

Defending Free and Fair Elections in 2024

April 2024

The 2024 election poses a direct threat to American democracy and constitutional order. We face a powerful, coordinated plan to rig elections, target voters of color, and subvert results. We must strengthen the system to produce free, fair, trusted outcomes in this critical year.

We have a four-part strategy to protect the election. Our efforts concentrate in battleground states, including Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, and Texas, where we have deep ties and demonstrated effectiveness.

The Brennan Center for Justice is the nation's leading, largest, and longest-standing nonpartisan hub for democracy. We have honed a unique model for change over nearly 30 years. Today, we work on an increasing scale and larger stage. With a staff of 160 and budget of \$52 million, we are ready for the challenge.

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Block Election Subversion

Election deniers failed in 2022. But they have not stopped their efforts to undermine democracy. Partisans will seize on rare machine breakdowns and the age-old myth of voter fraud to sow distrust. They will mobilize vigilantes to drive chaos and intimidate officials and voters. We are developing legal tools and advocating for policy guardrails to stave them off.

>> We wrote the national [plan](#) to save the last presidential election. We are leveraging our credibility to urge states to adopt five [essential steps](#) to ensure integrity in 2024. Among our goals: clear standards of conduct for poll watchers and concrete improvements to the handling of mail ballots. We have begun to conduct a series of closed-door trainings for top officials and attorneys general as we approach November.

>> We must prepare to win in court if radicals try to upend elections. We co-lead the Election Sabotage Legal Response Network, a coalition ensuring field-wide coverage and coordination. As the key link across civil rights, good government, and academic communities, we mobilize stakeholders and ready emergency litigation to force certification of results, block attempts to throw out votes, and shut down intimidation schemes.

>> In 2023, we directed the successful outside legal and messaging campaigns in *Moore v. Harper*. This U.S. Supreme Court decision soundly rejected the principal legal strategy of election deniers—the claim that state legislatures have unfettered power to gerrymander and suppress votes. Despite attempts by Trump and his allies to revive it, we continue to make clear: the “[independent state legislature theory](#)” is dead.



Ban Guns at Voting Sites

The U.S. has more guns than people. Threats of political violence and the Supreme Court's extreme Second Amendment doctrine pose new dangers. Our [study](#) with Giffords Law Center found that *only 12 states* have clear laws barring all guns at polls and only two prohibit them near ballot drop boxes. We are advancing model legislation to change that. So far, our efforts helped win a ban on open carry near voting sites in New Mexico. Next up: Colorado and Michigan.

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Support Election Officials

America’s election workers are heroes. They are **under attack**—and the Brennan Center plays a lead role in protecting them. Over the past five years, our advocacy has helped secure \$1 billion in funding for state election administration.

>> Our in-house team of former officials—including two secretaries of state—partners with administrators to **secure** infrastructure and prepare for disruptions. For example: Arizona asked us to help rewrite its election procedure manuals to preempt future “**fraudits**,” the partisan reviews pushed by election deniers.

>> We convene dozens of officials from the biggest cities and counties on a monthly basis to assess challenges, train for crises, and share best practices. This group represents the most diverse pockets of the electorate, such as Harris County (Houston), where voters and officials face harsh attacks.

>> We are **confronting** new threats posed by AI-supercharged disinformation. Starting in Arizona, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, we are running a series of simulation exercises to help administrators prevent, detect, and respond to “deep fakes” and other dangers. We will distill our findings into a report with actionable recommendations for all 50 states.

De-escalate Political Violence

Election officials told us: they need law enforcement’s help. So we organized the Committee for Safe and Secure Elections, a coalition uniting these historically disconnected communities. The group educates police and sheriffs on their role in defending democracy. In its first year, CSSE briefed dozens of influential audiences, such as the National Sheriffs’ Association; built relationships with officials representing nearly 40 percent of American voters; and successfully urged new state-level protections for election workers. Learn more at safeelections.org.



