The Futurist New Deal For America

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The Futurist New Deal and I-Voting

In the aftermath of state-based espionage as well as corporatist and big data manipulators having penetrated US voting system integrity in the 2016 US presidential election, questions have been raised about what more can be done to secure our electoral system from unsympathetic forces.

"E-stonia" has become synonymous with the notion of reimagining how citizens interact with their government, making nearly every governmental service available from home or on the go via a click. Since 2005 the country has allowed its citizens to cast their votes in pan-national elections via a secure online portal system, growing to over 30% of the votes cast in the last several elections.

Citizens can vote as many times as they like up to election day, with only the final vote counting. Those who do not have access to a computer or who prefer old fashioned paper ballots can still vote by paper – evoting is an option rather than a mandate.

Interestingly, nearly a quarter of evotes in recent elections have been cast by people over the age of 55, with another 20% of evotes from the 45-54 age range. This suggests evoting enjoys broad support not just among young digital native millennials, but across the societal spectrum, especially among those who, at least in the US, are not typically viewed as early adopters of digital services.

To vote in Estonia, one simply visits the national election website and downloads and installs the voting application. Then you insert your national identity card into your computer's card reader, fill out your digital ballot, confirm your choices and digitally sign and submit your eballot. You can do

all of this from the comfort of your own home in the seven days leading up to election day.

Of course, one of the most common concerns regarding internet voting is the potential that one's vote could be changed either by a virus on your computer or as your ballot transits the internet on its way to the central government servers. To address this, Estonia's evoting system adds a novel twist: the ability to use your mobile phone to separately connect to the electoral servers via a different set of tools and services to see how your vote was recorded and verify that it is correct.

After casting your vote using your desktop computer you can thus pull out your smartphone and verify the results that were actually received by the central electoral servers. The results are encrypted so that no government official can see how you individually voted, only you can see your individual voting choices, even as they are aggregated into the national totals.

By physically separating vote casting and vote checking to two different devices (votes are cast via a desktop computer, while checking your vote must be performed on your phone), it makes it highly unlikely that even the most motivated attacker could compromise both devices in such a way that your vote could be changed without your knowledge. And of course, even after voting online, you can always show up at a polling station on election day and vote via paper ballot if you want.

The ability to verify through a physically separate channel that the data received by the government is what you sent goes a long way towards addressing many of the most common concerns about electronic voting.

With the Futurist New Deal evoting offers immense potential to mobilize and empower the US electorate in ways never before seen. Candidates no longer would have to convince voters to both like them and also drive themselves to the polls and wait in long frustrating lines on election day.

Indeed, a whole new generation of voters might participate if all they had to do was log onto a website and click a button to cast their votes from their couch and could change their votes as many times as they wanted in reaction to late-breaking news, rather than being locked into the early vote they already cast.

Putting this all together, Estonia's successful deployment of evoting over the past decade, rising to more than a third of all votes cast in recent elections, along with the novel security measures it has adopted, offers a powerful glimpse of the coming future from the most advanced digital government on the planet.

A blockchain is an audit trail for a database which is managed by a network of computers where no single computer is responsible for storing or maintaining the database, and any computer may enter or leave this network at any time without jeopardizing the integrity or availability of the database. Any computer can rebuild the database from scratch by downloading the blockchain and processing the audit trail.

Traditional databases are maintained by a single organization, and that organization has complete control of the database, including the ability to tamper with the stored data, to censor otherwise valid changes to the data, or to add data fraudulently. For most use cases, this is not a problem since the organization which maintains the database does so for its own benefit, and therefore has no motive to falsify the database's contents; however, there are other use cases, such as a financial network, where the data being stored is too sensitive and the motive to manipulate it is too enticing to allow any single organization to have total control over the database. Even if it could be guaranteed that the responsible organization would never enact a fraudulent change to the database (an assumption which, for many people, is already too much to ask), there is still the possibility that a hacker could break in and manipulate the database to their own ends.

The most obvious way to ensure that no single entity can manipulate the database is to make the database public, and allow anyone to store a redundant copy of the database. In this way, everyone can be assured that their copy of the database is intact, simply by comparing it with everyone else's. This is sufficient as long as the database is static; however, if changes must be made to the database after it has been distributed, a problem of consensus arises: which of the entities keeping a copy of the database decides which changes are allowed and what order those changes occurred in? If any of the entities can make changes at any time, the redundant copies of the database will quickly get out of sync, and there will be no consensus as to which copy is correct. If all of the entities agree on a certain one who makes changes first, and the others all copy from it, then that one has the power to censor changes it does not like. Furthermore, if that one entity disappears, the database is stuck until all of the others can organize to choose a replacement. All of the entities may agree to take turns making changes and all the others copy changes from the one whose turn it is, but this opens the question of who decides who gets a turn when.

Blockchain technology solves these problems by creating a network of computers (called nodes) which each store a copy of the database, and a set of rules (called the consensus protocol) which define the order in which nodes may take turns adding new changes to the database. In this way, all of the nodes agree as to the state of the database at any time, and no one node has the power to falsify the data or to censor changes. The blockchain further requires that an audit trail of all changes to the database is preserved, which allows anyone to audit that the database is correct at any time. This audit trail is composed to the individual changes to the database, which are called transactions. A group of transactions which were all added by a single node on its turn is called a block. Each block contains a reference to the block which preceded it, which establishes an ordering of the blocks. This is the origin of the term "blockchain": it is a chain of blocks, each one containing a link to the previous block and a list

of new transactions since that previous block. When a new node joins the network, it starts with an empty database, and downloads all of the blocks, applying the transactions within them to the database, to fast-forward this database to the same state as all the other nodes have. In essence, a blockchain establishes the order in which transactions were applied to the database so that anyone can verify that the database is accurate by rebuilding it from scratch and verifying that at no point was any improper change made.

The most obvious example of blockchain technology in use today is Bitcoin. Bitcoin is a digital currency system which uses a blockchain to keep track of ownership of the currency. Whenever someone wishes to spend their bitcoins, they create a transaction which states that they are sending a certain number of their bitcoins to someone else. Then they digitally sign this transaction to authorize it, and broadcast it to all of the nodes in the Bitcoin network. When the next node creates a block, it will check that the new transaction is valid, and include it in the new block, which is then propagated to all other nodes in the network, which adjust their databases to deduct the transferred bitcoins from the sender and credit them to the recipient.

As mentioned above, blockchains are governed by a set of rules called the consensus protocol. These rules define which changes are allowed to be made to the database, who may make them, when they can be made, etc. One of the most important aspects of the consensus protocol are the rules governing how and when blocks are added to the chain. This is important because in order for blockchains to be useful, they must establish an unchangeable timeline of events, which must be agreed upon by all nodes, so that all nodes can agree on the current state of the database. Moreover, this timeline cannot be subject to censorship, thus no single node may be entrusted with control over what enters it when. There are currently two main types of consensus protocol: Proof of Work (PoW) and Proof of Stake (PoS).

Proof of Work is the original consensus protocol, and is currently used by Bitcoin, Ethereum and many other blockchains. Proof of Work is based on puzzles which are difficult to solve, but once solved, it is easy to verify that the solution is correct. This is analogous to a jigsaw puzzle: hours of effort are required to put the puzzle together, but it takes only a momentary glance to see that one has been assembled correctly. In Proof of Work consensus, the effort required to solve a puzzle is called Work, and a solution is called a Proof of Work. In other words, the fact that I know the solution to the puzzle proves that someone did the work to find that solution. The solution is proof that someone did work. Blockchains which use Proof of Work consensus require such proof for each new block to be added to the chain, thus requiring Work to be done to create new blocks. This Work is frequently referred to as 'mining.' Proof of Work consensus protocols state that the chain containing the most blocks is the correct chain because it contains the most work. Blockchains which use Proof of Work are regarded as secure timelines because if one node attempted to rewrite history by changing an old block, its change would invalidate the work on the block it changed and all blocks after it by making the Proofs incorrect. In order to convince other nodes that the modified chain is the correct chain, that node would have to redo all of the work in all of the blocks after his change to make new, valid Proofs, and because all other nodes are still making new blocks with new Proofs and adding them to the original chain, the one node would have to redo all of the old work faster than all other nodes combined in order to catch up and surpass the original chain. This is known as a 51% attack, so named because the one node would have to have at least 51% of the computational power (ability to do Work and find Proofs) of all nodes combined. If this attack were successfully carried out, the attacking node would be able to censor transactions from the blockchain, change the order in which transactions occurred, or change transactions that node made (but the node would be unable to change any other node's transactions).

Proof of Stake is a newer consensus protocol which was developed to address some perceived weaknesses in Proof of Work and is currently utilized by Peercoin, BitShares, and several other blockchains. Some of the advantages of Proof of Stake are that no Work is required, thus it requires less energy; the 51% attack is theoretically more expensive; and PoS may encourage a more decentralized network of nodes than PoW. Proof of Stake consensus protocols have more varied rules governing which nodes may create new blocks when than Proof of Work protocols, but in general all PoS protocols specify that block production is controlled by Stake in the blockchain rather than computational power. Stake in the blockchain is balances in the currency the blockchain tracks, thus the greater the balance a node owns, the more say that node has in block production. Proponents of Proof of Stake consensus protocols argue that owners of large amounts of stake will wish to protect their investment and thus will take action to ensure block production continues smoothly and securely. Attacks on the network will damage trust in the network, thereby devaluing the stake. A 51% attack would require the attacker to buy 51% of the stake in the network, which would be extremely expensive since the more stake the attacker buys, the higher the price will rise, and using that stake to attack the network will result in a complete loss since the value of the stake would be destroyed by the attack. This is as compared with a 51% attack on a Proof of Work blockchain, which requires only computing power which typically becomes cheaper when purchased in bulk, and can be repurposed or sold when the attack is complete. It is further supposed that, whereas Proof of Work consensus incentivizes greater centralization because computing power is cheaper with centralized cooling and power, no such incentive exists with Proof of Stake since a typical smartphone has more than sufficient computational power to produce blocks for a PoS blockchain.

