2023 Annual Report

BLAZING NEW TRAILS

THE CENTER FOR Election Science

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VISION

Our vision is a world where democracies thrive because voters' voices are heard.

MISSION

The Center for Election Science is dedicated to empowering people with voting methods that strengthen democracy.

Follow us on social media

Letter from the **Board Chair**

Dear Fellow Reformer,

The Center for Election Science was founded thirteen years ago on a bedrock of science, transparency, and a passionate ambition to make America's democracy work the way it should. Out of those ideals, CES's founders, directors, and staff built an ethical, agile nonprofit that ultimately nurtured three impactful ballot measure campaigns. Two of those were overwhelmingly successful, and all deserve credit for bringing election reform to a new American city.

2023 was an extraordinary year for CES. Board and staff alike stepped up to take the organization on a journey of self-reflection and transformation. That journey culminated in the hiring of a new CEO, Nina Taylor. Nina brings vision, skill, experience, enthusiasm, and compassion to this role. Her competence and poise are inspiring, and her joyfulness is contagious.

I am so grateful and proud to be a part of this team, at this moment. Our board is engaged, our staff is empowered, and we are all excited to bring CES into its next era. I've never been more optimistic about this organization and its potential to do great work in the world.

This year will see CES moving forward intentionally, bravely, and collaboratively. On the solid foundation of election science, we are building a politically savvy organization capable not just of successful ballot measure campaigns, but of creating enduring systemic change. By listening, learning, and engaging, by recruiting allies and building partnerships, and with the support of our diverse community of champions, CES will continue to drive progress toward a democracy that works for everyone.

In solidarity and gratitude,

MICHAEL RUVINSKY
Board Chair
The Center for Election Science

> **"I am so grateful and proud to be a part of this team, at this moment. Our board is engaged, our staff is empowered, and we are all excited to bring CES into its next era."**

Letter from the **Chief Executive Officer**

On behalf of the board of directors and staff of The Center for Election Science, welcome to the 2023 annual report. Join us in celebrating 2023, "a year of firsts."

As the new CEO, I want to express how excited I am to lead this organization through its transformation. Our mission to strengthen American democracy through reform is more important than ever. I would like to extend my appreciation for your support, and the dedication of the staff, I am confident that together we are poised to have transformational impact during this pivotal election year.

I'm excited for you to read about the progress the team made in 2023, and the foundation they have built for future success.

For the first time, CES invested in legislative reform, working directly with legislators committed to improving voting. This inaugural effort has already yielded results as we celebrated new proposed legislation in Maryland, one of our target states, and a pathway forward in many other jurisdictions.

Our first series of in-person focus groups provided fresh insight into how Americans feel about voting and what messages resonate with them when we talk about approval voting. As we engage with stakeholders in the future and renew our focus of elevating our profile throughout the reform community, we are confident that our messaging will be clear and compelling.

Our research department developed a comprehensive and novel database of broken elections nationwide. We look forward to introducing our community to this new biennial report, *America Misrepresented*. This report will be a consistent offering published after every national election cycle.

None of these achievements would be possible without your steadfast support and commitment to our mission. Last year may have been a year of firsts, but we're ready to turn these investments into lasting change. Thank you for your ongoing support, which makes our work possible.

Onward,

NINA TAYLOR
Chief Executive Officer
The Center for Election Science

Fresh Strategies to Put Approval Voting Into the **Political Conversation**

At CES, we eat, drink, and sleep vote-splitting and broken elections. We've built a library of content about the comparative advantages of approval voting. Yet, outside of academia, voting-method reform remains a foreign concept. That's why we committed to political relevance as a driving force behind our content and programmatic decisions in 2023 and beyond. To raise awareness about the perils of plurality voting, and the simple way to avoid them, we need content that speaks to key elections as they happen.

