010 DEMOGRAPHICS OF JUDGES IN WASHINGTON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Number of Judges</th>
<th>Percentage of All Judges in State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Pacific Islander</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8% (217)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The figure in the parentheses is the total number of authorized judgeships in the state for the general jurisdiction trial courts, appellate level courts, and courts of last resort.

Source: American Bar Association, National Database on Judicial Diversity in State Courts

Akin to the bar ratings, we recommend the creation of metrics to track and measure demographics on who is deciding our law over time - when people can become knowledgeable about who comprises the judiciary, we can start to increase capacity and motivation to make changes when issues arise.
EMPOWERING
This value defines why people choose to participate in our democracy.

People actively exercise their civic duties including and beyond voting; for example contacting their representative, and serving for jury duty. People feel they impact policy change and have the confidence that our voices eclipse the needs of wealthy special interests. The responsibility must be on our government and elected leaders to foster that confidence through the passage of laws, programs, and systems that seek to equalize the power between powerful, wealthy interests and everyday residents.

Empowerment is threatened when:
- the invasive and pervasive influence of money on electoral and issue campaigns feels insurmountable and far eclipses influence of people power;
- people don’t see and experience the change they have voted for; and
- people don’t trust that they have the power to bring “fairness” to the system.

WHAT WE DON’T KNOW
- How many Washingtonians want to run for office
- Other barriers to run for office such as child care and employment and how it affects individuals’ desire to run for office

WHAT WE KNOW
- People do not think they could raise enough funds to run for office
- People are in favor of our initiative process, though many don’t know whether the process is fair
- People know that voting is a right
- People think their vote matters, but not as much as a wealthy person’s impact on democracy
- People understand how to vote, typically use one or more voter guides, but may not fully understand their ballot

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EMPOWERING DEMOCRACY

Alternative Voting Systems: different structural and procedural methods to cast individual ballots, such as ranked choice voting, approval voting, and proportional representation. We recommend further research about various voting systems, their impact on communities of color and women, and rates of participation in new voting systems.

Prepaid Postage: In Washington, we have mail-in ballots. Prepaid postage would add a stamp or another form of state-subsidized postage symbol to each ballot. In theory, this would remove the financial cost associated with voting and remove the burden of locating a stamp, thereby allowing more people to vote and increasing voter turnout.

Candidate Recruitment and Training: Groups, organizations, and programs to encourage potential candidates to run for office, to educate candidates on the political process, and to support newly elected officials in what to expect in their first years in office. We recommend an intentional focus on recruitment and training in communities of color, particularly with women of color.

Full Rights Restoration: Laws lifted or made to allow all people eligible to vote, regardless of their interaction with the criminal justice system. In Washington, a constitutional amendment is needed to overturn this long-standing disenfranchisement.

Our data revealed great opportunities to expand our democracy into a truly thriving system were all voices are heard, and all people are counted. Our respondents overwhelmingly said they knew that voting was a right and the vast majority exercised their vote. Those surveyed also were in favor of direct democratic practices like ballot initiatives and a good portion of respondents thought the initiative process is fair. We see these findings as an excellent opportunity to create programs and policies that will solve some of the issues revealed in this section - primarily in our campaign finance systems and candidate training programs.
QUALITATIVE FINDINGS IMPACTING EMPOWERMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We asked...</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incentives to Run for Office</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel like you could raise enough money to run for office?</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know how to run for office in your county? State? City?</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know of / Can you access a candidate training program?</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structures to Influence Participation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you in favor of ballot initiatives?</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think WA State’s initiative process is fair?</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empowerment at the Ballot</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you vote?</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like the option to vote in-person at a polling place?</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you use a voter’s guide to help you choose who to vote for?</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think your vote matters?</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More often than not, do you understand how to vote using the ballot mailed to you?</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE STATE OF VOTING TECHNOLOGY IN WA

Voting technology capable of counting alternative votes: 20.5% (8 jurisdictions)

Technology used in WA capable of counting alternative votes: Democracy Suite 5.0, Verity 2.0, WinEDS 4.0

Voting technology not capable of counting alternative votes: 79.5% (31 jurisdictions)

Technology used in WA not capable of counting alternative votes (w/o customization): Clearvote 1.3.3; HVS 6.2.1; Unity 3.4.0.0; Unity 3.4.1.0

Voting technology, the machines we use to create ballots and count votes, are only as good as their design. Voting machines differ by jurisdiction and in capabilities, and though there are many considerations in picking voting technology, we are explicitly focused on technology that can count alternative voting systems like ranked choice voting or approval voting. These alternative voting systems could change the way we vote, who is elected, and how many political parties are genuinely competitive in our state’s political process.

Currently, nearly 80% of our voting systems are incapable of adapting to changes in the way we vote. In recent years, several states and jurisdictions have enacted alternative forms of voting such as ranked choice voting that requires updated technology. To consider innovations in our voting systems, we need to upgrade our current technology.

The way we vote is vital because it can have a direct impact on who is elected and how many people turn out to vote. Our survey data shows people are craving structural reform - whether it be through term limits for our state Senate and House, the creation of in-person polling places, permanently prepaid postage on ballots, or through methods that would encourage a truly multi-party system. People are ready to change up our democratic process to make it better serve our communities.
In Washington, people convicted of felonies lose their right to vote while they are incarcerated or in community custody. Voting rights are automatically restored once out of prison and community custody. Legal financial obligations (LFOs) don’t have to be paid off entirely either, but courts can revoke the right to vote if individuals do not adhere to the terms of their individual LFO.