The primary Futurist New Deal mandate for blockchain technology is evoting. By casting votes as transactions, we can create a blockchain which keeps track of the tally of the votes. This way, everyone can agree

on the final count because they can count the votes themselves, and because of the blockchain audit trail, they can verify that no votes were changed or removed, and no illegitimate votes were added.

Almost 92 million eligible Americans did not vote in the 2016 presidential elections. In the 2014 midterm elections, an estimated 143 million eligible Americans failed to vote, marking the lowest voter participation in 72 years. For the nation's democracy to function properly and for government to provide fair representation, all eligible Americans must have the opportunity to vote—and be encouraged to do so. Our collective self-rule is established and fostered through free, fair, accessible, and secure elections through which the voice of every eligible American is heard.

The American people recognize the importance of voting in our democracy. In a 2018 Pew Research Center survey, 74 percent of respondents ranked election participation as a very important determinant of good citizenship—above paying taxes and following the law. And yet, millions of eligible voters are missing from America's political decision-making process. This may be because of unnecessary barriers in the voter registration and voting process that prevent would-be voters from casting ballots or because potential voters feel alienated from government. Nationwide, roughly 6 million American citizens are barred from having their voices heard because of antiquated and discriminatory ex-offender disenfranchisement laws. Voter suppression tools, including improper voter purges such as those recently upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, keep countless eligible Americans from voting each election cycle.

However, America can build an election system based on pro-voter policies and practices that drive participation by all eligible voters. To do so, first, barriers to registering to vote and to voting must be eliminated, and reforms must be implemented in order to enable all eligible Americans to cast a ballot that will be securely counted. Implementing automatic voter registration (AVR) in all 50 states and the District of Columbia could result in more than 22 million newly registered voters in just the first year of implementation. In addition, eliminating ex-offender disenfranchisement

laws would bring more than 6 million new voters into the electorate. At the same time, civic engagement tools must be designed to encourage voting, particularly for those who have become alienated from the democratic process and do not feel heard by their elected leaders or represented in government.

When people exercise their power as voters, they can elect local, state, and national leaders who are responsive to and reflective of the communities they serve. For example, in November 2017, Philadelphia voters translated their desire for criminal justice reform by electing Larry Krasner as the city's new district attorney with 74 percent of the votes. Krasner is a vocal critic of mass incarceration, racial bias, and corruption within the criminal justice system and recently ended cash bail requirements for low-level offenders. Voters have also used their power to diversify government bodies and make them more reflective of the broader population, for example, by electing LGBTQ candidates and people of color.9 In one instance, recognizing the important issues at stake in the November 2017 elections—from immigration reform to health care to civil rights—voters in Virginia exercised their power over government at higher rates than in past gubernatorial elections: 47.6 percent in 2017, compared with 43 percent in 2013.

This section examines the problem of low voter participation in America, which includes structural barriers that keep Americans from having their voices heard as well as widespread disillusionment with the political process. As this report shows, obstacles to voting and distrust in government have repercussions for representational democracy, leading to participation gaps across demographics as well as elected bodies that are unrepresentative of the broader population of American citizens.

To increase voter participation and expand voting opportunities for eligible voters, states have a number of tools available, including those detailed in this report. Taken together, the policies and practices explored in the

sections below are proven to increase voter participation and make voting more convenient. The success of these programs depends largely on states' commitment—as well as that of campaigns and grassroots organizations—to inform eligible voters of their availability, how to use them, and why exercising their power as voters can make a difference in their lives. In addition to analyzing the contributing factors to low voter turnout and the effectiveness of pro-voter policies in increasing participation, this report examines the impact of civics education and voter engagement work.

This selection also outlines the following recommendations to drive voter participation and make the process of voting more convenient for eligible Americans:

Streamline voter registration with automatic voter registration, same-day voter registration (SDR),   preregistration of 16- and 17-year-olds, and online voter registration
Make voting more convenient with in-person early voting, no-excuse absentee voting, and vote-at-home with vote centers
Provide sufficient resources in elections and ensure voting is accessible
Restore rights for formerly incarcerated people
Strengthen civics education in schools
Invest in integrated voter engagement (IVE) and outreach

We will also highlights the success of these policies based on existing literature. Where possible, gains in voter participation were projected using current impact data. Of course, demographics and voting cultures differ across states and even by jurisdiction, so these projections are not exact. However, they do provide an idea of how many of America's missing voters could be engaged through these policies. There were some policies for which the authors were unable to project gains because key data points were unavailable. For these policies, more research must be done to determine their potential impact on voter participation in future elections.

Automatic voter registration: Center for American Progress research finds that, if every state implemented Oregon's model of AVR, more than 22 million registered voters could be added to state voter rolls in just the first year. Based on this analysis, one could expect more than 7.9 million new voters nationwide—including 3.2 million previously disengaged voters—within just the first year of implementation.

Same-day voter registration: States with SDR, which this report defines as including Election Day registration, experience, on average, a 5 percent increase in voter participation and consistently have the highest participation in the country. According to the authors' calculations, if all states without SDR had passed and implemented the policy, there could have been approximately 4.8 million more voters in the 2016 elections.

Preregistration: In Florida, pre registration laws have been found to improve youth voting participation by 4.7 percentage points.

Online registration: A study of Georgia's online voter registration system found that approximately 71 percent of those who registered online turned out to vote, compared with 48 percent and 52 percent of those registering by mail or through a state agency, respectively. According to the authors' calculations, had every state implemented an online voter registration policy such as Georgia's, there could have been more than 536,000 additional voters during the 2016 elections.

Early voting: One study found that early voting can increase participation by about 2 to 4 percent. 6 Eliminating early voting has also been found to decrease turnout in communities of color. According to the authors' calculations, if all states had early voting in place during the 2016 elections, there could have been at least 789,500 more voters.

No-excuse absentee voting: No-excuse absentee voting has been projected to increase voter participation by about 3 percent over time.

Vote-at-home with vote centers: Colorado's vote-at-home plus vote centers policy increased voter participation in the state by about 2 to 5 percent and increased participation for young people by 9 percent.

Restore rights for formerly incarcerated people: More than 25,000 formerly incarcerated people in Virginia participated in the 2016 elections after having their rights restored by former Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D). Based on Virginia's experience, all else being equal, if all formerly incarcerated people had their rights restored, there could have been more than 914,000 additional voters during the 2016 elections.

Strengthen civics education in schools: As one example, a study of Kids Voting USA—a civics education model—in Kansas found that voter participation was 2.1 percent higher for both 18-year-olds and their parents in Kansas counties that incorporated Kids Voting into school curricula.

Invest in integrated voter engagement and outreach: Integrated voter engagement groups combine issue advocacy and organizing with voter mobilization to effectuate positive change within the communities they serve. From 2012 to 2016, the IVE group Emgage, saw a 17.2 percent increase in participation among Muslim American voters. Grassroots voter outreach efforts are also successful in driving participation; one study showed that an additional vote is produced for every 14 people contacted by canvassers. According to the authors' calculations, had every eligible non voting American been contacted by canvassers, there could have been approximately 6.2 million more voters during the 2016 elections.

These pro-voter policies are mutually dependent and reinforcing. For example, the effectiveness of more convenient voting options—including early voting, vote-at-home, and no-excuse absentee voting—depends on eligible voters being registered. As aptly described in a report by the director of the Elections Research Center at the University of Wisconsin, Barry C. Burden, and others, "The additional convenience of early voting is worthless to a potential voter who finds that she is actually not registered, and therefore unqualified to vote." At the same time, the benefits of registration modernization cannot be fully realized if voters do not have opportunities to exercise their civic duty. Moreover, these policies often complement each other. Whereas early voting on its own has been shown to increase participation by about 2 to 4 percent, early voting combined with

same-day voter registration has increased voter participation by 4.2 to 11 percent where it has been implemented.

The policies examined in this report—registration modernization, convenience voting, sufficient resources, and rights restoration—have shown success in increasing voter participation and in making voting more convenient, particularly among historically underrepresented groups. Along with ensuring strong civics education and carrying out robust integrated voter engagement, these policies have the potential to reshape and reinvigorate the electorate. Through them, the 92 million eligible voters who did not vote in the 2016 elections will find or regain their voices, resulting in a more representative and responsive government that works for all Americans.

Recognizing that these policies increase participation and expand the electorate, many states are prioritizing advancement of pro-voter reforms. For example, in 2018, Washington state took significant strides to improve its pro-voter policy structure by enacting a reform package that included automatic voter registration, pre registration for 16- and 17-year-olds, and same-day voter registration. CAP estimates that, in Washington, AVR could result in more than 50,000 new voter registrants, 21,000 of whom would be unlikely to register without the program. And in April 2018, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D) issued an executive order restoring voting rights to an estimated 36,000 eligible Americans on parole.

Millions of eligible Americans today are either choosing not to vote or are prevented from participating in the electoral process. Voter participation remains low by historical measures. Since 2000, voter participation for U.S. citizens has hovered between 54 and 64 percent during presidential elections and between 41 and 48 percent during midterm elections. In 2016, falling participation defined the election, as swing states such as Wisconsin and Ohio saw voter participation drop by approximately 3 percent and 4 percent, respectively, compared with 2012.29 Voter

participation rates are particularly low during primary and local elections. During the 2016 primaries, only 28.5 percent of eligible voters cast votes for party candidates, while a mere 14.5 percent participated in the 2012 primaries.30 For local mayoral elections, participation falls below 20 percent in 15 of the country's 30 most populous cities.

