



CENTER FOR
TECH AND
CIVIC LIFE

Excellent elections, everywhere.

ANNUAL REPORT **2023**



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Who We Are

We connect Americans with the information they need to be civically engaged, and ensure that our elections are more professional, inclusive, and secure.

Our Approach



We equip local election departments with the best-in-class tools they need to improve operations, build trust, and run successful elections.



We provide the information that U.S. voters need to develop healthy, lifelong habits of civic engagement.



We advocate for federal election infrastructure funding, so election departments have the resources they need to continue to safeguard our elections.

Letter from our Executive Director

In the world of elections, there are no “off years.” Election officials’ work does not pause in odd years, and neither does ours. In 2023, it was as important as ever to promote civic engagement among voters, and support election officials as they both administered local-level elections and readied themselves for 2024.

We saw voters across the country make decisions about their local government—electing mayors, city commissioners, school board members, and weighing in on amendments and referendums. We’re proud to have empowered thousands of Americans with the information they needed to participate in these local elections, whose results have a direct impact on their communities, and their day-to-day life.

We’re grateful to have been able to gather in person with election officials more than we ever have in the past—attending election conferences in 43 states, and hosting three convenings of our own. We’ve come away from those gatherings with a renewed sense of respect for their commitment to democracy—and we always manage to have a great time together (especially when a little competition is involved). We won a murder mystery contest in Georgia, received the bronze medal in a sand castle contest in Maryland, and have sung karaoke on more than one occasion!

Being in the field together has not only brought us great joy; it has also allowed us to listen to election officials’ needs and build programs that allow them to enter into 2024 feeling prepared, confident, and supported. In addition to creating tools to address election officials’ most pressing concerns, we haven’t stopped making the case for increased federal funding so they have the resources they need to be able to run successful elections.

Our CTCL team is now bigger than it has ever been before. In 2023, we welcomed eight new team members across our Advocacy, Civic Information, Government Services, Communications, and Operations departments bringing us to 48 total staff. This increased capacity, diversity, and resiliency has powered us to lay the groundwork for excellent elections in 2024 and beyond.

TIANA EPPS-JOHNSON

*Founder and Executive Director
Center for Tech and Civic Life*





Supporting the Fundamentals of Democracy

Behind the scenes of American democracy are thousands of election officials in state and local governments working hard to make sure ballots are counted and voices are heard. CTCL supports election officials across the country with tools, training, and best practices to ensure U.S. elections are more inclusive and secure.

The U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence

Designed by local election departments, for local election departments

There are thousands of local election departments across the country that are responsible for administering elections, and when they don't have the resources and support they need, voters and our democracy pay the price. **That's where the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence comes in.**

The Alliance is a nonpartisan collaborative that is bringing together election officials, designers, technologists, and other experts to help local election departments improve operations, develop a set of shared standards and values, and obtain access to best-in-class resources to run successful elections.

During the first year of the program, we identified 15 local election departments to serve as a support system for each other and for other election departments across the country. These offices are recognized as U.S. Centers for Election Excellence. The inaugural cohort of Centers for Election Excellence is a **diverse group of U.S. election departments representing communities that range from more than 1 million voters to fewer than 3,000.** Centers are coming together to share best practices and shape a new set of voluntary, nonpartisan performance standards for the field. Their work will uplift and advance the profession of U.S. election administration for years to come.



Values and standards: a north star for U.S. election administration

In 2023, the Alliance launched its nonpartisan values as the guiding lights for a path forward. These values represent more than a year of collaboration between election officials, designers, technologists, and other experts who are committed to improving election operations. These define our shared vision for the way election departments across the country can aspire to excellence.



Putting these ideals into practice, the Alliance released the first of our draft voluntary, nonpartisan [Standards for Election Excellence](#) for public comment at the end of 2023, with more to come throughout 2024. The standards explicitly define excellence for U.S. election administration. Each standard defines goals that are achievable by all local election departments across the country. This means local election departments who pursue the standards will identify the approaches that make sense for their achievement of the standards based on their unique context. In the end, election officials who achieve the standards will have streamlined processes they are proud of and will deliver a voting experience that builds trust with the public.



Regardless of size or location, local election offices and their staff benefit from being connected and learning from each other. I appreciate how the Alliance is centering local election departments—and voters—in their work.

