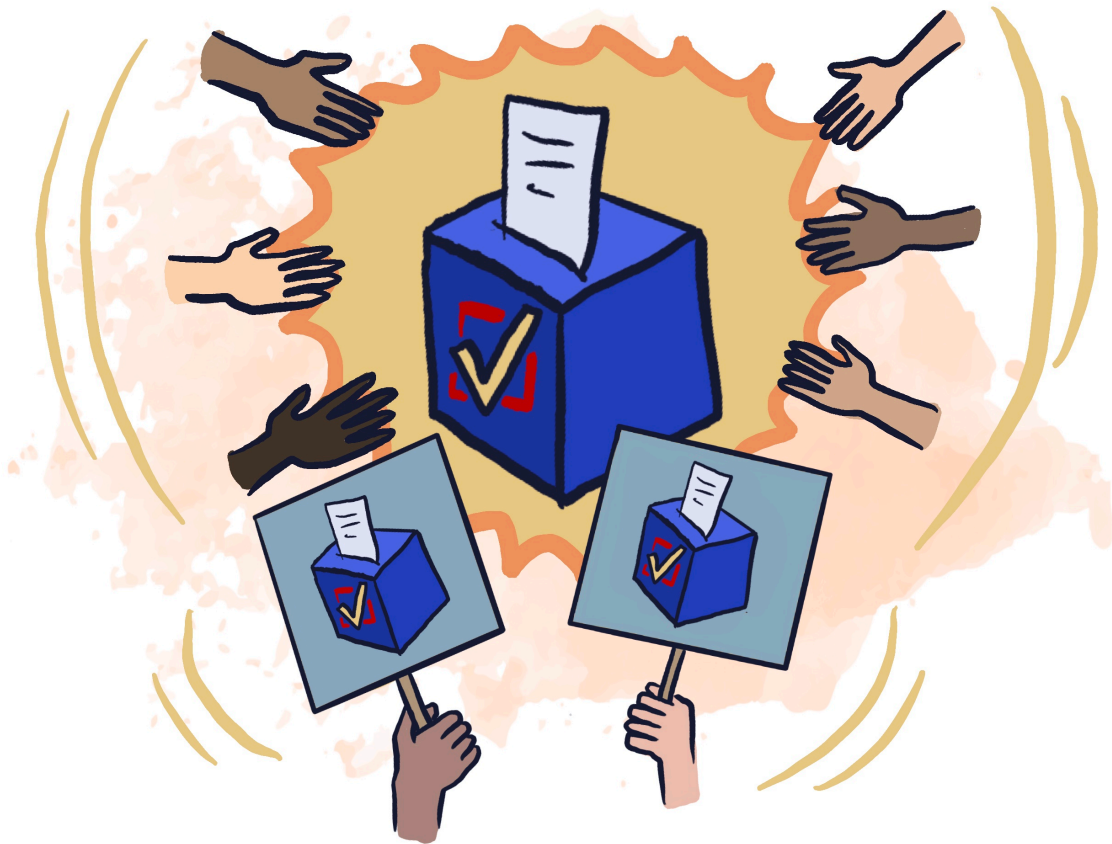


Election Defense Scenarios



how we keep their hands off our vote

by Daniel Hunter, 2026

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This guide is for informational and organizing purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice. Its authors are not lawyers or soothsayers. Laws, court rulings, and election procedures vary by state and locality and may change rapidly. Nothing here should be relied upon as a definitive statement of the law. If you encounter a legal issue on or around Election Day, contact a qualified election law attorney.

Some scenarios in this guide reference historical examples of civil disobedience — including cases where people chose to nonviolently resist laws or orders they believed to be unjust. These examples are included as historical record. Readers are responsible for understanding the legal implications of any actions they choose to take and are encouraged to consult legal counsel before engaging in any activity that may carry legal risk.

The legal and electoral information in this guide reflects best understood conditions as of June 2026. Election law is in active flux. Readers should verify current rules with their state and county election offices before Election Day.

“Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” - Lord Acton

You’re reading this because you already know our vote is at stake. You know our vote is precious. You know most of us can only vote because of hard-won movements by ancestors who risked their lives — because they weren’t landholders, men, or White.

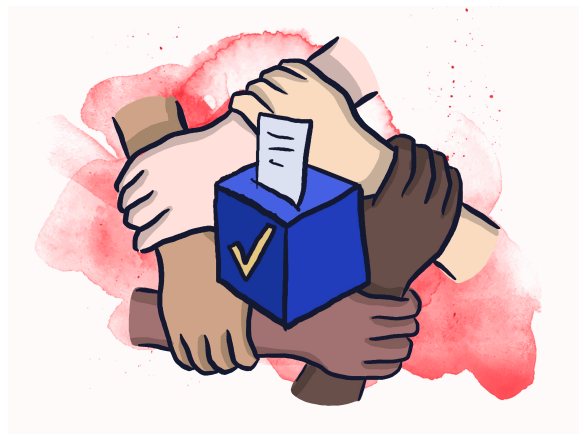
You know the current regime wants to stay in power — so they are changing the rules. Stomping on the Voting Rights Act to reduce Black power, threatening deployment of armed agents at polls, opening federal investigations into nonpartisan operations, and terrifying the voting population into believing they can’t vote — or that it won’t matter anyways.

You know this — and you want to know what to do.

The good news: here’s a resource with a bunch of thinking about how some of this might play out. It offers some starting points and sections that you could draw to run some role-plays or group strategy sessions. If you don’t know much about these scenarios, it provides a little background.

The bad news: there’s no crystal ball. None of us know how this will play out. These scenarios can’t cover all options, nor tell you the best use of your time. You will have to do work to make plans suitable for you.

In each scenario you will find stories from the US and around the globe of folks who faced these threats. Sometimes those strategies they didn’t “win” everything — but they offer insights and options. Because we will need some planning and some creativity — the threat is too large to just hew close to our playbooks of the past.



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Using the Scenarios

This guide will help you be more prepared with what may happen — and options to respond if it does.

In many states, election protection coalitions are planning for these scenarios — lawyers, organizers, election officials, and civic groups planning together. Connect with those coalitions so you’re not reinventing the wheel. The Election Security Resource Network (ESRN) can connect you to existing local tables. bit.ly/esrn_partner

Which scenarios should I read?

You *could* read this cover-to-cover. If you’re that person, enjoy.

For most people it’s pretty overwhelming. Study the table of contents to select the most prescient scenarios — either to your location, your role, or your worries. Skip around to those.

If you need a little bit more of a hand, here’s some suggestions on which scenarios roughly correspond with your location:

If your situation...	Try these scenarios
Your state has mail-in voting	4 (<i>mail deadlines</i>)
You're in a state that passed new restrictive voting/ID laws in 2025-26	1 (<i>redistricting</i>), 2 (<i>roll purge</i>), 3 (<i>IDs</i>)
You're in a swing state or close-margin races expected	5 (<i>box sabotage</i>), 8 (<i>challenges</i>), 9 (<i>disinformation</i>), 12 (<i>recounts</i>), 13 (<i>SCOTUS</i>)
You're in a state with robust ICE operations or National Guard deployment	11 (<i>federal agents at polls</i>)

Your region has active armed militias or organized disruptors	10 (<i>armed civilian groups</i>)
Your canvassing board has shown willingness to delay/refuse certification, or is closely divided	14 (<i>canvassers refuse to certify</i>)
Your election is high-profile (e.g. California) or high-stakes (Ohio)	6 (<i>DOJ investigations</i>)
Your locale is a heavily concentrated Democratic voting bloc	7 (<i>location chaos</i>), 15 (<i>federal seizure</i>), 16 (<i>Congress refuses to seat</i>)
You're in DC	17 (<i>control board</i>)
You're in Puerto Rico	18 (<i>feds interfere</i>)

To familiarize yourself with your state/district’s voting mechanisms, look up more at [Movement Action Project \(mapresearch.org/democracy\)](https://mapresearch.org/democracy).

Planning is Deterrence

If you feel overwhelmed by all of us, remember that in school, fire fighters teach exit drills and fire safety. Why? The first is to prepare *before* the worst case happens. The second is to *deter*. Kids learning about fire safety dissuades dangerously playing with matches.

The same applies here — by being prepared, we are also acting as a deterrent to worst things happening. Uncertain political leaders get moved when they see that a determined force will act valiantly and call out anybody who cosigns with election stealers.

Anybody involved in organizing union strikes knows that the best way to avoid a strike is to prepare for one — the bosses see the readiness and preparation and are willing to make compromises.

So we’re preparing to avoid the worst cases.

What are the key lessons from these scenarios?

If you run through these scenarios, you'll start to see some key patterns. There's a huge role for rapid legal defense, education of people's rights (including poll workers), communication to neighborhoods, and rapid mobilization.

A subtle theme is handling fear — including for election protection folks to not become vectors of fear by spreading unfounded rumors or by placing too much trust in institutions that cannot handle this situation.

With the dismemberment of the Voting Rights Act, on full display is that we cannot rely on the courts and electoral mechanisms alone. The great democracy movements like the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Suffrage movements expanded voting rights not only through polite discourse and trusting lawyers — but also through confrontation political protest and nonviolent resistance. These skills will be needed, too.

One of the clearest lessons from every scenario in this guide — and from democratic movements around the world — is this: *illegal and unjust orders only work if people comply with them.*

If federal agents arrive with an overbroad or defective warrant, election officials are not obligated to hand over more than what the warrant specifies — and their legal team should be present before they hand over anything. If a canvasser is pressured to refuse certification without legal grounds, their refusal has no legal effect if the board's vote and the required signatures are already complete. If a National Guard unit is deployed illegally to a polling location, they do not have to comply — and local officials and legal observers can document the violation, call it out publicly, and

community presence can make the deployment politically costly.

Noncooperation against injustice is our legal and moral right. It means:

- Refusing to implement orders that are illegal or that a lower-level official reasonably believes are illegal or violating ethics — and saying so publicly and on the record;
- Not immediately complying with warrants that look faulty, making sure to consult with a lawyer before handing over anything, and scrutinizing every warrant for scope and legal basis;
- Continuing to do your job as an election official unless a court order specifically prevents you from doing so — an investigation is not an injunction;
- Insisting National Guard or other armed forces to leave a polling location, naming the federal law they are violating (18 U.S.C. § 592), and having that request documented and witnessed;
- Committing ourselves to implement the results of the election — using protests as enforcement, if the official processes breakdown.

Local and state officials who publicly commit in advance to protecting voters — and who publicly name the laws that protect them — make the cost of interference higher.

You'll find a lot of nuance in the different scenarios — and we lay out 6 key inflection moments which make up the People's Election Playbook — key points for mobilization and pressure.

Last thought

This regime desperately wants you afraid. It wants you to pass that fear along — to spread their bogus rules and invented threats, to get you so overwhelmed you don't do your humble part. **Don't comply.**

Because here is the other truth: they fear you. They fear activated voters who are engaged. They fear a free people who show up, stay loud, and refuse to be turned away. Go be that.

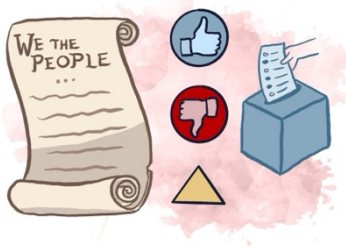
We got this.



The People's Election Playbook

To hold onto power, they are going to keep people from voting. **We are not going to let them.** These actions are foundations that other tactics build on to stop them.

Now through Election Day	1. Activate the Vote
Aug-Nov	2. Check your Registration
Sept-Oct	3. Vote Early — Together
Election Day • Nov 3	4. Election Day as Civic Holiday
Nov 4 until All Votes Counted	5. Count Every Vote Parties
If Election results are not honored	6. Economic Noncooperation



Get registered and ready to vote at:
[Vote.org](https://www.vote.org)

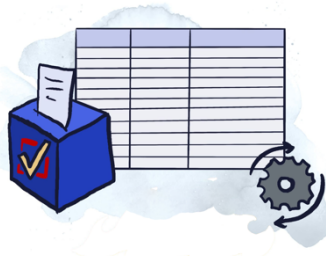
1. Activate the Vote

In 2024, approximately 89 million eligible voters in the United States didn't vote. That's more people than votes received by either major-party candidate. If "none of the above" was a candidate, they would have won — which is why we have to reach out to those who didn't vote last cycle.

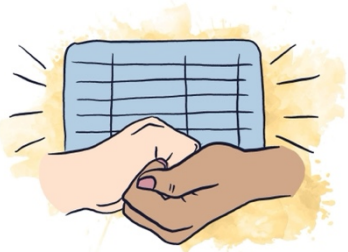
Each of the people's election playbooks starts with this: get with at least 3 people to act with you.

This means speaking to the different reasons people don't vote. In her essay (at freedomtrainers.net/election) Ash-Lee Henderson describes three core reasons people don't vote. They:

- Are structurally locked out (we need to help them vote)
- Rationally withdraw (we need to build them a political home based on the economic despair)
- Ideologically refuse (we need to expand the frame).



**Check your
registration at:**
[Vote.org](https://www.vote.org)



Register your event:
[Vote Early Day,](https://www.vote.org/vote-early-day)
[Indivisible](https://www.vote.org/vote-early-day)



Sign up at:
[Election.Holiday](https://www.electionholiday.org)

**Companies: [Time To
Vote](https://www.maketimetovote.org)** ([maketimetovote.org](https://www.maketimetovote.org))

2. Check your Registration

Prepare your circle for attempts to take away your vote.

Put it in your calendar to regularly check in with your circle to check-up on your voter registrations.

This is especially true if your states have handed voter rolls to the federal government: Alaska, Arkansas, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming.

The federal government has said it plans to ask those states to purge their voter rolls. Checking once is not enough — check multiple times.

3. Vote Early — Together

If early voting is available to you, it isn't just convenient, it's smart — especially in this election season. **But don't vote just as an individual — get with at least 3 other people to vote together.**

Call it what you want: *Souls to the Polls*. *A workplace fieldtrip*. *Friendship bonding time*. *Parties at the polls*. *Arrive with Five!* Bring a voter guide ([guides.vote](https://www.guides.vote)). Be visible! Text friends that you voted. Wear a sticker. Share a selfie.

Each state has different voting rules — so look yours up at [vote.org](https://www.vote.org). **Many use Vote Early Day (Oct 27, 2026)!**

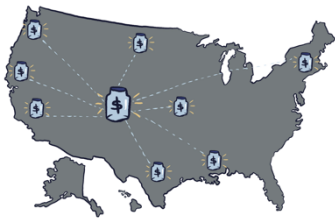
4. Election Day as a Civic Holiday

On this Civic Holiday, vote (if you haven't already) and spend the day helping others vote and protecting our election. An Election Day isn't a floor — it's the minimum — a civic holiday for you to:

- Vote, if you haven't.
- Be a poll worker or poll monitor ([866OurVote.org](https://www.866OurVote.org))
- Call or text friends (AKA “vote tripling”)
- Organize block parties to encourage voting and discourage any harassment or intimidation.
- Help escort people to polls
- Find more volunteer opportunities at: [Ground Control](https://www.groundcontrol.org) ([wearegroundcontrol.org](https://www.wearegroundcontrol.org)).



**Connect with
organizing groups:
Indivisible, May Day
Strong**



**Connect with
organizing groups:
Indivisible, May Day
Strong**

5. Count Every Vote Parties

November 4th, the morning after election day, be ready to rally and party. If it's right for your city, organize events at County Board of Elections if the votes are still being counted. In 2020, Philadelphia famously organized a massive dance party outside of the County Board of Elections — to offer positivity and encouragement and discourage any violence or slander.

Peaceful, visible encouragement and protection for election officials to count all ballots. Post-election threat scenarios often have a common need: people in the streets. This gets that moving.

IF ELECTION RESULTS ARE NOT HONORED,

6. Economic Noncooperation

Cheating must never pay. When results were not honored in Ukraine or Serbia or Brazil, people took to the streets to enforce election results.

We may have to do that here.

In the US, May Day Strong has a simple saying: **No work. No school. No shopping.**

Economic withdrawal is the escalation tool of last resort. This creates economic pressure on vote deniers using all levers of economic pressure.



Redistricting to Erase Representation

Congressional district maps are redrawn outside the normal post-census cycle to eliminate seats held by Black, Latino, and Democratic incumbents — diluting communities of color's political power

What Is This Scenario?

This scenario is not hypothetical—it has largely already occurred, with little immediate recourse available.

Redistricting is supposed to happen once a decade, after the census, to account for population changes. That norm no longer holds. In 2025, President Trump pressured Republican-controlled states to redraw their congressional maps mid-decade — not because populations shifted, but to lock in a partisan advantage.

Texas led the way in summer 2025, passing new maps designed to net Republicans five additional House seats. Missouri and North Carolina followed. The goal: protect a slim Republican House majority in anticipation of the traditional midterm swing against the party in power. This initial wave was slowed after Indiana rejected redistricting attempts.