America's representative government is warped by low voter participation, and, of those who do vote, the group is not representative of the broader population of eligible American citizens. Research shows that communities of color, young people, and low-income Americans are disproportionately burdened by registration barriers, inflexible voting hours, and polling place closures, making it more difficult for these groups to vote. Participation gaps persist along racial, educational, and income-level differences.

These participation gaps matter for who we elect and who holds public power. Although the 115th Congress is the most diverse in history, communities of color are still underrepresented.

Furthermore, according to a Quartz analysis, the typical member of Congress is at least 12 times wealthier than the average American household.33 Nearly half of all 535 members of Congress have a net worth of at least $1 million, whereas the median net worth for an American adult in 2014 was only about $45,000. President Donald Trump's initial cabinet—which included Rex Tillerson, Tom Price, and Reince Priebus—was worth a combined $9.5 billion, exceeding the combined wealth of more than a third of all U.S. households.

Eligible voters are clear about the barriers that keep them from voting. For example, a 2017 Pew study examined why registered voters refrained from voting in the 2016 elections and found the most common reason among respondents—25 percent—to be that they "Didn't like candidates or campaign issues," followed by "Not interested, felt vote would not make a

difference," at 15 percent; "Too busy or conflicting schedules," 14 percent; "Illness or disability," 12 percent; "Out of town or away from home," 8 percent; "Registration problems," 4 percent; "Forgot to vote," 3 percent; "Transportation problems," 3 percent; and "inconvenient hours or polling place," 2 percent."

There are a number of challenges associated with analyzing the effectiveness of pro-voter policies in boosting voter participation—including diverging research methodologies, uniqueness of state and local policy models, and difficulty distinguishing between correlation and causation in election settings. However, the policies discussed in this report have been shown to improve voter participation and help make the process of voting more convenient by eliminating many of the barriers keeping millions of Americans from exercising their civic duty. Additionally, strong civics education and integrated voter engagement programs can help to address widespread alienation by connecting voting to the issues that affect people's lives, by demystifying government, and by educating people on the electoral process and inviting them to participate. If properly implemented, these policies and practices have the potential to expand the electorate and to elect representatives that are more reflective of and responsive to the American population.

The utility and impact of the pro-voter structural policies described in this report depend largely on people knowing that they exist and how to use them. As described by voting expert Tova Wang:

"For election reforms to work, people have to know about them. People don't even know about the options available to them. They need to be provided with this information in very simple straightforward terms."

Infrequent or first-time voters are especially unlikely to know about the availability of things such as same-day voter registration and early voting. This obligation falls largely on states and localities, both of which should

send eligible voters notifications regarding voting registration deadlines and information about eligibility as well as where and how to register. Well in advance of Election Day, eligible voters should receive notifications that remind them to vote and include information about their respective polling place and voting hours. This would help cut down on improperly cast ballots. Distributing sample ballots can also help to improve the voting experience and reduce wait times at polling places. One study found that, during the 2000 elections, participation was 2.5 percent higher in states that mailed information about polling places to voters in advance and 2 percentage points higher in states that mailed sample ballots. The effects were especially notable for voters with little education and for young people. In the seven states that mailed sample ballots, voter participation for registered youths was 73 percent, compared with 67.3 percent in states that did not distribute sample ballots.

How to increase voter participation and make voting more convenient
The sections that follow describe pro-voter tools that states can adopt in order to increase voter participation and provide more voting opportunities for eligible Americans. By adopting the following recommendations, states can diversify and expand the electorate, resulting in a government that is more representative of the American populace and in policy outcomes that better reflect public will.

One of the most effective ways to improve voter participation is to increase the number of people who are registered to vote by making the process more convenient. Every state except North Dakota requires that people register to vote before casting their ballot. Yet there are still millions of Americans who are unregistered; according to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2016, approximately 1 in 7 American citizens who were of voting age self-reported that they were not registered to vote. In 2012, Pew estimated that nearly 1 in 4 eligible Americans were unregistered.

Simply registering more people to vote would increase participation, as registered individuals are more likely to cast a ballot in elections. For example, in 2016, 61 percent of U.S. citizens reported voting, compared with 87 percent of people registered to vote.

Each election cycle, barriers to the voter registration process—including a lack of accessible information about where and how to register—prevent countless Americans from voting. In a 2017 survey, 6 percent of respondents said that they were not registered to vote because they did not know how to register. Meanwhile, a 2018 report found that, in Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and South Dakota, Native Americans most commonly fail to register to vote because they do not know where or how to register and because they miss the voter registration deadline. In 2014, 1.9 million people failed to register because they did not know where to register or how to do so.

Certain groups are less likely to be registered to vote; these include communities of color, low-income Americans, those with disabilities, and young people. In 2016, 69 percent of black and 57 percent of Hispanic Americans were registered to vote, compared with 72 percent of whites. Asian Americans were 16 percent less likely to be registered to vote than whites. Furthermore, in 2012, only 66 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives were registered—7 percentage points lower than their white counterparts. A shocking 20-point gap exists in registration rates between Americans making less than $25,000 per year and individuals making $100,000 or more per year. Eligible Americans with disabilities are also less likely to be registered to vote—by about 2 percentage points—than people without disabilities. And in 2012, 735,000 potential voters were prevented from having their names added to the voter rolls because of language barriers in the registration process.

Young people are particularly burdened by barriers in the voter registration process. According to the census, people ages 18 to 34 were registered at

a rate of 64 percent in 2016, compared with 72 percent of citizens 35 years or older.57 In 2012, 18- to 29-year-old nonvoters most commonly cited "not being registered" as their reason for not voting. In all, 55 percent of black youth, 45 percent of Latino youth, and 61 percent of white youth reported "not being registered" as the reason that they did not cast ballots in the 2012 election.

Improving the voter registration process can decrease gaps in voter participation between demographic groups. For example, in 2016, white voting-age citizens participated at a 63 percent rate, while voting-age citizens of color participated at a 53 percent rate. However, the participation gap decreases significantly between registered whites and registered people of color: 87.78 percent versus 84.91 percent, respectively. Therefore, while the participation gap between eligible white citizens and eligible citizens of color is 10 percentage points, among registered citizens, the gap is only 2.87 percentage points.

Even if one succeeds in navigating the labyrinthine voter registration process, for the millions of Americans who move frequently or lack traditional addresses, registration can be difficult to maintain. From 2016 to 2017, approximately 11 percent of people changed their place of residence. Here, too, there are demographic disparities. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, from 2016 to 2017, the black or African American population had a higher moving rate than any other racial or ethnic group; Americans between the ages of 18 and 34 changed addresses more than three times as often as Americans age 35 and older; and those living below the poverty line were about 6 percentage points more likely to move than those living above the poverty line.

Additionally, arbitrary voter registration deadlines that occur needlessly early make the voter registration process even more difficult for eligible voters. In 2014, arbitrary voter registration deadlines prevented 4.1 million Americans from registering to vote.   In 2016, 23 percent of voting-eligible

but unregistered 18- and 19-year-olds reported having missed their registration deadlines. And, according to a 2012 CIRCLE poll, only 13 percent of young voters knew their state's voter registration deadline, while a shocking 87 percent did not know their state's deadline or were misinformed. By analyzing the number of Google searches for voter registration deadlines that occurred after state voter registration deadlines had passed in 2012, another report found that an additional 3 million to 4 million Americans would have registered to vote in that election were it not for voter registration deadlines. In a recent example, Eric and Ivanka Trump were unable to vote for their father, then-candidate Donald Trump, in the 2016 primaries because they missed the voter registration deadline. Courts are beginning to recognize these deadlines' dangerous effects on the electorate. For example, In 2017, a superior court struck down Massachusetts' arbitrary 20-day voter registration deadline after finding that it was an unconstitutional burden on the right to vote. The case was heard by the Massachusetts Supreme Court in May 2018.

To ensure voter registration rolls are accurate and regularly updated, states should enlist the help of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC). ERIC uses advanced technology and information to identify voter registrations that are outdated or invalid; this includes names, addresses, birthdates, and other points of comparison through official data from voter registration rolls, motor vehicle records, postal addresses, and Social Security death records. Upon receiving ERIC's results, states contact residents identified by the program as eligible but unregistered to vote in order to educate them on the most efficient means of completing their voter registration. For those whose registration information is identified by the report as inaccurate or outdated, the state provides them with information on how to update their record. Through ERIC, states improve the accuracy of voting rolls and identify new eligible residents in order to facilitate their registration.

To streamline voter registration, states should implement the following pro-voter policies, all of which have been shown to increase voter participation and make it more convenient to get registered and keep one's registration up-to-date:

Automatic voter registration
Same-day voter registration
Preregistration of 16- and 17-year-olds
Online voter registration
Automatic voter registration

AVR encourages voter participation by realigning incentives and shifting the burden of voter registration onto the state. Through AVR, eligible citizens are automatically registered to vote using voter eligibility information that the state already receives—unless the individual chooses to decline registration. One of the major benefits of AVR is that voters' registrations follow them and are updated automatically if and when they move. In this way, AVR offers a secure, modern way to use data efficiently to enhance the integrity of voter rolls and facilitate voter participation for all.