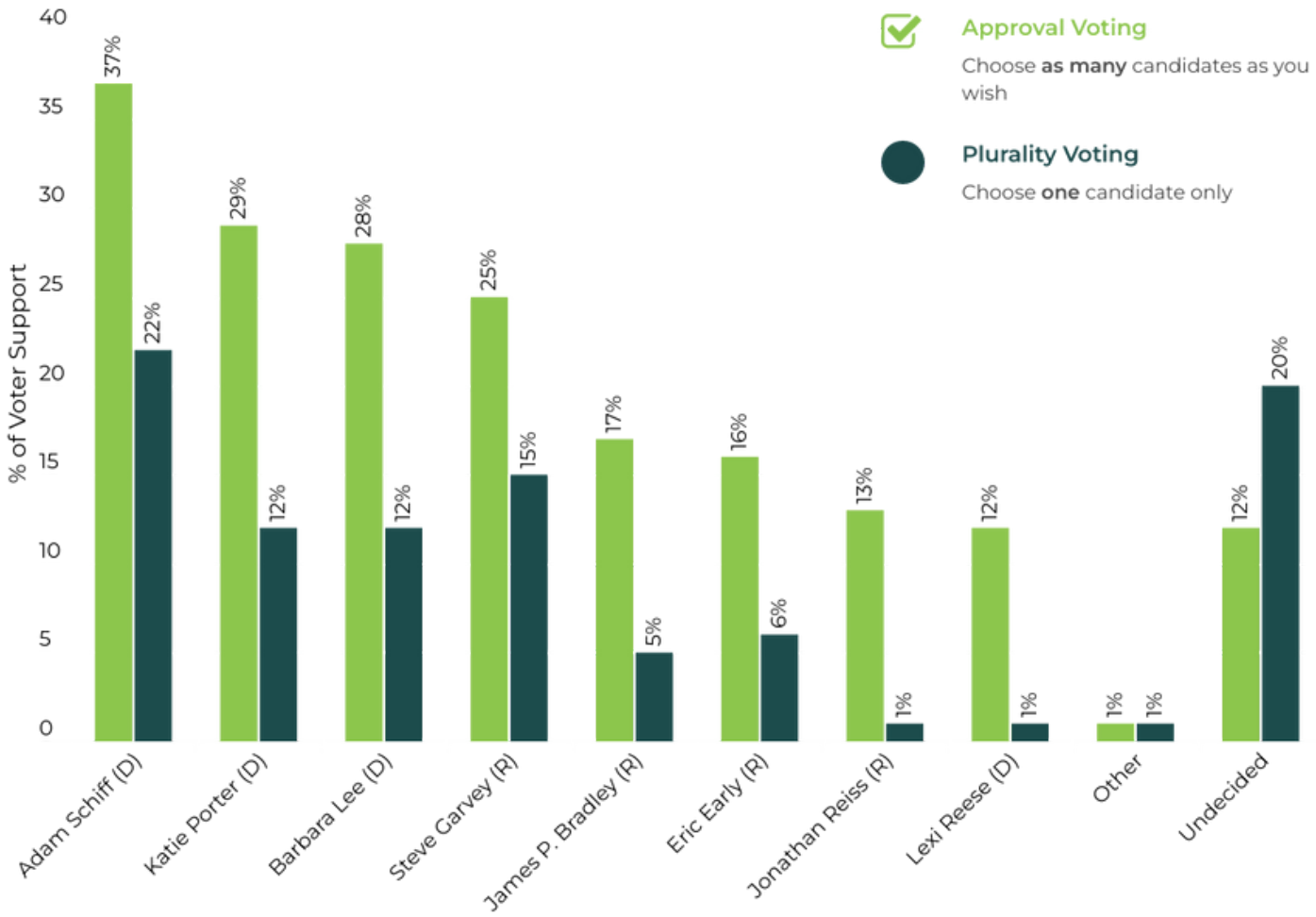
Led internally by our own Dr. Whitney Hua, we partnered with SurveyUSA and fielded our first approval tracker poll in December, surveying voter support for candidates running in California's U.S. Senate race—one of the most compelling primaries of this election cycle. This is the first time CES has ever conducted a poll in an active Senate race. The results of this project enabled us to gather fresh and clear data on how the simple switch to approval voting can have a tangible and significant impact on election outcomes, earning engagement from pollsters on media outlets and the campaigns themselves. Thanks to the success of this project, we gained insight into how to bring approval voting into ongoing national political conversations and engage key stakeholders.

In comparison to the current plurality voting system used in California's top-two primary, our polling analysis reveals how approval voting better represents what voters want—illustrating simply yet comprehensively what the true level of support for each candidate looks like when voters are not restricted to one choice.

The results offer vital data-driven insights into the consensus-forming impact approval voting has on competitive and often overcrowded elections. It shows entirely different results under each method.

If the election was held today, how representative would it be of what California voters want?

% of candidate support with **approval voting** compared to **plurality voting** from registered voters in CA's 2024 U.S. Senate primary race to be held March 5, 2024.



