



Securing democratic representation and accountability in the United States: Evaluation of Freedom2Vote

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Executive summary

Freedom2Vote is a leading non-profit civil society organisation focused on strengthening democratic accountability of elected officials by mobilising underrepresented groups through large-scale, innovative, data-driven voter registration programmes.

At a time when liberal democracy in the United States is experiencing an unprecedented erosion, Freedom2Vote’s approach to checking authoritarianism through targeted voter mobilisation is one of the most rigorously tested and cost-effective interventions in the civic space.

The organisation has demonstrated excellent results in increasing voter registration, which have been measured and replicated across multiple election cycles. For example, Freedom2Vote’s own and independently verified randomised controlled trial (RCT) for the 2024 presidential election found a +3.72 percentage point increase in voter registration and a +2.14 percentage point increase in turnout. This translates to approximately 280,000 new registrations and about 160,000 additional votes nationwide.

These statistically significant results persist across several election cycles, with individuals who registered in one election continuing to vote in subsequent elections.^a



^aStatistical significance in data analysis is a measure that helps determine the reliability of a study’s findings and whether they are likely to be genuine or if they occurred by chance. A result is considered statistically significant if it is unlikely to have occurred under the null hypothesis, which posits that there is no effect or relationship between the variables being studied, in this case Freedom2Vote’s programme and voting behaviour.

The cost-effectiveness of Freedom2Vote’s programmes is supported by a strong evidence base. Its programme for the 2024 elections achieved a cost per net voter registration of approximately \$54 and a cost per net vote of around \$94. This is considerably lower than the cost benchmarks for comparable civic engagement initiatives, which range between several hundred and several thousand dollars per net vote.^b

Freedom2Vote’s programme for the 2026 mid-term elections builds on this evidence base, with projections that, with full funding, its planned \$19 million effort would register over 350,000 voters and generate more than 200,000 additional votes in pivotal House and Senate races. This output would make it one of the most cost-effective interventions for encouraging voter participation in the United States today.

A non-partisan organisation under US tax law, Freedom2Vote maintains neutral language and content in its outreach to ensure compliance. It can receive funds from both US and foreign donors.



5 November 2024: Voters at a polling station in the Ridgewood neighbourhood of Queens, New York waiting to vote in the 2024 presidential election.
Credit Image: picture alliance / ZUMAPRESS.com | Apolline Guillerot-Malick

^bThese claims are based on private experimental data that can be shared in greater detail with trusted donors. Interested donors can contact us at hello@powerfordemocracies.org.

Problem analysis

The United States is currently facing the most serious challenge to its democracy in recent history. For decades, it has been coded as a ‘full democracy’ according to Polity’s democracy index. The country is now experiencing rapid democratic backsliding under the second administration of President Donald Trump and facing potentially existential risks due to executive overreach, threats to free and fair elections, persecution of political opponents, defied court orders, and domestic deployment of the US military, among other authoritarian moves.

Yet the United States remains highly tractable – its civil society sector is extensive, active, and unusually capable of measuring impact. US democracy remains a neglected cause. Cost-effective organisations are underfunded and cannot scale their programmes for maximum impact. Power for Democracies’ analysis highlights voter mobilisation targeted at marginalised and underserved voters as one of the most cost-effective levers for expanding democratic participation in ways that ensure pro-democracy outcomes.

With the 2026 mid-term elections approaching, the opportunity to reinforce democratic accountability through this form of increased civic participation is urgent. When election outcomes are close – as may well be the case in both 2026 and 2028 – civil society working to mobilise underrepresented voters can play a decisive role in holding elected officials and politicians accountable and checking authoritarianism. This has pervasive impacts both in the United States domestically and internationally, due to US global influence.

The initiative

Freedom2Vote conducts a nationwide voter registration programme aimed at expanding civic participation among eligible but unregistered citizens. Its voter turnout initiative mobilises segments of the population that have been systematically underrepresented in the democratic process.

The civil society organisation pursues an innovative approach: it finds underutilised data and uses statistical models to identify and register new voters as early as possible in 2026, the mid-term election year. This encourages people who are unregistered yet eligible to vote to participate in elections.

Specifically, Freedom2Vote’s programme uses thousands of public data sources to identify millions of new eligible voters.