Oregon's AVR system, implemented in 2016, registers eligible voters through records received by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), whose applications for a driver's license, learner's permit, and identification card require all information necessary to determine eligibility to vote in general elections. When Oregonians provide their name, address, birthdate, and citizenship information to the DMV, the agency automatically transmits the information to the elections division in the office of the secretary of state. Once the Oregon State Elections Division receives qualifying voter records from the DMV, it sends postcards to each individual informing them that they will be registered to vote through AVR unless they decline by signing and mailing back the postcard. The individual has 21 days to return the postcard indicating that they do not wish to be automatically registered to vote; afterward, they will be registered to vote upon confirmation of eligibility. Voter registrations are automatically

updated and confirmed when information about the voter registrant—for example, an updated address—is received by the post office and shared with the secretary of state.

CAP's original research found that Oregon's AVR system increased voter registration rates and expanded the electorate in the state. More than 272,000 new people were added to Oregon's voter rolls through AVR, and more than 98,000 of them voted in the November 2016 presidential election. Another 260,000 voters had their addresses updated through AVR. More than 116,000 of those who became registered were unlikely to have done so otherwise. As a result of AVR, Oregon's electorate is now more representative of the state's population, as citizens registered through the program are younger, more rural, lower-income, and more ethnically diverse.

Due to the many benefits that automatic voter registration offers election administrators and eligible voters, AVR programs are being adopted across the country. In 2018, three states—Washington, Maryland, and New Jersey—have already adopted AVR. These states followed on the heels of Rhode Island and Illinois, both of which enacted AVR in 2017, and Alaska, whose voters adopted AVR at the ballot in 2016. And beginning in 2018, California will become the second state after Oregon to implement AVR. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, AVR has been passed by 12 states and the District of Columbia, with varying processes and implementation models.

Oregon's experience provides a roadmap to project how voter registration and participation could increase if each state adopted AVR. For example, roughly one-third of the 272,702 individuals registered to vote through AVR within the first year of its implementation in Oregon voted in the 2016 election. Similarly, of those registered, some 42.5 percent, or 116,000, were unlikely to have registered without AVR, and approximately one-third of the 40,000 previously disengaged people turned out to vote. CAP

research finds that, if every state implemented AVR, more than 22 million registered voters could be added to state voter rolls in just the first year. All else being equal, if every state adopted the Oregon model of AVR, within just the first year of implementation, one could expect more than 7.9 million new voters nationwide—including 3.2 million previously disengaged voters.

In adopting AVR, states should abide by Oregon's postal notification opt-out system, whereby eligible voters receive a notice of their right, via mail, to decline automatic registration. This model is structured to include as many eligible Americans as possible and is the best option for voters in states that are equipped with databases that are secure and efficient. Additionally, states should ensure that designated AVR agencies extend beyond state DMVs to include social services agencies, universities, and departments of correction, where they are technologically prepared to collect and share information to confirm voter eligibility. Doing so will help guarantee that AVR has the greatest impact on the largest number of eligible voters.

Same-day registration, which we define as including Election Day registration, improves the voter registration process by allowing registration to take place at the same time that voters are casting their ballots, removing barriers such as arbitrarily early registration deadlines. Relatedly, SDR eliminates confusion around where to register to vote, as voters may register at the polling place or other designated locations that permit voting. Moreover, individuals who have moved can simply bring a bill or other documentation showing residency to the designated voting location in order to update their voter registration. In the 2016 election, nationwide, more than 1.2 million voter registrations took place on voting days.

Same-day voter registration has proven effective in increasing voter participation. States implementing SDR have seen increases in voter

participation of between 3 and 7 percent, with an average of 5 percent.8 Furthermore, in states with SDR during the 2012 election, voter participation was, on average, more than 10 percent higher than in other states. The three states with the highest voter participation in the 2014 midterms—Maine, Wisconsin, and Colorado—all allow SDR, while 6 of the 7 states with the highest voter participation in the 2012 elections allowed SDR. Minnesota, which has led the country in voter participation for the last two presidential elections, has same-day registration, with more than 17 percent of voters having registered to vote through the SDR process during the 2012 elections. A 2002 study by the Caltech/MIT Project found that, during the 2000 election, voter participation in states with SDR was 8 percent higher than in states without the policy.

Notably, same-day registration is effective at increasing voter registration for historically underrepresented groups. In the lead-up to the 2012 elections, nearly 250,000 North Carolinians—41 percent of whom were African American—registered to vote through the state's then-SDR system. Young people also benefit from same-day registration. In 2008, young people from states with SDR policies were, on average, 9 percent more likely to vote than those living in states that lacked the policy.

According to estimates, if implemented nationally, SDR could boost participation for young people—ages 18 to 25—by 12 percent as well as by 7.5 percent and 11 percent for African Americans and Latinos, respectively.

In addition to increasing participation, the majority of election officials in jurisdictions with SDR have found implementation costs to be minimal, and roughly half of respondents said that it reduced the burden of voter registration surges that occur before traditional registration deadlines.

All else being equal, if projections are based on the 5-percent average increase in voter turnout that was experienced by states with SDR, had all

states that do not have SDR passed and implemented the policy, there likely could have been more than 4.8 million additional voters in the 2016 elections.

Same-day voter registration is a common-sense policy proven to increase voter participation and close participation gaps. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 16 states and the District of Columbia currently offer SDR, including election day registration. Two additional states—Maryland and North Carolina—permit SDR, but only during early voting periods. States enacting it must be sure that the policy includes Election Day registration, as opposed to only allowing SDR during early voting periods. To ensure that the policy is carried out effectively, voting locations must be adequately staffed to handle large numbers of same-day registrations, as the policy has proven popular in the states that use it.

Preregistration of 16- and 17-year-olds
One way to improve voter participation for young people is to welcome them into the democratic process early, pre registering them to vote at a time when they are more likely to begin interacting with government agencies where voter registration services are offered. One benefit of this is that, once a person registers to vote, that individual becomes part of a state's voter file and is more likely to be contacted by campaign and grassroots efforts, which increase voter participation.

Pre Registration policies allow eligible Americans to preregister to vote before their 18th birthday. Upon turning 18, their voter registration is automatically activated so that they can exercise their right to vote. Some states permit 16-years-olds to preregister to vote, while others allow pre registration beginning on an individual's 17th birthday. In Florida, those who pre registered to vote were roughly 4.7 percent more likely to participate in the 2008 elections, compared with those who registered upon turning 18. Additionally, pre registration policies can help to narrow participation gaps across certain demographic groups. During the 2008 elections, African

Americans who pre registered to vote in Florida were 5.2 percent more likely to vote than those who registered only after turning 18.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, today, 17 states and the District of Columbia permit eligible 16- and/or 17-year-olds to preregister to vote. California's preregistration program is already a rousing success. Since launching its program in the fall of 2016, the state has already pre registered 100,000 16- and 17-year-olds.

In adopting pre registration policies, states should offer pre registration services through not just the DMV, but other sites and services that are frequented and used by young people, such as schools, hair salons, movie theaters, community days of action, volunteer programs geared toward young people, and naturalization ceremonies. Preregistration programs that target 16-year-olds tend to be more effective than those that target 17-year-olds since the former age group is beginning to interact with government agencies for the first time—particularly the DMV. States without preregistration keep young people from using a common method of voter registration until they reach their early- to mid-20s, given that state driver's licenses can take several years to expire before renewal is required.

Online voter registration makes the voter registration process more convenient and drives voter participation, particularly for young people. It eliminates the hassle of locating where to register, securing time off work, and finding transportation to DMVs or other voter registration locations in order to register in person. Online voter registration is particularly useful for eligible voters who are highly transient as well as those with inflexible schedules.

Online voter registration is popular in jurisdictions that have it. An analysis of Georgia's online voter registration program found that, from April 2014 through October 2016, more than 350,000 of the state's voter registrations

were carried out online. People ages 18 to 34 made up 70 percent of online registrations, while 42.2 percent of online registrants were registering for the first time. Nationally, online voter registration accounted for 17.4 percent of all voter registration in 2016.

Research shows that those who register online are more likely to participate in elections. The study of Georgia's online voter registration system, for example, found that approximately 71 percent of those who registered online turned out to vote, compared with 48 percent and 52 percent of those registering by mail and through a state agency, respectively. Similarly, a study of California's online voter registration system found that people registering online were almost 8 percentage points more likely to participate in the 2012 elections than those registering through other more traditional means. In addition, 78 percent of California's online registrants ages 25 to 34 turned out to vote in the 2012 general election, compared with 56 percent of individuals in the same age group who registered through other methods. Likewise, in Arizona, online registrants turn out in greater numbers than those who register in more traditional ways; in 2008, those who registered online were 9 percent more likely to participate in that year's elections, compared with those who registered in other ways.

All else being equal, if states without online voter registration were to have implemented a policy such as Georgia's in 2016, a total of more than 536,000 additional voters could have been expected to participate in that year's elections.

It is likely that the popularity of online voter registration with young people in particular is due, at least in part, to that group's familiarity with the internet. And, as new generations become more accustomed to using web-based services, reliance on online voter registration may increase in the future.

In addition to improving participation in elections—particularly for young people—online voter registration has been shown to save jurisdictions money. In 2012, California saved nearly $2 million as a result of online voter registration, and between 2008 and 2012, Maricopa County, Arizona, saved almost $1.4 million due to online voter registration. Cost savings can derive from reductions in local government costs from producing paper voter registration forms, in the number of poll workers needed to process registrations, and in individual registration costs.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 38 states and the District of Columbia currently provide eligible voters with the option to register to vote online. When adopting online voter registration systems, states must retain adequate resources and locations, allowing eligible voters to register in person or by mail, if they prefer. As of 2018, 11 percent of all Americans still do not use the internet. Most non-internet users are older, lower-income, and live in rural communities. A 2013 study by Pew found that nearly one-third of non-internet users believe that the internet is too difficult to use, while 19 percent cited the expense of internet services or computer ownership as the reason they do not go online. Although internet usage is on the rise, it is important to remember that many voting-eligible Americans do not have access to or choose not to utilize online services. As such, to ensure that they are not shut out of the democratic process, they must be provided opportunities to register through other means.