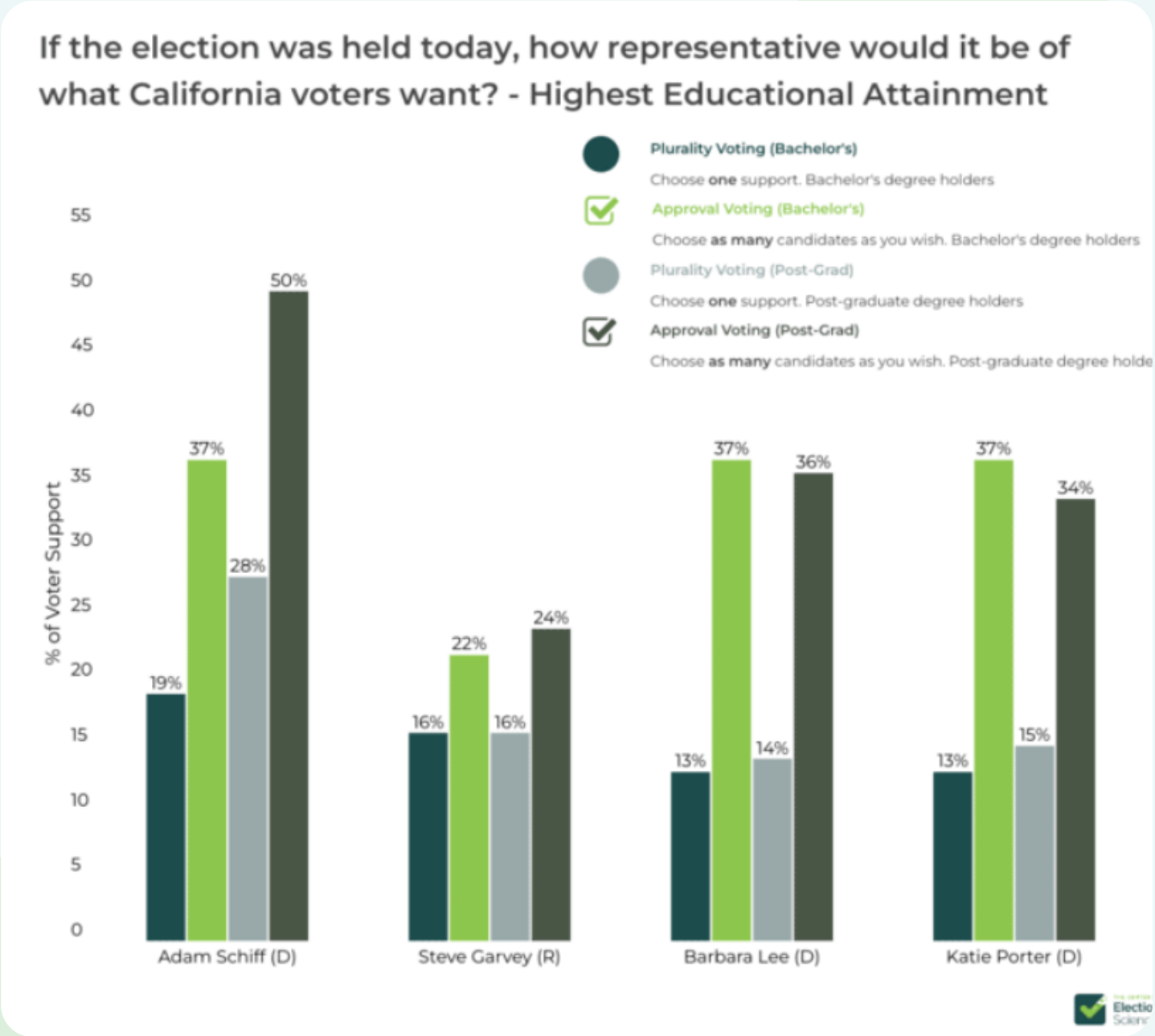
Note: Study fielded from Dec. 7, 2023 to Dec. 10, 2023. To access the full report and statement of methodology from SurveyUSA, click here.

Election Science

Under **plurality,** the Senate primary is racked by vote-splitting with the three top-tier Democratic candidates ultimately splitting the majority of votes, leaving a runoff between them. Adam Schiff (D) and former baseball player Steve Garvey (R) as the top two candidates set to compete in the general election matchup.