The new Texas maps, as elsewhere, targeted Black and Latino districts (majority-minority districts).

This process was accelerated after the Supreme Court issued its ruling in *Louisiana v. Callais*. The Court gutted the Voting Rights Act — the legal jewel of the Civil Rights Movement that had, for six decades,

prohibited states from drawing maps that dilute the voting power of communities of color.

By ruling that such maps were an unconstitutional racial gerrymander, the Court eliminated the primary legal tool communities of color had used to challenge discriminatory maps. A flood of Republican-led Southern states moved immediately (Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, etc). The loss of Black representation in Congress is historic — the largest single-election drop in absolute numbers since Reconstruction.

Gerrymandering and district manipulation have been used to suppress Black and brown political power throughout American history — from post-Reconstruction rollbacks to the systematic dilution of the 1980s. The playbook: use the machinery of the state to ensure Black and brown voters count less.

Black activists and others have vociferously fought against these new maps, with some notable wins. After facing hundreds of demonstrators at the South Carolina Statehouse, Republicans decided not to advance (for now) eliminating Rep. Jim Clyburn's majority-Black 6th District — a seat Clyburn has held for 34 years, making him the only Black Democrat to represent South Carolina in the state's congressional

history. However, in other states the losses are devastating and longer-term organizing will be needed.

How This Has Unfolded

State legislatures called into special session. Governors have called the state legislature back from recess to consider new district maps. The stated justification is protecting the state’s “fair share” of House seats or responding to redistricting in other states. The real purpose is eliminating a seat held by a Black or Latino Democrat.

New map adopted after Callais. Following the Supreme Court’s Callais decision gutting the Voting Rights Act, Southern states moved to redraw maps, even cancelling already in progress elections. The new districts pack Black voters from multiple communities into a single seat or split them across multiple districts, diluting their collective voice. Candidate filing deadlines are restarted. Primaries are moved or delayed. Voters who thought they knew who they were electing suddenly find themselves in a different district.

Responses That Have Worked

Indiana, 2025: “You Have to Know Hoosiers.” Watching what was happening in other states, ordinary Hoosiers pushed back against pressure to redistrict. Protests, petitions drives, and testimony campaigns grew for months. Hoosiers sent more than 61,500 messages to state lawmakers opposing the maps. Constituent meetings and town halls became heated over the issue.

When the Indiana governor called a special session in December, protesters flooded the

Statehouse. On December 1, over 400 people turned out. Testifiers were a mix of Democrats and lifelong Republicans opposed to the blatant power grab.

Despite pressure from President Trump, all Democrats and 21 Republican Senators joined in voting down the redistricting attempt. The lesson: sustained, broad-based community presence — showing up early, showing up often, and showing up with a cross-partisan coalition — can make even a Republican supermajority think twice about defying its own voters.

Tuskegee, Alabama, 1957–1960: The Town That Fought Gerrymandering. The executive secretary of the White Citizens' Council of Alabama — also an Alabama state Senator — introduced a redistricting bill to redraw the largely Black city of Tuskegee from a simple square to a figure with 28 sides. The act, explicitly introduced to reduce Black voting power, was passed.

Three thousand mostly Black Tuskegee citizens met at Butler Chapel AME Zion Church where they launched an economic boycott of white-owned stores in Tuskegee. "We are going to buy goods and services from those who help us, from those who make no effort to hinder us, from those who recognize us as first-class citizens," organizer and sociology professor Charles Gomillion declared.

Within weeks the boycott had plunged local sales by more than 75% and put the gerrymandering case in the national spotlight. The state attorney general raided their offices and obtained injunctions to outlaw the boycott. But the boycott continued for four long years.

Under withering pressure, the courts agreed that the redrawn boundaries violated the Fifteenth Amendment and had to be restored. It was one of the first cases in

which the Court ruled that a gerrymander was an unconstitutional racial discrimination — and it was won because a community boycotted, organized, and litigated all at once.

Canada, 1964: Taking Politicians Out of the Process. For most of its history, Canada suffered from partisan gerrymandering. The reform began at the provincial level — Manitoba abolished gerrymandering in 1955 after voters and press alike grew disgusted with maps that gave rural ridings two-thirds of legislative seats despite the population being evenly split urban-rural. Within a decade, the pressure had spread nationally. In 1964, Canada codified independent, non-partisan redistricting commissions into federal law through the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act. Politicians can lodge objections — but they do not draw the lines.

What to Prepare

Start here: Find local grassroots groups who are already rapidly responding, like [Black Voters Matter](#), and your state’s redistricting watchdog organizations — [ACLU](#) state chapters, [NAACP](#) state conferences, and [LULAC](#) chapters are all monitoring. Find your state’s redistricting calendar at [Democracy Docket](#). Then go on the offensive to build economic noncooperation, with campaigns like [Fix It, FedEx](#) ([fixitfedex.com](#)).

Additional options:

- **Show up at the statehouse — early and in numbers.** Indiana and South Carolina both showed that visible, sustained statehouse presence can change how legislators read their political situation. Organize cross-partisan delegations — Republicans opposing the maps for their own reasons

are often more persuasive to Republican senators than Democrats alone.

- **Make the case in the district — not only at the capitol.** Reach out to constituents of wavering Republican legislators in their home communities. Town halls, letters to local newspapers, conversations with local civic and religious leaders who have credibility with those legislators.
- **Document how the map was drawn.** Gather testimony from community members about what representation has meant. Gather data comparing old and new districts by race and community. Note who was in the room when maps were drawn, what guidance came from Washington, and what justification was offered. This record supports both the public argument and the legal challenge.
- **Have a legal team ready to file immediately.** The Callais ruling has severely narrowed but not eliminated constitutional claims; Fifteenth Amendment arguments and intentional discrimination claims remain available.
- **Build toward permanent reform.** Indiana and South Carolina bought time — but leaders in both states have signaled they may try again. Two-thirds of Americans, including most Republicans, support banning gerrymandering. That supermajority is the foundation for a long-term reform campaign. Begin building the coalition now.
- **Even if the map passes — vote anyway.** Jim Clyburn said he would run for an 18th term regardless of what map was drawn. Gerrymandering succeeds when it convinces people their vote doesn’t matter. The answer is to prove it wrong. Register. Turn out. Run candidates. Courts matter, but winning elections even under gerrymandered maps has happened in Wisconsin, North

Carolina, and elsewhere. When it does, it sends a powerful message.



The Voter Roll Purge

Eligible voters arrive at the polls and find they are no longer registered — their vote is either blocked or cast provisionally, with an uncertain outcome

What Is This Scenario?

A common tool to hold onto power in a democracy is to control who can and cannot vote. This can be quite dramatic. In Ivory Coast (2025) four major opposition figures were struck from the final voter rolls so they couldn't run or even vote. Ahead of 2013 elections, the Zimbabwean government purged its voter list — then initially kept the roll hidden. Independent analysis found significant anomalies — including registration numbers that exceeded census population in some areas and under-registration in urban opposition strongholds.

American history is filled with this, too, largely as a tool of racial disenfranchisement. US purges have primarily targeted low frequency voters and communities of color. The NAACP documented that Georgia's "exact match" program disproportionately affected Black, Latino, and Asian American voters. Federal law under the National Voter Registration Act prohibits systematic voter roll purges within 90 days of a federal election. Late purges can be challenged in court immediately.

In 2026, it has a new twist: the federal government actively trying to control voter registration data, or at least building lists to challenge who are accurate voters. The DOJ

has filed suit against more than 30 states demanding unredacted voter rolls — not just names, but Social Security numbers, birth dates, and addresses. Multiple states have refused and are in ongoing litigation.

These are already being used to pressure states to remove voters that *it* thinks are invalid. The lists could later be used to discredit results with claims of mass fraud or forcing the USPS to refuse to send mail-in ballots to their lists (another dubious legal move).

Critically, voter rolls are controlled by the state — not the federal government. Many of its current moves are likely illegal violations of the National Voter Registration Act. In most states, voters who have been purged have the right to cast a *provisional ballot* — a ballot that is set aside and counted after officials verify the voter's eligibility.

How This Might Unfold

Mass purge lists generated from federal data. A federal agency generates hundreds of thousands of "suspicious" voter registrations based on cross-referencing SSA, immigration, or other databases. The list is forwarded to states with demands for

investigation and purge. Some officials purge voters without adequate notice, leaving insufficient time for voters to correct errors or re-register.

Election Day challenges using the data.

Rather than removing voters ahead of time, organized challengers show up at polling places with lists and challenge individual voters' eligibility at check-in, citing the federal data.

Claims of mass fraud. After elections are over, the federal government uses its faulty lists to claim a massive fraud has occurred. This is then pretense for further disenfranchisement from the federal government.

What would you do?

It is election day. Things have been going fine except that you begin hearing of one, then two, then eventually dozens of people who have previously voted show up on election day and find that they are not on the voting rolls. Some remembered to try provisional ballot; others just walked away.

You check notes with others around the state and find this is widespread. Perhaps tens of thousands — or more — of voters are getting their names rejected. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Has your state's voter rolls have been requested by the DOJ or accessed by a federal data-matching operation?
- What is your state's deadline for checking your registration before Election Day?
- Does your state allow same-day registration? If not, what is the process to challenge if you've been purged?

Responses That Have Worked

Georgia, 2020: Provisional ballot workaround: Georgia's 2020 election enacted strict voters ID requirements. Voting rights groups sued, noting the program by impact targeted Black, Latino, and Asian American voters.

A massive voter education campaign was carried out to prepare people for possible ballot voting problems. Poll workers were taught about the options of provisional ballot voting, and about how to tell people what they needed to do to “cure” (fix) their ballot with ID. Following the election, daily reports were published with the number of provisional ballots cast. Advocacy groups urged voters to take advantage of the 24 hour window to ensure those votes were counted in the final results, and an Election Protection Hotline was available for support.

Organizers credited the strong networks, relationships, and coalitions to support counter efforts to intimidate voters. Amber Bell, with Georgia Project for Community Education shared, if “a voter had been intimidated or that something was going on, we were able to pick up the phone and there were a network of attorneys, a network of organizers, and a network of supporters that could offer their support.”

Belarus, 2020: Poll Workers Refuse to Sign Falsified Protocols. When Alexander Lukashenko stole the August 2020 presidential election, poll workers were ordered to sign result protocols with blank vote totals — to be filled in later by superiors. Several refused. They would not implement an illegal order.

One worker in Minsk said she refused to sign and walked off the precinct; another

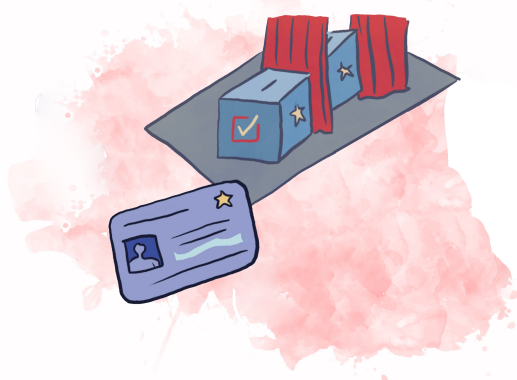
was fired on the spot for pointing out violations during the count. These refusals became early anchors for the broader protest movement that followed — evidence of falsification with names attached.

What to Prepare

Start here: [Know your state's voter registration check deadline](#) (apps.npr.org/voter-registration-2026-mail). Build a "check your registration" campaign for your community — in the weeks before the election people should [check their registration regularly](#) (vote411.org/check-registration). bit.ly/esrn_partner to build a strong network.

Additional options:

- **Prepare local governments to resist any last-minute purges.** Lower-level officials have to be ready to refuse to implement what they believe is an illegal action by a higher-level body.
- **Set up your own check-in infrastructure.** Deploy volunteers to polling places with phone access to help voters check their registration status in real time and request provisional ballots.
- **Publicize provisional ballot rights aggressively.** Most voters don't know their rights to cast a [provisional ballot](#) (democracydocket.com/cases). Make this fact impossible to miss: flyers, texts, social media, in your language, before Election Day.
- **Document every turned-away voter.** Have a simple form. Get the voter's name, address, polling place, time, and what they were told. This builds the foundation for post-election legal action.
- **Conduct your own voter roll audit.** If you have resources, do a parallel audit in targeted areas comparing official rolls to community knowledge. Create an independent data set.
- **Tell the story as it happens.** Produce regular reports: “X voters purged, Y showed up to vote, Z were turned away.” These are critical for the counter narrative. In Georgia they tracked daily the number of provisional ballots cast and how many were cured/accepted to keep momentum in the days following.



ID Requirements Arrive Close to Election Day

Voters who have voted for years arrive with valid ID they have always used — and are told it's no longer sufficient

What Is This Scenario?

Voter ID laws are not new. But the current wave pushes further: requiring birth certificates, passports, or proof-of-citizenship documents that millions of Americans — particularly elderly, low-income, and naturalized citizen voters — don't have or can't easily produce.

The Brennan Center documents that through May 2026, at least 9 states have enacted 12 restrictive voting laws, 9 of which will be in effect for November (Florida, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Utah and West Virginia). Several include strict new ID requirements or proof-of-citizenship requirements.

More than 21 million Americans do not have ready access to citizenship documents.

Under the Help America Vote Act, first-time voters who registered by mail may be required to show ID if they did not provide it when registering. When a voter cannot meet applicable ID requirements, they must generally be offered a provisional ballot,

which is counted once eligibility is verified under state rules.

ID laws can drop off participation and turnout. When these requirements are passed close to an election, or enforced inconsistently, they further suppress participation on a massive scale. Even the mere threat of them as last-minute illegal executive orders could hamper turnout.

How This Might Unfold

New requirement takes effect without adequate voter education. A new ID law is passed months before the election but voter education resources are minimal. Poll workers receive training but community outreach is insufficient. Voters who have always used their library card, utility bill, or student ID arrive and are told it's not enough.

Inconsistent enforcement. Poll workers in different precincts apply new requirements differently. Voters who are turned away at one precinct hear that others voted without issue.

Targeted enforcement in specific communities. New requirements are enforced more aggressively in precincts with high concentrations of BIPOC, elderly, or immigrant-community voters.

What would you do?

Amidst so much noise and election drama, it was easy to miss. But you were still surprised when you talked with your dear neighbor and she was shocked when you mentioned the new ID law.

You begin talking to more people. You realize this is widespread — few people know about this new ID law. Already, you can imagine the long lines at poll stations and many people being turned away. You especially fear the folks who arrive at the end of their workday to vote — only to realize they don't have sufficient ID to cast their vote. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Has your state passed any new voter ID or document requirement laws that will be in effect for November?
- Which voters in your community are most likely to be affected — and do you have a plan to reach them?
- Does your state have a "free ID" program? Is it accessible to the voters who need it?
- What are the rules about curing and provisional ballots if valid IDs cannot be found?

Responses That Have Worked

Wisconsin, 2016-2020: Voter ID Education and Acquisition Campaigns.

After Wisconsin enacted strict photo ID law, grassroots community members surveyed DMVs across the state and found that only 3 out of 11 were complying with a court order to distribute voter IDs within a week to residents without birth certificates or other required documents.

In response, civil society and organizing groups ran intensive education and ID acquisition campaigns, bringing the ID process to community breakfasts for low income residents, and church and community events. Programs were put in place to accompany these residents to DMV's and WisDOT locations, door-to-door canvassing targeted voters who might lack compliant ID.

In 2019 the Governor began to explore pathways to eliminate barriers. Messaging was coordinated, online services expanded, and a hotline created for obtaining a free ID for voting. Following a 3% drop in voter turnout in 2016, the 2020 election increased 6%.

Philadelphia, 2012–2014: Voter ID Requirements Blocked After Litigation Exposed Disenfranchisement Risks. After Pennsylvania passed a strict photo voter ID law in 2012, implementation became a major concern in cities like Philadelphia. Civil rights groups challenged the law, presenting evidence that large numbers of registered voters could be excluded and that the state's ID access system was not sufficiently available before Election Day. Public pressure campaigns shared the real-world impact and scrutinized the court's examination of the issue. Eventually courts issued injunctions blocking enforcement for the 2012 election (and later permanently).

North Carolina, 2013–2016: Documentation Created the Record That Courts Could Not Ignore. After North Carolina enacted a series of restrictive

voting measures, civil-rights organizations, community groups, and affected voters systematically documented who was affected and how. Testimony from voters, election officials, and experts helped build a factual record showing the impact of the restrictions. That record became central to litigation challenging the law. In 2016, a federal appeals court struck down key provisions, finding that they targeted African American voters with remarkable precision. The lesson was that documenting barriers to voting can create both legal accountability and public understanding.

education about how to get ID into the voter registration process and vice versa. Use the opportunity to connect with more people.

- **Use public pressure to support legal challenges.** Bring evidence and grow scrutiny so that court cases are not swept under the rug.