Jurisdictions must adhere to the National Voter Registration Act
In addition to implementing those policies mentioned above, states must meet their obligations under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), which requires DMVs, social service agencies, and other government offices to offer voter registration services to eligible people during transactions. The NVRA, which was passed in 1992 in order to improve voter registration nationwide, also requires states to accept voter

registration forms by mail. In just its first year of implementation, the NVRA helped facilitate voter registration applications and updates for more than 30 million people. The popularity of registering through methods authorized by the NVRA continues today: Between 2014 and the 2016 election, more than 25 million voter registrations were received through DMVs, making up 32.7 percent of all voter registration applications during that period. As noted by Demos, the NVRA has been particularly beneficial for low-income Americans. In 1992, when the NVRA was enacted, only 43.5 percent of the lowest-income Americans were registered to vote. By 2012, 52.7 percent of this group was registered to vote. One study found that the NVRA's motor-voter provision has helped increase voter participation by between 4.7 and 8.7 percent.

Unfortunately, in some places, compliance with the NVRA is lacking. A 2017 Pew survey found that only 16 percent of unregistered respondents were asked to register to vote by an official at a motor vehicle department, social services agency, or other government office. A 2016 study found that 12 states failed to include the option to register to vote on driver's license change-of-address applications. And a survey of Native American interactions with NVRA agencies found that only 29 percent of respondents from New Mexico reported being asked about voter registration at DMVs or social service agencies. Advocates have also raised concerns about the lack of voter registration services at state agencies that provide services to Americans with disabilities.

Fourteen percent of registered voters cited being "Too busy or conflicting schedule" as their reason for not voting in the 2016 elections, while 2 percent cited "Inconvenient hours or polling place." Although most states have rules in place allowing employees to take time away from work in order to vote on Election Day, many eligible voters still are unable to do so on one Tuesday in November. The same is true for Americans with family obligations. Many eligible voters with young children must find reliable and affordable child care before going to the polls. However, this can be

especially difficult if designated polling places are located far away or if polling place lines are long, requiring additional time away from work or home—time that many Americans cannot afford. In 2012, voting lines were estimated to have cost Americans $544 million in lost productivity and wages. These burdens often fall disproportionately on communities of color and low-income Americans. Black voters are, on average, forced to wait in line nearly twice as long as white voters. And long wait times can play a role in dissuading would-be voters from participating in future elections.

Eligible voters should be provided ample opportunity to exercise their civic duty and have their voices heard in our democracy. Affirmative voting policies—including in-person early voting, no-excuse absentee voting, and vote-at-home with vote centers—aim to make the voting process more convenient for voters, particularly for those with scheduling and transportation challenges. Some convenience-based voting policies, like vote-at-home, have shown to be more effective in driving participation than others. And while the effects of early voting and no-excuse absentee voting on participation are less clear, these policies have an important role to play in improving the voting experience by helping to ensure that voters who want to participate in elections have the opportunity to do so.

States should implement the following pro-voter policies in order to expand voting opportunities for eligible Americans and drive participation:

<div align="center">

In-person early voting
No-excuse absentee voting
Vote-at-home with vote centers
In-person early voting

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Early voting aims to make voting more convenient for eligible voters by providing them with greater flexibility and opportunities to cast ballots. If implemented correctly and with sufficient resources, early voting has the potential to facilitate shorter lines on Election Day—particularly among

communities of color—and to improve the voter experience. At least 42 million people voted early in the 2016 elections. Early voting that takes places on Sundays and "Souls to the Polls" events is particularly popular among communities of color. In 2016, at least 52,000 voters took advantage of Georgia's Sunday voting hours.

Although some research suggests that, by simply making the task more convenient, early voting mostly benefits people who would already vote, one study found that early voting can increase participation by about 2 to 4 percent. When combined with SDR and Election Day registration, early voting can increase voter participation by 4.2 to 11 percent. In a 2018 survey of more than 900 voters in New York, 79 percent of respondents said that they would be more likely to vote if the state offered early voting.

It is also worth noting that cuts to early voting can have a detrimental impact on voter participation. A 2016 study by The Atlantic found that, in North Carolina counties with polling place closures and reductions in voting hours, during the first week of early voting, black voter participation reached only 60 percent of the cumulative participation at the same point in 2012. And while participation increased some in the weeks leading up to the election, black participation never reached more than 90 percent of the cumulative participation in 2012. At the same time, in 2012, after the Florida Legislature cut the state's early voting period from days to 8 days and eliminated voting on the last Sunday before Election Day, early voting participation for African Americans dropped by 4.1 percent relative to 2008, while participation for Latinos dropped by 4.6 percent.

All else being equal, if states that currently do not have early voting had it in place during the 2016 elections, one could have expected at least 789,500 more voters that year based on conservative 2 percent estimates.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, early voting is permitted in 33 states and the District of Columbia, though early voting

opportunities vary in terms of timing and location.1 6 And, although more research is needed on its overall effectiveness at increasing participation, early voting could prove powerful when combined with active mobilization efforts. Even if the policy's impact on participation is relatively small, during a time when margins of victory are so close that elections are decided by lot, every vote counts.

In implementing this policy, states should ensure that there is an adequate number of early voting locations conveniently located near public transportation. Early voting should be available on Saturdays and Sundays and should begin at least 14 days prior to Election Day, as research suggests that early voting is most commonly utilized by infrequent voters and nearer to an election. Furthermore, states that already have early voting should not reduce or eliminate the policy since reductions of early voting have been shown to decrease participation in communities of color. When adopting early voting, states should avoid reducing the number of Election Day polling places, as doing so may result in long lines and may nullify some of early voting's benefits. Relatedly, states must ensure sufficient polling place hours in order to allow people opportunities to vote. Today, most states require voting locations to be open for at least 12 hours. However, the hours of operation vary significantly depending on the jurisdiction. Limited polling place hours can be problematic for voters whose workdays begin especially early and end late in the evening and for those who are unable to take time away from work.

No-excuse absentee voting and vote-at-home with vote centers
"No-excuse absentee" and "vote-at-home" are two affirmative voting policies that can make the process of voting more convenient. As noted in previous sections of this report, the act of voting can be a burdensome process for many eligible Americans who otherwise want to participate. It may involve taking time away from work, child care costs, and mobility and transportation challenges as well as long lines and complications at polling places. No-excuse absentee voting and vote-at-home policies help voters

avoid these altogether, allowing eligible voters to cast ballots at their convenience, often in the comfort of their own homes.

Absentee voting is the process whereby eligible voters are permitted to return, by mail or in person, voted paper ballots prior to an election. Voters are typically required to fill out an application online or by mail in order to receive an absentee paper ballot from designated election authorities. No-excuse absentee voting is particularly useful for students, those with conflicting work schedules, and those who travel frequently and are otherwise unable to vote in person on Election Day. Whereas some states allow voters to vote absentee only if they are permanently disabled, serve overseas, or live in certain rural areas, 27 states and the District of Columbia allow no-excuse absentee voting, which allows eligible voters to vote absentee for any reason. According to one study, states with no-excuse absentee voting experience increases in voter participation of about 3 percent over time.

In adopting or updating absentee voting policies, states should allow any eligible voter to vote absentee for any reason whatsoever, no excuse needed. This would ensure that all eligible Americans could cast their votes no matter what, even if they were simply out of town or unable to make it to the polls on Election Day but did not fit under one of the limited set of exemptions.

Vote-at-home, which is sometimes called "vote-by-mail," is another convenience-based voting policy that improves the voting experience and can increase voter participation. Two states—Washington and Oregon—conduct all elections through vote-at-home, while Colorado has an exemplary model that combines vote-at-home with community vote centers where people can still cast their ballots in person.   Vote-at-home differs from no-excuse absentee voting in that registered voters need not file a request to receive their ballots; ahead of election day, paper ballots are distributed by mail to all registered voters. Voters can take their time

examining and researching the candidates and issues, and they can vote in the comfort of their own home before placing their voted ballot in the mail or dropping it off at a vote center or collection box.

How does Colorado's vote-at-home with vote centers model work? Colorado is revolutionizing election administration by putting voters first and giving them more opportunities to become registered and vote. Colorado is a vote-at-home state but operates under a model that provides voters many options to cast their ballots. Once voters receive their ballot, which is sent to them automatically by the state, they can:

Vote by returning the ballot by mail
Vote by dropping the ballot in one of the conveniently located 24-hour drop boxes located across their county
Vote by dropping off the ballot or voting in person at a county vote center, where eligible voters can register at the same time as voting
In the city of Denver, vote by dropping a ballot off or vote in person at the city's mobile vote center, which travels to different communities within the city.

Colorado's model increased voter participation in the state by about 2 to 5 percent, according to one study. Notably, after the state implemented vote-at-home, participation increased by 9 percent for Coloradans ages 18 to 34. Meanwhile, after Denver implemented its vote-at-home program in 2001, it experienced a significant increase in voter participation among Latinos. While the city as a whole saw participation increase by 17.2 percent compared with the 1999 local elections, the 19 precincts with the highest Latino populations experienced an increase of 55.5 percent, and the precinct with the highest Latino population saw participation rise by 82 percent.   One of the reasons that Colorado's model is so successful is that it works in tandem with the state's same-day registration policy. By combining these two policies, Colorado has removed significant barriers to registration and provided more options for voting, thus driving participation.