With **approval voting,** however, support from the Democratic majority is no longer subject to a vote-split, allowing consensus to form in the final vote tally. As a well-established blue state, California voters expectedly show a strong preference for a Democratic U.S. Senator to represent them, showing support for the leading three Democratic candidates—i.e., Adam Schiff, Katie Porter, and Barbara Lee, respectively It is clear from this data that approval voting delivers a more accurate result where plurality falls short.

Beyond changing the eventual runoff, we also see how approval voting prevents powerful voting blocs from splitting their support and diluting their influence. In particular, the California simulation shows how approval voting can increase the voting power of people of color, as well as voters with a college degree.



Which groups would benefit from a similar consolidation would depend on the jurisdiction, but we see plainly that without the effects of vote-splitting, elections can more easily reflect the electorate. As the 2024 election heats up, we will continue to share more exciting new polling research and analysis to usher approval voting into the national political conversation.

What does the public think about approval voting? **We asked them**

Voters **don't** naturally associate choose-one voting with the lack of choice, and they need visuals to make that connection.

That's just one observation from last year's focus groups, the first in-person focus groups ever fielded by CES. As the national leader for approval voting, our goal is to build a scalable model for reform, which includes broadly appealing messaging that resonates with voters. Through this project, we conducted separate focus groups with Democratic, Independent, and Republican voters in Ohio to get a full-set of qualitative data on voter attitudes toward approval voting and the broader electoral system. Unsurprisingly, we found a deeply cynical population, unaware of the flaws of plurality voting or their power to change how we vote. But we also found hope, as pride in voting endures, and excitement about reform that can be kindled with minimal education.

Through these focus groups, we gained new insight into which messages and tactics move voters, straight from their mouths. Here are the top five takeaways from the focus groups:

1. The logic of approval voting won't change minds, You must make your message voter-centric.

2. Voters feel a sense of pride in their vote - and are hesitant to change it.

3. Voters want candidates who fight for everyone's vote. They want to know every vote matters.

4. Voters need visuals to understand the problem and solution.

5. Voters see hope in approval voting - a louder voice that ensures candidates value every voter.

By hearing directly from the voters, we learned what works and doesn't work when discussing voting reform. Most importantly, we must connect approval voting to the outcomes voters already want and value. Relying on the logic alone of approval voting only goes so far. We invite you to dive in and watch the focus groups yourself! What are your key takeaways?

These lessons will be broadly applied in our messaging, on our website, and in our conversations with stakeholders. In addition to being instructive, our focus groups renewed our resolve, as we saw firsthand how approval voting can empower and energize voters.
As one Independent voter put it:

"If candidates can now realistically get a vote from every voter, every voter becomes important. No longer can candidates ignore large swaths of voters. Candidates have to work for everyone's vote if they want to win." - Independent Voter

A new Pathway to Reform

Since 2018, when CES added advocacy for political reform to its mission, we have focused on supporting ballot initiatives to advance approval voting. Ballot initiatives are expensive, and, as we found out in Seattle, difficult to predict–even with strong polling. Most experts believe a statewide ballot initiative in an influential state would cost close to $30 million and require years of in-state relationship-building to be viable.

Relying exclusively on ballot initiatives also restricts the impact of a reform to the 21 states that allow ballot initiatives. As part of last year's strategic assessment, CES committed to developing a legislative pathway to reform. It's far more cost-effective and engages key legislative stakeholders in the voting-method reform movement. Maryland is a state wracked with vote-splitting in the primaries, including mayoral and state legislative elections in which candidates have won with less than 25% support. Coupled with an openness to reform, this is the perfect test market for a legislative approach to adopt and implement approval voting. In October, CES officially began working with an in-state expert who previously served as an election administrator in Baltimore County to build a legislative strategy that relied on key stakeholders. Our partners helped us advocate for reform, engage with local election officials, including the Maryland County Election Officials (MAEO), and ultimately meet with key legislators who could drive the reform effort.

This pilot strategy will serve as a playbook for other states, including model legislation, interstate relationships, and applied learning from each experience. If successful, this new approach could be the key to scaling the approval voting movement in a more cost-effective manner. With the introduction of SB913 in February 2024, we have already seen success from this new approach. We will create a replicable model for other jurisdictions by documenting everything we learn through this effort.

Any legislative pathway is a journey with setbacks and successes, but we're thrilled to expand the playing field and maximize the impact of approval voting as a meaningful voting reform.