These include people who have either:

recently reached voting age (18 years)

moved to a new voting address

returned from incarceration

Freedom2Vote then analyses all the available data to target marginalised voters (especially young as well as racial and ethnic minority voters) and facilitates their registration process. It mails nearly completed registration forms and return envelopes directly to eligible citizens in key states and districts. Follow-up communications provide reminders and assistance to ensure completion.



While this approach may appear straightforward, Freedom2Vote is set apart with its innovative data sources, scale and precision of execution, and its rigorous evaluations. Whereas most voter engagement efforts in the US target individuals already on voter rolls, seeking to increase turnout among existing registrants, Freedom2Vote focuses on undercontacted citizens who are likely to be interested in voting but do not appear on voter rolls. The organisation systematically contacts people who would otherwise remain invisible to campaigns and traditional civic voter programmes.

As high-quality evidence shows (see [‘Evidence base’](#)), the organisation has succeeded in expanding the electorate to a degree that can be decisive in close elections.

With sufficient funds, Freedom2Vote could target tens of millions of currently unregistered but eligible voters,^e thereby strengthening democratic participation and accountability. Each registration mail sent to a household has the potential to add at least one voter, and sometimes adds multiple new voters from the same household, often for several election cycles.

1 November 2025: College students gathered at a Get Out the Vote campaign rally New Jersey Democratic gubernatorial candidate for Governor Mikie Sherrill, featuring former president of the United States Barack Obama (not shown).
Credit Image: picture alliance / CNP/AdMedia

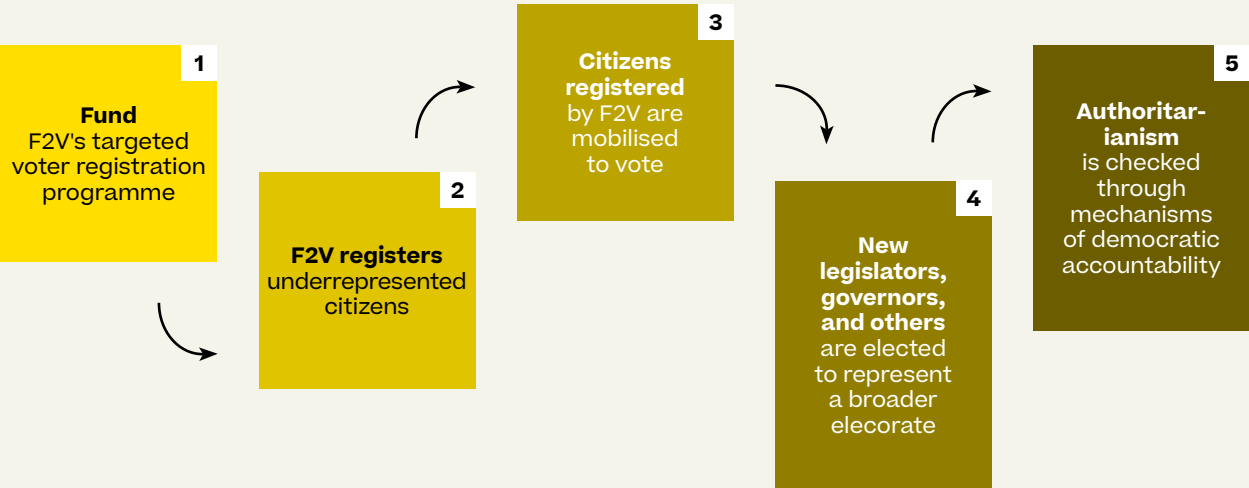
^eMore than one quarter of eligible voters in the United States are unregistered to vote (62 million), according to an April 2025 press release by the US Census; Freedom2Vote would target a subset of these voters. See: [2024 Presidential Election Voting and Registration Tables Now Available](#)

Theory of change

Freedom2Vote’s theory of change is grounded in the principle that democracy is most resilient when the electorate is broad, representative, and actively engaged. The organisation seeks to lower structural barriers to participation, converting eligibility into action where voters have the greatest power to decide on electoral outcomes (e.g. close races that may be decisive for the US House and Senate in 2026).