What to Prepare

Start here: [Know exactly what ID your state requires and what exceptions exist](https://mapresearch.org/democracy-map/voter-identification-requirements-for-in-person-voting) (mapresearch.org/democracy-map/voter-identification-requirements-for-in-person-voting). Run community education ahead of the election. Partner with organizations that can help voters obtain compliant ID. [Learn if your state offers same-day ID](https://rockthevote.org/how-to-vote/same-day-voter-registration). (rockthevote.org/how-to-vote/same-day-voter-registration)

Additional options:

- **Provisional ballot navigation at polling places.** Station volunteers outside polling places trained to advise voters turned away about what to ask for and how to follow up.
- **Document every denial.** This builds both the legal case and the political accountability case.
- **Make it a community story.** If voters in your community are being systematically denied, make sure local media, state officials, and allied organizations know.
- **Make getting your ID easy.** Set up operations to make it easy to get your ID. If that's not available, at least mix



Mail-In Ballot Deadline Changes

Mail-in ballots that voters sent in good faith, expecting them to be counted under existing rules, are no longer counted because deadline rules changed

What Is This Scenario?

This scenario contains a cocktail of legal uncertainty and voter disenfranchisement.

Multiple states have enacted mail voting restrictions in 2026. State receipt deadlines vary; some states accept ballots postmarked by Election Day and received within a certain timeframe after (typically 2-3 days), while others require receipt by Election Day itself. In some cases, extended deadlines exist not by statute but through court precedent or consent decrees. Once ballots are received, they must be counted unless there is a specific legal reason (voter signed and dated wrong, signature mismatch, etc.). "Ballot curing" — allowing voters to fix problems with their ballots — is available in some states but not all.

What's new here is the federal government's attempt to insert itself. President Trump signed an executive order in March 2025 imposing restrictions on mail voting, including a proof-of-citizenship requirement for voter registration and mandating that mailed ballots be received by election offices no later than Election Day. Critics argue the executive branch lacks this authority — that power over federal election procedures belongs to Congress, not the president.

If this was implemented, the immediate effect would be severe: all mail-in ballots would have to be received by Election Day. This is especially onerous in remote places like Alaska, where mail is regularly delayed due to difficult terrain and weather conditions.

Courts gave a temporary injunction. The case, known as *Watson*, is now pending before the Supreme Court after lower courts blocked key portions of the order. If the Court lifts the injunction and upholds the federal government's position, states will be forced to change rules with little notice before November. At issue is that federal election procedure authority rests primarily with Congress under Article I, Section 4 of the Constitution — not the executive branch.

Even if the Supreme Court rules against this, much damage could be done. The case creates uncertainty, allowing dishonest actors to claim fraud via a legal mechanism. And in theory, ballots received after Election Day under old rules may be set aside during initial canvassing, creating uncertainty about results until litigation is resolved.

Further executive or legislative action is possible at any point. Even if courts continue blocking the administration's

efforts, last-minute announcements will throw uncertainty into the mix — for voters, election administrators, and candidates alike.

How This Might Unfold

Supreme Court ruling on Watson case.

The Court rules that mail ballots must be physically received by Election Day, not postmarked. States scramble to implement new rules. Voters and election officials are confused. Ballots in transit are at risk.

Executive order claims mail-in ballots illegal — but the order is illegal. A last-minute Trump executive order or state executive action limits mail ballots. Though the change is stopped by the courts, confusion reigns and is used as evidence of election tampering.

Late legislative action. A state legislature passes a law tightening mail ballot deadlines or restrictions, effective immediately. Election officials don't have time to educate voters or change procedures.

What would you do?

Millions of voters have already voted by mail. They put their ballots in the mail 10 days ago, expecting them to arrive by the deadline they knew about. Then, the rule changes. After delayed court rulings over the status, the deadline suddenly moves to Election Day itself — no longer postmarked by Election Day, but physically received by Election Day. Suddenly, millions of ballots in transit are at risk of not being counted.

What would you do?

Key planning questions:

- What are your state's current mail ballot receipt deadlines?

- If the deadline changed to require receipt on Election Day itself, how many voters would be affected?
- What's your rapid communication plan to tell voters of any changes?
- Does your state have a "ballot curing" process — a way to fix rejected ballots?

Responses That Have Worked

19 State AGs (then 23+), 2025–2026: Coalition Lawsuits Block the Mail Ballot Executive Orders. When Trump signed his first elections executive order in March 2025 — demanding proof of citizenship for voter registration and requiring all mail ballots be received (not just postmarked) by Election Day — the response was immediate and multistate. California AG Rob Bonta and Nevada AG Aaron Ford led a coalition of 19 state attorneys general in filing suit in the District of Massachusetts in April 2025. The coalition argued that the Constitution's Elections Clause gives power over federal elections to states and Congress, not the president — and that the order would disenfranchise millions of eligible voters, particularly veterans, overseas citizens, the elderly, and people with disabilities who depend on mail voting.

A series of court and executive order battles ensued — Washington State, followed by an even more sweeping executive order followed by 23 attorneys generals suing again. The lesson: a coordinated multistate legal counteroffensive, filed fast and framed on constitutional grounds, can win injunctions and delay — if not permanently stop — dangerous executive overreach.

Philippines, 2022: Tsek.PH Fact-Checks Deadline Disinformation in Real Time. When false claims circulated on social

media about mail and absentee ballot deadlines for overseas Filipino workers in the 2022 presidential election, a large coalition of civil society and media network published corrections within hours through partner outlets, social media, and SMS. They had established a verified 400-outlet network before Election Day specifically for this purpose.

- **Plan for the chaos.** Given the current situation, encourage voters to mail-in early or hand-deliver ballots to drop boxes instead of mailing them. Do this well before Election Day.

What to Prepare

Start here: [Know your state's current mail ballot receipt deadline](https://apps.npr.org/voter-registration-2026-mail) (apps.npr.org/voter-registration-2026-mail) and when ballots must be mailed. Subscribe to updates from your state and county election office. Create a simple graphic or document explaining your state's mail ballot rules that you can share widely.

Additional options:

- **Monitor for deadline changes.** If the Watson case is decided or a new executive order is announced, track changes in real time.
- **Rapid voter education.** If deadlines change, immediately push corrected information through every channel: text, social media, email, phone calls, door-to-door. Get the word out within hours.
- **Ballot tracking support.** [Help voters track their ballots](https://vote.org/ballot-tracker-tools) (vote.org/ballot-tracker-tools), if available. Encourage voters to use official ballot tracking systems. Create a hotline for voters to call if they're worried their ballot was not received.
- **Know the ballot curing process.** [Learn whether your state allows ballot curing](https://ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/table-15-states-with-signature-cure-processes) (ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/table-15-states-with-signature-cure-processes) (fixing signature mismatches, dating errors, etc.). Prepare to help voters cure their ballots if needed.



Sabotage of Drop Boxes and Bomb Threats

Early voting sites are disrupted — drop boxes damaged or voting system databases compromised — affecting ballots already cast and suppressing future early voting

What Is This Scenario?

Polling places have seen an uptick in bomb threats. On Election Day 2024, several dozen polling places across Georgia, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania received bomb threats, some requiring evacuations. In each case, election officials deployed backup procedures: extended voting hours, provisional ballots, and redundant systems. The National Task Force on Election Crises later concluded that in most instances the impact to voters was minimal.

At the same time, resources to combat interference are down. Federal election security grants have fallen from a high of \$425 million to just \$15 million in 2025. That's a dramatic reduction that leaves counties with aging equipment and no federal help to replace it.

On her first day as Attorney General, Pam Bondi abandoned the FBI task force tracking election interference operations — including from overseas (like Russia, Iran, and China). Roughly one-third of all national cybersecurity workers in CISA have been fired or forced to resign.

Courts have held that voters unable to vote due to polling place failures through no fault of their own are entitled to relief — including extended hours. Emergency provisional ballots must be offered when a polling place cannot function normally.

Voter registration databases are protected under federal law. Unauthorized access is a crime. If a database is compromised, election officials must notify voters and have procedures to verify eligibility even if the database is offline.

Drop boxes are public property or must be accessible to voters. Removing them without adequate notice is illegal.

However, given very close elections, targeted acts of sabotage could affect results — and certainly could further erode trust and turnout.

How This Might Unfold

Database compromise affects voter registration. A cyber attack or authorized access compromises the voter registration database in a county or state. Early voting

sites can't verify voter eligibility. Voters are turned away or given provisional ballots.

Drop boxes vandalized or removed. Drop boxes in specific communities are damaged, removed, or locked. Voters show up to return ballots and find they can't.

Early voting site closes. An early voting location closes due to an alleged emergency (bomb threat, equipment failure, facility closure). The closure affects thousands of voters who had planned to vote there.

What would you do?

A friend tells you that a nearby ballot box had a pipe bomb stuffed into it. At first you figured it was some kid — but when a second happens at another location across town, you start to worry.

Police say they are investigating and election officials huddle. But a friend pulls you aside and asks what else can be done? You start to put your mind to the question.

What do you do?

Key planning questions:

- Who has authority to declare an emergency and extend early voting hours?
- What is the protocol for notifying voters who planned to use the affected drop box or site — or to attempt to find voters who voted at that location to try again?
- What is the legal standard for accepting or rejecting ballots from a damaged or tampered drop box?
- At what point does a second incident trigger a national response rather than a local one?
- How do you notify voters quickly without amplifying fear or suppressing turnout further?

Responses That Have Worked

Arizona, 2022: Drop Box Monitoring and Repair When drop boxes were vandalized or had mechanical problems, election officials immediately repaired or replaced them. Civil society organizations stationed observers at drop boxes to document any problems. When problems occurred, they were reported in real time and fixed within hours.

Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, 2026: Explosive Device Detonated — Voting Continued Anyway. On the morning of May 19, 2026 — Pennsylvania's primary — someone threw an explosive device outside a suburban polling station. No one was injured. Voting was not interrupted. Officials kept the polling location open, directing voters to enter through a side entrance while law enforcement secured the perimeter. Seventeen additional explosive devices were later found in the suspects' truck. County officials said afterward that they had planned for bomb threats as part of their Election Day emergency preparedness.

Georgia, 2024: 60+ Bomb Threats, Zero Precincts Permanently Closed. On Election Day 2024, Fulton County alone received 32 bomb threats — some by email, some by calls to 911. Sites were evacuated as protocol required. But in each case, voting resumed. The threats originated from Russian email domains. The FBI had pre-briefed election officials that bomb threats were in the likely planning scenarios, meaning counties had already walked through their response protocols before Election Day.

Nigeria, 2023: Youth Volunteers Physically Defend Polling Stations. In

multiple Lagos constituencies in the 2023 election, community and Labour Party youth volunteers physically formed protective circles around ballot boxes after armed men attacked and burned several stations. Their presence sites didn't prevent all attacks — but it stopped some and reduced overall fear.

Elsewhere, local coordinators and youth volunteers fanned out, using phone trees and WhatsApp to redirect affected voters to nearby still-functional stations and tell them about provisional processes. This spontaneous peer coordination, not official instruction, kept many voters from simply going home.

What to Prepare

Start here: [Know when early voting and mail voting start in your area](#) (vote411.org/plan-your-vote). Identify vulnerable drop box locations (isolated, low-traffic, in targeted communities). Know your election office's procedures for database failures and early voting site closures.

Additional options:

- **Monitor early voting and mail infrastructure.** Deploy observers to early voting sites and drop boxes starting day 1. Document any disruptions immediately.
- **Have legal backup ready.** Identify a lawyer who can file emergency motions immediately if a legal challenge freezes mail ballot processing. This motion should be filed within hours.
- **Support voters whose ballots are at risk.** If there's a legal challenge affecting ballots, create a tracking system so voters know whether their ballot is counted. Be transparent.
- **Have a drop box backup plan.** If drop boxes are damaged or removed, identify alternative locations where voters can return ballots (election office, satellite early voting sites, etc.). Communicate this immediately.
- **Help voters adapt.** If early voting sites close or mail voting is disrupted, help voters hand-deliver ballots, request new ballots, or vote in person later. Have rapid communication ready.



DOJ Election Fraud Investigations

Criminal investigations announced against election results, election officials, or civic organizations — designed not to result in charges, but to cast doubt on results, intimidate officials, and create justification for more extreme actions

What Is This Scenario?

This scenario is about dishonest investigations, used as a pretext for other more egregious scenarios. Trump is beginning this. Without any evidence, on June 4, Trump claimed Democrats are stealing the California primaries, repeating the lies in multiple venues. This is coupled with a shady statement from the US Attorney saying they are working with the FBI on multiple election fraud investigations.

Then on June 11, FBI agents raided the Cleveland offices of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, a pro-democracy organization that helps register voters in that state. Agents allegedly went to staff and even volunteer canvassers houses — sometimes with subpoenas, sometimes without — and pressed for information and electronic devices.

Even if the administration never files charges, the threat in all these cases creates a pretext for any number of interference attempts. It will further reduce election officials morale and plunge trust in the electoral system.

The Brennan Center documented three new DOJ task forces have been created specifically around elections: the Weaponization Working Group, the NJ Election Integrity Task Force, and the DC Election Accountability Unit. They are "poised to enable election interference by investigating perceived adversaries, targeting election officials, and casting doubt on election systems."

Federal investigations do not give the government the right to stop election administration. An investigation is not an injunction. Election officials can and should continue their work unless a court order specifically prevents them from doing so.

Organizations served with subpoenas have legal rights: to challenge overbroad subpoenas, to seek protective orders limiting disclosure, and to continue operating while litigation proceeds. Because the investigations are about narrative, it's important to push back publicly — not merely defending against accusations of fraud, but explaining the goal is election interference and institutionally assaulting our elections.

How This Might Unfold

Pre-election announcement targeting a swing-county election director. DOJ announces an investigation into alleged fraud in a swing county. No charges. No evidence. The director is not suspended — but the announcement dominates local news for weeks.

Investigation targeting a GOTV organization. A major voter registration organization is served with a federal subpoena demanding donor lists, staff records, and communications.

Post-election announcement creates certification pretext. After Election Day, DOJ announces a fraud investigation in a county with a narrow voting result. County canvassers use the investigation as grounds to delay certification.

What would you do?

Two days before the election, the DOJ announces it is investigating election fraud in your county. No charges are filed. No evidence is released. But the announcement is made.

The press trumpets the news: *Election officials under federal investigation*. A dark cloud is cast on all of the election — backed by only vague statements around fraud.

The investigation becomes the justification for every other interference mechanism in this guide. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Which voting rights organizations in your state have received federal subpoenas or been publicly targeted?
- Does your state attorney general have the willingness to challenge DOJ overreach?
- How bold are officials willing to be in challenging a public narrative?

Responses That Have Worked

Minnesota Officials, 2026: Continued Doing Their Jobs Publicly. In January 2026, the DOJ issued grand jury subpoenas to Governor Tim Walz and a handful of other leading officials — targeting them for their opposition to federal immigration raids, not for anything election-related. None of them went quiet. Every one went on the record immediately. , Attorney General Keith Ellison: "I will not be intimidated, and I will not stop working to protect Minnesotans." Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey: "In Minneapolis, we won't be afraid." Walz framed it as "political theater" and refused to be drawn in. Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty had already publicly warned that she would prosecute any ICE agents who broke the law at polling places. Far from silencing the officials, the overreach of the subpoenas became the story — and each public statement of defiance became the counter-narrative that made the DOJ's investigation look like what it was: intimidation, not investigation.

Arizona, 2022: Defamation lawsuits. Kari Lake repeatedly and falsely blamed Stephen Richer, the Republican Maricopa County Recorder, for her gubernatorial loss. Rather than just defending himself, he went on offense: he sought not only damages but a court order declaring her statements false and requiring her to delete them from social media. Lake ultimately declined to even contest liability, and the case settled. But the offensive strategy was important for resetting the narrative.

Georgia (country), 2024: Opposition Continues Operating Publicly After Government Threats. After the October

2024 disputed elections, the Georgian Dream party threatened to outlaw opposition parties — specifically accusing them of "treason." The threat of treason was significant, and language intended to send the opposition leaders underground.

Instead, folks became *more* public. They held press conferences and legal challenges, but they headlined protest rallies held in Tbilisi and around the country. The public nature of continued operation — rather than going underground — was key in building public support for the opposition.

Otpor, 1999-2000: Empty Boxes Expose a Paranoid Regime. After Serbian authorities raided grassroots group Otpor's offices and confiscated their computers and files, the group turned the repression into a public spectacle. Anticipating their opponent's moves, Otpor publicly announced it would move back into its offices on a specific date, daring police to act again. When moving vans arrived as promised, drawing spectators and media, police rushed to stop them and tore open the boxes — only to find them empty. Otpor immediately seized the moment, framing the raid as proof of the regime's paranoia and desperation, turning what could have been another grim confrontation into a moment of public humiliation for the authorities.

Ukraine, 2004: Refusal to Halt the Electoral Process Despite Fraud Allegations. During the disputed presidential runoff, authorities amplified false claims that cast doubt on the vote and smeared election officials. Citing this, they delayed reporting results.

Opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko didn't wait for them to fill the space with their lies. No vague claims of fraud justified halting democratic procedures. He unambiguously named this as a tactic to steal election results.

The response was maximalist noncooperation. Protesters occupied central Kyiv for weeks, creating a sustained, highly visible presence that functioned as a parallel civic authority. Institutions were forced to respond.

The opposition refused to accept any delay as neutral; instead, they framed it as a tactic to overturn results and met it with continuous public action and legal escalation. Ultimately, the pressure compelled Ukraine's Supreme Court to invalidate the fraudulent runoff and order a new vote. The key lesson: stay active in contesting the narrative using formal and outside channels, focusing the burden back onto those invoking investigations.

What to Prepare

Start here: Know which legal organizations in your state are tracking DOJ targeting of election officials. The [Brennan Center](#), [Democracy Docket](#), and your [state ACLU](#) are monitoring — subscribe to their alerts. Be prepared for community mobilization and do not hesitate to frame the opposition's moves in the public.

Additional options:

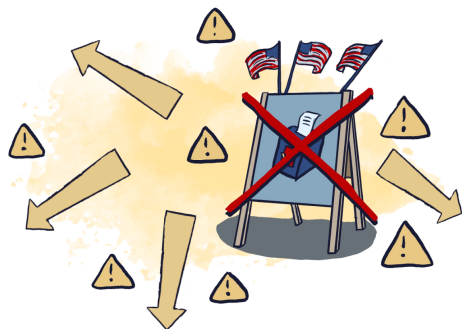
- **Public support for targeted officials.** When a federal investigation is announced, the immediate community response should be visible, vocal support.
- **Counter the pretext immediately.** Specifically refute the alleged facts with actual evidence. Don't let the allegation stand uncontested. And, don't be caught within their frame — if this is about them trying to steal the election, say so.
- **Legal counter-offensive.** Organizations with resources should immediately challenge any overbroad subpoenas and

announce they are doing so publicly. Filed lawsuits can be both legal strategy and counter-narrative.

- **Targeted groups: don't be afraid to be public.** Accusations are intended to breed silence and complicity — neither should be done. You are safer if you move with public support. The courts will move too slowly to clear your name.

Stay active in framing the story with press conferences and align strategies with outside citizen pressure.

- **Protest and get loud.** Rather than only responding to the accusations — often impossible since they may be made with only vague statements — stay on the offensive with clear statements about what is happening politically.



Last-Minute Voting Location Chaos

Voters show up at the polling place they've always used and are turned away and redirected to a new location

What Is This Scenario?

Rule changes are legal. Polling place changes happen. But when they happen late, without adequate public notice, the effect is voter suppression. This especially harms turn-out in communities with high concentrations of first-time voters, elderly voters, or voters without cars.

In Dallas County, Texas on March 3, 2026, Republican Party officials unilaterally eliminated countywide voting for primary Election Day — reverting to a precinct-based system that voters hadn't used in years. Voters who showed up at the wrong location were redirected.

The Dallas County Elections Department, working with the League of Women Voters, deployed nonpartisan "election navigators" to at least 75 polling locations on Election Day morning. The navigators had tablets to look up each voter's correct precinct and could text the address directly to a voter's phone. Nearly 13,000 texts were sent to redirect voters that day. A county judge temporarily extended voting hours at Democratic polling sites. Following widespread criticism and voter frustration, county election officials and both parties moved toward restoring countywide voting for the May 26 runoff.

Still, more than 1,750 Democratic ballots cast during court-ordered extended hours were set aside pending litigation — and ultimately not counted after Dallas County Democrats withdrew their lawsuit, citing the Texas Supreme Court's hostility to the case.

Voters who show up at the wrong location due to an administrative error or rule change are generally entitled to a provisional ballot. Courts may order extended polling hours when voters have been disenfranchised through official conduct rather than voter error. But that requires voters knowing when they should stay in line and that, at minimum, to vote by provisional ballot.

The Callais decision means voting location disruption will occur in many places in 2026.

How This Might Unfold

Polling place moved with minimal notice. A location is changed weeks before Election Day. Notice is sent by mail. On Election Day, hundreds arrive at the old location.

Precinct-based voting imposed late. In counties that have used countywide vote centers for years, a rule change reimpose

precinct-based voting shortly before Election Day.

What would you do?

You've voted at the same community center for twelve years. This November, without adequate notice, that polling place doesn't exist anymore. You arrive and there is nobody there and just a sign taped on that says "Not a current polling place."

You look online and realize it's been moved four miles away. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Has your county or state made any changes to Election Day voting rules since the last general election?
- Do you know which voters in your community are most vulnerable to confusion from a rule change?
- What networks of communication are most critical for reaching vulnerable voters?

Responses That Have Worked

Nevada, 2020: Election officials adapted to rapid procedural changes during the pandemic as the state expanded mail voting for all active registered voters in the general election. Counties had to quickly communicate updated rules around ballot delivery, return methods, and deadlines to a large and dispersed electorate. To reduce confusion, election offices relied on multiple communication channels, including official websites, mailed notices, press briefings, and coordinated outreach through local media.

Georgia, 2020: Election workers and observers documented a highly scrutinized election. Unprecedented election changes and absentee voting due to the COVID-19 pandemic caused an array of uncertainties. Counties implemented those changes, but also election administration staff tracked issues, timelines, and procedural incidents through official logs and reports required under state and federal election administration rules.

Poll workers followed established procedures, including issuing provisional ballots when required under Georgia law. These provisional ballots were then processed through the standard post-election review process. Steps could later be dissected for accuracy.

The broader lesson: document procedural issues—through official logs, incident reports, and election records. This is a key part of ensuring transparency and supporting later review, audits, and legal accountability.

Philippines, 2022: Parish-Based Rapid Notification. When the Commission on Elections in the Philippines faced polling-place confusion and technical issues during the May 2022 presidential election, Catholic Bishops activated its parish-based network to push real-time, accurate polling-station information to communities. Unlike official channels, the parish network reached rural voters within minutes. The same network also collected signed affidavits from voters who witnessed irregularities.

What to Prepare

Start here: [Monitor your county election website](https://www.vote411.org) (vote411.org) for changes to polling places, [equipment](https://www.verifiedvoting.org) (verifiedvoting.org), or voting rules — starting now. Sign up for any county voter notification system. Create

community networks where people can prepare to rapidly communicate with each other any changes. Know your state's rules on provisional ballots.

Additional options:

- **Deploy your own navigators.** Station volunteers outside affected polling places early on Election Day to redirect voters and explain what happened.
- **Create rapid-response communication channels.** A group text or Signal chain that can push updated polling location information within minutes.
- **Know the judge.** Emergency court orders extending polling hours are granted by local judges. Your legal contact should be able to file within hours of a disruption.
- **Document every voter affected.** This builds the case for an extension and post-election accountability.
- **Prepare your election workers for bumps.** If you're in a place where these last-minute changes are likely, talk to your election workers about how changes will get communicated.



Mass Voter Challenge Campaign

Thousands of trained challengers fan out to polling places and early voting sites, filing challenges to voters' eligibility in large numbers — slowing lines, discouraging voters, and creating confrontation

What Is This Scenario?

In Georgia in 2020, Republican challengers filed more than 360,000 voter challenges in a single county — attempting to remove voters from the rolls weeks before the election. Similarly, in Arizona in 2022 organized challenge campaigns were deployed in specific communities.

Trump has since announced an expanded "Election Integrity Army" for 2026. The boast has been making election challenges in every state, larger than ever before.

Legally, challenges must have legitimate legal basis — not just a name on a list. Challenges based solely on data matches are legally insufficient in most (but not all) states. Poll workers can and should dismiss frivolous challenges. But even that may not be sufficient.

Organized groups cause delays, make polling places seem chaotic or unsafe, harass election workers, and create conditions for confrontation that discourage other voters from waiting in line. Federal law prohibits voter intimidation regardless of source (52 U.S.C. § 10307(b)), but without enforcement the intimidation may succeed.

How This Might Unfold

Targeted precincts flooded with challengers. In precincts with high Black, Latino, or immigrant-community concentrations, organized challengers arrive at opening. They challenge voter after voter based on federal data-matching lists. Each challenge requires adjudication. Lines form. Voters leave.

Challengers create a hostile atmosphere. Even without filing formal challenges, the presence of organized observers who visibly scrutinize voters creates psychological pressure. Voters with any uncertainty may leave rather than face the interaction.

Written challenges overwhelm the system. Bulk challenge letters arrive at county boards demanding large lists of voters be removed. County officials must respond to each challenge. Staff is diverted. Other work stops.

What would you do?

Days before the election you heard of "lists" floating around with names of many voters and teams of challengers being organized. On election day it's clear the plan: dozens show up at polling places as volunteer

“challengers.” Working from a list, they challenge hundreds of voters — arguing they are voting illegally, are illegal, don’t match their ID, are fake, etc.

The complaints are extensive and create delays and disrupt the voting process. In some polling stations the challengers are kicked out — but then they just drive to another location and continue. More and more are sent all over.

You expect that later bulk letters will be sent to county boards of elections demanding that large lists of voters be challenged or purged from the rolls. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- In your state, how many challenger objections can be filed at a polling place?
- Does your county have a process for flagging frivolous challenges and removing them quickly?
- Do you have trained observers who understand challenge procedures in your state?
- How will poll workers identify and dismiss legally baseless challenges?
- How can grassroots volunteers respectfully interact with the challengers to tie up their time?

Responses That Have Worked

Georgia (country), 2024: Observer Networks Document Challenger Behavior. After the October 2024 election was disputed, Transparency International Georgia's observers not only tracked official irregularities but specifically documented the behavior of ruling-party proxies at polling stations — who were intimidating voters and election workers. By publishing

these observations in real time — naming locations, times, and methods — civil society created an accountability structure that made repeat behavior riskier.

Indonesia, 2024: Civil Society Monitoring of Coordinated Digital Operations. Ahead of Indonesia's February 2024 presidential election, coordinated social media manipulation was a well-documented threat. Networks of paid operatives — known locally as "buzzers" — were recruited to manage fake profiles and amplify messaging on behalf of campaigns. Civil society organizations responded by banding together to identify hoaxes and coordinated inauthentic behavior, providing voters and election workers with accurate, nonpartisan information. The Damai Coalition of independent civil society organizations mobilized its networks to monitor harmful content online and design risk assessments for conflict-prone areas. Major platforms including Meta and TikTok implemented special election content moderation policies, though consistently identifying coordinated activity remained difficult.

Belarus, 2020: Activists Monitor the Monitors. After the August 2020 election, Belarusian civil society monitoring group Viasna documented not only ballot fraud but also the behavior of the state officials orchestrating it — compiling names of election commission chairs, district supervisors, and Interior Ministry liaisons at specific precincts who had ordered falsification. The "naming the responsible parties" strategy created individual accountability beyond the systemic level. It also made it harder for mid-level officials to simply follow orders without personal consequence.

What to Prepare

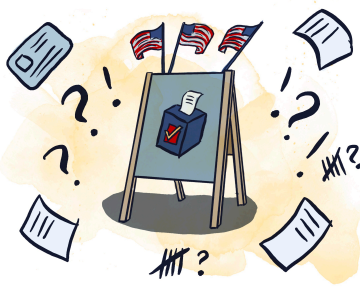
Start here: Learn your state's specific rules for challengers. bit.ly/esrn_partner. Make sure your area has enough trained legal observers. Develop a plan for training poll workers on handling challenges.

Additional options:

- **Deploy legal observers at precincts where challenges are expected.** Their job is to document challenge activity, flag legally deficient challenges to election officials, and ensure challengers aren't exceeding their authority.
- **Make the "integrity army" visible before Election Day.** Research whether

challenger operations are being organized in your area. Publicize the tactics and expected locations.

- **Voter reassurance materials.** Distribute simple materials in every language used in your community explaining that challengers have no authority over voters and voters can request a poll worker if they feel uncomfortable.
- **Counter-presence at targeted precincts.** Deploy trained, friendly observers to polling places you expect to be targeted to support voters and document any voter intimidation.



Disinformation Flood: Wrong Place, Wrong Time, Wrong Day

Targeted voters — particularly in Black, Latino, and immigrant communities — receive false information about polling location, date, or eligibility, and some believe it and stay home

What Is This Scenario?

In August 2020, conservative operatives sent robocalls to Detroit-area residents warning them that voting by mail would put their information in a police database and expose them to mandatory vaccines. The calls specifically targeted Black voters.

The local NAACP chapter was early to catch this. Alongside other neighborhood outreach, they used an already set-up peer-to-peer text program using high-frequency Black voters to directly contact neighborhoods.

The two operatives behind the scheme were caught and convicted, and a federal court later ordered the operatives behind the call to send a corrective robocall to every recipient. But the fast reaction helped minimize the damage.

Similar "stay home" robocalls reached an estimated 800,000+ voters in swing states in 2020.

In 2024, an AI-generated robocall using President Biden's cloned voice told New Hampshire voters not to vote in the primary.

In 2026, the same technology is cheaper, more accessible, and harder to attribute.

Knowingly spreading false information about voting is a crime under most state laws and potentially federal law (18 U.S.C. § 594, § 10307). The FCC has specific rules about AI-generated voices in political calls.

That said, the damage may still be done.

How This Might Unfold

Wrong place, wrong date robocall.

Automated calls or texts go to voters in targeted precincts giving wrong information about polling location, hours, or date. Targeted to communities that skew Democratic.

AI deepfake of a trusted figure. A voice that sounds like your city councilmember or pastor tells people that there have been "problems" at local polling places and encourages listeners that voting will be extended for tomorrow (a falsehood).

Threat-based disinformation. Messages — in Spanish, in Creole, in multiple languages — warn immigrant-community voters that

ICE will be present at polling places and checking citizenship status. Or (perhaps as devastatingly), allies of good will hear rumors of ICE at polls and quickly pass them on social media, thinking they're doing people a service when they're just spreading falsehoods to keep people from polls.

What would you do?

Your phone rings the night before Election Day. A recorded voice says: because of long lines, your polling place has been moved. It gives a new address. You write it down and go there the next morning.

That address doesn't exist. The call was designed to keep you from voting. You text some friends and realize thousands of these calls have gone out across your county.

What do you do?

Key planning questions:

- What are your community's different channels of rapid response information about voting?
- What social media, texting or other chains of communication do you have?
- Do you have a relationship with the press that allows you to push corrections fast?
- Is there a local number to call to verify Election Day information and rumors?

Responses That Have Worked

Flint, 2020: Election Day Disinformation.

On Election Day, Flint residents received robocalls falsely telling them that due to long lines at the polls, they should wait and vote on Wednesday. There is no Wednesday voting.

Attorney General Nessel and Secretary of State Benson both issued immediate public corrections, and Governor Whitmer released a statement warning that an unknown party was deliberately spreading misinformation. The FBI announced it was aware of the calls and investigating. Flint's mayor issued a public statement reminding residents that Election Day was that day. Again, local networks activated — local pastors posted a video alerting their congregations. The impact from the robocalls appeared minimal.

Prediction Markets, 2026: Platforms Cut Off Paid Misinformation. Following California's primary election, conservative influencers paid to promote prediction market apps Kalshi and Polymarket began spreading unfounded claims of election fraud to their audiences.

Civil society pressure and public scrutiny pushed both platforms to act. Kalshi updated its policies to prohibit paid creators from calling into question the integrity of an election result. Polymarket informed affiliates that denying election results violated their terms of service against false and misleading information, and asked two paid creators to remove sponsorship tags.

This illustrates a pressure point: prediction markets depend on accurate outcomes to function, giving them a direct financial incentive to not let their brands become vehicles for delegitimizing results. When that conflict became visible and public, the platforms moved.

Brazil 2022: Platforms remove false information Brazil's election had heated up and social media was regularly used by a major party to amplify false information. Platforms received consistent pressure from civil society to remove such material on platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok. Brazil has stronger laws than the US against producing false information

which accelerated their campaign. As a result, those platforms removed such material and follow-up pressure made sure that information stayed removed.

What to Prepare

Start here: Establish your community's "truth hotline" before Election Day: a number people can call to verify voting information or use [866-OUR-VOTE](https://866ourvote.org) (866ourvote.org). Know your [county election board's number](https://usvotefoundation.org/election-offices) (usvotefoundation.org/election-offices). Sign up for alerts from your Secretary of State.

Additional options:

- **Activate your trusted messenger network.** If disinformation is circulating, the fastest counter is your pastor, union president, or school principal pushing correct information through their own channels.
- **Document and report every instance.** Screenshot, save, report to: your state

AG, state election board, the [FCC](https://fcc.gov/consumers/guides/filing-informal-complaint) (fcc.gov/consumers/guides/filing-informal-complaint) (for robocalls), [DOJ](https://justice.gov/crt/contact-voting-section) (justice.gov/crt/contact-voting-section), and platform trust and safety teams.