In 2016, 48,552 Washingtonians were unable to exercise their right to vote due to our state’s restrictions on voting. Though this figure is less than 1% of the voting age population - it still represents tens of thousands of individuals who aren’t allowed to exercise their civic duty by voting. We were unable to locate demographic data about the 48,552 individuals barred from voting.

We believe no one should lose their right to vote. Now and in the past, prison has been used as a weapon to destabilize low-income and communities of color. Here in Washington State, people of color are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system from the juvenile system into adulthood. This means people of color are very likely disproportionately represented among those who cannot vote.

There are different avenues to restore voting rights. Some argue to restore rights for all but those convicted of the most violent felonies, while others argue that voting rights should be restored when the individual serves their time in prison. We recommend a constitutional amendment that restores rights to all people, regardless of criminal record or status in state custody, so Washingtonians never risk losing the right to vote.

These growing discrepancies in turnout by race and income support our qualitative findings around an enthusiasm gap and ongoing barriers that keep communities from participating. Though voting is only one way to participate in our democracy, the vast differences in voter turnout between the wealthy, lower-income, white, and communities of color illustrate a need for systemic changes to truly achieve a representative democracy. This lack of participation among communities correlates to the lack of representation of communities of color in office. That is, when one group overwhelmingly chooses who will serve their communities, it is more likely that the majority group will be represented not only in office but in legislative priority. This has a direct impact on how people perceive the effectiveness of their vote and democracy, whether they participate, and whether they feel their participation will have an effect.

Turnout trends are important in setting informed outreach, education, and advocacy strategies. We can use turnout data to make informed decisions, including outreach and organizing strategy in any given campaign, where to advocate for reforms and when, and to make informed analysis about trends in elections. For example, we know that turnout increases in even years, when higher level offices are on the ballot, versus lower turnout in odd years, local election cycles, and we see highest turnout in presidential cycles when people are most inspired to vote. With this knowledge, we can plan issue campaigns appropriately, increase voter education we know turnout will be low, or even advocate to consolidate elections into higher turnout years.
A great measure of how empowered people are at the ballot is not just if they voted, but if they vote completely and consistently. We examined two different trends here:

- **down ballot completion** - the rate at which one voter fills their ballot completely
- **drop off rates** - the rate of voting consistently between election cycles

Using available data for both can highlight trends on why people might respond to the ways they have about the vote. Available data shows that a large number of voters, roughly 80%, voted down the ballot in 2016. Drop off rates are similarly low, with a 2.2% drop off rate in 2016. Knowing how many people fill out their ballot completely regardless of the specific race or physical position of that race on the ballot, helps us make inferences into the quality of ballot design to the interest of voters. The high completion rate validates our survey findings that people not only vote but feel knowledgeable about how to vote. It also indicates that our ballot design is strong. Though we did not ask how respondents felt about the look and design of their ballots, we know that long and confusing ballots tend to cause increases in incomplete ballots.

**A NOTE ABOUT DROP-OFF RATES IN 2016:**

Though the ballot drop off rate is less than many other state averages, it increased from 2012 to 2016 in the state. In 2012, our drop off rate was 1.63%, while it was 2.2% in 2016. Experts theorize the reason for the increase was due to dissatisfaction with federal candidates for office.

**On the positive side,** the vast majority of survey respondents vote, feel educated on how to vote, know that voting is a right, and know their vote matters. Also, when asked how people felt about ballot initiatives, responses were mostly positive. Respondents are in favor of our initiative process, and many think it’s fair. Some expressed confusion on whether the ballot initiative process is fair, which may warrant some advocacy and organizing to find out where the gap in knowledge lies or what it would take to increase fairness in our initiative process. **These high numbers show that our respondents often feel empowered and ready to participate in our democratic process.**

However, on the flipside, though our respondents felt empowered to exercise their right to vote, they felt much less strongly about their ability to run for office and whether their vote mattered as much as our wealthy neighbors. Over two-thirds of respondents said that they don’t think they could run office, didn’t know how to access candidate training or whether training was available at all, and didn’t know where to start to obtain the information. These low numbers show a clear gap where, more often than not, regular people don’t feel empowered to represent their communities.

This is important because people who don’t think they have a chance to compete and win won’t run in the first place, and that means we’re missing out on the ideas, leadership, and representation from a broad swath of our communities. We strongly recommend working to increase incentives and access to run for office. We recommend strengthening existing candidate recruitment and training opportunities and creating mechanisms within the advocacy network to track and coordinate training and recruitment efforts. Also of note, when we asked people how informed they felt about a range of races, responses were evenly mixed. A majority responded that they only felt informed about half of the races before them in any given cycle. To contrast, only 14% said they felt informed about more than three-quarters of races, while 28% said they felt informed about 51-75% of races. There is a direct correlation between an individual’s knowledge of what’s on the ballot and their comfort in voting and people should feel informed about the candidates and offices they’re voting for. Increasing individual understanding of what’s on the ballot is pivotal to increase empowerment and confidence which will impact participation.