Colorado's vote-at-home system is unique because of its expansive incorporation of vote centers, which are required statewide and open on Election Day. Colorado vote centers are open Monday through Saturday, for 15 days during general elections and 8 days in primary and off-year elections. Vote centers are conveniently located within and across counties; their precise location is determined through a public selection process whereby the public can provide feedback on proposed locations, including concerns over accessibility and convenience. In Denver, the city's Ballot TRACE program allows voters returning voted ballots by mail to track their delivery to and receipt by election officials. Voters who sign up for this free service receive regular updates—via email, text message, or an online portal—about the status of their ballot as well as when it is delivered to the elections division. In designing the city's elections, Denver Elections Director Amber McReynolds focuses on the voter experience: "We have a voter-centered approach to election administration—one that respects voters and focuses on improving their voter experience." The state's prioritization of voters' needs and convenience has paid off: In 2016, voter participation in Colorado was more than 12 percentage points higher than nationwide turnout.

During the 2016 elections, voter participation in states allowing vote-at-home was 10 percentage points higher, on average, than it was in other states. However, research has been mixed regarding vote-at-home's effectiveness at increasing voter participation. A 2017 analysis of vote-at-home's impact on some California counties found that participation in general elections was lower in jurisdictions using vote-at-home.   The authors of that study, Thad Kousser and Megan Mullin, posited that, during general elections, when there is constant flow of information and reminders about voting, changes in election processes are unlikely to influence voter participation. The authors also noted complaints by some voters living in jurisdictions with vote-at-home who were unfamiliar with how it worked. Voters cannot engage in the voting process if they do not understand how it operates or are skeptical of its utility; this could offer, at least in part, an

explanation for lower turnout. A comprehensive literature review carried out by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in 2016 examined vote-at-home's impact on voter participation and found that most research showed a positive correlation between voter participation and vote-at-home policies. Similar findings have been reported elsewhere. A 2018 report examining voting behavior in Utah during the 2016 elections found that voter participation increased by 5 to 7 percentage points in the 21 counties using vote-at-home rather than traditional polling places. During the April 2018 elections, Anchorage, Alaska, experienced the highest voter participation in the city's history after rolling out a new vote-at-home system, which included some vote centers and ballot drop boxes. And in Washington, which carries out all elections by mail, researchers found that vote-at-home increases voter participation by between 2 and 4 percent.

One area where researchers tend to agree is that vote-at-home increases voter participation in elections with historically low participation. In local special elections, for example, vote-at-home has been shown to increase participation by about 7.6 percent.160 In the 2014 midterm elections, voter participation in vote-at-home states was, on average, 23 percent higher than in other states. In 2018, a county clerk estimated that vote-at-home increased voter participation in Kansas by 20 percent in a local election for sales tax. Furthermore, whereas most states see significant discrepancies between presidential and midterm elections, in 2014, voter participation in Colorado and Oregon was equal to the national average for the 2016 election. In Colorado, after implementing vote-at-home, the voter turnout gap between the 2014 midterms and the 2016 general election decreased by approximately 1.5 percent, compared with the gap between the 2010 and 2012 elections. In Oregon, vote-at-home has been shown to reduce the participation gaps between general and special elections by 11 percent.

In implementing vote-at-home, states should abide by the Colorado model, which incorporates vote centers, as research suggests that voters prefer dropping their completed ballots off in person at a designated location

rather than sending them through the mail. And since mail delivery can occasionally be unreliable—particularly for highly transient communities—eligible voters must have an alternative means of casting ballots. For example, surveys indicate that Native American voters prefer to vote in person, as they often experience problems with mail-in voting, including ballots never arriving, difficulty describing their voting addresses, and difficulty understanding how to fill out the ballot. Vote centers themselves have proven beneficial to improving participation, particularly for infrequent voters, and they reduce election administration costs, allowing election officials to focus resources where they are needed most.

Vote-at-home may be a particularly good option for states with permanent no-excuse absentee voting lists, where individuals sign up to automatically receive an absentee ballot each election and where a large percentage of voters cast absentee ballots by mail already—as is the case in Hawaii, Arizona, and Montana. This year, some counties in California will begin transitioning to vote-at-home with drop boxes and vote centers. All states should offer voters the chance to sign up for permanent absentee voting lists and to automatically receive their ballots by mail. Doing so would provide voters with more convenient options and would help to increase voter participation. Finally, vote-at-home may be useful for jurisdictions lacking election resources and sufficient numbers of poll workers or for jurisdictions in which voters are located long distances from polling places. Vote-at-home is estimated to save $2 to $5 in election costs per registered voter.

Provide sufficient resources in elections and ensure voting is accessible
Even with the passage of affirmative policies, implementation matters. It is particularly important to make sure that enough resources are available to administer elections effectively. Poll closures, lack of voting machines, and insufficiently trained poll workers can contribute to long lines during voting periods and prevent eligible Americans from voting.

For example, a 2014 study by the Brennan Center for Justice found that the 10 precincts with the longest lines in Florida had fewer poll workers than the statewide average. Polling place closures also cause problems for voters, as fewer polling places often result in longer lines and wait times during voting periods. For example, after Maricopa County, Arizona, reduced its number of polling places by 70 percent during the 2016 primary, voters were forced to wait in line for up to five hours. A study from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies reported that long lines were estimated to have deterred at least 730,000 Americans from voting in the 2012 elections. That year, more than 5 million Americans experienced polling place wait times of at least one hour. Furthermore, according to a nationwide study, in 2016, roughly 3 percent of people standing in line at voting locations left before they could vote as a result of long lines.

Polling place closures disproportionately affect communities of color. In 2016, North Carolina had 158 fewer early polling places in 40 counties with large black communities. And in Daphne, Alabama, city council members eliminated 3 of the 5 polling places located in a heavily African American district, leaving the number of polling places in majority-white districts largely untouched. Polling places were also closed or consolidated in several jurisdictions in Georgia. Seven of the locations that experienced closures were heavily African American, with longtime voters reporting that they would not participate in the 2016 elections due to mobility challenges and difficulty traveling longer distances to new polling places.

Lack of convenient polling places and registrar offices also has been a problem for Native American would-be voters. Thirty-two percent of unregistered Native Americans in South Dakota and 26 percent in Nevada cited long distances from voter registrar's offices as one of the reasons that they decided not to register. Additionally, 29 percent and 27 percent of respondents in South Dakota and Nevada, respectively, reported difficulty traveling to designated polling places to vote.

Voters should not be forced to wait in line for hours to exercise their civic duty and for their voice to be heard in our democracy. Nor should certain groups have less access and fewer opportunities to register to vote and cast ballots. Recognizing funding constraints on election administration, officials must provide enough polling places and poll workers to serve all communities equally. Leading researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) developed a resource allocation calculator to help election administrators across the country determine how many polling places, workers, or voting machines a jurisdiction needs based on a variety of factors, including the number of registered or eligible voters within a particular area. Additionally, in order to prevent problems in future elections, officials should conduct assessments of Election Day readiness after each election to evaluate issues such as wait times, difficulties during voter check-in, and bottlenecks in the voting process.

Another way to reduce long lines is to adopt voter registration modernization reforms such as automatic voter registration, which ensures that voter lists are kept up-to-date, as inaccuracies or errors in voter registration databases can cause significant delays at polling places. Automating the registration process with information the state already has on hand eliminates clerical errors and helps prevent unnecessary confusion during voting periods. Ensuring that jurisdictions have an adequate number of accessible polling locations and hours—as well as poll workers and voting equipment—to accommodate the communities they serve will help to ensure that the right to vote is fully realized.

This extends to voters who are disabled and who speak different languages. In 2016, Americans with disabilities accounted for nearly 16 percent of the total eligible voter population, or 35.4 million eligible voters. However, that year, voter participation for people with disabilities was more than 6 points lower than for people without disabilities. One estimate suggests that there could have been 2.2 million more voters if people with disabilities had voted at the same rate as people without disabilities who

had the same demographic characteristics. Unfortunately, in many polling places, impediments exist that make voting difficult for people with disabilities. A 2017 study by the GAO found that, of the 178 polling places observed for accessibility in 2016 during early voting periods and on Election Day, 60 percent had at least one potential impediment, such as steep ramps, inadequate signage indicating accessible pathways, and insufficient parking. Jurisdictions must invest resources to ensure that eligible Americans with disabilities have equal opportunity and access to cast ballots in elections and that their privacy is maintained at the voting booth.

To ensure eligible Americans with limited English proficiency can participate in elections, Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act requires certain jurisdictions to publish election materials—including voter registration information, election notices, and ballots—in other languages additional to English. Federal law also requires covered jurisdictions to offer oral assistance in minority languages. Part of the act, under Section 208, allows limited English speakers to exercise their right to receive language assistance from a person of their choosing, with certain exceptions, such as that person's employer. An estimated 22 million limited English-proficient Americans who are eligible to vote are subject to these protections. Unfortunately, some poll workers are not aware of these federal requirements, while some states place unnecessary restrictions on how many voters a language-proficient person can assist, which may prevent limited English speakers from receiving the assistance they need. Between 3 and 4 percent of Native Americans in Arizona, Nevada, South Dakota, and New Mexico—four states with large Native American communities—cited language as a problem that they encountered when voting.

All eligible Americans must have equal opportunity to vote, including access to ballots and election materials that facilitate their ability to do so. With help from local advocacy groups, covered jurisdictions should work

closely with federal entities in order to ensure that they abide by federal law in providing language assistance to those who need it. And even if they are not covered by Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act, any jurisdiction with a large population of limited English-proficient speakers should ensure that polling places are staffed with bilingual poll workers.