- **Pre-load your community with correct information.** Push verified polling place, hours, and ID information multiple times in the week before the election — through every channel you have.
- **Pre-load your community with inoculation.** Especially if you have reason to believe they may be targeted, tell them. This is another reminder of how powerful their vote is — and a chance to reassure them about the value of early voting and regularly checking their voter registration. Alert allies to be careful before spreading rumors.
- **Pressure platforms for removal.** While they may not immediately remove the material, they have a role and an obligation and their carelessness shouldn't be an excuse for them to not be named and shamed for their participation in vulgar actions.



Armed Civilian Groups at Ballot Drop Boxes or Polling Places

Voters are intimidated away from drop boxes or polling places by organized, armed, or surveilling civilian groups — suppressing participation without any direct confrontation

What Is This Scenario?

In fall 2022, a national network of "drop box watchers" coordinated on Telegram with militia groups stationed people at drop boxes across Maricopa County, Arizona. Two members were photographed in full tactical gear. Voters reported being followed and having license plates recorded. Leaked Telegram messages from group leaders said: "2022 was only a warm-up."

In 2026, Trump has announced an expanded "Election Integrity Army." Right wing extremists have taken this as directions for intervention in the elections.

It is a federal crime to "intimidate, threaten, or coerce" anyone voting or trying to vote (52 U.S.C. § 10307(b); 18 U.S.C. § 594). Conduct that a reasonable person would find threatening — including being photographed, followed, or closely surveilled — qualifies.

That, of course, requires enforcement and prosecution — but it does provide legal standing for interventions.

How This Might Unfold

Quiet surveillance. Two to four people with cameras and notepads station themselves at a drop box. They photograph voters and record license plates. Entirely intimidating.

Armed presence. One or more members are openly armed. They may approach voters or simply stand where they can be seen. Almost certainly illegal voter intimidation.

Live-stream doxxing. Video and photos are uploaded to social media in real time. Voters are identified and accused of being "mules" (people improperly handling multiple ballots).

What would you do?

You're dropping off your mail ballot at an official drop box. Standing nearby are two or three people in tactical gear. One holds a camera. Another is writing down license plates. They don't stop you. They may not say anything. But you feel watched. You feel unsafe. You turn around and leave.

This is voter intimidation — even without a single word spoken. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Are there drop boxes or polling places in your community that are isolated, low-traffic, or in areas where a small group would be visibly intimidating?
- Do you have a legal contact who could file for an emergency injunction within 48 hours?
- Could you mobilize 20 friendly, visible people to a drop box location within a half hour?

Responses That Have Worked

Arizona, 2022: Emergency Injunctions and Deploying Counter-Presence. Arizona Oath Keepers, along with other militia and armed civilian groups, photographed voters and recorded license plates. The intent was clear: voter intimidation, and dissuasion.

Lawsuits were filed, calling for a ban of their activities around polling sites. Initially the Federal Judge ruled against the ban. But civil society would not let the issue go. Civil society organized counter-presence operations — friendly, visible volunteers at drop boxes and polling places with bright “I voted” shirts and friendly gear.

An election protection hotline was run, translation was offered at polling stations, and organizers held a clear 75 feet perimeter around polling stations, to shield voters from ongoing intimidation and campaigning. They handed out water and sacks and intentionally tried to counter intimidation. Media covered this which helped move public opinion and reassure people.

Under a second challenge, the Judge eventually enacted a ban.

Philadelphia, 2020: The Counting-Room Vigil. During the post-Election Day ballot count, partisan observers and campaign representatives attempted to challenge procedures and slow the counting. Rumors of bombs and armed actors whipped through Philadelphia. Election workers and officials continued processing, despite heightened tension.

To boost the morale of ballot counters inside, hundreds of residents gathered outside for a festive celebration of the counting happening inside the Pennsylvania Convention Center. This was not a one-hour protest — it was a visible, sustained presence marked by loud music and dancing.

The positive, family-friendly energy was beamed for all to see — organized community support to affirm confidence in the process and the workers inside. The message directed toward election workers was consistent—“we see you, keep going.”

Ukraine 2024: Police remove armed observers. When armed civilian observers stationed themselves at polling places, election officials acted fast. They cannot be present at polling places — it can only intimidate. So police were called and, in cases where the observers didn’t immediately leave, were arrested.

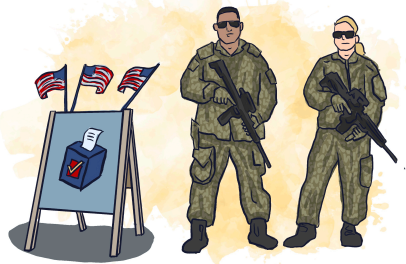
What to Prepare

Start here: [Know the drop boxes and polling places in your area](https://vote411.org/plan-your-vote) (vote411.org/plan-your-vote). Find a law firm willing to file an emergency restraining order before early voting begins. [Know your state's legal buffer distance](https://ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/electioneering) (ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/electioneering). Publicize [866-OUR-VOTE](https://866ourvote.org) (866ourvote.org) (866-687-

8683) widely. Track right-wing activity in your area ([Bridging Divides Initiative](http://bridgingdivides.princeton.edu) (bridgingdivides.princeton.edu) can help). Plan to hold a post-counting festive event to support ballot counters.

Additional options:

- **Deploy a "Friendly Presence" team** — 10 to 20 people in bright, welcoming t-shirts at at-risk drop boxes, handing out water and materials. Warmth through numbers.
- **Counter the doxxing.** If surveillance groups are live-streaming voter information, document it and report it to platforms and law enforcement simultaneously.
- **Prepare a post-election counting festival** with music and a DJ to support the ballot counters, especially if results are anticipated over days beyond the election.
- **Document everything.** Date, time, location, number of people, equipment, behavior, any voter who turned away.



Federal Agents at or Near Polling Places

Federal immigration agents or National Guard troops appear at or near polling places, creating a climate of fear that suppresses turnout — particularly among Latino, BIPOC, and immigrant-community voters

What Is This Scenario?

Steve Bannon said in February 2026: *"You're damn right we're gonna have ICE surround the polls come November."* Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said she had not heard the president consider it, but then-DHS Secretary nominee Markwayne Mullin said that ICE could be sent to polling places in the event of a "specific threat." Bannon later described ICE's airport deployment as "perfect training for the fall of 2026."

Reports of ICE activity near voting locations during the 2026 primary season raised alarms about what November could look like. In Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, a primary polling site was delayed in opening after ICE agents conducted an immigration operation nearby. In San Antonio, Texas, local law enforcement conducting an arrest near a primary polling site fueled rumors of ICE activity — a reminder that even unrelated enforcement can trigger fear and confusion among voters. And in Philadelphia, the local Homeland Security Investigations office sits within a half-mile radius of at least three polling precincts — meaning voters in those neighborhoods may encounter federal agents without any deployment being "planned" at all.

Federal law is unambiguous: deploying federal "troops or armed men" to any location where voting is taking place is a federal crime, punishable by up to five years in prison (18 U.S.C. § 592). Voter intimidation by any person — including federal agents — is also a federal crime (18 U.S.C. § 594).

However, who would enforce that — and how?

It is likely any deployment of federal agents is primarily about intimidation — more so than overt violence. But ICE in particular, which has acted more and more as an unregulated, private wing of the Executive, could be deployed into neighborhoods in terrifyingly overt ways. A mix of these could cause a diffuse chilling of voter turnout — through nearby ICE operations, local law enforcement overreach, and misinformation.

How This Might Unfold

Federal agents stationed near polling places. ICE or other federal agents are visible in the vicinity of polling places in communities where ICE has previously operated. They do not enter the polling place but their presence is unmistakable.

Checkpoint near a polling place. A federal immigration enforcement checkpoint is set up near — not at — a polling place on Election Day morning. These checkpoints could be relatively passive (casually checking IDs), or very active scenes of violent enforcement.

Local or state law enforcement deploy to polling sites or otherwise. While election codes vary, in many jurisdictions local law enforcement has wide legal rights to show up at polling places to maintain order. However, in California 2026, for example, a sheriff illegally seized ballots in an attempt to investigate perceived election fraud.

National Guard "crowd control" deployment. In a city under partial National Guard deployment, troops are deployed to the vicinity of multiple polling places, likely places with heavy concentrations of Black and brown voters.

Ongoing immigration operations impact voter turnout and voting processes. This may be perhaps the most likely — with ICE executing high-profile routines near and on Election day, causing a diffuse chilling effect on voters.

What would you do?

You walked towards your neighborhood polling place. As you turn a corner, you see three heavily armed federal agents in uniform. You cross the street to avoid them, but they follow you with their eyes — watching as you enter your polling place.

You don't know if they're there to arrest someone or just to be visible. You don't know if they're checking papers. You aren't even sure if they're ICE or who. Your heart races with fear. That is the point. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Which places in your community are in or near areas that have already seen ICE operations?
- Does your state have specific legislation protecting voters from federal agent interference at polls?
- Could you push accurate information to your community within minutes of a federal agent sighting?
- Could you mobilize 20 friendly, visible people to a drop box location within a half hour?

Responses That Have Worked

Los Angeles, 2025: Community Monitoring of Immigration Enforcement.

In 2025, immigration enforcement activity increased significantly in the Los Angeles area. Rapid-response networks were formed that encouraged residents to report suspected immigration enforcement activity. These networks distributed information through hotlines, volunteers, and community alerts. Public visibility, preparation, and documentation increased accountability and helped community members understand options to handle federal immigration authorities.

DuPage County, Illinois, 2026: A County Clerk Goes Public and Sets Up a Hotline.

Ahead of Illinois's March 2026 primary, DuPage County Clerk Jean Kaczmarek held a news conference declaring that federal immigration agents would not be allowed to interfere with DuPage County elections "in any way," called out the intimidation threat by name, and cited the federal statute making it a crime to deploy "troops or armed men" to any location where voting is

taking place, punishable by up to five years in prison.

Her office set up a dedicated hotline for residents to report sightings of any immigration agents or federal personnel at polling locations or early voting sites. She also announced that if federal agents were spotted, her office would instantly notify election judges, alert "rapid responders on the streets," and push information to voters via social media. DHS pushed back publicly against her statements. She did not back down. The combination of pre-emptive public statement, concrete legal grounding, a voter hotline, and a rapid-response protocol is one model to copy.

US, 2026: Local Governments Refuse Cooperation. Mayors and county sheriffs can publicly state — before Election Day — that they will not cooperate with illegal federal agent presence at polling places in their jurisdiction, and that any such presence will be reported and challenged. Many of these local government officials have joined the Project for the Fight Against Federal Overreach (FAFO — <https://www.federaloverreach.org/>).

Minnesota's Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty stated clearly, "If ICE officers are dispatched to polling places in Hennepin County to frighten voters away from the ballot box, my office will investigate, and we will charge."

Larry Krasner, district attorney of Philadelphia. "We will prosecute ICE agents who break the law. There is no category of American who gets to operate above it."

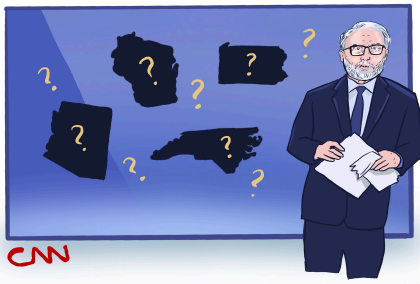
The group includes officials in Travis County, Texas, Dallas County, Texas, Pima County, Arizona, Fairfax County, Virginia, Arlington County, Virginia, Portsmouth, Norfolk, and more.

What to Prepare

Start here: Know which polling places are in areas with high ICE or National Guard activity already (nearby facilities, etc). Connect with immigrant rights organizations. Know your sheriff's position on cooperating with federal enforcement. Get information from [Bridging Divides Initiative](#) about local threat levels.

Additional options:

- **Establish a rapid response network before Election Day.** A text tree or Signal group for immediate alerts if federal agents appear near polling places. Many of these that have been set up for rapid response for ICE may need to be primed to be ready again.
- **Have legal observers at at-risk polling places from opening.** Their presence deters violations and documents any that occur.
- **Push "[know your rights](https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/voting-rights)" materials — and alternative ways to vote.** For example, push voting early using mail-in ballots if that's an option.
- **[Ask city and election officials to go on record](#)** ([federaloverreach.org](https://www.federaloverreach.org)). A public statement from local law enforcement that they will enforce voter protection laws changes the dynamic.
- **Discourage spreading rumors.** Well-meaning people spreading unverified ICE sightings can suppress turnout as much as actual ICE presence.
- **Deploy a community team** — 10 to 20 people in bright, welcoming t-shirts at at-risk drop boxes, handing out water and materials. Warmth through numbers and refusing to be afraid.



Recounts, Hand Counts, and Ballot Curing

One or more races end up close enough to trigger automatic or requested recounts, hand counts, or ballot curing processes — creating enormous demand for legal coordination and volunteer work, and creating opportunities for interference

What Is This Scenario?

Close elections invite speculation. In this political environment, they spiral quickly into claims of fraud and theft. The result is great attention needs to be placed on the mechanics of recounts, hand counts, and ballot curing.

The 2020 Georgia Senate runoff required months of recounts, hand counts, and legal battles. The 2024 North Carolina Supreme Court judicial race remained unresolved due to recount questions.

In certain places, Election Day margins are narrowing. The risk of a super-close race triggering a recount is significant.

Recount procedures vary by state. Most states have automatic recount thresholds (usually 0.5% or less). Recount procedures are spelled out in state law and typically involve: a request is made, the election authority conducts the recount, observers from both sides are present, and results are certified.

Hand counts must follow the same procedures as recounts and are subject to the same rules about observers and documentation.

Ballot curing procedures vary by state. Most states allow voters to fix problems with their ballots (signature mismatches, missing dates, etc.). Some states give direct notification to voters; some do not. Either way, the state's outreach is never sufficient — and so a ground game is needed to help people cure their ballots.

How This Might Unfold

Automatic recount triggered. A race margin falls below the automatic recount threshold. The recount process begins. It will take weeks. Questions arise about which ballots get recounted, how the recount is done, and who observes it.

Hand count requested. A campaign or observer requests a hand count of ballots instead of relying on tabulation machines. The hand count raises new questions about which ballots to hand count, how to count them, and whether hand counts match machine counts.

Ballot curing process becomes a battleground. Ballots with irregularities (signature mismatches, missing dates, etc.) need to be "cured" — voters are notified and given a chance to fix them. The curing

process becomes contentious. Questions arise about which ballots qualify for curing, how voters are notified, and how much time they have to respond.

What would you do?

Election results are in. One race is decided by 475 votes out of 2.3 million cast. Hand counts have been requested. Alongside that, ballots with irregularities need to be "cured" — given back to voters to fix. The process will take weeks and suddenly you realize — thousands of voters need to be activated again to make sure their votes get cured. Doing so will require hundreds of volunteers, multiple legal teams, and constant media attention.

This scenario combines legal complexity, time pressure, and public scrutiny in ways that create opportunities for interference and mistakes. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- What are the automatic recount thresholds in your state?
- How long do recounts take? Who administers them?
- What is the "ballot curing" process in your state? How are voters notified of problems with their ballots?
- Do you have the volunteer infrastructure to support a recount? Do you have lawyers ready to litigate recount procedures?

Responses That Have Worked

Georgia, 2020-2021: The Recount Machine. The presidential election and subsequent runoff elections produced razor-

thin margins. Election officials, once they had done a recount, documented the procedures meticulously and were largely transparent, knowing the process was being politicized.

Under Georgia law, curing primarily applied to absentee ballots with signature problems (missing signature or mismatched signatures from voter records). It's called a "signature cure." The state provided lists and reached out usually by mail, sometimes by phone or email if available. The catch: only 3 days after Election Day to cure.

Civil society scoured the list for connections to make sure a voter on the list knew that they had to fill out a cure affidavit and confirm their identity. Results were uneven, but vital in a close election.

North Carolina, 2024: The Ballot Curing Transparency

When a close judicial race required addressing ballots with defects, North Carolina election officials were transparent about which ballots qualified for curing (missing information, missing witness signature, and certain other errors — but not a late arrival or ballots where the voter had forgotten to sign).

Many community groups had experienced the curing process before. It's in every election, but with heightened scrutiny the county boards of elections wanted to be more deliberate and transparent. Community groups set up neighborhood groups to canvas voters who had cures — hoping to catch folks who had missed the state's alert via mail.

What to Prepare

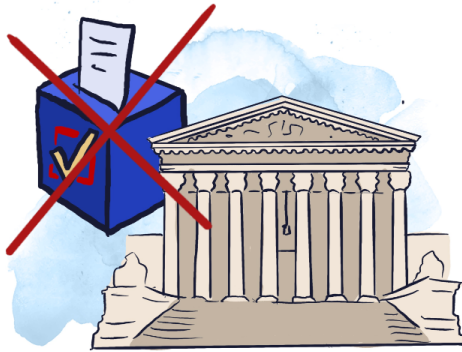
Start here: [Know your state's automatic recount thresholds and procedures](https://ballotpedia.org/Election_recount_laws_and_procedures_in_the_50_states) (ballotpedia.org/Election_recount_laws_and_procedures_in_the_50_states). Know

whether your state uses hand counts or machine recounts. Know the ballot curing procedures in your state — who gets notified, how much time do they have.