While these findings could be viewed as dismal, they point to systemic barriers that offer opportunities for reform. Because people still see value in voting, feel educated on how to vote, and know its a right, we can use reform efforts to address the gaps and make our systems stronger. When we make changes to the accessibility and motivation to run for office, we know that people will vote because they value the right. When we lower the cost to run for office, a broader set of individuals can be empowered to run, and people will vote for candidates that represent them. And, when we examine the structural and educational barriers to vote, we know people will use new avenues to exercise their civic duty when given a chance to do so.
EQUITABLE
This value clarifies how our system of democracy should function for “we the people” to truly become a reality.

All branches of government are just, fair, and prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized communities. Institutions and laws are trusted as fairly created and implemented. Our laws create shared economic opportunity and provide paths to a truly equal society. This includes looking at data with an equity lens to close all current gaps on voter registration, voter turnout, elected representation, and equal access to public institutions and influence. To create an equitable democracy, we must dismantle hundreds of years of disenfranchisement and economic exploitation that has resulted in unequal opportunity and starkly disproportionate levels of access for countless people of color, poor people, and geographically isolated communities.

Threats to an equitable democracy include:

- Ignoring gaps in voter turnout and participation among traditionally marginalized communities including communities of color, those impacted by the prison industrial complex, undocumented communities, and lower-income communities
- Lack of voting materials translated for all communities across Washington to understand
- Lack of structural reform efforts to create more efficient and convenient access to the voting process
- Lack of awareness of barriers to voting for native, rural, and lower-income communities
- Continued short-sighted outreach efforts that focus on persuading the most likely voters over the most impacted ones

WHAT WE KNOW

- Lack of infrastructure to routinely measure minority language requirements and ensure proper translation requirements
- Ballot drop off boxes are applied per capita, often leaving rural communities with long distances between each ballot box
- People do not feel their elected representatives reflect the race, class, and gender diversity of their communities
- Over half of all voter registrations are made through Washington State agencies

WHAT WE DON’T KNOW

- Racial and ethnic demographics of those registered through state agencies
- How prepaid postage advocacy will impact the need for ballot boxes in the state

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EQUITABLE DEMOCRACY

Candidate Recruitment and Training: Groups, organizations, and programs to encourage potential candidates to run for office, to educate candidates on the political process, and to support newly elected officials in what to expect in their first years in office. We recommend an intentional focus on recruitment and training in communities of color, particularly with women of color.

Prepaid Postage on ballots: In Washington, we have mail-in ballots. Prepaid postage would add a stamp or another form of state-subsidized postage symbol to each ballot. In theory, this would remove the financial cost associated with voting and remove the burden of locating a stamp, thereby allowing more people to vote and increasing voter turnout.

Measurement of Candidate and Campaign Demographics: A program or group that would actively count the ethnicity, income, and other variables about elected officials and campaign consultants. Measuring candidate and campaign consultant demographics is helpful to understand who is representing us and which communities are left out of elections and campaigning.

Increasing Translated Voter Materials: Voter information pamphlets, ballots, dropboxes, and other documents used for voting should be translated into as many languages as possible to make sure all voters have the requisite information in languages they understand. We recommend a standard advocated for by groups around the country - if there are more than 7,500 individuals or 3% of the population that speaks a language that is not English, voting materials ought to be translated into that language.

Our data shows significant gaps in access to ballot boxes in rural counties, lack of systems to measure how effective our minority language requirements are at reaching as many communities as feasible and the federal laws around language requirements may not be strong enough, and a shared feeling among those polled that their elected representatives do not reflect one or more aspects of their community’s diverse identities. We also saw that state agencies who register voters play a substantial role in how many individuals actually register.
EQUITY BY DEMOGRAPHICS

Do you feel like your elected representatives reflect the race, class and gender diversity of your community?

When asked this question, we learned that 35% said “yes,” 47% said “no,” and 18% said they “don’t know.” These numbers are concerning because they can impact levels of trust and confidence in our government. When our representatives are perceived as not connected to the overall community, it is hard to place trust in their actions and decisions. To improve this number, we recommend strong attention on and shifting resources to candidate recruitment and training groups that could help strengthen community engagement around leadership and elected office. This recommendation has been included a couple of times because we strongly feel that those most connected to the community know what issues to prioritize and address. We cannot achieve a truly trusted and equitable democracy until our representatives come from the communities they serve the communities they serve.

Demographics of elected officials statewide

The National Representation Index analyzed the racial demographics of all statewide elected representatives in 2016. Washington ranked 9th out of the 50 state. State figures also show that white women representatives are close to being at parity with the demographics of the state. Before we celebrate being in the top ten, however, we can see that women and men of color make up less than a third of our elected representative base while white men are vastly overrepresented.

We recommend focus on candidate recruitment and training programs to help our representative base become more reflective of our communities.

How many individuals are registered at agencies covered under the National Voting Rights Act from 2014-2016?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency &amp; Method</th>
<th>Percentage of all registrants</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Licensing</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>This includes registrations at various DMVs throughout the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail-in</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>This also includes fax and email registrations, processed by Secretary of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Agencies</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>This includes agencies like the Department of Social and Health Services and Health Benefit Exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>Over half all of registrations from 2014-2016 went through Washington State agencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Reliable and wide reaching information on demographic of other offices are not available. To remedy this, we recommend tracking and measurement of candidate and consultant demographics to see a better picture of who represents us.