AL SCHMIDT, FORMER PHILADELPHIA CITY COMMISSIONER



The first standards focus on developing and maintaining a successful poll worker program, since poll workers directly affect the voting experience for millions of Americans. This means that when local election departments have the right resources to run successful poll worker programs, voters and our democracy benefit.

Take it from local officials: “The simple reality is that you just can’t have a successful election without a strong poll worker operation,” said Pam Anderson, former Jefferson County, Colorado Clerk and the 2022 Republican nominee for Colorado Secretary of State.

“By starting on poll worker management, the Alliance is tackling one of the key challenges all election departments face.”

In order to obtain buy-in from the field, we’ve invited members of the election community to review the poll worker standards before they are finalized. We’re proud to say that dozens of election offices, other government entities, and other organizations have weighed in on the poll worker standards so far.

Advancing election officials’ skills through nonpartisan professional development

At CTCL, we’ve always offered election officials affordable opportunities to expand their skills through tools and trainings. As a result, they’re able to conduct more trustworthy, inclusive elections, troubleshoot and prepare for problems in advance of Election Day, better inform their community with the information they need in order to vote, and increase civic participation. Since our inception, CTCL has trained U.S. state and local election officials who serve over 1/2 of America’s eligible voters.

With the launch of the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence, we bolstered our training program to directly align with the values and standards of the Alliance. To support thousands of election departments as they work to achieve the poll worker standards, we created [four new nonpartisan poll worker trainings](#), hosted on our revamped online

training platform. As always, we’ve designed these trainings to be relevant to any election jurisdiction—regardless of size or location. It’s our hope that election departments across the country will find value in these offerings so they can lead successful poll worker programs, and ultimately, better serve their voters and boost public trust in the election process.

In 2023, we also continued to help election officials use nonpartisan tech solutions to promote civic engagement and make voting easier. We built and curated the latest field-tested tools, including an election website template, an app to measure how long it takes to vote on a ballot, and a simulation tool to allocate resources and minimize voter wait times. We’re proud that **our tools received over 3,500 downloads** in 2023.

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Bringing the elections community together

As part of our work to build a strong community of leaders in the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence, CTCL held three in-person convenings in 2023.

These were opportunities for Centers for Election Excellence and partners to support one another and lay the groundwork for the future of the Alliance.

For the first time, in early February 2023 CTCL hosted a three-day convening in Chicago, where local election officials came together, debriefed about the common challenges they faced during the 2022 election, and shared solutions. The three-day conference included a series of bipartisan panel discussions on topics including:

- Resilient and sustainable federal election funding
- Communications strategies to build public confidence in elections
- The evolving landscape of safety, security and the trustworthiness of elections.

Attendees included a diverse group of local election officials from rural, suburban and urban communities across the country.

During subsequent convenings in May and November, Centers for Election Excellence and partners got together to develop the initial set of standards for election excellence, fine-tuning the language and details for each standard. Through this rigorous, collaborative process, we ensured that election officials and other experts agree that these standards are achievable, will improve operations, and build public trust in their work.

Our May convening also offered the opportunity for members of the Alliance to tour an election office, allowing election officials to learn and grow from one another's best practices.



**FEBRUARY 2023
CONVENING**

3
Days

12
Centers for Election
Excellence in attendance

4 million+
Voters represented



I saw election officials learn from each other, make connections, celebrate their hard work, and leave with new energy. We need more of these kinds of moments for professional development in the field.

TIANA EPPS-JOHNSON,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CTCL



Looking Ahead

Through 2024, the Alliance will continue sharing sets of voluntary, nonpartisan draft standards for local election departments. Moving forward, rolling standards releases will cover common responsibilities managed by local election departments, including communications and security.

The next step after setting the standards for election excellence is to encourage election departments across the country to pursue those standards. That's why in 2024 we're beginning to develop a nonpartisan certification program—hosted on an online portal—so election departments can be acknowledged for their accomplishments. For election departments that successfully meet the standards, the Alliance will award a public designation.

To support election departments every step of the way as they pursue certification, we'll be sharing case studies that showcase what is possible for local election departments to achieve. Plus, we'll continue to collaborate with experts in the field to create publically available, **nonpartisan trainings and resources** that election officials can access any time, arming them with the tools they need to run successful elections in 2024 and beyond.