Have lawyers identified who can handle recount litigation. Know the state judge who would hear recount disputes. Identify volunteer infrastructure that can support a recount — you'll need observers, people who can help voters with curing, and communication capacity in neighborhoods.

Additional options:

- **Deploy observers for the entire recount process.** Not just for Election Day — for weeks afterward during the recount.
- **Have a rapid-response legal team.** Questions about recount procedures, ballot curing, and counting processes will arise. Have lawyers ready to file emergency motions.
- **Communicate transparently about the process.** Publish recount procedures, schedules, and preliminary results. Transparency reduces disputes and opportunities for interference.
- **Help voters with ballot curing.** If ballots need to be cured, help voters understand the process and get their ballots fixed in time.
- **Use all the channels available to tell people about ballot curing.** Door-to-door. Media blitz. Even public protests and parties are an opportunity!



SCOTUS Intervenes to Stop or Overturn Counting

An emergency appeal reaches the Supreme Court asking it to halt counting of specific ballots or reverse a certification — effectively freezing results while litigation proceeds

What Is This Scenario?

The most dramatic case of this is *Bush v. Gore* (2000), where the Supreme Court halted the Florida recount and effectively decided the presidency.

In 2020, the Trump campaign filed multiple emergency motions with the Supreme Court seeking to stop counting or exclude mail ballots. Voting rights organizations had counter-briefs prepared and filed within hours. The speed of response and strength of arguments was critical in both public narrative and legal efficacy. The Court rejected Trump's emergency motions.

But the composition of the Court has changed significantly since 2020 — with three Trump appointees now seated.

The Supreme Court has power to grant emergency stays in extraordinary circumstances. But courts have generally held that halting vote counts creates irreparable public harm and is not appropriate in ordinary election disputes.

How This Might Unfold

Emergency stay filed to freeze counting. During or immediately after Election Day, the DOJ files an emergency motion asking the Court to halt counting of mail ballots or ballots from a specific jurisdiction, pending litigation. The Court issues a stay, freezing the count.

Motion to reverse a certification. After state certification has been completed, an emergency motion is filed asking the Court to reverse the certification based on alleged fraud or procedural violations. The Court agrees to take the case on an emergency basis, halting any transmission of results to Congress.

What would you do?

An emergency appeal reaches the Supreme Court filed by the DOJ asking the Court to halt counting of mail ballots from targeted jurisdictions. The Court, citing procedural or constitutional grounds, takes up the case on an emergency basis.

Results are frozen while litigation proceeds. A call is made by some to let the courts play it out. But you fear the courts will be merely political instruments.

You don't know when a result will be handed down. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- What is the Supreme Court's recent trajectory on election emergency appeals?
- Do you have a rapid alert system already set-up for mobilization in the streets?
- Could your group and national allies organize a rapid response at the Supreme Court building if needed?

Responses That Have Worked

Thailand, 2023: Move Forward Refuses to Accept Constitutional Court Rejection.

When Thailand's Constitutional Court unanimously rejected Move Forward's petition challenging the parliamentary blocking of Pita's prime-ministerial nomination, the party did not dissolve or go quiet. It publicly announced it would remain in opposition, continue fighting for constitutional reform, and hold the ruling system accountable at every turn. When the Constitutional Court later dissolved Move Forward entirely (August 2024), its members reconstituted under a new party name within days — People's Party — continuing the same political program.

Malawi, 2019–2020: The Courts Needed to be Corrected, So the Streets Didn't Stop.

When incumbent President Peter Mutharika was declared the winner of Malawi's May 2019 election, the fraud was visible to the naked eye — result tally sheets across the country had been altered with

correction fluid, new numbers written over the originals. Opposition candidates immediately challenged the results in court. The court refused any injunction and Mutharika was inaugurated anyway.

A constitutional case was allowed to go forward, but the belief was the courts were merely delaying to allow the government to better secure its position. The pressure had to come from the streets.

Human rights groups organized thousands of people to the streets on a regular basis to campaign against the botched election outcome. The protests were sustained and moved from just protests to rolling strikes across the country — teachers, sanitation workers, truck drivers, and airline staff all held separate strikes. The mounting economic pressure could not be ignored.

The government tried to ban the demonstrations outright, but the courts — now nervous about the growing discontent — refused an injunction against the protests. Activists were arrested and returned immediately to the streets.

After many hot months of protests and growing economic instability, in February 2020, the Constitutional Court nullified the 2019 election results. A fresh election was held in June 2020, and the opposition won.

The Malawi case illustrates something critical for this scenario: when courts move slowly or against you, the function of public protest isn't just pressure — it's oxygen. It keeps the legal case legitimate, visible, and costly to bury.

What to Prepare

Start here: Know which legal organizations monitor Supreme Court filings in real time. [Democracy Docket](#)

(democracydocket.com/topic/litigation) is perhaps the most responsive for election-related filings. Have the direct number for your state's Attorney General's office — they can file counter-briefs on behalf of the state if needed. Connect to groups like [May Day Strong](https://maydaystrong.org) (maydaystrong.org), [Sunrise](https://sunrisemovement.org) (sunrisemovement.org), or [Indivisible](https://indivisible.org) (indivisible.org) for rapid mass mobilization. Prepare protest and strike scenarios.

Additional options:

- **Monitor and document.** If a Supreme Court emergency filing is made, document what is being asked for and how absurd the legal theory is.
- National media. If the Supreme Court appears to be intervening in counting, make it a national story immediately. This is the kind of crisis that should generate a rapid national response.
- Mass presence at the Supreme Court. If the Court moves toward unprecedented emergency relief, being present at the Supreme Court building — with phones, documentation, visible witness — matters.
- Build local and national networks for activation. Prepare your networks for protests, strike activation, and other escalated responses to such a coup scenario.



County Board of Canvassers Refuses to Certify

One or more canvassers vote to refuse certification, citing unsubstantiated fraud claims. A deadlock or refusal delays certification and throws results into legal limbo

What Is This Scenario?

After everyone votes, canvassers (local or state officials—often members of a bipartisan board) have to formally review and finalize election results. Their job is not to re-run the election or investigate broad allegations, but to ensure that vote totals from precincts are complete, properly documented, and legally compliant. This process, called canvassing, is typically quiet and boring, the final administrative step before results are officially certified and made part of the public record.

In almost every state, certification is a ministerial duty — canvassers must certify unless there is a specific, documented, legal reason not to. Personal doubts, political pressure, and unsubstantiated fraud claims don't qualify.

Still, on November 17, 2020, the Wayne County Board of Canvassers in Michigan met to certify results. In a nearly unprecedented move, two Republican members voted no. Under hastily organized withering public pressure, the two members reversed course. Within 30 minutes, Trump

called to pressure them to rescind. But it was too late — the certification had already been transmitted.

In 2026, pressure on canvassers will be greater. Trump has pardoned nearly 80 people who participated in 2020 certification obstruction and over 1,500 people charged in connection with January 6.

How This Might Unfold

One canvasser holds out. A single member refuses, citing vague irregularities. The board deadlocks. Results go to the state board. Days of legal uncertainty follow.

Multiple counties, coordinated. In a swing state, several county boards refuse to certify in the same week, using nearly identical language. Courts are flooded. State certification deadlines loom.

Refusal by pretext. A federal investigation is announced. Canvassers now have cover to pause "pending investigation."

What would you do?

The votes have been cast and counted. A candidate won. But the count doesn't become official until a local board of canvassers — usually 2 to 5 people — formally certifies it. Certification is supposed to be routine.

You don't think much of this process — until you hear that two members are about to refuse to sign. Suddenly this is a big deal and their initial vote ends in just a few minutes.

They don't need evidence. They just refuse. A county's results — sometimes hundreds of thousands of votes — hang in the balance while lawyers and whoever is at their local board argue. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Who are the canvassers in your county? What is their history?
- What is your state's certification deadline — and what happens if the board deadlocks?
- Is a legal organization already watching your county board?
- Who can you rapidly mobilize — and to do what?

Responses That Have Worked

Detroit, 2020: Sustained Public Comment.

Two Republicans on the Wayne County Board of Canvassers voted to block certification of Detroit's results, citing discrepancies of a few dozen votes out of hundreds of thousands cast. Had this held, Detroit's votes would not have been counted.

Word spread immediately through pre-existing organizing networks. Hundreds of

residents flooded the Zoom public comment session — so many that the meeting capacity had to be expanded past 300 — and gave testimony for hours. The board reversed course and certified unanimously.

But it wasn't over. Minutes after the meeting ended, Trump and RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel called the two canvassers personally, pressuring them not to sign the certification document. The canvassers left the room and never returned to sign — but Michigan law only required the vote itself plus signatures from the chair or clerk, so their walkout had no legal effect.

Alongside this, when Michigan Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey and House Speaker Lee Chatfield were summoned to the White House by Trump — a thinly veiled pressure campaign to get them to block certification — activists did not wait for them to go quietly. More than two dozen activists swarmed Shirkey at Detroit Metro Airport as he printed his boarding pass, chanting "protect our vote" and holding signs reading "certify the results" and "shame on you." When Shirkey arrived at Reagan National Airport in Washington, he was met by a second group of protesters asking "what did Trump promise you?"

When the two issued their post-meeting statement, they confirmed they had found nothing to change the outcome and would follow Michigan law. The public accountability — before and after the meeting — made it much harder for them to come home and quietly flip.

When Michigan's full results went to the state board for certification in Lansing, residents drove a caravan around the Capitol honking horns and carrying signs urging the board to certify. The state certified and the results held.

Michigan, 2024: Preemptive Lawsuit Forces Canvasser to Swear He'll Certify.

Certification fights don't have to wait until election night to be addressed. In August 2024, a Kalamazoo County canvasser publicly told the *Detroit News* that he would refuse to certify the presidential election if it unfolded the way 2020 had — "No. And that's why I'm there." Rather than wait for the crisis, the ACLU of Michigan filed a preemptive lawsuit in Kalamazoo County Circuit Court on behalf of two local voters, asking a judge to declare that canvassers are legally required to certify based on vote totals and nothing else. Within a week, the canvasser signed a sworn affidavit promising to certify. The ACLU dropped the suit. The senior ACLU attorney called it "the simple ministerial duty of grade school math." The lesson: threats to refuse can be neutralized before election night, not just during it, through preemptive legal action paired with public pressure to make the refusal costly before it happens.

Arizona, 2020: A Governor Certified and Silenced the Call.

Arizona's 2020 presidential results were certified on November 30, with Republican Governor Doug Ducey signing the paperwork declaring Joe Biden the winner. As Ducey signed, his phone rang. The ringtone — "Hail to the Chief," which Ducey had set specifically so he would never miss a call from the White House — played for a moment before he pulled the phone from his pocket, silenced it, and kept signing. He finished the certification and called Trump back afterward.

Trump had earlier called into an Arizona election hearing and attacked Ducey, and later blasted him on Twitter for "betraying the people of Arizona." Ducey responded publicly, writing that he'd sworn an oath to uphold the law and that he took his responsibility seriously. Later reporting

revealed that in a subsequent call, Trump tried to pressure Ducey to overturn the results by finding enough fraudulent votes to overcome his narrow loss in the state. Ducey refused.

The certification had already been transmitted. It was too late.

Two years later, when Arizona's 2022 results were certified, Ducey said: "This is a responsibility I do not take lightly. It's one that recognizes the votes cast by the citizens of our great state."

Ukraine, 2004: Local Officials Named the Fraud.

After Ukraine's rigged presidential runoff, the country's Central Election Commission certified a fraudulent result — declaring Yanukovich the winner over Yushchenko despite massive documented irregularities.

For a critical few days, the outcome hung in the balance. But city councils in Lviv, Ternopil, Vinnytsia, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Kyiv passed resolutions refusing to recognize the result, each declaring Yushchenko the legitimate winner. Other councils joined. Each refusal made the next easier, and collectively they built an irrefutable public record that the fraud could not simply be absorbed as a settled fact.

This was amplified by massive street protests. Hundreds of thousands citizens flooded Independence Square in Kyiv. They came in the bitter cold, setting up tent cities and field kitchens, wrapping themselves in orange scarves and ribbons that became the movement's symbol. Estimates put the crowds in Kyiv alone at over a million people — as protests spread to dozens of cities.

The Orange Revolution, as it became known, was highly disciplined in its nonviolence, knowing that any outbreak of violence would give authorities a pretext to

crack down and shift the narrative away from election fraud. Marshals kept order within the crowds. Protesters brought their own food, their own supplies, and their own sound systems.

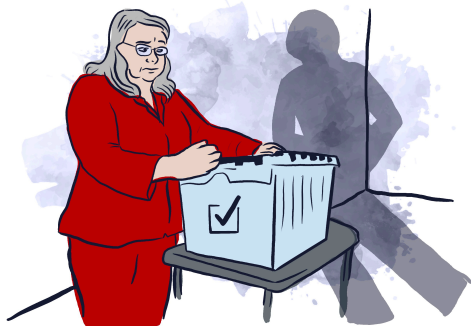
Backed by mass street protests and a Supreme Court challenge, the pressure worked — a new election was ordered and Yushchenko won.

What to Prepare

Start here: [Know your canvassers' names, history, and affiliations](#) ([ballotpedia.org](#)). [Look up your state's certification timeline and deadlines](#) ([ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/election-certification-deadlines](#)). Identify a legal organization willing to file an emergency motion if needed. Get on your county canvassing board's meeting notification list. Prepare for prolonged street action to enforce results.

Additional options:

- **Make canvassers visible before they refuse.** A "Meet Your Canvassers" campaign creates accountability before anything goes wrong.
- **Fill public comment — with substance.** Mobilize organized, factual public comment with legal argument and evidence.
- **Activate elected officials.** Ask city council, county commissioners, and state legislators to go on record before certification day.
- **Show up outside.** Organize a sustained visible presence at the building — a vigil, not a one-hour rally.
- Get ally elected officials to speak up about the certification process. Help make it known and pressure to act right.
- **Escalate nationally — fast.** Contact every group you can think of to raise the heat immediately.



Federal Seizure of Ballots or Election Equipment

FBI or federal agents appear at a county elections hub and seize ballots, voting machines, or voter rolls — breaking chain of custody and casting doubt on results

What Is This Scenario?

On January 28, 2026, FBI agents arrived at Fulton County, Georgia's elections hub with a warrant. They loaded 700 boxes of 2020 ballots, tabulators, and voter rolls onto trucks. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard — who has no domestic law enforcement authority — was present.

No chain-of-custody inventory was taken. Election security expert David Becker: the seizure "destroyed the provenance of the evidence." UCLA law professor Rick Hasen called it a "test run for 2026."

Details here matter. The warrant was overly broad and based on disputed allegations. Fulton County later argued that the affidavit omitted key evidence and that the seizure lacked adequate chain-of-custody protections. Those claims remain contested in court.

What remains clear is that election officials need to call lawyers to the scene immediately — and certainly not cooperate beyond what the warrant specifies.

State election records — including ballots — are property of the state. Federal agents

need a warrant to seize them. Warrants must be specific and supported by probable cause. An overbroad warrant can be legally defective and challengeable immediately.

How This Might Unfold

Pre-election seizure of past ballots. FBI arrives before November, seizing past-cycle ballots or equipment to "investigate" prior fraud. This breaks the chain of custody and casts doubt on the election integrity.

Post-election seizure. After November 3, federal agents arrive to seize current-year ballots, voting machines, or tabulators — citing an "ongoing investigation." The seizure may be used as pretext to prevent certification.

Equipment examination. Federal officials request or demand to inspect or retain voting machines for a "security review." The machines are returned weeks later, too late to recertify them.

What would you do?

FBI agents pull up to your county elections warehouse. They have a signed warrant from a judge. They load boxes onto trucks. Hours later, they're gone — and with them are the ballots thousands cast.

No one knows where they went. No chain-of-custody inventory was taken. The county elections board can no longer satisfy voters that those ballots are secure. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Does your county have secure, documented chain-of-custody procedures for storing ballots?
- What is your county's legal response plan if federal agents arrive with a warrant?
- Is there a lawyer who understands what federal agents can and cannot seize from a state election facility?
- How many people can you mobilize to protect such an extreme move?

Responses That Have Worked

Fulton County, 2026: Lawsuit Filed Immediately Within days of the seizure, Fulton County filed a motion in federal court to force the DOJ to return the materials. The lawsuit created a public record and resulted in a court-ordered return.

Commissioner Arrington went on record publicly and immediately — naming exactly what had been taken and what the problem was. His statement was the anchor for national coverage.

