

**THE DEMOCRACY PROJECT**  
**VALUES & VISION PLATFORM**  
AN INITIATIVE OF THE STATE INNOVATION EXCHANGE (SIX)

## **OUR VISION**

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A strong democracy—where our government is of, by, and for the people—is essential to the basic rights and freedoms that we value in our country. A healthy American democracy, rooted in the power of the people, ensures that every person has an opportunity for their voice to be heard regardless of their race, education, age, gender identity, economic background, sexual orientation, religion, zip code, country of origin, incarceration status, or abilities. We must ensure that everyone is able to register and able to vote without unnecessary obstacles, is accurately counted in the census, lives in a fairly-drawn district where they can elect a candidate who represents them and is accountable to them. We must ensure everyone is granted equal access to our public leaders and the levers of power within all branches and levels of government.

The work to fulfill this vision of a true, robust democracy continues. Those who came before us worked tirelessly to secure the right to vote for women and people of color and to defeat restrictions that denied access to that right. We must continue that fight to ensure access to our democracy is, at last, fully extended to all citizens without impediment.

Our present challenges are real. Partisan gerrymandering, undermining census counts, and targeted election policies seek to deny a meaningful voice to voters across the country. The growing influence of money in politics has further thrown our democratic system out of balance and allowed the wealthy and well-connected greater access to our democracy. New threats from foreign and domestic actors illustrate the urgency to modernize and secure our election systems. Our lives are also increasingly demanding and busy, especially for those working more than one job to provide for their families. These barriers impact all Americans but have the most harmful impacts on low-income families and communities of color. The absence of equity, accountability, and transparency threatens our march towards a more perfect union. We have overcome comparable challenges before and we commit to ensuring that every voice is heard and that those in power understand that every voice matters. Our vision of an America with full, enthusiastic participation in our democracy will guide our work.

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## **OUR VALUES**

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### **EQUITY AND PARTICIPATION**

**We declare** that all aspects of our democratic system should be equally accessible to all people regardless of their race, education, age, gender identity, economic background, sexual orientation, religion, zip code, country of origin, incarceration status, or abilities.

**We designate** any system as unacceptable if it does not provide equal access and representation to all. We commit to the restoration of voting rights for the millions of Americans who are disenfranchised due to their exposure to the criminal justice system.

**We understand** that equity requires access and commit to ensuring public information, public offices, and ballots are accessible for all. We must ensure our democratic processes are accessible for those with disabilities, our public notices and ballots are understandable by the average person, and that those with limited English proficiency can participate fully.

### **GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY**

**We affirm** our commitment to government that answers to the people and will work to ensure every resident has equal representation in our society. This commitment requires a fair and complete census that accurately reflects our country's population, equal electoral power for voters, and equitable access to public officials so that all people can engage and hold our leaders to account.

**We believe** it is a fundamental function of government to facilitate public participation. Our democracy is strengthened when government offers robust voter registration opportunities, removes barriers to accessing the ballot and public officials, and works proactively to count all communities in the census.

**We decry** attacks on our democratic system, whether domestic or foreign, as attacks on the American public that require robust response. We proudly commit to provide the resources required to ensure a secure system so agencies and officials may focus on improving the democratic experience and defending our democracy.

**We embrace** innovation and technological advances that can modernize our systems while strengthening existing infrastructure.

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**TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY**

**We center** people over money and strive to halt and reverse the corrupting influence of money in politics electorally and during policy making. **We support** expanded disclosures and transparency for candidates, issue campaigns and lobbyists in order to eliminate campaign finance loopholes and the influence of dark money.

**We condemn** backroom-style processes and declare that a democracy should provide access and a record of actions taken. To enable trust and participation in government processes, **we commit** to building full transparency at all levels of decision making, from agenda setting to execution.

**We appreciate** that the privilege of elected office demands a high ethical code **and vow** to reform ethics requirements and codes of conduct for public officials and their staff at all levels of democracy across all branches of government.

**We refute** narratives that seek to undermine the confidence of communities and individuals who engage in our democracy in hopes of making an impact. Every person should be able to participate in democratic processes free from harassment and unnecessary bureaucratic barriers, with full confidence that their voices are heard.

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## **OUR COMMITMENT**

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**We believe** in the sacred duty of public office and honor our charge to act for a better future for our constituents and communities. **We believe** a robust, secure, diverse and representative democracy is the cornerstone of a more perfect union and that we will bring about a time in which democracy is so valued that we no longer see policy proposals meant to restrict it.

**We honor** those who came before us in the fight for a free and fair democracy. The foundation of our work was laid through their work and sacrifice. **We recognize** that our work would not be possible absent their decades of unrelenting dedication to ensure every American resident has an equal voice.

**We believe** in the power of the people and our duty as elected officials to protect the fundamental right to participate in democratic institutions. **We will defend** the essential rights that allow this participation including a free and fair press, the right to protest, and the right to organize in the workplace.

**We vow** to create a system in which every person can participate, be represented, and believe in the security of our democracy. **We know** that divisive narratives are meant to separate us and create insecurity within our democratic institutions. Through a focus on our shared values and not what separates us, we will work to create a more equitable and just society.

**We will work** with those who wish to strengthen our systems and will defeat those who wish to undermine democracy at any level.

**We commit** to bring robust and necessary reforms to our states to ensure an inclusive democracy lasts for generations to come. We will not be limited in our thinking but will boldly work to transform our democratic systems to ensure accessible and rewarding participation.

**We strive** to re-center democracy as a positive focus of the American experience. **We endeavor to create** an America with enthusiastic, full participation and representation knowing that the more people participate in our democracy, the stronger it becomes.

Leveraging the innovation and inspiration of our linked network of colleagues from around the country, **we promise** to use the power of our voices and the privilege of public office to advance these values and this vision and invite our colleagues and allies to do the same.