The National Voter Registration Act was passed in 1993 to increase voter registration efforts within the states at vehicle licensing facilities (motor voter), by mail, and in state agencies. The passage of NVRA increased access to voter registration for thousands of Washingtonians, two-thirds of voters registered between 2014 and 2016 were registered through NVRA institutions. Research conducted by the Washington Voter Justice Coalition revealed that nearly a million voting eligible individuals remained unregistered. Thanks to the forty-member coalition’s advocacy, the Washington State Legislature passed a state-based automatic voter registration law in 2017 that aims to increase registration and expand the number of agencies to reach more potential voters.
EQUITY IN ACCESS TO VOTING SYSTEMS

Ballot boxes per person in counties around the state

Statewide Average: 7,450.6 individuals per ballot box

Least ballot boxes per person:
- King County has 27,867 voters per ballot box
- Snohomish has 24,026.4 voters per ballot box
- Yakima has 19,012.5 voters per ballot box

Most ballot boxes per voter:
- Garfield has 776.5 voters per ballot box
- Wahkiakum has 1,002.7 voters per ballot box
- Skamania has 1,064.4 voters per ballot box

Average distance to a drop box
There are considerable differences among counties based on rural, urban, or suburban makeup of the area. Rural voters likely have to travel longer to get to a drop box than a person in a suburban or urban area. The average Washingtonian has to travel 3.6 miles driving.

On average, there is one ballot box per 7,500 individuals in the state. This number is only an average, however, and takes into account the often large difference in ballot box placement among the jurisdictions. Ballot box placement is important because, at the time of drafting this report, Washington state does not have universal postage-paid ballots. Because ballot boxes are allocated per capita instead of by distance, it can be the case that voters have to travel 20+ miles to drop off their ballots if they don’t have a stamp. In areas where public transportation is lacking, like in rural areas, lack of access to ballot box might be the sole reason a person ‘chooses’ not vote. If your dropbox is 20 miles away, and you don’t have a car or a stamp, how do you vote? When polled, 63% of respondents said they would prefer to have prepaid postage, regardless of whether they lived in rural, suburban, and urban areas.

In 2017, the WA State Legislature passed a law requiring at least one ballot box for every 15,000 voters to address this issue. Though we recommend routine tracking of dropbox placement and ballot returns, we strongly recommend passing prepaid postage for all Washingtonians.

If your ballot dropbox is 20 miles away, and you don’t have a car or stamp, how do you vote?

The points on this graphic show the widely differing placement of ballot dropboxes per jurisdiction. The dots at bottom indicate over 25,000 individuals have to drive less than 5 miles away, while the dots at the top mean a little less than 2,500 voters have over 40 miles to travel to reach a dropbox.
EQUITY IN LANGUAGE ACCESS
Jurisdictions offering language assistance beyond the Section 203 requirements of the National Voting Rights Act

In Washington, Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act requires ballots and election materials be translated for jurisdictions with limited English literacy and 10,000+ voting age residents or where 5% of the population speaks either Spanish, Asiatic, Native American, and Alaskan Native languages. Translation required under Section 203 must be conducted orally and in writing. Translation is vital to participation - if you can’t understand your ballot, you can’t vote.

Nationwide, advocacy organizations have identified 7,500 or 3% as a best practice threshold to reach as many language communities as possible. As of 2017, no jurisdiction routinely meets this translation threshold, but some counties get very close. King County and 12 other counties report that they translate voting materials in languages beyond the federal requirements such as increased numbers of languages for translation, on-demand translation services, and one-on-one assistance with filling out a voter’s ballot.

We asked county election administrators whether they offered language assistance beyond Section 203 requirements of the National Voting Rights Act.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Counties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Respond</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spotlight on translation services:
(W)e employ a full-time State Certified Bilingual Translator who assists voters with any special language needs, translates all of our elections materials and coordinates our outreach programs. We also hire bilingual seasonal staff during the elections to assist voters with reading the ballot and answering questions...

—Franklin County Board of Elections

Though over a dozen counties are going beyond federal requirements to make voting materials available to the diverse language base of their communities, we recommend routine statewide audits and planning to increase the scope of translation. When we examine the breadth of language reach, and its impact on voter behavior, we can make more informed decisions to reform or celebrate our state’s language accessibility.
Democratic values are strong and promoted in all forms, functions, and systems of public life. Democracy is viewed beyond the act of voting, but in the democratic practice and experience within our public institutions. We celebrate democracy, inclusion, and participation through: respectful debate, listening sessions, and participatory decision-making work, which better not only our government but our society as a whole. Infusing these values into all walks of life fosters understanding, dialogue, and solutions that take into account the needs of the majority of people impacted.

Threats include:
- The concentration of power and influence to a few, even as the actions of those few impacts the many;
- Lack of transparency and participation around ideas, data and decision points for creation of laws, policy or procedure; and
- When expediency is valued over process in the name of government efficiency

WHAT WE KNOW

- Survey respondents think prepaid postage would make voting easier
- There isn’t a lot of outside influence in state elections
- 44% of campaign contributions in the state come from 4% of the state’s counties
- People don’t think the two-party system is meeting their needs
- Money is negatively impacting respondent’s trust that their vote holds the same weight as wealthier voters
- A majority of respondents said “yes” when asked if money was speech

WHAT WE DON’T KNOW

- We asked “is money speech?” when we should have asked, “do you believe money is speech?” We do not know how many people responded “yes” because they understand the law resulting from Citizen’s United versus how many people believe that money is a form of speech and worth protecting.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EXPANSIVE DEMOCRACY

Small donor public financing: A system of rules, laws, and practices that create a state or locally funded method for residents to support candidates for elected office financially. Enacting policies such as Democracy Vouchers and public matching systems help to increase the community’s power in choosing who is on their ballot.

