

Public Citizen 2024 Democracy Protection Campaign





Preventing Election Sabotage

MORE THAN A THOUSAND people involved in the deadly January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol have been prosecuted by the U.S. Justice Department.

But the risk of political violence is even higher today than it was three years ago.

On the front line: Election workers.

One-third of election workers—the nonpartisan, public-spirited women and men all across the country who make our elections work—report being abused, threatened or harassed just for doing their jobs.

The *PBS NewsHour* headlines a story: “*Election Workers are Being Bombarded with Death Threats.*”

The threat is so elevated this year that training for poll workers in Arizona now includes active shooter drills, and local election offices have been supplied with tourniquets, devices to barricade doors and hammers to break windows in case of an urgent need to escape.

Pause for a moment and take that in. Active shooter drills. Barricades. Tourniquets. For election workers!

Threats have helped drive from office 12 of the Arizona’s 15 county election chiefs. And in Pennsylvania, nearly 70 county election directors or assistant directors have left their jobs, affecting at least 40 of Pennsylvania’s 60 counties.



One in five election workers plan to leave their jobs before the 2024 election. In some states half the election workers have resigned. Other states are having an increasingly difficult time recruiting new election workers.

It’s hard to conduct a well-run election without trained and experienced election workers. And that’s the goal of these attacks. They’re part of a larger MAGA strategy to disrupt voting and undermine the public’s confidence in the integrity of the 2024 election.

But if we can’t run our elections fairly or if threats of violence are permitted to drive out those who properly count the ballots ... well, then it’s awfully hard to see making progress on anything else.

That's why I need your immediate help to mobilize the public to take action against this assault on our election workers and election infrastructure, push for new laws to protect election workers as well as the hardware used to record, tabulate and report votes, and combat the Big Lie and the explosion of misinformation designed to erode the public's trust in our election systems and the outcome of the 2024 campaign.

Our work is already making a difference.



Public Citizen is active in 37 states, working in coalitions with allied organizations to build broad grassroots support to pass strong legislation protecting election workers and the integrity of voting systems and data. And we're chalking up major wins.

Since January 2022, fifteen states have passed urgently needed reforms to protect election workers. At least 26 states have additional election worker protection legislation under consideration.

As the election approaches, we'll shift gears and focus on specific locales and states, confronting threats and making sure every vote is counted.

We're not going to let MAGA forces bully our democracy into submission.

You can learn more by visiting our state election safety legislative tracking system at <https://www.citizen.org/article/tracker-state-legislation-to-protect-election-officials>.



Scan here to see the most up-to-date information.



Protecting Against Deepfakes

IT BOGGLES THE MIND that we have to protect election workers from violence, but that's our reality.

Equally mind-blowing is another urgent threat to election integrity: Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated deepfakes.

Deepfakes are AI-generated pictures, video or audio that appear convincingly real but actually depict people saying or doing things they never did.

Deepfake technology is now very powerful.

We are already seeing early deployments of deepfake technology in U.S. elections, and more consequential uses in elections overseas. Deepfakes have already affected elections in Slovakia, Argentina, Pakistan and India.

It's not hard to imagine nightmare scenarios from political deepfakes in the near term in the United States. Absent preventative measures, we should expect political operatives of all stripes to employ deepfakes with devastating effect.

In a tightly contested election, a late-breaking deepfake showing a candidate slurring their words, plotting to rig election results, or disparaging a particular group could easily swing the results. A torrent of deepfakes could leave voters at a loss to wonder what's real and what's fake. And the prevalence of deepfakes could empower candidates to dismiss damaging authentic content as fake.

Here's why this is so likely. Without new laws, deploying deepfakes is completely legal. Completely unethical, but also legal.

So, we are leading the charge to ban political deepfakes. We petitioned the Federal Election Commission to issue a rule using their existing authority and continue to press the agency to act; we are also supporting federal legislation on political deepfakes.



Most exciting, we're making huge progress in states across the nation—from Idaho to Maryland, Alaska to Florida—to address the issue. We've had legislation to ban deepfakes introduced in all but three states. Eleven states now have new laws on the books at the time I'm writing this, and we anticipate a dozen or more additional states will act this year.

You can see our state tracker on deepfake legislation here: <https://www.citizen.org/article/tracker-legislation-on-deepfakes-in-elections/>.