Empowering Voters with Civic Information

Local government officials have a direct impact on our lives. But all too often, we have very little information about them when it comes time to vote. That's where we come in. We provide affordable, open-source civic data, so that voters have access to the information they need to make informed decisions on their ballot.

Data for the People

Americans deserve accurate, nonpartisan information about their elections and elected officials.

Through our data, millions of Americans have found the answers to important civic questions like, “what’s on my ballot”, “who are my elected officials?” and “what do my elected officials do?” CTCL’s data has been accessed **over 250 million times** through partnerships with major technology companies in the country. 2023 was an exciting year as we advanced on our

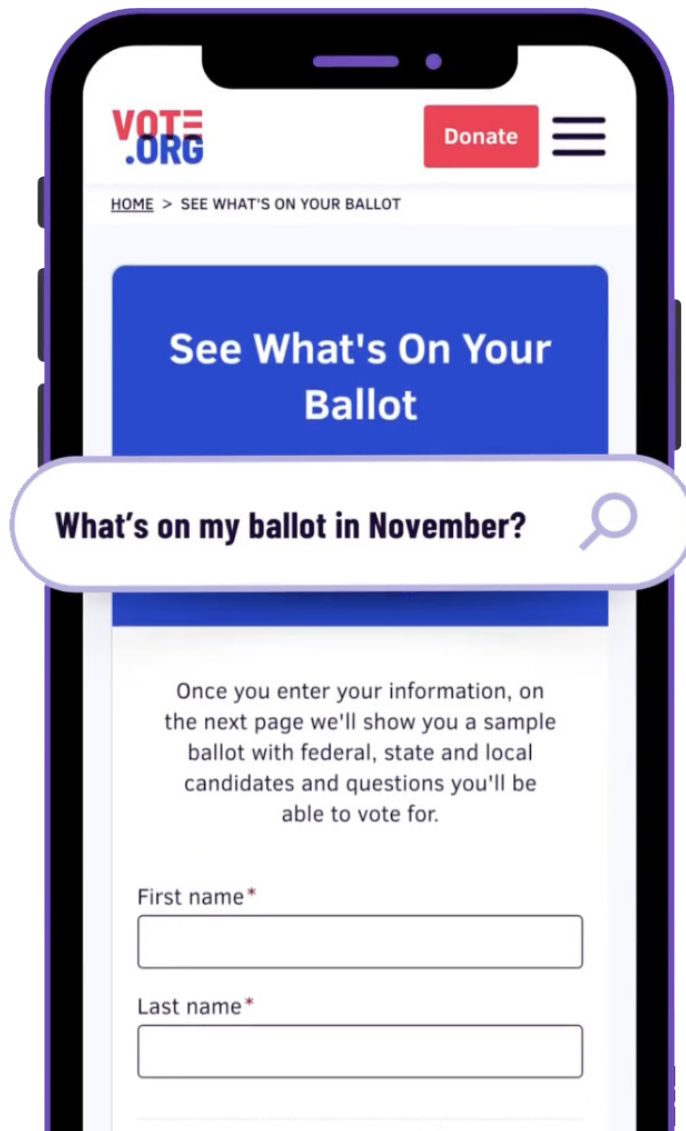
mission to connect Americans with accurate and trustworthy information about what’s on their ballot and who represents them in office. Thanks to our impactful partnerships with Vote.org, ActiVote, and WeVote, **we connected over 110,000 people with ballot data and representative data in 2023.**

What’s on my ballot?

Even though 2023 was an odd-numbered year, elections still took place at the state and local levels of government. Our Civic Information department was excited to continue our partnerships with [Activote](#), [WeVote](#), and [Vote.org](#), to help voters find accurate, nonpartisan information about what was on their ballots.

We’re proud that over **77,000 voters** accessed our ballot data through Vote.org’s ballot lookup tool, with **60% of users being under the age of 35**. Additionally, nearly 35,000 voters accessed our data through the ActiVote app, which had an immediate impact of a nearly **20% increase in voter turnout in 2023**.

In the fall of 2023, we expanded our data offerings so that we can connect Americans with even more salient civic information. Notably, in partnership with Vote.org, we expanded our ballot data coverage to include school board candidates in select states. This marks an important step toward providing digital ground truth on hyperlocal contests.



CTCL’s data has been accessed over 250 million times.

Who represents me?

