

United States: Freedom2Vote

Why US democracy needs support

The United States is experiencing acute democratic backsliding under the second administration of President Donald Trump, with executive authority systematically expanded and the separation of powers and structural checks and balances weakened.

In early 2025, the Polity Democracy Index rated the US as '0' on a scale from -10 to +10, with a negative -10 representing full autocracy and positive +10 marking full democracy. Previously, the United States had been ranked as a full democracy (+10) for decades.

The actions of the current administration have also set out to weaken civil society, which has traditionally provided important protections upholding US democracy. Globally, with the fundamental shift away from foreign assistance spending via executive order, the Trump administration has harmed important initiatives abroad through cuts to pro-democracy foreign aid.

However, the mid-term elections in 2026 and the presidential election in 2028 will mark a pivotal moment for democracy in the United States and around the world.

How to support

Non-partisan voter registration and mobilisation efforts are among the most effective pro-democracy tactics. In the United States, many citizens face barriers to registering and casting votes: about one-quarter of eligible citizens are not registered to vote, and one-third of eligible citizens did not vote in recent presidential elections.

An unusually strong evidence base consisting of hundreds of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) has shown that civil society is effective at mobilising US citizens to register and vote at a scale that decisively impacts the outcome of national elections. In particular, supporting underrepresented voters may significantly increase the probability of reversing the democratic backsliding in the 2026 congressional mid-term elections and the 2028 presidential election.

Who to support

Freedom2Vote is a non-profit organisation focused on strengthening democratic participation among underrepresented voters through large-scale, innovative, and data-driven voter registration programmes.

Freedom2Vote is non-partisan under US law and can receive funds from both US and foreign donors. Its programme generates an additional vote for as little as \$80. Further donor support would enable Freedom2Vote to operate a fully scaled national programme.

Registering voters for the 2026 elections also will have positive turnout effects for 2028. The data shows that Freedom2Vote's contribution to an expanded electorate is both immediate and durable.

For more information, donors can contact us at hello@powerfordemocracies.org.

About us

Power for Democracies strengthens and protects democracy by identifying and recommending highly effective civil society initiatives for donors to support. It is non-profit and non-partisan. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Power for Democracies.

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