Participatory budget & lawmaking: A method of decision-making where all people included provide input into the ultimate decision. For example, a participatory lawmaking program in Ireland allows citizens to submit proposals to become law. People vote on those proposals, and the top voted laws become law. Participatory decision making could be used to make law, decide a budget, criminal justice and sentencing, and other areas where many voices are better than a few.
The following data reveal insights into how our survey respondents felt about democratic structures such as whether people want polling places, prepaid postage, or more political parties. Some of the figures in this section have been discussed in earlier sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We asked...</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would voting be easier if ballots had paid postage?</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you in favor of term limits for House &amp; Senate?</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like the option to vote at a polling place?</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know of a political party that represents your ideology?</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can see that our survey respondents desire changes to how we vote and the number of dominant political parties. These figures are important because they provide, albeit limited, insight into how our communities view the norms and rules of our government. We recommend collaborative efforts to make these structural reforms such as prepaid postage, examining term limits for our statewide offices, alternative voting methods and to increase the number of political parties on our redistricting commission.

The most starkly negative data we received, next to our dismal levels of reflective democracy, is around respondents perceptions of money and how it impacts our political process.

Do you feel like the average person has the same impact on elections and lawmakers than more wealthy individuals?

This straightforward question daylighted the starkest and surprising results - 73% of people polled said “no,” when asked whether their voice has the same impact as wealthier people. This number reveals a deep schism in perceived political power. If you feel that your vote matters less, why would you bother to vote?

Does Money Control Elections for Office in Your State? In Your County?

Similar to the figure above, the majority of respondents feel that money controls elections in their state and county, which helps us understand the impact money has on trust and confidence in our democracy. When people believe that wealthy interests prevail, little incentive remains for middle- and lower-income voters to attempt to make their voices heard. These numbers point to high levels of perceived disempowerment due to the influence of money in our political process.
Do You Think that Money is Speech?

This number surprised us. When asked whether people believe money is speech, we expected the vast majority of respondents to say “no.” Perhaps if we asked “should money be considered speech” we would have learned more about people’s perceptions of money.

Given this current reality, instead of focusing attempts to limit money in politics through various caps and contribution limits, we should expand efforts to increase participation in campaign finance for all people - regardless of income. With programs like Democracy Vouchers, Seattle saw a 200% increase in participation through the use of democracy vouchers before and after the primary election. We recommend exploring similar programs on the local and eventually state level to increase participation, support, and faith in the campaign finance process.

Share of in-state & out-of-state contributions to designated offices, combined

| In state county-wide office contributions: | $20,977,048.52 |
| Out of state contributions to countywide office: | $1,131,446.10 |
| In state contributions to statewide office: | $43,995,847.34 |
| Out of state contributions to statewide office: | $6,002,427.10 |

Most contributions in Washington come from in-state donors. As of 2016, 84% of contributions to all campaigns were from in-state donors, while 94% of contributions to county offices were from in-state donors. Roughly 15% of contributions to Washington State campaigns were from out-of-state contributors. The average out-of-state contribution was $599.68. Though the average itemized contribution reveals that larger donors are largely financing the candidates we see on our ballot, we can be confident that support for candidates is overwhelmingly from in state. This number is important because we can measure how much influence out-of-state contributors have on our elections. As we can see from the data, in-state contributions greatly outnumber the number of contributions from out-of-state actors. We recommend keeping an eye on these figures to make sure our state continues to have the most influence in who is funded to run for office.

Contributions to WA State campaigns from the top ten zip codes in the US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 CONTRIBUTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98104, Seattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98101, Seattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98004, Bellevue, WA, Beaux Arts Village, WA, Clyde Hill, WA, Yarrow Point, WA, Hunts Point, WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98109, Seattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98121, Seattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98501, Olympia, Tumwater, East Olympia, Bush, South Union, Schneider’s Prairie, Plumb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98507, Olympia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98508, Olympia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00000, Not assigned*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98194, Seattle, WA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top ten zip codes responsible for campaign contributions in our state are from our state, which are overwhelmingly from Washington State, with the exception of zip code 00000.* These numbers show that Washingtonians are the some of the most significant contributors in the state, though top contributing zip codes concentrated in populated urban centers like Seattle and Olympia areas.

Higher concentrations of contributions in urban areas could be explained solely by population differences where more money comes from areas with more people. On the other hand, this data could show that a disproportionately large number of contributions are coming from a relatively small number of contributors. Existing data appears to back up the latter. Research by Sightline Institute in 2016 showed that 44% of contributions came from 30 of the 732 zip codes in the state in 2012 and 2014. That’s just 4% of the state making 44% of the contributions in 2012 and 2014. Because of these figures, we again recommend small donor public financing systems to encourage voters in all zip codes to participate in the campaign finance system.