At CTCL, we’re proud to say **our dataset of officeholders is the most comprehensive and among the farthest reaching in the country.**

Thanks to our partnership with Google, when someone searches for something like, ‘Who is the governor of Illinois?’, our data helps power results, so that people can easily look up which elected officials represent them.

In early 2023, we updated our [Governance Project](#) dataset to reflect all the changes in officeholders that resulted from the 2022 midterm elections. In total, **we updated over 50,000 officeholders**, ultimately helping voters answer the question, “Who represents me?”

OUR DATA PARTNERS INCLUDE:



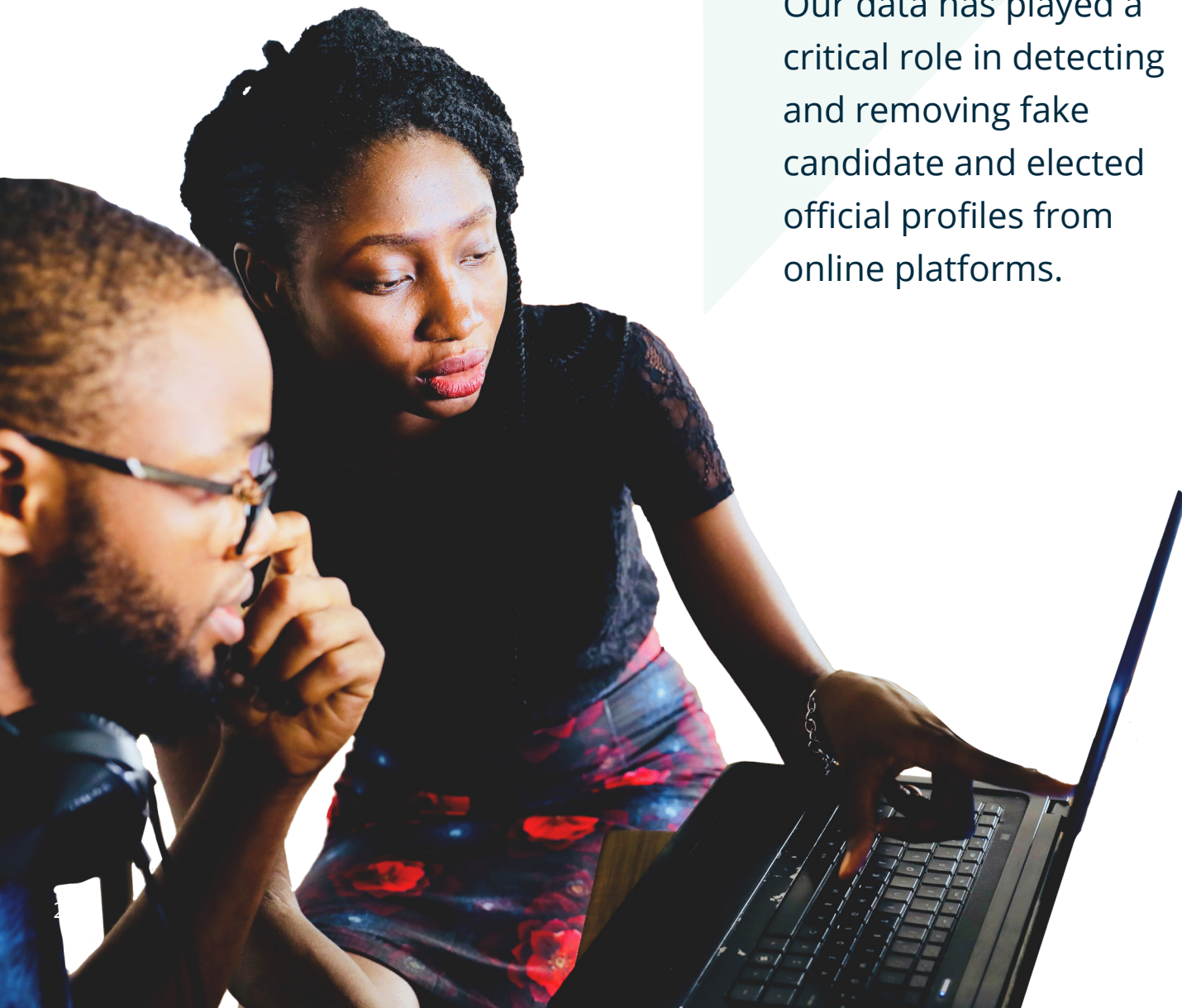
Combating mis- and disinformation

At a time when mis- and disinformation about elections and voting is plaguing digital platforms, we combat these threats by amplifying trusted information from local governments themselves. Our data equips our partners with information about candidates, elected officials, and local election offices. This information in turn allows our partners to inform the public and combat false and misleading information on their platforms. Our data has played a critical role in detecting and removing fake candidate and

elected official profiles from online platforms, and enforcing policies and regulations that apply to accounts of candidates and elected officials.