Scan here to see the most up-to-date information.

We've made more progress, faster, on deepfakes than even our most optimistic projections. That success is a tribute to our foresightedness in identifying the issue, our creative campaigning and the expertise we bring to the table.

But we must do still more—and we will, with your help.

We're not going to sit idly by while Big Tech irresponsibly introduces new, chaos-creating technologies. Instead, we're racing ahead to prevent a deepfake-fueled democratic unraveling.

That's a lot of scary stuff. And it's very real—we're not talking about far-fetched scenarios.

But if it's okay with you, I'd like to switch gears for a moment and talk about some POSITIVE things.





Transformative Democracy Reform

IT FEELS LIKE A LONG time ago, but in fact it was only two years ago that we came within a whisker of winning the most far-reaching democracy legislation of the last 50 years.

In 2022, we fell just two votes short—Senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema—of reforming the filibuster and passing the *Freedom to Vote* and the *John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Acts*.

In 2025, if things go well, we'll get to have another shot—and neither Manchin nor Sinema will be around to undermine the effort.

And this time, we're going to pass this desperately needed and vital legislation.

Winning will shift the political terrain. In combination, the *Freedom to Vote Act* and the *John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act* will:

- End the use of Dark Money in elections;
- Restore and strengthen the *Voting Rights Act*, giving it back its teeth after successive guttings by the U.S. Supreme Court;
- Make it much easier to vote by creating nationwide standards for early voting and voting by mail and ensuring no one would have to wait in long lines to cast their ballot;
- End partisan gerrymandering;
- Establish protections against election denialists and those who aim to sabotage election administration;
- Support public funding of elections.

Passing the *Freedom to Vote* and the *John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Acts* will deepen and widen our democracy. They will immediately diminish corporate influence and break the gridlock preventing countless legislative reforms. A very, very big deal.

We know Koch Industries, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the billionaires, ExxonMobil and the whole cast of interests that depend on a compromised political system will be mobilizing against us.



These bills didn't fall from the sky. Public Citizen played a major role in crafting them.

Even more importantly, we did the long-term organizing and coalition building that made them possible and convinced Congressional leaders to prioritize them.

Our grassroots organizing in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's 2010 *Citizens United* decision—the one that held that corporations could spend whatever they wanted to impact elections—showed there was popular support for democracy reform.

Then in 2017, in response to the democratic deprivations of the Trump administration, we organized a strategy retreat for key pro-democracy organizations. Together, we theorized that a post-Trump moment would give us an opportunity to win far-reaching democracy

reform. We agreed on the need for a broad, pro-active, pro-democracy legislative package. And we identified the need for a wide-ranging, inclusive and formal coalition to drive the work.

Out of that meeting came the Declaration for American Democracy, an expansive coalition that led the charge for the *Freedom to Vote* and the *John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Acts*.

Now, we're poised to apply that same strategic and organizing sensibility and win.

As we look forward to 2025, and, depending on the outcome of the election this November, we have all the pieces in place to win passage of these bills.

We have the legislation. We have commitment from political leadership. We have the coalition. We have the polling to show the overwhelming support of the American people.

And we have the strategy to move these bills across the finish line, including by obtaining reform to filibuster rules.

But here's the thing. Executing that strategy requires that we ramp up investments now, including in key states to stiffen the spines of any senators or representatives who may waver on the need to pass these measures.

We know Koch Industries, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the billionaires, ExxonMobil and the whole cast of interests that depend on a compromised political system will be mobilizing against us.

Of course, we can't match their money. But with your help, we can pull together sufficient resources to organize and mobilize across the country and overcome their money power with people power.

That, ultimately, is what it's all about.



Your Role in this Pivotal Year

THIS ELECTION YEAR MAY well pose the greatest test our democracy has faced since the Civil War.

It's entirely possible that the horrific images of January 6 will soon be eclipsed in our memory by something even worse.

But we're dedicated to the core to get our country—all of ours—on the right track.

That's why Public Citizen is doing everything we can to protect the integrity of this year's election ... and, going forward, doing the hard work of rebuilding our democracy.

But it won't be easy. It will take all of us pulling together, and I'm asking you to do your part.

Please take a moment right now and use the enclosed envelope to send whatever contribution you can afford.

Thank you.





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