DEMOCRACY BEYOND ELECTIONS

Re-imagine the power of democracy between and beyond elections.

Democracy Beyond Elections is a collaborative campaign to deepen participatory democracy and civic engagement, beyond and between elections.

We are convening national civic engagement, policy, and organizing groups to develop a shared policy agenda, build political and community support, and launch collaborative pilot programs that model a more equitable and participatory democracy.

THE PROBLEM

80% of Americans don't trust the government, and just 19% say that government is run for the benefit of all.

Our democracy remains largely limited to occasionally electing a few leaders to decide for us. This structural political inequality may work well for those in power, but it is also fueling deep polarization, distrust of government, and skepticism of democracy itself.

And yet, most responses to this democratic crisis are confined within our dysfunctional political process. Yes, we should make voting more accessible and less driven by money. Yes, we should expand civic engagement and invest in new leaders. Yes, our elected officials should and must be responsive to us, the people who elected them. But no, this alone will not fix our democracy.

Communities across the country are demanding more meaningful ways to engage with their neighbors, develop solutions to public problems, and decide together. It's time to invest in new models of participatory democratic governance led by and for communities left out of decision-making spaces.

Democracy Beyond Elections is a collective effort of civic innovation leaders, practitioners, and community organizers committed to a more equitable democracy. Our core partners include:

THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED NYC   PEOPLE'S ACTION INSTITUTE   pbp PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROJECT   THE CENTER FOR POPULAR DEMOCRACY   Jefferson Center

THE SOLUTION

To build mutual trust amongst communities and governments, public power over government decision needs to be expanded. This means increasing civic engagement, bringing new voices into government, and generating more equitable decisions.

A growing movement of political leaders and democracy reformers around the world are already turning to participatory democracy to make government more responsive and equitable. In over 7,000 cities, communities are using *participatory budgeting* to enable residents to directly decide how to spend public budget.

Hundreds of schools are using *action civics* to help students identify, prioritize, and enact policy changes. In states and nations, *policy juries and assemblies* are convening representative samples of the community to produce decisions and statements on policies, ballot measures, and constitutions.

Research shows that this engagement increases understanding of and trust in government, inspires transformative learning and civic leadership, and directs resources to communities with greater needs.

GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

We aim to increase the quantity and quality of government programs that engage community members in civic engagement and democracy beyond elections, at the local, state, and federal level.

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION Partnerships are the backbone of this movement and will require forming a core team of partners, establishing strong internal management systems, and securing funding to pilot and deepen participatory democracy practices.

DEVELOP CAMPAIGN STRATEGY This will involve drafting, revising, and finalizing a shared vision and language with local and national stakeholders.

SECURE COMMITMENTS We aim to work in partnership with community organizations and government officials to commit to implementing key policies using participatory democracy practice.

LAUNCH & EVALUATE PILOTS We will grow participatory democracy by supporting strong communities and governments to pilot robust programs. We will develop comprehensive evaluation plans that measure the impacts of an integrated approach to empowered and equitable civic engagement.