Myanmar, 2021: Parallel Government Established While Junta Seized State

Apparatus. After the military junta seized all state buildings, records, and election commission materials in the February 2021 coup, deposed parliamentarians formed an alternative structure, eventually called the National Unity Government (NUG). They claimed constitutional authority and began operating ministries, issuing laws, and maintaining international diplomatic contacts — all while the junta held the physical election materials.

This dual sovereignty model shows how political legitimacy can be maintained even after physical control of election infrastructure is lost.

Serbia, 2023: Monitoring Organizations Preserve Digital Records. After the December 2023 elections, election monitors immediately archived and secured all their digital observation records — videos, photos, irregularity logs, and observer reports — on external servers outside of the country. They anticipated that Serbian authorities might attempt to demand or access their internal data.

If the chain of custody was broken, the digital records they preserved may be the only remaining evidence. The preservation of independent records outside state reach is an election-integrity equivalent of breaking chain of custody — protecting it rather than surrendering it.

What to Prepare

Start here: Ask your [county attorney](mailto:usvotefoundation.org/election-offices) (usvotefoundation.org/election-offices): what is our legal response plan if federal agents arrive? Make sure your election director has a personal relationship with the county attorney. Know the federal district judge who handles emergency filings. [Train election officials](https://protectdemocracy.org/wp-) (protectdemocracy.org/wp-

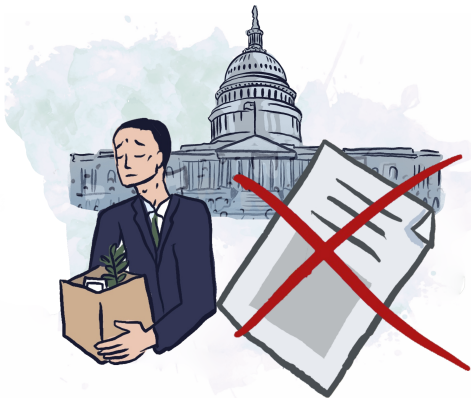
content/uploads/2026/06/Advocates-Election-Explainer_2026.pdf) to scrutinize a warrant and call trusted lawyers before handing anything over.

Additional options:

- **Have officials go on record publicly and immediately.** If a seizure happens, the public statement must be fast, specific, and naming: what was taken, how chain of custody was broken, why this is legally problematic.
- **Community presence at elections facilities.** Organizing visible community

presence outside elections offices — to witness, document, and publicize — creates accountability.

- **Document, document, document.** If possible, document anything moving out of your chain of custody. At minimum, take pictures of any interactions.
- **National alert, immediately.** Call national activist, major election groups, and media channels simultaneously. Prepare for ongoing protests at key facilities.



Congress Refuses to Seat Incoming Winners

Following DOJ reports and unfounded fraud allegations, the House refuses to seat some newly elected representatives from the opposing party

What Is This Scenario?

This is essentially a coup. But the mechanics of this scenario are critical to following how it would happen.

When picturing this scenario people often cite Adelita Grijalva, who won the 2025 special election in Arizona's 7th congressional district. Speaker Mike Johnson claimed he could not administer her oath during the government shutdown (a patent falsehood). He claimed it was procedural, but it was widely perceived as a move to protect the Epstein files from being released. After seven weeks, the House reconvened and she was sworn-in (and she promptly cast the 218th signature on a discharge petition to release the Epstein files).

Nobody argued she lost the election or that Arizona's certification was invalid. But people plausibly imagine a version of this after the election.

However, post-election the scenario is a bit different. Technically, the House disbands at noon on January 3, 2027 and needs to be reconstituted. A series of normally routine steps unfolds: the Clerk of the previous House calls the roll of members-elect and a

quorum has to be obtained. A new House is now official. The first act is selecting a speaker.

So a refusal to seat doesn't happen by the Speaker, but by the majority of House members voting saying certain elections are "contested" or "invalid." This has unhelpfully murky law around it.

Article I, Section 5 states: "Each House shall be the Judge of the Elections, Returns and Qualifications of its own Members." This authority allows either chamber to refuse to seat a member-elect by a simple majority vote, even if the individual was duly elected and certified by their state.

However, the Supreme Court case *Powell v. McCormack* held that the House cannot exclude someone who meets the constitutional qualifications (age, citizenship, residency). Any challenge would have to focus narrowly on the validity of the election itself. This could be over trumped up fraud accusations, possibly targeting Black-majority districts that haven't redistricted, or other accusations of a "stolen" election.

Courts have been extremely reluctant to interfere with this process — treating it as a "political question" that Congress must

resolve internally. There's no clear enforcement mechanism in real time.

How This Might Unfold

Targeting the narrowest margin seats.

The House focuses on the 5-10 seats won by the smallest margins. Unsubstantiated fraud allegations are filed for each. Members-elect are asked to submit to investigations. When they refuse, the House votes not to seat them.

Mass refusal. If the opposing party has narrowly won control, the Speaker's party en masse votes to refuse to seat any of the opposition members-elect, claiming that "mass investigations" are needed before they can take office.

Republican-controlled states refusing to issue election credentials. If a Republican governor refuses to issue a certificate of election for, say, a Democratic winner of a House seat, then under ordinary circumstances, that seat is considered vacant for the purposes of establishing a quorum of Members-elect on Jan 3rd to elect a new Speaker. If enough such seats were made "vacant", it could swing the majority. A single state could delay credentialing enough Members-elect to flip the outcome of the Speaker vote.

What would you do?

The House has changed hands. The President issues multiple calls about fraud, clearly pressuring his own party to reject the results. The DOJ and FBI announce investigations into specific elections.

The House speaker openly proposes Article I, Section 5 to refuse to seat key members-elect from the opposing party, focusing on

the controversial House races of their opposition. Majority House members are conflicted — but do not rule out the possibility.

This is technically within the letter of the Constitution. It has never been deployed as a wholesale strategy. But the authority exists, and in a hostile Congress, the pressure to use it is intense.

It's 5-days before the House is seated. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Since this strategy cannot be implemented without a lot of narrative cover, what narrative strategies would indicate this strategy is being planned?
- What House members or senators have publicly committed to honoring election results?
- What is the threshold for a walkout or other significant procedural action?

Responses That Have Worked

India, 2019: Opposition Walkout and Public Resistance. When the Indian government attempted to suppress opposition through parliamentary manipulation, opposition parties walked out en masse and organized public demonstrations. The visibility and sustained resistance made the strategy politically costly.

Georgia (country), 2024: Opposition MPs Formally Renounce Parliamentary Seats. Rather than enter a parliament whose election they considered fraudulent, opposition parties filed formal documents canceling their own electoral mandates. Leaders said publicly: "We will not go to

that parliament, and we will not let Georgian Dream announce itself as the legitimate representative of the Georgian people." This was not an informal boycott — it was a formal legal act specifically engineered to make it impossible to register the seats.

Venezuela, 2024: Multiple Countries Recognize González as President-Elect Instead of Seating Maduro. When Maduro was inaugurated for a new term in January 2025 despite the disputed election, multiple countries refused to recognize the new government and continued recognizing González as the legitimate president-elect. This diplomatic nonrecognition — the international equivalent of refusing to seat a winner — created a sustained legitimacy challenge to the Maduro government.

South Korea, 2024: Citizens and Lawmakers Physically Forced Their Way Into Parliament to Vote Down Martial Law. On the night of December 3, 2024, President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial law and security forces were deployed to the National Election Commission's offices. Special forces soldiers sealed the National Assembly, helicopters landed on the roof, and almost 300 soldiers tried to lock down the building.

The public response was immediate. Flag-waving protesters braved freezing temperatures to keep vigil through the night outside parliament in defiance of the order. Crucially, they weren't passive — they physically blocked soldiers from advancing and created enough friction to buy lawmakers time to get inside.

At least one opposition lawmaker had to climb over a 1.5-meter fence to enter the assembly because police blocked him even after he showed identification proving he was a member of parliament. Parliamentary staffers blocked soldiers with sofas and fire extinguishers. All 190 lawmakers present

voted to lift martial law, and Yoon reversed the decree within six hours.

But the protests didn't stop there — they escalated strategically. When Yoon survived a first impeachment vote after members of his own party boycotted the chamber — leaving the motion just short of the required 200 votes — demonstrators pledged to continue their civil movement until he was removed. University students held protests in front of the ruling People Power Party headquarters with banners reading "Participating in blocking impeachment is a crime."

Trade unions called a national strike — which further escalated the pressure. They had tested their muscles over months, and found that civic and ordinary citizens heeded their call. Protests in the streets and economic pressure grew.

The sustained pressure worked. On December 14, lawmakers voted 204 to 85 to impeach Yoon. Outside parliament, at least 200,000 people had gathered — K-pop anthems rang out, and protesters wept and embraced as the result was confirmed. Fourteen months later, Yoon was convicted of leading an insurrection and sentenced to life in prison.

The South Korea case illustrates a critical dynamic: the first wave of protest stopped the immediate seizure of power; the second, sustained wave of escalating public pressure broke the political coalition protecting the president. Neither wave alone was sufficient. Together, they were decisive.

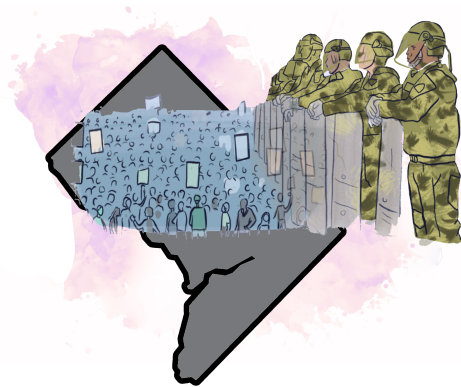
What to Prepare

Start here: Know which representatives won their seats by the smallest margins. Track federal investigations of those members and their campaigns. Know which

House and Senate members have publicly committed to honoring election results. Look to groups like [May Day Strong](http://maydaystrong.org) (maydaystrong.org), [Sunrise](http://sunrisemovement.org) (sunrisemovement.org), or [Indivisible](http://indivisible.org) (indivisible.org) for rapid mass mobilization.

Additional options:

- **Prepare a massive public presence in Washington if needed.** If Congress moves to refuse to seat incoming members, this is a national call-to-action moment.
- **Make it visible and sustained.** Congressional refusal to seat members-elect must be treated as a constitutional crisis — not a procedural matter. Sustained presence at Capitol Hill, state capitals, and media.
- **Organize opposition walkouts.** If the refusal proceeds, opposition members can walk out en masse and organize publicly. The walkout itself becomes the story.
- **Gain international recognition.** Using all the documentation and evidence, ask international allies to honor the election results, recognize the Senate-elect and House-elect leaders as duly appointed leaders.
- **Keep pressure up.** This strategy is one of the most escalated scenarios and therefore requires a broad mix of pressure tactics: boycotts, strikes, mass marches. These would need to be organized and sustained over time.



DC: Override of Home Rule Election

Using a pretext of "fiscal emergency" or "public safety crisis," the federal government activates or reconstitutes the DC Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority (the "Control Board"), giving it sweeping operational authority to override local election administration

What Is This Scenario?

The DC Control Board existed from 1995 to 2001. It gave the federal government sweeping operational authority over DC's budget, operations, and policies during a financial crisis. While formally dissolving in 2001, the authority granted to Congress remains in the statute.

Trump has floated canceling the 2026 elections and has demonstrated willingness to use emergency declarations to bypass normal procedures.

Congress retains constitutional authority to review and block DC legislation within 30 days. However, DC residents have constitutional rights as voters, and any effort to suppress DC voting rights would likely face litigation challenging it as a violation of voting rights protections.

The DC Control Board statute remains on the books but requires an act of Congress or a certification by the CFO of financial distress to reactivate — though an emergency declaration might be used to claim inherent authority to activate it and the current Congress is unlikely to block such a move.

How This Might Unfold

Federal emergency declaration citing "crime" or "fiscal crisis." The president declares a federal emergency affecting DC, citing crime rates or budget instability. Using that emergency declaration, the president attempts to activate the Control Board and transfer election administration authority to federal officials.

Control Board override of DC Board of Elections. The reconstituted Control Board, using its statutory authority, attempts to impose requirements on DC's election administration — changing rules, demanding new procedures, or taking direct operational control.

Congress blocks DC election law. Congress overturns DC legislation related to elections — for example, changing a local law expanding early voting or mail voting.

What would you do?

The president declares a federal emergency "due to crime" and, alongside some financial

accusations, uses that to activate the DC Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority.

The Control Board, created by Congress in 1995, gave the federal government sweeping operational authority over DC during a fiscal crisis. A reconstituted or newly empowered version is used to override the administration of DC — they announce the Mayor-elect cannot be sworn in.

This extreme breach is mentioned by national news but, amidst other crises, largely drowned out. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Which DC elected officials are prepared to resist Control Board override of election administration?
- What is the legislative status of Home Rule protections?
- Which organizations are prepared to meet an escalation like this with ongoing resistance?

Responses That Have Worked

Washington, DC, 1982: Residents Built the Institutions They Were Denied.

Frustrated by continued congressional control over local affairs, DC residents voted to draft a state constitution and establish the framework for a future state government. Black Washingtonians, who made up the majority of the city's population, played a central role in the effort. Elections were held for shadow senators and representatives despite the fact that Congress did not recognize the positions.

The institutions held no formal power, but they served as a persistent assertion that

democratic legitimacy comes from the governed, not from congressional permission. This did not achieve all its goals, but it established the practice of electing "shadow" senators and representatives who would advocate for statehood and created an enduring institutional framework for the statehood movement.

Catalonia, 2017: Regional Government Holds Referendum Despite Federal Court Ruling.

The Spanish Constitutional Court declared Catalonia's independence referendum illegal before it was held. The Catalan regional government proceeded anyway on October 1, 2017. When Spanish national police arrived at polling stations to physically seize ballot boxes, Catalan citizens formed human chains around polling stations, placed their bodies between police and the ballot equipment, and in many stations successfully continued voting for hours. The referendum was not legally recognized, but the act of holding it — and protecting it physically — is one of the most fully documented examples of a regional government's noncooperation with central suppression of a democratic vote.

Nigeria, 2023: Governors in Opposition States Refuse to Implement Federal Election Commission Directives.

Several governors from opposition-held states in Nigeria's 2023 election refused to facilitate federal directives they believed were designed to advantage the ruling APC party. While not a complete blocking action, the partial noncooperation by state executives with federal election administration created meaningful friction in the disenfranchisement machinery.

What to Prepare

Start here: Connect with experts on DC Home Rule and voting rights. Monitor Congress and the federal government for any emergency declarations that might affect DC. Know the fiscal status of DC's government. Look for rapid response plans from [Free DC](https://freedcproject.org) (freedcproject.org).

Additional options:

- **Make DC disenfranchisement a national story.** Federal interference in DC elections is a story about the denial of self-governance to a majority-Black city. It should be told that way, loudly, to national audiences.
- **Constituent pressure on every member of Congress.** If a Control Board reactivation is threatened, every member of Congress has constituents who care about democracy. Use that leverage.
- **Make the DC fight a coalition issue.** Organizations in states with full voting rights should stand in solidarity with DC publicly and visibly.
- **Seat your Mayor anyway.** Noncooperate with such unjust actions and, like Catalonia, hold your own elections or your own swearing-in process anyways.



Puerto Rico: Federal Interference with Commonwealth Election

Federal agents obtain, examine, or seize Puerto Rico's voting machines or election records — casting doubt on the commonwealth's election infrastructure

What Is This Scenario?

Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory, not a state. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens but cannot vote for president. Puerto Rico elects its own governor, legislature, and a non-voting resident commissioner to the House.

In 2025, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) under Tulsi Gabbard obtained Puerto Rico's voting machines for examination, citing "publicly reported claims" of "discrepancies and systemic anomalies." Puerto Rico election officials "voluntarily" handed over the equipment. No evidence of fraud or foreign interference was found. The precedent — federal examination of a jurisdiction's election equipment based on unsubstantiated "claims" — is now established.

Puerto Rico's resident commissioner is a non-voting member of the House. A disputed PR election result could theoretically be used to affect congressional math — making PR elections more strategically relevant.

Puerto Rico's elections are administered by the PR State Elections Commission under Puerto Rican law. The federal government's legal authority over PR elections gives greater latitude to intervene in territorial matters than in US states.

Puerto Rico officials could have challenged the 2025 ODNI seizure of voting machines in federal court — asserting that PR, as a self-governing commonwealth, has authority over its own election equipment.

PR communities in the states vote in large numbers, and federal interference with PR's elections affects American citizens in those states as well.

How This Might Unfold

Pre-election seizure of PR voting machines. Using the 2025 ODNI examination as precedent, federal agents request or seize PR voting machines before November for a new "security review." The

machines are returned late or not at all, disrupting the election.

Post-election challenge to PR resident commissioner result. If the PR resident commissioner race is close, federal officials announce a fraud investigation into PR's election administration. This creates precedent for challenging the seating of PR's member of Congress.