Note: *The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) is aware of the 00000 issue and believes it can be attributed to user and technological error.
Top five highest & lowest contributions to countywide offices by county, 2016

Top five highest
- Grant - $291.84
- Douglas - $277.86
- Clark - $240.49
- Yakima - $228.42
- Skamania - $225.94

Top five lowest
- Lincoln - $100.08
- Jefferson - $108.38
- Pacific - $121.97
- Thurston - $123.55
- Columbia - $128.22

Washington State law includes limits on campaign contributions based on the type of office sought, as an example candidates seeking legislative office can only raise $1,000 from any individual while a candidate seeking judicial office can raise $2,000 from an individual. Information about candidate contributions are listed on the Public Disclosure Commission website. The average in-state contribution to countywide offices for all counties in 2016 is $172, far lower than the individual contribution limit. The numbers above illustrate the counties with the highest and lowest average contribution.

Contribution data broken out by jurisdiction and office is important for reference and comparison. With this data, we can explore trends in spending, whether outliers in average donation size exist, and where to prioritize potential advocacy for reform efforts. For example, areas with high average donations could be potential jurisdictions to enact small donor public financing programs, while areas with lower average contributions would be lower on the advocacy list. In practice, we would prioritize our research and planning efforts in Grant County, WA, because they top the average contribution list. These figures are also good reference points to see whether changes in structure, outreach, and policy have an impact on the average donation size.

Percentage to designated offices
Over 78% of contributions made to designated statewide campaigns were over $500.00. The average contribution in 2016 was $332.73. These high averages reveal how powerful big money is in our state. With the vast majority of donations coming from donations of $500.00 or more, it is likely that lower-income donors do not have the same impact on elections as their wealthy counterparts. The people feel this problem. Three-quarters of survey participants believe that money controls elections for office in our state. Another 73% do not believe the average person has the same impact on elections and lawmakers than wealthier individuals. We recommend statewide small donor public financing to equalize the power imbalance between larger and smaller donors.

When asked if participants thought they could raise enough funds to run for office, a staggering 73% said “no.” Curiously, however, roughly half of survey participants (53%) feel that money is indeed speech. Due to this, it is likely that small donor public financing programs may help to increase donations from smaller donors, thereby lowering the percentage of larger contributions and feelings that wealthy people have a larger voice than low- and middle-class Washingtonians.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?
We must advocate for solutions that amplify the everyday person’s power in choosing and funding candidates for office. Overwhelmingly, those polled agree that money is a larger factor in our political process than individual voices. We saw earlier that people also felt disempowered to run for office due to the cost to run a campaign. When people feel disempowered at all levels of the political process, from voting through to the lawmakers process, democratic ideals suffer.

We recommend creating opportunities to participate in the campaign finance process through small donor public financing, public matching programs, and other opportunities that transfer resources to voters to support their candidates of choice. We also recommend structural reform efforts that increase the ability of people to participate in the policymaking process beyond voting, such as participatory law and budget making programs.
CONCLUSION

The ideas, recommendations, and data contained in this report provide a more in-depth look into the state of our democracy in Washington. From campaign finance to voting systems, access to the vote, and our judiciary, we compiled this report to serve as a valuable analysis of our democracy - where we are and where we should go. We organized it in a fashion where all people, regardless of their position in the movement, can see a multi-issue and interconnected set of recommendations to increase representation, empowerment, equity, and expand our democratic values. We showcased the bright spots in our democracy, such as the high numbers of people who know voting is a right and a high number of in-state contributions shaping who we see on our ballots. We’ve also revealed big gaps - all centered around people’s trust in a democracy. These recommendations create a path forward in building a democracy that works for all people.

We are confident the findings contained will help guide advocacy efforts and serve as a benchmark for future reform efforts. However, we must repeat that our data collection fell short in places, and we know some data sets and insights could be expanded for a better understanding. We are using the gaps in this analysis as an opportunity to build new data infrastructure to address issues like the lack of demographic data on candidates, and we are planning supplements to the Index to fill in missing and incomplete information. We invite you to grow this analysis with us. What is missing? What did you wish to see that you didn’t? What is the data telling you?

We are so thankful to the dozens of activists, leaders, and movement members who created the values, measures of health, and landscape analysis within this report. We know the promise of our democracy - one person, one voice - is broken. We also know it will take a long-term movement to create a new democracy that serves us all because we know our democracy was not created to serve us all. This shared analysis of what is and what could be is one of the crucial components of building a new democracy.

What is missing?
What did you wish to see that you didn’t?
What is the data telling you?
**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**Alternative Voting System**
Different structural and procedural methods to cast individual ballots, such as ranked choice voting, approval voting, and proportional representation.

**Approval Voting**
Method of voting that asks voters whether they approve or disapprove of candidates. In a typical approval voting framework, voters may approve of as many candidates as they see fit, though the candidate with the most approvals will win the election.

**At-Large Voting**
Method of voting where voters in a jurisdiction vote for a representative to represent the entire jurisdiction. For example, an at-large voting system would elect representatives to serve voters citywide or countywide instead of a particular part of the city or county.

**Bar Association**
A professional association for lawyers who often regulate who becomes a lawyer and the rules that they must follow.

**Bar Ratings**
Bar associations analyze the past decisions, actions, and other aspects of judicial performance and give numerical or alphabet grades to candidates for judicial office. When available and accessible, voters can use bar ratings to decide whether to support a judicial candidate for office based on performance.

**Campaign Finance Systems**
Rules, regulations, and norms instituted to regulate spending on campaigns for elected office.

**Candidate Recruitment & Training**
Groups, organizations, and programs to encourage potential candidates to run for office, to educate candidates on the political process, and to support newly elected officials in what to expect in their first years in office. We recommend an intentional focus on recruitment and training in communities of color, particularly with women of color.