Restore rights for formerly incarcerated people
When discussing policies for increasing voter participation, it is necessary to acknowledge the more than 6 million American citizens barred from exercising their fundamental right to vote because of ex-offender disenfranchisement laws. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, 48 states and the District of Columbia have laws that prohibit those who are incarcerated from voting. Fifteen states and the district automatically restore voting rights to formerly incarcerated people upon release from prison, while another 23 states restore voting rights upon completion of probation and/or parole. And, although seven states prohibit only people convicted of certain felonies, often the most violent crimes, from ever voting again, three states—Florida, Kentucky, and Iowa—prohibit anyone convicted of any felony from ever voting, even after completion of probation and parole. Some jurisdictions fail to provide pretrial detainees with absentee ballots or transportation to voting locations on Election Day, thereby disenfranchising individuals who have not been convicted of a crime and are eligible to vote. Felon disenfranchisement laws disproportionately affect people of color; in 2010, 1 in 13 black Americans were unable to vote due to a felony conviction, compared with 1 in 56 nonblack Americans.

An estimated 93 percent—or about 14 million—of formerly incarcerated people are eligible to vote based on current rights restoration laws. Despite this, participation is low. In 2008, when voter participation in the United States reached almost 62 percent, one study found that participation for eligible formerly incarcerated people in five states—Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, and North Carolina—averaged around 22.2 percent.

Voting-eligible formerly incarcerated people also register at low rates. A 2009 study of 660 formerly incarcerated people who were released from parole in Erie County, New York, found that, while 36 percent of participants were registered to vote prior to their conviction, only about 13 percent had registered or reregistered to vote post-conviction.

Beyond this, studies have found that a negative relationship exists between voter disenfranchisement and black participation, even among those not directly involved in the criminal justice system. For example, in communities with high percentages of disenfranchised black voters, eligible black voters are less likely to vote. This negative relationship exists even when there are pro-voter reforms such as early voting and same-day registration.

Low participation among formerly incarcerated people may be due, at least in part, to the lack of information provided to them about their voting rights while incarcerated and upon release. One survey found that 68 percent of ex-offender respondents failed to demonstrate an accurate understanding of how their conviction affected their right to vote.Another study found that only 10 percent of ex-offender respondents self-reported being educated about their voting rights by a judge, prison staff, or parole staff. However, public education can make a difference. According to a survey, of ex-offenders who held an accurate understanding of how their convictions affected their voting rights, a majority planned to vote in future elections.

States have approached ex-offender re-enfranchisement in different ways, which have included issuing executive orders, pursuing reform legislatively, granting individual pardons, and offering ballot initiatives. For example, in April 2018, New York Gov. Cuomo issued an executive order restoring voting rights to an estimated 36,000 formerly incarcerated people on parole.205 And in May, Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards (D) signed a bill restoring rights to formally incarcerated formerly incarcerated people five years after their release, even if they remain on probation or parole.

Wyoming and Alabama also went the legislative route. In 2017, Wyoming enacted a law to automatically restore voting rights to certain first-time ex-offenders convicted of nonviolent felonies upon completion of their sentence. Also that year, lawmakers in Alabama limited the kinds of criminal offenses for which someone can be disenfranchised, restoring voting rights to thousands of formerly incarcerated people. And after the Virginia Supreme Court struck down his order to restore voting rights to more than 200,000 ex-offenders in the state, former Virginia Gov. McAuliffe (D) relied on individual pardons to restore the rights of more than 173,000 formerly incarcerated people who completed their sentences. More than 25,000 of those whose rights were restored participated in the 2016 elections in Virginia. From this, it is clear that there are a number of options through which states can work to restore the fundamental right to vote to those who have served their time.

Based on Virginia's experience, all else being equal, if all ineligible formerly incarcerated people had their rights restored, there could have been approximately 914,728 more voters during the 2016 elections; and this figure would increase to 1.3 million if projections were based on the 22.2 percent average turnout observed in formerly incarcerated people during the 2008 elections. Here, it is worth repeating that demographics and voting cultures differ across states and even by jurisdiction, particularly in terms of outreach to and engagement of formerly incarcerated people whose voting rights are restored. Moreover, it is important to consider the 22.2 percent average turnout rate in the context of the historic 2008 elections, during which voter participation surged nationwide. Although these projections are not exact, they do provide a snapshot of how many more Americans could participate in the electoral process if their rights were restored.

This year, Florida voters will have the opportunity to vote "yes" on a 2018 ballot measure that would restore voting rights to millions of disenfranchised formerly incarcerated people who have completed their

sentences and earned back their fundamental right to vote. Earlier this year in New Jersey, legislation was introduced to allow citizens to vote while incarcerated. Meanwhile, a bill in Illinois that is awaiting the governor's signature would ensure that pretrial detainees who are effectively denied the right to vote in some places are provided voter registration forms and other voting materials. Legislation was also introduced in Colorado to preregister formerly incarcerated people on parole to vote, so that their rights would be automatically restored upon completion of their sentence. The bipartisan bill was estimated to affect 10,000 parolees in the state.

Americans who complete their sentences should have their right to vote and voter registration automatically restored upon release from prison, as is done in Rhode Island. States with automatic voter registration should designate state-run departments of correction as qualified AVR agencies. Of course, any re-enfranchisement policy must be combined with a robust education and outreach program carried out by the state and detention facilities. The program must provide formerly incarcerated people with information verbally, electronically, and through hard copy. They must be informed of how their conviction affects their voting rights. If voting rights are not automatically restored upon release, public officials should provide continuing guidance on how they may be restored upon release or completion of probation or parole. In particular, corrections, probation, and parole officers should provide voter registration services when a justice-involved individual becomes eligible to vote. A 2015 study found that formerly incarcerated people who received outreach messages from the Connecticut secretary of state's office reminding them of their eligibility to register to vote and participate in elections were more likely to register and vote than those who did not receive messages.

This section focuses on pro-voter policies to expand the electorate and improve the voter experience. Part of this involves protecting the right of all

eligible Americans to have their voices heard, which means dismantling voter suppression. It is an attack on the integrity of our democracy when the voices of eligible Americans are silenced as individuals are turned away at the polls or removed from state voter registration rolls because of restrictive laws and burdensome practices.

Each election cycle, countless eligible Americans are prevented from voting because of voter suppression measures, including strict voter ID laws, voter purges, and documentary proof of citizenship requirements for voter registration. These voter suppression measures, which have arisen across the country, are often justified by false claims of voter fraud but are actually aimed at making the voting process more difficult for certain groups, particularly for communities of color.

Before they even get to the polls, eligible voters are being removed from voter registration lists, which can result in them being turned away on Election Day. A 2017 report by the bipartisan U.S. Election Assistance Commission found that there was a 12.8 percent increase—equal to 1.9 million people—in the number of voters purged from state voter rolls between 2014 and 2016, compared with between 2012 and 2014. People of color are more likely to be targeted by state voter purges than whites. For example, in the lead-up to the 2016 election, Ohio removed thousands of people—846,000, according to some estimates—from its state voter rolls for failing to vote in previous elections. Between 2012 and 2016, more than 10 percent of voter registrants were purged in "heavily African-American" neighborhoods near downtown Cincinnati, compared with only 4 percent of those living in the surrounding suburb of Indian Hill. On June 11, in a 5-4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court validated Ohio's voter purging process, giving Ohio and other states its stamp of approval to manipulate voter rolls and keep eligible Americans, especially people of color, from participating in elections. Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach's infamous Interstate Crosscheck System, widely criticized for being discriminatory and unreliable, is another purging tool that uses minimal search criteria to

identify potentially ineligible voters, resulting in eligible Americans being misidentified as potential illegal voters.   African Americans living in states that rely on Crosscheck have a 1 in 9 chance of being flagged as potentially ineligible. And for Hispanics and Asian Americans, those chances increase to 1 in 6 and 1 in 7, respectively.

Communities of color, young people, and low-income Americans are also disproportionately affected by discriminatory voter registration requirements such as documentary proof of citizenship laws. These laws require eligible Americans to provide proof of citizenship in the form of a passport, birth certificate, or naturalization papers before they are added to the voter rolls. From 2013 to 2016, Kobach's documentary proof of citizenship prevented more than 35,000 Kansans from registering to vote. People under the age of 30 made up 44 percent of those whose voter registrations were slated for removal from the state voter rolls due to failure to provide documentary proof of citizenship. This is striking, as people in this age group make up only 15 percent of all registered voters in Kansas. Documentary proof of citizenship requirements also have a discriminatory effect on communities of color since nearly 9 percent of voting-age African Americans lack access to birth certificates or passports, compared with 5.5 percent of whites. Furthermore, Americans earning less than $25,000 per year are nearly twice as likely to lack citizenship documentation, such as passports and birth certificates, as those who earn more than $25,000.

Even if eligible Americans are successfully added to and remain on state voter rolls, they face other obstacles to casting a ballot. In seven states, strict voter ID laws require eligible voters to present certain forms of government identification before voting. Eleven percent of all Americans lack the kind of government-issued photo identification required by these laws. People of color are even less likely to have IDs than whites. Texas' voter ID law, which was struck down in 2017 for being intentionally discriminatory, required eligible voters to present a driver's license, passport, military identification, or gun permit prior to voting; yet student IDs

were not accepted—even from state schools.   A 2018 analysis found that 608,470 registered voters lacked the necessary ID to vote in Texas. The GAO has found that voter ID laws can reduce participation in elections by between 2 and 3 percent.2 5 For example, voting-eligible Native Americans in North Dakota were more than 7 percent less likely than non-Native Americans to have a qualifying voter ID under the state's voter ID law. In April 2018, after finding that North Dakota's law had a disproportionate effect on the state's Native American population, a federal judge ordered the state to accept tribal documents as valid forms of ID and do away with requirements for residential street addresses. Furthermore, some states do not allow transgender people to change the gender marker on their driver's license unless they meet burdensome requirements, such as proof of transition-related surgery, a court order, or an amended birth certificate. When a transgender person is unable to change the gender marker on their ID, poll workers and election officials may decide that the ID does not match the voter and wrongfully deny them their right to vote. In September 2016, the Williams Institute estimated that, in eight states with strict photo ID laws, 30 percent of transgender people who were eligible to vote were likely to be disenfranchised or face substantial barriers to vote in the November 2016 election. Americans with disabilities are also disproportionately affected by voter ID laws.