Full federal oversight imposed. Federal agents assert operational control over PR's election administration, citing the need for "security review." Elections are administered under federal supervision.

What would you do?

The news is huge in Puerto Rico. Just days before the election, federal agents seize PR voting machines claiming a massive investigation of "voting irregularities" and vague claims of tampering.

Outside of PR and the diaspora, the news is barely mentioned. **What do you do?**

Key planning questions:

- Are Puerto Rican civic organizations connected to national election protection networks?
- If federal agents arrived at PR elections offices, who would respond — locally and nationally?
- Is PR's resident commissioner in contact with voting rights organizations about this risk?
- Have folks inside PR talked with the Puerto Ricans in the States about these and other possibilities — so people are ready to mobilize?

Responses That Have Worked

Vieques, Puerto Rico, 1999–2003: The Federal Government Controlled the Land, But Not Its Legitimacy. After a civilian security guard was killed during a Navy training exercise, residents of Vieques launched a sustained campaign of civil disobedience against decades of military occupation and bombing. Protesters established encampments inside restricted military zones, repeatedly entered federal property, and risked arrest in large numbers. Puerto Rican civic organizations, religious leaders, elected officials, and diaspora communities joined the campaign.

The federal government maintained legal authority over the island, but the political cost of continuing operations grew steadily. The resistance began escalating its demands for full independence, which spooked US federal leaders. After years of sustained resistance, the Navy ended bombing exercises and withdrew from Vieques. The lesson was that a determined local population can make federal control increasingly difficult to sustain, even when formal legal authority remains unchanged.

Philippines, 1986: Independent Election Monitoring Preserved the Truth When Official Institutions Would Not. After a snap presidential election widely criticized for fraud, the Marcos government declared victory and moved to certify the result. Independent election observers conducted their own nationwide vote tabulation and reported substantially different results.

This spark moved beyond just institutional channels. Election computer technicians publicly walked out of the government's tabulation center, alleging manipulation of official returns. Opposition legislators refused to legitimize the certification

process and left parliament in protest. The story was clear: this is being stolen.

Without that clarity led by protests from people inside, it is harder to mobilize the full breadth of population. Protests grew in the streets, confident in their analysis of what was happening. The official result remained in place temporarily, but confidence in it collapsed.

When Cardinal Jaime Sin — one of the country's most trusted public figures — broadcast a direct appeal over Radio Veritas calling on ordinary Filipinos to take to the streets and support the military defectors who had broken with Marcos, millions responded. Crowds surrounded the military camps where the defectors had taken refuge, forming human shields against tanks and troops loyal to the regime. Soldiers were unwilling to fire on nuns, priests, and civilians offering them food and flowers. That mass physical presence — bodies in the street as a form of protection and moral witness — was decisive. Following a mass uprising, the Marcos regime fell and Corazon Aquino assumed the presidency.

interference with PR's elections should be treated as an attack on the rights of American citizens in those states as well.

- **Organize the diaspora.** Puerto Rican communities in the states have electoral power and influence.
- **Legal challenge immediately.** Any federal seizure or forced examination of PR election equipment should be challenged in federal court immediately, citing the Fulton County litigation as precedent.
- **Coalition building.** Organizations in states with large Puerto Rican populations should stand in solidarity with PR, publicly and through constituent pressure on their representative.

What to Prepare

Start here: Connect with Puerto Rico civil society organizations — [Centro de Periodismo Investigativo](#) ([periodismoinvestigativo.com](#)), [LatinoJustice PRLDEF](#) ([latinojustice.org/en](#)), and [ACLU of Puerto Rico](#) ([aclu-pr.org](#)). If you are working in communities with large Puerto Rican diaspora populations (New York, Florida, Chicago), make this scenario part of your coalition work.

Additional options:

- **Make federal interference in PR elections a national story.** Federal

Agenda: 1-day Scenario Planning

Here is a sample training agenda to help people explore these threats. Times are not included since the length of exercises depends on the size of your group, trust with each other, expertise with this material, and how deep you wish to go. Typically, with this design you could run 2-4 scenarios in depth in a 1-day session.

We strongly suggest not running these exclusively inside organizations or groups, but cross-silo — so people can benefit from understanding different interventions needed and how they can best work together.

You can view additional agendas at: freedomtrainers.net/election.

Before the Day Begins

Pre-training setup checklist

- Confirm MC and brief them on chants/songs list
- Review local election calendar: key dates, key officials, key vulnerabilities
- Confirm any local election lawyers attending; brief them on fishbowl format, if appropriate
- Materials to run the scenarios
 - Select scenarios to explore in this group
 - Scenarios cards? Placards?
- Prepare list of resources already in the ecosystem
 - E.g. Signal threads or signup sheet for real-time comm infrastructure
 - List of public-facing existing structures
 - Bring public plans from state tables or other coordinated structures
- Set up room in clusters (not rows) to enable easy breakout groups

Welcoming

MC leads arrival energy (begin as people filter in, no formal start needed)

The MC opens by teaching and leading 1–2 chants or call-and-response songs — choosing high-energy material that could actually be used on the street. This is not just warm-up; this is a skill-transfer moment. Participants are learning tools they may use at a rally, a polling location vigil, or a mobilization.

Lead Trainer: "Welcome, everyone. We are so glad you're here."

We are gathered because our votes are under attack. The Supreme Court re-opened the door to racial gerrymandering, the Trump administration has demanded 2020 ballots, voter rolls from 30 states, threatened elections officials. There are a myriad of attacks on the election process and accusations of fraud in honest elections. Those in power are already firmly people from voting in

an attempt to hold onto power, and protecting our vote requires all of us working together, starting right now — and "all of us" really means all of us.

We come from different places. Some of us are deeply partisan. Some of us represent nonpartisan organizations. Some of us are here wearing C3 hats. This space is being held as a **C3-safe space**, which means we are not taking partisan stances as a group today. Individuals may hold their own views, and different organizations in this room may operate differently — but as a group, we are here to protect the vote process and enforce the will of the voters.

Our focus today is about the legal pathways — supporting voters, protecting the vote, helping election officials ensure every vote is counted, and stopping the theft of the election. Our goal today: to uphold the will of the voters.

We are not trying to convince each other of our different strategies. Some of us know the power of civil disobedience. Some believe in litigation. Some believe in mobilizing in the streets. Some are focused on getting out the vote. All of these may matter at different moments. We are here to understand how we function as an **ecosystem** — how we harmonize and support each other.

Some of us will share everything. Some will share selectively. All of that is okay. What matters is we leave here better positioned to act together.

Tomorrow, there is a second training on nonviolent direct action and enforcement tools for post-election scenarios. Everyone is invited, regardless of your comfort level with NVDA — it is an important set of skills to understand, even if it's not your first tool.

“Who Else” (sometimes called Stand Up/Sit Down) (20 min)

A classic warming activity. Trainer leads from the front — start with 3–4 examples and then throw it open to participants.

Facilitators leads stand up (or put your hand up) if...

- You represent a grassroots organization
- You are an advocate or community organizer
- You work in electoral or voting rights law
- You work in voter registration or get-out-the-vote
- You've done election protection work before
- You've never done this before and you're figuring it out as you go
- (open to participants — anyone can call one out)
- You've been worried about this election
- You believe there are people trying to suppress votes in our community right now
- You believe there are people already working to steal or subvert this election
- You believe that together, we can stop them

[Close on the affirmative — the last stand-up should land on solidarity and shared purpose.]

Elections: What do we know / what are we wondering?

The strength of this tool is it helps the group say some things they already know — so you don't have to repeat them. You can underline and underscore, but it allows a chance for you to hear where the group is thinking.

Ask the group: “What do we know about these upcoming elections? And what are we wondering?”

Make a list.

FRAMING: The Authoritarian Threat: Context & Framework

This section is drawn from [Freedom Trainer's material](#) on where we are in the authoritarian cycle. Supporting materials from: <https://freedomtrainers.net/election> especially the [Election Defense Training](#). The presenter should review the source material thoroughly.

Core framing points to cover:

- 1. We are already in it.** Political violence and election subversion are not abstract threats. Threats, intimidation, doxxing, harassment of election workers — these are already happening and have been escalating. Understanding the pattern helps us respond strategically rather than reactively.
- 2. The authoritarian playbook on elections.** Aspiring autocrats try to subvert elections through multiple overlapping tactics: voter suppression, disinformation, intimidation of officials and poll workers, procedural manipulation, and — if all else fails — contesting or ignoring results. These are not independent acts. They're part of a system.
- 3. Today's focus is on protecting the vote before and on Election Day.** Today we are focused on: How do we build the ecosystem, practice scenario response, and strengthen our collective capacity to protect the vote?
- 4. History is on our side — if we're organized.** Movements that are broad, disciplined, strategic, and nonviolent have a strong track record. This is not wishful thinking — it is documented across dozens of countries.
5. Close with examples or stories of some of the successful (or even partially successful) pushback happening now locally, or recent examples, such as:
 - 2020 “Count Every Vote” experiences
 - Active work around the country replacing retiring poll workers
 - Getting folks to go to local board of elections, pressuring them to do their jobs
 - Pushback on the fraud narrative (when Ohio was under attack, thousands of groups responded)

If you don't have a better story, one to tell:

Detroit, 2020. Two Republicans on the Wayne County Board of Canvassers voted to block certification of Detroit's results, citing discrepancies of a few dozen votes out of hundreds of thousands cast. Had this held, Detroit's votes would not have been counted.

Word spread immediately through pre-existing organizing networks. Hundreds of residents flooded the Zoom public comment session — so many that the meeting capacity had to be expanded past 300 — and gave testimony for hours. The board reversed course and certified unanimously.

But it wasn't over. Minutes after the meeting ended, Trump and RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel called the two canvassers personally, pressuring them not to sign the certification document. The canvassers left the room and never returned to sign — but Michigan law only required the vote itself plus signatures from the chair or clerk, so their walkout had no legal effect.

Alongside this, when Michigan Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey and House Speaker Lee Chatfield were summoned to the White House by Trump — a thinly veiled pressure campaign to get them to block certification — activists did not wait for them to go quietly. More than two dozen activists swarmed Shirkey at Detroit Metro Airport as he printed his boarding pass, chanting "protect our vote" and holding signs reading "certify the results" and "shame on you." When Shirkey arrived at Reagan National Airport in Washington, he was met by a second group of protesters asking "what did Trump promise you?"

When the two issued their post-meeting statement, they confirmed they had found nothing to change the outcome and would follow Michigan law. The public accountability — before and after the meeting — made it much harder for them to come home and quietly flip.

When Michigan's full results went to the state board for certification in Lansing, residents drove a caravan around the Capitol honking horns and carrying signs urging the board to certify. The state certified and the results held.

Run the Scenarios

At this point the group is ready to dive into playing out some scenarios. Pick a scenario. Then pick a format that you think will be effective for that scenario. Two examples:

(From Scenario 14: County Board of Canvassers Refuses to Certify)

Room has a mixture of roles: lawyers, grassroots, election administrators. They have already done work in large groups, so they decide to challenge people by getting

(From Scenario 15: Federal Seizure of Ballots or Election Equipment)

*Facilitator sees the group isn't comfortable with confrontation. So decides to pick **parallel***

<p><i>into affinity groups/sector caucuses. Each will make their plans and share back.</i></p> <p><i>Facilitator uses the “What would you do” scenario:</i></p> <p>The votes have been cast and counted. A candidate won. But the count doesn't become official until a local board of canvassers — usually 2 to 5 people — formally certifies it. Certification is supposed to be routine.</p> <p>You don't think much of this process — until you hear that two members are about to refuse to sign. Suddenly this is a big deal and their initial vote ends in just a few minutes.</p> <p>They don't need evidence. They just refuse. A county's results — sometimes hundreds of thousands of votes — hang in the balance while lawyers and whoever is at their local board argue. What do you do?</p> <p><i>Facilitator puts people in their groups (for this group it's Legal, Local Grassroots, Out-of-county Mobilization, and Election Officials & Politicos).</i></p> <p><i>The debrief ends up being intense — as the strategies have friction over strategy and goals. This is a critical moment to help the group see each other, find ways to harmonize, but also not slow each other down — speed will be critical.</i></p>	<p><i>lines role-play so each person can have a 1-on-1 confrontation with an agent.</i></p> <p><i>Facilitator adapts only slightly from the “What would you do” scenario:</i></p> <p>FBI agents pull up to your county elections warehouse. They are direct, mean, and insistent, threatening any interference will be cause for arrest. They have a signed warrant from a judge. They tell you, an election worker, that they have to be permitted to load boxes onto trucks. What do you do?</p> <p><i>The facilitator debriefs on feelings — and yes, what are things to say (“I need my lawyer to come down and read the warrant — I cannot release custody of anything without that”).</i></p> <p><i>But facilitator focuses on the emotional readiness for a confrontation like this. Helps with grounding people.</i></p>
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Format Options for Trainers

There are at least four formats you can consider. Use different formats for different scenarios to keep it fresh:

Format A — Large Group / Tabletop Everyone hears the scenario. Random roles are assigned across the room. The group works through: Who does what? Who calls whom? What's the public-facing response? What's the legal response? What's the street response? *Best for: Opening scenarios. Builds shared vocabulary. Good when the room is large and diverse.*

Format B — Affinity Groups / Sector Caucus People break out by sector: legal/electoral, community organizations, unions/labor, faith, direct action groups, media/comms. Each group works through the scenario from their sector's perspective. Groups then report back. *Best for:*

When you have genuine diversity of sectors in the room. Helps people find their lane and understand others'.

Format C — Fishbowl A mixed group of 5–7 people from different sectors works through the scenario in the center of the room while others observe. Debrief with the full group after. *Best for: When you have legal/electoral folks who can model realistic constraints. Also great for helping community groups see how lawyers think — the friction is productive and instructive.*

Format D — Role-play it Some scenarios are very helpful to see played out — and to have some set of actors (or the whole room) experience the hostility or tension, so they're not facing that kind of tension for the first time when it happens to them. Role-plays may include parallel lines role-play or individual role-plays. Detailed instructions for leading these are at: freedomtrainers.net/election.

Trainer's Note on Fishbowl: If lawyers are in the room, a fishbowl early in the day helps them set context for legal constraints — as long as they are reasonable partners. Some tension between "here's what the law allows" and "here's what the streets need" is healthy and instructive, especially for community groups assessing how to navigate those relationships. If the lawyers you have are likely to be combative or dismissive, consider saving the fishbowl for later when some rapport has been built.

What do we already have?

Make sure to provide some space for people to share in the large group about connections and pieces of information does your group already has. Depending on the size of this group, this may need to be very carefully managed or even figured out ahead of time.

This prevents duplication and surfaces hidden resources in the room.

Messaging Practice

Knowing what to do is only half the work. *How* you talk about election protection — to your community, to the press, to persuadable officials — shapes whether people show up or stay home in fear.

There's been some excellent messaging guidance specifically for the 2026 elections: bit.ly/handsoffourvote. That messaging is designed to help pro-democracy communicators stay on offense rather than getting trapped defending process.

Give some time for practicing how people communicate to each other (this could be a role-play or application practice with some of the scenarios already). If possible, feedback from an expert will be ideal.

The short version: when talking about what's happening to our elections, lead with *what we're protecting* (the ability of people to choose their own representatives), name *who is doing what and why*, and end with *a specific action* the listener can take. Avoid leading with process,

machinery, or abstract fear. Every communication is an opportunity to strengthen trust — not just convey information.

Towards Closing: Build a Timeline

Draw a horizontal line from NOW and towards the ELECTION. Add a few markers (e.g. 3 months out, 1 month out, 1 week out, ELECTION DAY, 1 week after, 1 month after, 3 months after).

At each point, ask: What relationships must exist by this date? What training has happened, with how many people? What legal preparations are in place? What does your communications infrastructure look like? Who in your community knows what to do and has practiced it?

Push for specifics, not generalities. Not "build coalitions" — but "the labor council has signed a joint defense pledge with the county bar association."

Then, stress test that plan: What if it happens faster than planned? What if two scenarios happen at once? Add a second color of stickies for backup plans at each stage.

High Priority Next Steps

Each person leaves with 3 concrete commitments for the next 30 days. For example, election officials might commit to: identifying legal counsel on 24-hour call; documenting chain-of-custody protocols before any challenge; knowing which court to go to first if a warrant arrives.

What is the one thing that, if it isn't done in the next 30 days, makes everything else on this timeline impossible? Write it down. Assign it. Leave with a name and a date.

Closing Question

Options for a closing circle or reflection question:

- What is the one thing you're leaving with that you didn't come in with?
- What is one thing you're going to do differently in the next 30 days because of today?
- What is one relationship in this room you want to deepen?

Trainer also surfaces and distributes:

- Scenario Guide (link / printed excerpts)
- Local election protection hotline numbers
- Next steps, such as signal thread QR code if appropriate or other ways to stay in touch