**Capacity, organizational & movement**
The ability, or inability, of an entity or institution to function and achieve their goals. For example, high capacity movements often have the funding, staff, and public presence to garner support for their actions while lower capacity movements and organizations lack one or more fundamental aspects to perform at their peak.

**Community Custody**
A period of confinement when a person serves the rest of their sentence out of physical incarceration and often in service to the community. A person in community custody often is limited in permissible activities, and their actions are monitored.

**Competition in Elections**
A principle of an empowering and expansive democracy, more than one person running for a particular election increases attention from the voter base and increase campaign efforts by candidates. Competition is not inherently good or bad; rather, competition inspires candidates, voters, and campaigns to engage more to win votes and the race.

**Disparate Impact**
The results from a practice, rule, or law that unintentionally or has a side effect of discriminating against protected classes.

**Districted Elections**
A structure for elections that divides municipalities, counties, and states into subdivisions so people elect representatives to serve a smaller part of the jurisdiction as part of a larger legislative body. Districted elections allow distinct communities to elect representatives who come from their communities and, thus, know and care about their issues. Judges often require districted elections after Voting Rights Act challenges because they often result in more reflective candidates than at-large districts.

**Down Ballot Completion**
The process of filling out one's ballot entirely. Measurements of down-ballot completion are often used to analyze the functionality of ballot design, voter sentiment, and other measures of voter interaction with voting materials.

**Drop-off Rates**
The measure of people who vote for presidential elections every four years but ignore others elections and do not vote.

**Election Districts**
Also called electoral districts, voting districts, or legislative districts; subdivided jurisdictions where voters elect representatives to serve their subdivision as part of a representative body of elected officials.

**Elections Administration**
Rules, laws, and practices that function to count, monitor, and analyze elections.

**Electoral Systems**
Rules, laws, and practices that function to conduct elections and determine their leaders.

**Fair Courts**
A movement to promote and protect the fairness, independence, and nature of our judicial system.

**Fourteenth Amendment**
Amendment to the US Constitution providing birthright citizenship, restricts states from depriving citizens of equal protection under the law and "life, liberty, or property" without due process, mandates equal protection under the law, requires apportionment respective the number of people in the state, and regulates who can be an elected office and payment of public debt. This is the most cited amendment in legal cases.
**Full Felony Reenfranchisement**
Laws lifted or made to allow all people eligible to vote, regardless of their interaction with the criminal justice system.

**Incarcerated**
The state of being physically confined, typically in state-sanctioned confinement like jail or prison.

**Increasing Translated Voting Materials**
Voter information pamphlets, ballots, dropboxes, and other documents used for voting should be translated into as many languages as possible to make sure all voters have the requisite information in languages they understand. We recommend a standard advocated for by groups around the country - if there are more than 7,500 individuals or 3% of the population that speaks a language that is not English, voting materials ought to be translated into that language.

**Judicial Candidate Questionnaires**
Questions and surveys distributed by groups and organizations to assess how a judge would decide on particular issues, their track record of decision making, and their interest in activist policies like criminal justice and ethics reforms. We recommend these because they can give valuable insight into the intentions and background of judges and their work.

**Judicial Election Reform**
New policies, rules, and changes to our judicial election system that would increase its fairness, independence, and increase its responsiveness to the community and the rule of law.

**Judicial Public Financing**
Laws, rules, and practices that regulate spending on campaigns for judicial office.

**Language Equity / Assistance**
Laws, rules, and practices that decide which voting materials are translated and into which languages, typically called minority language assistance. We reject the ‘minority’ term because it is pejorative and centers the United States as the demographic norm.

**Legal Financial Obligation**
Fines and restitution typically exacted to a person who violates the law by a judge or judicial entity.

**Majority-Marginalized Districts**
An electoral district where the majority of the electorate are people of color. Proponents of this type of district contend that communities of color are usually communities of similar interests, and thus, would elect candidates that amplify their needs and solve their problems. Those against argue that creation of these districts is gerrymandering and can act to consolidate a single type of vote, and therefore, dilute that vote in other nearby jurisdiction. We recommend the creation of these districts because they amplify traditionally marginalized voices and increase reflective democracy.

**Marginalized Communities**
Groups of people who have been displaced, alienated, or otherwise made to feel unwelcome in dominant society, and thus, live at the sides of dominant society, often with lesser living conditions and/or rights and status.

**Measuring & Tracking Candidate Demographics**
A program or group that would actively count the ethnicity, income, and other variables about elected officials and campaign consultants. Measuring candidate and campaign consultant demographics is helpful to understand who is representing us and which communities are left out of elections and campaigning.

**Merit Selection**
A system to elect judges where a panel of decision-makers nominate and/or appoint on judges to serve.

**Multi-Member Districts**
Election districts where voters choose more than one representative to serve their district as part of a larger elected body.

**National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)**
Voting rights law passed in 1993 that mandates voter registration activities at government agencies, also known as Motor Voter Law because many voter registrations under NVRA come through state-based department of licensing facilities.

**Participatory Decision Making**
A method of decision-making where all people included provide input into the ultimate decision. For example, a participatory lawmaking program in Ireland allows citizens to submit proposals to become law. People vote on those proposals, and the top voted laws become law. Participatory decision making could be used to make law, decide a budget, criminal justice and sentencing, and other areas where many voices are better than a few.