In 2023, we forged a new partnership with the National Council on Citizenship. Through that collaboration, our data is helping to power [Junkipedia](#), which gives journalists, researchers and civil society organizations powerful tools to collect, track, analyze, and respond to mis- and disinformation spreading online.

Our data has played a critical role in detecting and removing fake candidate and elected official profiles from online platforms.



Looking Ahead

In 2024, we're gearing up for a significant election year. Through our partnerships, we'll continue to make it as easy as a click of a button for voters to get the accurate, trustworthy information they need to make informed decisions when filling out their ballot—either in the voting booth or at the kitchen table. We're pleased to continue our ongoing partnership with Google ahead of the 2024 election; our ballot information data will help power the Google Civic Information API—a public facing tool that enables developers to create third-party civic applications to connect users with ballot information and other voting information.

And while the Presidential and Congressional Elections are highly anticipated this year, there will be many, many more contests on the ballot at the local level. We're proud to be **adding over 5,000 candidates and officeholders to our 2024 dataset scope**, which currently comprises over 50,000 primary and General Election candidates and over 50,000 elected officials.

To ensure that all Americans have access to this information, we'll begin offering our data in other languages. In 2024, for the first time, we'll be offering our nationwide dataset of candidates in Spanish, **filling a massive need for over 40 million Americans who speak Spanish at home.**

Our Governance Project dataset, which includes all elected officials in the U.S. down to at least the county-level, and our Reflective Democracy dataset, which includes the race and gender demographics of all candidates and elected officials, allow us to **provide ongoing snapshots about these offices and identify demographic and geographic trends.** Using these datasets, throughout 2024, we'll be publishing a series of reports that dive into research on topics including:

- Local election official turnover rates
- Comparable turnover among other local elected offices
- Profiles of newly incoming local election officials.

Our goal is for these reports to be as impactful as possible by providing valuable, cite-able information for those working to support election administrators across the country.



Advocating for Investment in Our Elections

The Election Infrastructure Initiative—led by CTCL and the Center for Secure and Modern Elections—advocates for reliable, predictable, and sufficient federal funding of elections, ensuring that election departments across America have the essential resources they need to serve voters.

The Case for Increased Federal Funding

Local election infrastructure is critical infrastructure. It's time we fund it that way.

Election administrators at the state and local levels work tirelessly to facilitate our democratic system of government. But our election administrators face incredible challenges; a greater array of security threats today than ever before, including verbal threats to election workers, outdated infrastructure and equipment, and tensions in public trust in the electoral process.

Yet Congress has continuously neglected to adequately fund local election offices; federal appropriations have been variable since HAVA passed in 2002. This has left elections departments to make do with buildings that lack heat and electricity; technology that they purchased before the iPhone was invented, and staff that are overworked and underpaid (with many departments

lacking even a single full time employee dedicated to elections). These challenges and more highlight the inarguable need for significant and consistent federal investment in election infrastructure.

The [Election Infrastructure Initiative](#) was launched in 2021 to advocate for \$20 billion over 10 years in federal investments in critical election infrastructure. This funding represents a significant investment in our nation's election infrastructure and will help ensure free and fair elections now and into the future.

In recognition of our work, we're honored to have been voted as **National Issue Advocacy Organization of the Year** at [Gain Power's Powerful IDEA Awards](#).

The Election Infrastructure Initiative was launched in 2021 to advocate for \$20 billion over 10 years in federal investments in critical election infrastructure.

Mobilization in 2023

Throughout 2023, we persevered in the face of challenges in securing election funding at the federal level. In June, the House Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) committee released an outrageous budget proposal that would [eliminate federal funding for election departments and cut the EAC operating budget by nearly a third](#). In response, we cultivated bipartisan support and organized hundreds of local election officials to submit letters to their Senators, urging them to include election infrastructure funding in the FY24 budget. Our team circulated a [sign-on release](#), and local election officials were highlighted in [regional press](#) for their outreach.