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Fight Voter Suppression

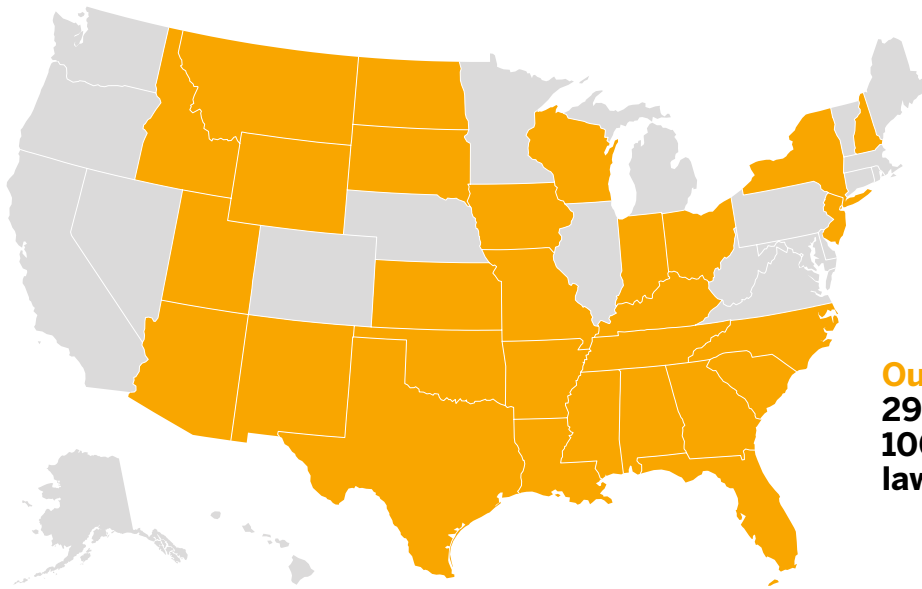
Elections hinge on razor-thin margins. A 2023 U.S. Supreme Court [decision](#) has led to new congressional maps and political shifts in Alabama, Louisiana, and elsewhere. We serve as a research, strategy, and communications resource in the national fight for voter access.

>> Communities of color are hit hardest by voting restrictions. In a [landmark study](#) relying on nearly a billion data points, we found the turnout gap between white voters and voters of color has grown consistently since 2012—and nearly twice as fast in places previously covered by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. We routinely expose new attacks through our [Voting Laws Roundup](#) and other research.

>> Our experts—including the former chief counsel to lawmakers combating the Alabama gerrymander—are scrutinizing proposed maps across the country to ensure they are more competitive and better reflective of communities of color.

>> The Ohio legislature defied five state court rulings we won against its extreme gerrymander. We joined our plaintiffs on a cross-partisan campaign to put independent redistricting on the 2024 ballot. We lend nonpartisan policy expertise, research firepower, and media savvy to this and other state battles.

States That Have Enacted Restrictive Voting Laws Since *Shelby County v. Holder*



**Our research showed:
29 states added nearly
100 restrictive voting
laws in the last decade.**

Source: Brennan Center analysis of publicly available data from 2013–2023.

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Win Public Support

We also aim to win in the court of public opinion. With 350,000 newsletter subscribers and a wide social media following, the Brennan Center is a trusted source of information and analysis. Journalists and allies use our research, op-eds, and explainers—digestible written and multimedia products—to drive awareness and impact.

>> Americans still rely on television networks to declare the winner of presidential elections. We will regularly brief the major news broadcasters as we did in 2020, when we had a formal partnership with ABC News.

>> Trump *and* election denial are **on trial** this year. We will leverage the ongoing legal drama to tell a broader story about democracy, mobilizing our following to amplify facts and dispel disinformation.

>> We employ cutting-edge opinion research to shape messaging strategy. We have retained Obama's pollsters and other national firms to glean public sentiment on the state of democracy and election integrity.

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en español

Reach Latino Voters

Brennan en español provides tools to empower Latino communities to tackle disinformation. We will expand and diversify our content in the lead-up to November, including through a monthly column in *La Opinión*—the nation's largest Spanish-language newspaper—and a partnership with the media literacy organization *Factchequeado*. We also collaborate with major media outlets such as *Univision* and *Telemundo*. Visit brennancenter.org/es to learn more.



Pablo Medina

Join our Fight

This work requires sophistication and scale. **We budget to spend approximately \$35 million on protecting the election—more than double the amount we spent on the 2020 cycle.**

Among the costs we account for: staff time for nearly 90 election-focused attorneys, researchers, and other strategists; expanded communications capacity, including best-in-class media and polling firms; and investments to strengthen our institution at this crucial moment.

Your financial support and networks can help to ensure our maximum impact. **At our current fundraising pace, election revenues are expected to fall short of expenses by up to \$10 million.** We have launched a campaign to close this gap through new and increased giving.

The Brennan Center is proud to have earned the trust of 40,000 donors and a perfect score from Charity Navigator. We receive no support from the government or NYU. We rely on individuals and families to provide the bulk of our annual funding. Institutional philanthropy, law firms, and business partnerships are also critical to our success.

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