The barriers to voter registration faced by underrepresented groups in the United States often stem from systemic issues and restrictive laws that disproportionately affect marginalised groups.¹ The largest gains from Freedom2Vote’s programme have been observed with underserved Black and Latino audiences, though impacts have been consistently positive with all relevant subgroups.

Freedom2Vote’s theory of change



Inputs: Funding and data necessary to identify unregistered but eligible citizens.

Activities: Freedom2Vote posts personalised registration materials and sends follow-up reminders to underrepresented and underserved voters (such as young citizens, racial and ethnic minorities, and previously incarcerated people). Freedom2Vote specifically targets otherwise uncontacted voters and focuses on jurisdictions which have close elections whose outcomes are well-positioned to check executive power.

Outputs: Hundreds of thousands of voters targeted by Freedom2Vote will be registered, leading to voters casting ballots in strategically important, close elections.

Outcomes: Mobilisation of these voters allows their views and interests to be represented by newly elected state and federal representatives. Increased voter turnout signals that voters are engaged and will hold elected officials accountable for their actions, and newly elected officials can check executive power through budget allocation, subpoenas, judicial confirmations, and lawsuits, among other mechanisms of accountability.

Each Freedom2Vote programme cycle builds cumulative value by expanding the base of citizens who are then accessible for future engagement by other civic efforts. Important one-time interventions are thus translated into long-term benefits, too, such that both the 2026 congressional and the 2028 presidential elections will be positively affected.

This theory of change assumes that mobilising hundreds of thousands of voters can make a difference to the outcome of the upcoming elections. The evidence supports this assumption: for instance, highly competitive state-wide and congressional House races are often decided by just a few thousand or a few hundred votes.² Freedom2Vote’s programme can thus make a decisive contribution to democratic accountability.

Evidence base

Freedom2Vote’s approach is shown to be effective by the strongest empirical evidence available in the field of democracy protection: dozens of RCTs.

Focus4Democracy, an effectiveness-focused evaluator and donor network, independently reviewed the Freedom2Vote RCT evidence. It found that it met the highest methodological standards.³ According to the review, the evidence demonstrates consistent, replicable effects across multiple states and demographics.^f The +3.72 percentage point registration and +2.14 percentage point turnout increases observed in 2024 relative to uncontacted control groups are statistically robust, and their magnitude particularly large for a high-salience election environment such as the United States.⁴

Longitudinal data analysis of cohorts at different timepoints from 2020 through 2023 further demonstrates voter retention: once registered, new voters continue to participate in future elections. This compounds the value of early registration efforts and lowers the effective cost per vote over time.

Since its programme has a larger, more untapped target population, Freedom2Vote’s registration method yields higher marginal returns than other voter engagement tactics (which include door-to-door canvassing, ‘Get out the vote’ – GOTV mail only, phone banking, and last-minute digital outreach).

While traditional GOTV methods often yield smaller turnout lifts of already registered voters, Freedom2Vote’s interventions achieve greater increases that permanently enlarge the voter pool. Because all other engagement tactics benefit from this enlargement, the organisation’s approach both complements and enhances the space of voter engagement.

Importantly, focusing on voter registration allows Freedom2Vote to zero in on marginalised populations and grow the electorate in ways that support democratic accountability. These findings also align with broader evidence on the value of initiatives focusing on voter registration. Sustained increases in voter participation⁵ have been achieved primarily by lowering structural barriers to registration,⁶ especially for underrepresented groups.⁷ Freedom2Vote’s results confirm that this holds true even in such a competitive environment as the United States.



5 November 2024: 'I voted' stickers are distributed to voters at a polling station. The US Census estimated that just 65.3 per cent of eligible voters cast a ballot in the 2024 presidential elections.
Credit Image: picture alliance / ZUMAPRESS.com | Apolline Guillerot-Malick

^fThese claims are based on private experimental data that can be shared in greater detail with trusted donors. Interested donors can contact us at hello@powerfordemocracies.org for more information. Publicly available evidence on the results of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) on the cost-effectiveness of various texts can be found in research articles by David W. Nickerson, including, 'Do Voter Registration Drives Increase Participation? For Whom and When?' 77/1 (2015) pp. 88 - 101 The Journal of Politics, <https://doi.org/10.1086/678391>, and Bennion, Elizabeth A., and David W. Nickerson. 'I Will Register and Vote, If You Teach Me How: A Field Experiment Testing Voter Registration in College Classrooms.' PS: Political Science & Politics 49/4 (2016) pp. 867–71. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096516001360>.