Reliable federal funding is more necessary than ever to adapt to ever-evolving challenges. Otherwise, we risk further losing access to essential capabilities such as internet access, desks, shelving and personnel.

EDDIE SMITH,
KNOX COUNTY, TENNESSEE
ELECTION COMMISSIONER



In July, as a result of our efforts, we were relieved to see that not only did the Senate FSGG budget \$75 million in federal funding for local election offices, but the support was unanimous. Notably, the report language included a recommendation to ensure that federal resources are properly distributed down to the local level.

Throughout the fall, we persisted in the fight to get a final bill with \$75 million in allocated funds over the finish line. The Federal Appropriations process underwent various Continuing Resolutions (not to mention a Speaker of the House transition), and HAVA Security grants was the **only** grant line item in the Senate

FSGG bill that did not face a reduction to FY23 levels. As opposed to taking a “wait and see” approach as negotiations occurred, the Election Infrastructure Initiative used this time to scale up our bipartisan outreach to ensure that we did not face a backroom cut in any step of the process. During October and November 2023, we partnered with [Stand Up America](#) to drive over **40,000 total emails** to Congressional Leadership offices, calling for investment in our state and local elections. We ended the year strong with over **600 local election officials** taking at least one action to support election infrastructure.

Forging alternative paths to funding

As we continue to make the case for federal funding, we recognize that election departments can't sit idly by as they wait for the federal government to appropriate additional funds. That's why in 2023 we activated a number of alternative strategies to connect election departments with the resources they need.

For the first time in 2023, a specific portion of Department of Homeland Security funding was devoted specifically to election security. But many local election officials were not aware of this federal grant opportunity. We created an awareness campaign to make sure that local election officials knew what was available, and connected them to their respective State Administrative Agencies that manage the grants. Through this work, we were able to support the allocation of **\$16.4 million** to the top 40 most populous, high risk jurisdictions for security improvements in advance of the next presidential election.

In partnership with the [Institute for Responsive Government](#) and local election officials, we

helped to secure state level public funding totaling **\$108.25 million** for elections in the following states in advance of 2024:

- New York: \$40M
- Michigan: \$30M
- Maine: \$5M
- Massachusetts: \$5M
- South Carolina: \$3M
- Minnesota: \$1.25M

Securing these additional funds has provided these states with the opportunity to carry out urgent technological and data management upgrades, as well as competently comply with new election laws (such as Prop 2 in Michigan).

Plus, we supported Maui and multiple jurisdictions in Vermont in requesting recovery funds after major natural disasters destroyed their election facilities and equipment. This process helped to enhance relationships within agencies, and helped us to understand costs of a full election system rebuild, which will be useful in emergency situations in 2024.



WHO HAS TAKEN ACTION?

25+

current and former Secretaries of State

60+

current and former mayors

150+

nonprofit organizations

600+

local election officials

Thank you to our partners in organizations and election departments across the country.

Without your collaboration, none of this work would be possible.



Where We're Headed in 2024

As we move through 2024—what's sure to be a consequential election year—we at the Center for Tech and Civic Life are uniquely poised to support election officials and voters in bold, new ways. Together, we'll help bolster a more engaged and informed electorate, as well as a more resilient and well-resourced democracy.

We'll be bold leaders.

Whether we're setting the standard for what excellent election administration looks like, connecting voters with civic information, or advocating for federal election funding, our ambitious work in 2024 will require us to lead with courage and confidence. Collaborating with trusted partners, CTCL will lead the way toward achieving professional, trustworthy, inclusive, and secure elections in 2024 and beyond.

We'll ground ourselves without becoming stuck.

With ambitious programmatic work taking place during a General Election year, we understand that we may need to shift our approach to achieve our goals. While we may be able to make some guesses, we can't fully anticipate how the election administration landscape will change this year. We'll focus on what we can control—continuing to ground ourselves in our mission and vision—and adapt accordingly to the ever-changing needs of election officials and voters in the field.

We'll seek and share joy.

During what's sure to be a busy—and stressful—election year, we'll prioritize taking care of ourselves, our staff, our partners, and election officials. We'll continue to cultivate a culture where staff feel connected. We'll continue to uplift stories of election departments going above and beyond to make democracy happen. And we'll continue to celebrate election officials for the heroes that they are.



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