Quantifying an **Electoral Crisis**

At CES, we obsess over vote-splitting and the damage it can do to our elections. As we know, vote-splitting negatively impacts the level of representativeness of our elections, and the experience of the individual voter. But up until now, no one had ever truly quantified the scope of vote-splitting on a national scale. When asked how often, where, or under what circumstances vote-splitting occurs, little hard data was available. That's why we set out to quantify every incidence of vote-splitting at the federal, statewide, and state legislative level during the 2022 primary election cycle, and developed our first biennial report that lays out this fundamental problem comprehensively. We're calling the report, America Misrepresented.

Dr. Whitney Hua and her team painstakingly combed through the 2022 primary election results in every state, discovering similarities across jurisdictions, and identifying the states where vote-splitting happens most often. As the map shows, there are a few states where primary elections are impacted by vote-splitting at an alarming rate.

The top 5 states are:

New Hampshire (44.8%)

Arizona (42.5%)

California (32.9%)

Nebraska (31.2%)

Maryland (28.1%)

Through this research, we've also confirmed that vote-splitting disproportionately occurs when no incumbent is running in the contest, and happens most often in competitive districts. That means that vote-splitting plays a substantial role in determining the general election candidates in the most crucial contests - elections that determine control of congressional and legislative chambers. Thanks to this report, we can provide detailed examples for any state in the country, supporting advocates as they make their case for approval voting.

This report is the first iteration of a project we will execute after every national election, solidifying CES as the preeminent authority on vote-splitting. Stay tuned for the release of CES' first *America Misrepresented* report, presenting exciting new data and analysis you won't want to miss.

Donor Spotlight:
Aaron Tellier

Like many Americans, Aaron Tellier is exhausted with the partisan bickering and dysfunction that defines our political system. “The win-at-all-costs ethos has created a system designed to divide us. Politics are now firmly separated from the goal of government.” Against this challenging backdrop, he sees hope in approval voting and The Center for Election Science.

As an engineer, marketer, and small business owner, Aaron understands that problem-solving requires engagement with diverse constituencies and opinions. That’s what he wants to see from our leaders at the local, state, and national levels. “We need more voices in the conversation and an electoral system that creates incentives for cooperation. Approval voting eliminates the strategic advantage of playing to your most partisan supporters, which will change how campaigns are run. Under approval voting, the win-at-all-costs calculation now means that politicians must engage with more voters.”

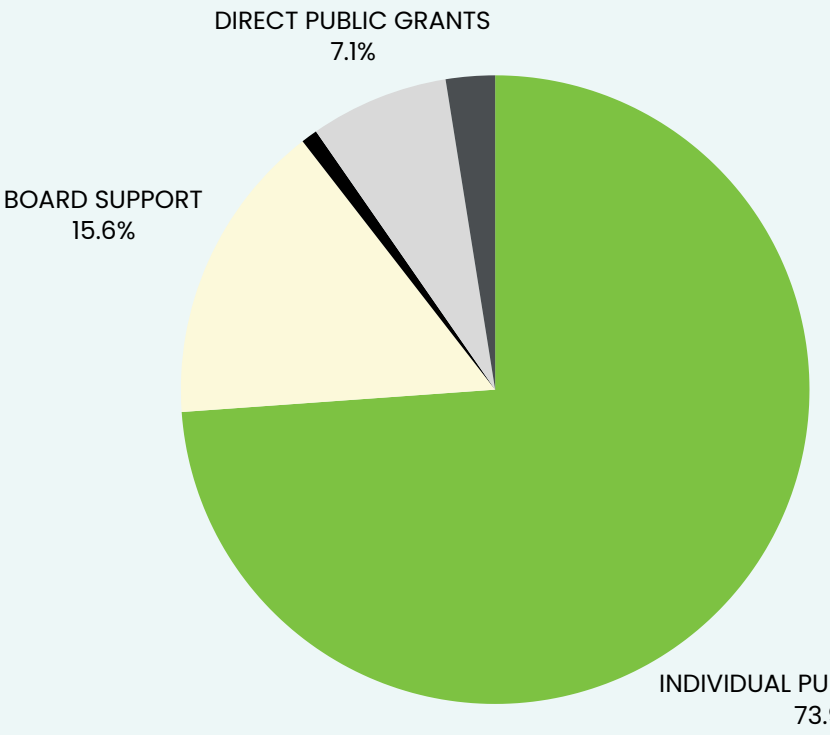
As a personal point of pride, he engages with people who hold diverse political opinions. That led Aaron to The Center for Election Science, when a friend from the opposite end of the political spectrum suggested approval voting. Before finding CES, Aaron never considered the negative impact of choose-one voting and the divisive incentives it creates. Thanks to the simplicity of the idea, and our commitment to empirical evidence, Aaron immediately grasped the potential power of approval voting. Now, as a donor for multiple years, he sees his role as a donor to and ambassador for CES. “I love the tools that CES provides its community to bring the conversation to close friends and political influencers.”