**Partisan**
An individual or effort that supports a specific political party, cause, or set of political parties and causes.

**Post-form of elections**
Also known as First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) or winner-takes-all, is a type of plurality electoral system where voters vote for a candidate, and the candidate who receives the most votes wins the election.

**Prepaid postage**
In Washington, we have mail-in ballots. Prepaid postage would add a stamp or another form of state-subsidized postage symbol to each ballot. In theory, this would remove the financial cost associated with voting and remove the burden of locating a stamp, thereby allowing more people to vote and increasing voter turnout.

**Proportional Representation**
A type of electoral system where seats are gained in a legislative body according to the number of people who vote for them.
Public Disclosure Commission
The Washington State Public Disclosure Commission is a state-based quasi-judicial agency that regulates and centralizes campaign finance rules, data, and other information related to campaign finance. Voted into creation in 1972 via I-276, an initiative to the people, the main functions of the agency are to collect campaign finance reports and make them public. Commissioners are appointed by the Governor and confirmed through a Senate process to serve one five year term. To maintain a balance of partisan affiliation, no more than three Commissioners can be from the same political party and no Commissioner can be involved in electoral politics.

Public Institution
Agencies, commissions, and boards typically created through legislative processes or citizen initiative that act to serve the good of community members within its jurisdiction.

Races for Office
Jargon, a metaphor used to symbolize the campaign or path to elected office as a sport race. For example, a candidate running and winning a campaign for Governor is said to have "won the race for Governor."

Racial Equity
Rules, practices, norms, and ideas created to prioritize the needs and issues of those most impacted by oppression and discrimination based on skin color. Racial equity is used to close gaps in economic and social issues such as the black and brown wealth, housing, education, healthcare, and food gaps.

 Ranked Choice Voting
Also called preferential voting, ranked choice voting (RCV) is an electoral system that allows voters to create a hierarchy of their choices for elected office. The candidate with the most top-preference votes wins. RCV is often accompanied by instant runoff voting to tally the winner of the race for elected office.

Recusal Rules
Policies, norms, and practices that cause or incentivize a judge to remove themselves, or be removed, from hearing a case.

Reflective Democracy
A movement to promote more people of color, low-income people, women, veterans, immigrants, and professions into elected offices to create a base of representatives that genuinely look like the communities they represent, and therefore, have a greater chance of serving with the knowledge of the lived experiences and needs of their communities.

Reform Movement
Various groups of people and organizations who come together under a shared vision of changing current law(s), norm(s), rule(s), or practice(s)

Registered Voter
An individual who is on the list or in the database of people authorized to vote in an election for elected office.

Residual Vote Rate
The sum of over- or under-votes for a race, or the number of votes that cannot be counted for a race. An overvote occurs when a person votes for more candidates than allowed for a particular race for elected office. An undervote occurs when a person indicates no vote for a candidate for a particular office.

Single-member district
An electoral jurisdiction structured where one candidate wins the race for elected office for that jurisdiction and is elected as the only representative to a multi-member body, such as a state legislature.

Small Donor Public Financing
A system of rules, laws, and practices that create a state or locally funded method for residents to support candidates for elected office financially.

Social Movement
A group of people and/or organizations formed and guided by a vision to change, shift, or enhance issue(s) impacting communities or entities of interest to that group. Examples of social movements are the Poor People’s Campaign born out of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.

Strategic Planning Retreat
A process, or part of a process, where people come together to form a shared vision, purpose, and plan of action to address issues and/or coordinate efforts around a shared goal, such as reforming our democracy.

Term limits for elected office
Rules, laws, norms, or practices that limit the number of elections and years a candidate can win and serve in a particular seat.

Tokenization
A practice and state of being where a person of color is placed in an environment or championed solely due to the advantages their skin color could bring to the environment or issue. Tokenization often disregards the value of the individual in favor of the perceived advantages their skin color could bring. Those who are tokenized are often left to feel used, silenced, and often complain of their voices not being heard and ideas not being incorporated into working plans or strategies, but the person is still being asked or required to be present to show that they are valued and heard.

Un/Contested Races
Elections for office where one person runs, often the incumbent, and no candidate runs against them.

Underrepresented Populations
Also labeled New American Majority (NAM), Rising American Electorate (RAE), or communities of color (COC) in the case of race, groups and communities who have been left out of the political and decision making processes in their states and municipalities due to issues like racism, poverty, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism.
**Voter Turnout**
The number of people who voted in a particular election.

**Voting Rights Act**
A set of laws and rules created to eliminate barriers to the vote by jurisdictions seeking to suppress, limit, dilute the vote of traditionally underrepresented populations like communities of color. Voting Rights Acts can be state or federally based.

**Voting Rights Act, Section 203**
Section 203 of the federal voting rights act is a set of laws put in place in 1975 to ensure proper translation of voting materials into languages spoken by 7,500 voting age residents or 10% of a jurisdiction’s voting-age residents where limited English literacy is higher than the national literacy rate. Languages translated include native/indigenous languages, Asian American languages, Alaska Native, and Spanish speaking languages. States are not required to limit their translated languages to this list of languages.

**Voting Rights and Access**
An issue-based campaign or set of campaigns that aim to eliminate structural and perception barriers to participating in the electoral process.

---

**SOURCES**


Original Research, Center for Tech and Civic Life 2017

Original Research, Maplight 2017

Original Research, Washington Community Action Network 2017