Funding gap and use of funds

Freedom2Vote’s projected 2025–2026 programme budget totals approximately \$19 million, \$4-5 million of which has been secured from existing supporters, leaving an unmet need of approximately \$14–15 million.

This funding gap represents the difference between a very limited rollout and a fully scaled national programme reaching potential voters in 12–14 decisive states.

Funds would be allocated to:

printing and mailing of registration packets

monitoring, evaluation, and compliance

programme management and operational infrastructure

targeted digital follow-up and community-based coordination

With full funding, Freedom2Vote projects the registration of more than 350,000 new voters and an estimated 250,000 additional votes in 2026.



21 October 2024: Early in-person voting in Texas, where according to state data 18.6 million people were registered to vote in the 2024 presidential election.
Credit Image: picture alliance / Sipa USA | Carlos Kosienski

Cost-effectiveness

Freedom2Vote's 2024 programme achieved an estimated cost of \$54 per net registration and \$94 per net additional vote – substantially lower than the costs typical of voter mobilisation programmes in national elections, which range between several hundred to several thousand dollars per vote.⁹ When accounting for multi-cycle retention of new voters, the long-term cost per vote likely falls below \$80. Freedom2Vote thus offers donors an unusually tractable theory of change – turning out voters in nationally pivotal and likely close elections – as well as highly measurable returns on investment.

Freedom2Vote's long-term cost per vote is estimated to be less than \$80.

The broader evidence behind the tactic implemented by Freedom2Vote is strong, too. For instance, the Voter Participation Center, a US voter mobilisation organisation, estimates that non-partisan, informational postal mail (which has been the most consistently effective voter mobilisation tactic known for the last decade) cost \$277 in 2020 per net vote (\$347 adjusted for inflation in 2025). Vote America, another major voter empowerment group, estimates that in 2022, implementing this tactic cost \$218 per vote (\$238 in 2025).⁸ Rogers et al. found that the cost was as low as \$52 per vote in a high-salience recall election in 2012 in Wisconsin (\$73 in 2025).⁹

⁹These claims are based on private experimental data that can be shared in greater detail with trusted donors. Interested donors can contact us at hello@powerfordemocracies.org for more information.

Risks and mitigation

Freedom2Vote's approach carries limited risk and comparatively strong safeguards that ensure it maintains operational integrity while scaling impact safely:

Legal and regulatory: variation in state election laws may pose logistical challenges. Freedom2Vote mitigates this using proactive legal review to ensure adherence to all relevant regulations.

Operational: potential supply chain disruptions or mailing delays are mitigated by diversified vendors and redundancy planning.

Reputational: as a non-partisan organisation under the law, Freedom2Vote maintains its compliance by using neutral language and content in all its outreach materials.

Data security: the organisation employs secure, privacy-compliant processes for all data handling and evaluation activities.

Follow-up and learning plans

Freedom2Vote uses rigorous monitoring and evaluation protocols to track effectiveness and to continuously refine its methods. Each programme cycle incorporates independent validation and post-election analysis to assess outcomes and identify lessons for improvement. Metrics such as mail delivery confirmation, registration rates, and turnout differentials are systematically reviewed.



5 November 2024: A polling station in the Ridgewood neighborhood of Queens, New York, one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the country.
Credit Image: picture alliance / ZUMAPRESS.com | Apolline Guillerot-Malick

Conclusion and recommendation

Freedom2Vote demonstrates an unusually strong combination of innovativeness, empirical rigour, operational efficiency, and national scalability. By expanding the electorate among marginalised citizens, it delivers an immediately effective and durable contribution to democratic accountability and checks on authoritarianism by elected officials. Its unusually tractable theory of change and RCT-based cost-effectiveness make it a high-impact opportunity for donors seeking to counter democratic erosion in the United States and – given US global influence – worldwide.

Power for Democracies therefore recommends Freedom2Vote for full donor support as a top-tier investment in evidence-based democracy protection.

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