> **“I love the tools that CES provides its community to bring the conversation to close friends and political influencers.”**

Looking ahead, Aaron is motivated by CES’ drive for political relevance and expanded approach to advocacy, including the emerging legislative pathways. “Voters don’t want an endless choice between steak and salad. The truth is, that people want a little bit of both. Approval voting can deliver more constructive politics, turning passion into problem-solving.”

We thank Aaron and the other members of our community for being relentless advocates for our work.

2023 Revenue



TOTAL REVENUE
$1,312,378

DIRECT PUBLIC GRANTS
$96,000

INDIVIDUAL PUBLIC SUPPORT
$994,503

BOARD SUPPORT
$210,517

INVESTMENTS
$33,993

CORPORATE SUPPORT
$11,358

2023 Expenditures

TOTAL EXPENDITURES
$1,591,166

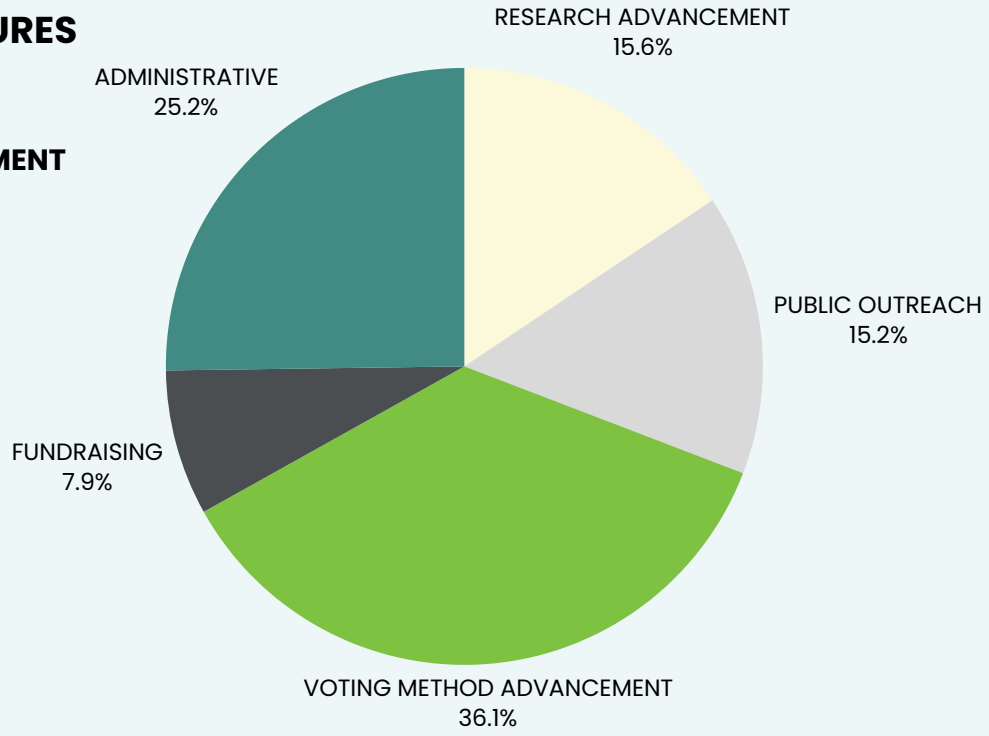
RESEARCH ADVANCEMENT
$247,477

PUBLIC OUTREACH
$241,130

VOTING METHOD ADVANCEMENT
$571,868

FUNDRAISING
$124,971

ADMINISTRATIVE
$399,704



Donor List

$100,000+
Aidan Hendrickson
John Hegeman
McKelvey Family Charitable Fund

$10,000–$99,999
Survival & Flourishing Fund
Jeff Justice
Jonathan Summers
Patrick Purvis
Nicholas Nolta

$2,500–$9,999
Andrew Mehler
Barbara Dijker
Clay Shentrup
Dylan Hirsch-Shell
Felix Sargent
Kerry Keys
Kevin Ulug
Patrick Flanagan
Tim Morton
Tim Swast
Todor Markov

$1,000–$2,499
Brian Chen
Brian Hegarty
Daniel Gierl
Greg Wolfe
Grey Nearing
Jordana Cox
Joshua Staller
Logan Gilbert
Matthew Schnaider
Michael Ruvinsky
Michael VanBemmel
Michael Weinbaum
Renee Slade
Robert Gressis

$500–$999
Aaron Tellier
Auros Harman
Benjamin Creasy
Corey Fry
Dana Dahlstrom
Douglas Rohde
Frank Atwood
Joe Kirby
Jordon Kalilich
Leon Smith
Michael Elgart
Nathan Robertson
Neal DeVorsey
Peter McCluskey
Randall Henderson
Rick Joi
Ross Askanazi
Tyler NeuCollins

$250–$499
Andrew Jenkins
Bart Ingles
Bob Kresek
D Thurgood Marshall
Dane Zieman
Danny Sleator
Debra Burgess
Frank Weible
Gabriel Nunes
Ian McCullough
Kurtis Van Gent
Matt Griffith
Matt Ricketson
Meghan Day
Richard Toscano
Robert Chen
Sairah Joseph
Sam Hyson
Steven Brams
Walter Horn
Williams Huggins

$100–$249
Adam Hoffman
Adrian Winchell
Alexander Marshall
Alfred Mikula
Andrew Sweeney
Arthur Thomas IV
Barry Rafkind
Ben Payne
Benjamin Burgdorf
Brian Goldman
Brian Kaufman
Cameron Kelley
Charles Townsend
Cory Harasha
Daniel LaLiberte
David Sokal
Debra Morrison
Derek Britz
Dominic Paris
Douglas Cantrell
Eliza Jewett-Hall
Eric Bell
Eric Bischoff
Eric Leventhal Arthen
Eric Sanders
Erik Kuefler
Fletcher Hecht
Frank Sardinha III
Grant Mathews
Heather Heckman
Jack Swiggett
James McClellan
Jamie Walker
Jan Kok
Jeffrey Sweeney
Jim Snow
John Baber-Lucero
Jonathan Bright
Joseph Stormes
Joshua Bordelon
Kay Johnson
Kerry Devery
LaShana Lewis
Linda J Albertano
Magnus Jonsson
Mark Ulrich
Matt Budde
Matt Welland
Mike Osenar
Nicholas O'Sullivan
Nicholas Wilson
Owen Biesel
Penny Berman
Ryan Lorey
Spencer Wilson
Thomas Moxham
William Heidrich

$1–$99
Adam Masiarek
Alan Volny
Anne Rendle
Ariel Kirkwood
B Peter Brandt-Sorheim
Benjamin Schwartz
Bernard Kobes
Blaine Hansen
Bob Myers
Bradley Allen
Brian Shank
Bruce Eckhardt
Carl Rohde
Charity Payments
Christine Morshedi
Christopher Clark
Cristian Trout
David Holden
David Imai
ERIC BOESCH
Evan Schor
Francis Uy
Glenn Abeln
Greg Peterson
Halsey Snow
Jake Ross
Jansen Mitchell
Jim Riley
John Seibel
Jon Schultz
Jonathan Irvin
Joshua Grothman-Pelton
Keegan Clay
Kennita Watson
Kyler Connare
Lang Waters
Linda Bell
Lora Friedenthal
Mason Biegel
Matthew Hawthorn
Michael Morris
Mike Spalding
Nathan Wilson
Neal Ungerleider
Neil Castine
Paul Trethewey
Steve Clay
William Cornwell
Yu Muller
Zachary Lange

Corporate Workplace Giving

Apple
Atlassian
Facebook
GitHub
Google
Intel Foundation
KLA
Macys
Microsoft
Oracle
Playstation Cares

Thank you to our many corporate donors for supporting our donors' philanthropy this year through matching gifts!

In 2023, these companies helped our individual donors double their donations through matching gifts. Interested in making your gift go twice as far? **Contact Mike Piel**, Director of Philanthropy, for more information on employer matching gift programs.

Board members' names appear in italics.