To have truly free, fair, accessible, and secure elections, discriminatory strict voter ID laws, documentary proof of citizenship requirements, and other unnecessary barriers to voter participation must be repealed. When carrying out voter list maintenance, states must strictly abide by the remaining provisions of the Voting Rights Act and the NVRA, which place limits on how states may remove people from state voter rolls. Additionally, states should cease using Interstate Crosscheck and should instead sign on as members to the Electronic Registration Information Center.   ERIC's data-matching criteria are much more comprehensive than the Interstate Crosscheck System; they consider names, addresses, birthdates, and other points of comparison using official data from voter registration rolls,

motor vehicle records, postal addresses, and Social Security death records. ERIC keeps state voter rolls up-to-date without compromising the privacy and security of citizens' right to vote.

Eligible citizens are much less likely to engage in elections or government if they do not understand them. A 2016 survey found that only 26 percent of Americans could name all three branches of government, a decline from past years. Lack of understanding—including that of institutional checks and balances and mechanisms for holding government accountable—contributes, at least in part, to rising distrust in government and elected bodies. Only 20 percent of Americans trust the government to do what is right always or most of the time, according to a 2017 survey by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Public distrust and alienation lead to a vicious cycle of bad government representation. According to a 2016 survey, 57 percent of Americans agreed that "politics and elections are controlled by people with money and by big corporations so it does not matter if they vote." A 2018 survey by Suffolk University found that 68 percent of unregistered and registered but disengaged voters agree with the statement, "I do not pay much attention to politics because it is so corrupt." If people do not trust democratic institutions or understand political processes, they will not show up to the polls—a place where they could contribute to removing bad actors from office and electing responsive representatives. A 2018 study by Harvard University found that only 36 percent of young respondents disagreed with the statement, "Political involvement rarely has any tangible results."

It is important for our education systems to inform young people on how to engage effectively and be responsible citizens in the political process. Unfortunately, today's students are largely ill-prepared for an active civic life. A 2014 study found that only 23 percent of 8th graders received a "proficient" or "advanced" score in civics. In 2016, the national average

Advanced Placement U.S. government exam score was lower than the average score of all but three of the other 45 AP exams offered by schools.

Americans recognize the important role civics education plays in our society. A 2018 survey found that, of those tested, the single most popular initiative to bolster U.S. democracy was a proposal to "ensure that schools make civic education a bigger part of the curriculum." Recent CAP research shows that most state-required civics education curricula do not result in higher voter participation on their own. However, research shows that people who actively engage in political discussion and debate and who follow current events are more likely to vote. These tendencies should be encouraged at a young age in order to facilitate generations of lifelong voters. While most states do require some type of U.S. government or civics education as a graduation requirement, few states require more than a semester of civics education, and few curricula focus on building skills and agency for civic engagement. Weak civics curricula likely contribute to young people's voting apathy. Studies suggest that robust community-integrated civics education programs that require young people and their families to play an active role in learning about the electoral process, developing issue salience, and building skills in debate and opinion expression can increase voter participation among young people as well as other household members. According to CAP research, the 10 states with the highest youth volunteer rates have a civics course requirement for graduation.

In the jurisdictions where it is used, Kids Voting USA, a "nonpartisan, grassroots-driven voter education program," has seen some success in increasing participation—particularly for low-income students and people of color. The program includes interactive lesson plans; mock elections; homework assignments where parents engage with children on political subject matter; and other activities designed to educate and get kids excited about the act of voting and politics. A study of Kids Voting's impact in Kansas found that, in Kansas counties that incorporated the program into

school curricula, voter participation was 2.1 percent higher for both 18-year-olds and their parents than it was in counties without the program—even after controlling for other factors. Other studies have similarly shown that Kids Voting increases voter participation indirectly through student-parent discussions, attention to political news, and other factors. Another organization, Generation Citizen, aims to provide young people with "the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in our democracy as active citizens" and trains more than 30,000 middle and high school students through "action-oriented" civics lessons.256 In addition to performing research and analysis on policies and issues, students meet with state and local lawmakers, create petitions, write op-eds, and deliver presentations to their classmates. Educators reported that, by the end of the 2016-2017 school year, 80 percent of participating students increased their civic knowledge and 62 percent increased their civic motivation.

Children between the ages of 0 and 18 account for more than 78 million people in the United States, almost a quarter of the country's population. Every year, more of these individuals will become eligible to vote and have their voices heard in the democratic process of self-government. It is important that young people receive a civics education in which they learn about the role of state and local governments; the three branches of federal government; and state voting and registration requirements, so that they have a basic understanding of the electoral process to support their engagement once they become eligible to vote. However, to be successful in increasing voter participation, civics education should be community- and family-oriented. Educators should engage students in lively discussion about current events and should debate contentious issues, encourage students to participate in grassroots mobilization efforts, assign homework that requires civic discussions at home, and hold mock elections. These comprehensive programs must be intentionally designed to reach diverse student bodies and marginalized communities. Currently, one study found that students in low-income schools are 30 percent less likely than students in schools of average socio-economic status to have debates or panel

discussions in classroom settings, and they are half as likely to learn how laws are made.

Groups that incorporate integrated voter engagement combine issue advocacy and organizing with voter mobilization and have been effective in harnessing voter power and enthusiasm in order to effectuate positive change in representation and policies within the communities they serve. IVE groups build issue salience that incentivizes people to vote by connecting the act of voting to making an impact on issues that affect people's lives. They prioritize training local leaders in the community to mobilize their neighbors and peers, as studies show that people are more likely to listen to those whom they know.   In addition to other community grassroots organizations, IVE groups partner with churches, unions, and social service agencies to organize voter registration drives and all-day volunteer events to assist voters with any problems that might arise on Election Day. IVE groups and their partners succeeded in registering nearly 4.5 million eligible voters between the mid-2000s and 2011.

IVE groups do not just register and engage eligible voters during election seasons; their work continues year-round, long before Election Day and well after election results are certified. IVE groups work within communities—including with young people, low-income Americans, communities of color, limited English-proficient speakers, and people focused on specific issue areas such as environmental or racial justice—building trust through face-to-face interactions and helping eligible people to navigate the voter registration and voting process. Rather than discarding voter registration lists after Election Day, these groups retain and continually update them for the purposes of ongoing outreach, communications, and relationship building.

Make the Road, an IVE group focused on immigrant rights in New York, has registered more than 30,000 voters since 2011 and spearheaded a number of successful campaigns, including passage of an anti-wage theft

law to protect immigrant workers. Advocacy by another IVE group, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), led to passage of the "We Want to Learn English" initiative, which has helped thousands of immigrants and refugees receive vocational English training and obtain other resources administered through nonprofit organizations and state agencies. Since 2004, the ICIRR has been responsible for registering almost 200,000 eligible voters and for mobilizing more than 600,000 to vote. In another example, Emgage, an IVE group focused on building political power for American Muslim communities, conducts civic trainings and candidate forums for Muslim voters and holds voter registration drives and voter outreach at mosques. Through mobilization and advocacy, Emgage has helped to elect Muslim lawmakers and defeat racist anti-Sharia bills. From 2012 to 2016, Muslim American voter participation increased by an average of 17.2 percent in states where Emgage engaged. And in 2016, an IVE group based in Los Angeles, Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE), played an integral role in passing two ballot measures that addressed issues of homelessness and affordable housing in L.A. communities. SCOPE's efforts were found to increase voter participation by 6.6 percent in some targeted communities.

Some partisan and nonpartisan organizations engage in grassroot efforts in order to drive participation. Outreach efforts may include canvassing, sending direct mailings, or holding phone banks to contact potential voters, among other things. Studies show that voters contacted through canvassing and direct outreach efforts are more likely to participate in elections. One study found that, generally, one additional vote is produced for every 14 people contacted by canvassers, while some volunteer phone banks have been shown to produce one additional vote for every 20 people contacted. Other studies show that voter contact in majority-African American neighborhoods can increase participation between 7 and 14 percentage points. Direct voter outreach has proven especially effective for young people. During the 2012 election, young people who were contacted by a campaign were 1.4 times more likely to vote than those who were not

contacted. And between 2013 and 2017, Virginia saw a 114 percent increase in early and absentee voting among Latinos, after partisan and nonpartisan organizations devoted significant resources toward in-language advertisements, polling, and canvassing in Latino communities.

All else being equal, had every registered and unregistered eligible but nonvoting American been contacted by canvassers, there could have been approximately 6.2 million more voters during the 2016 elections.

Our elected bodies are more representative and our laws are fairer when all eligible Americans are able to have their voices heard and to participate in elections. For voters who are disengaged and disenchanted with the political process, robust civics education programs and integrated voter engagement initiatives can drive participation by re-energizing voters and providing them with reasons and opportunities to cast ballots on the issues that matter most to them and their communities. Furthermore, states must have in place affirmative voter registration and voting policies in order to ensure that eligible voters who want to vote are able to and are not blocked by unnecessary and overly burdensome obstacles such as arbitrary voter registration deadlines and inflexible voting hours. By adopting the policies discussed in this report, America can find its 92 million missing voters and improve the voting experience for all eligible voters.

The Futurist New Deal and Data For All

Elon Musk is making headlines again, he wants to make your internet faster and cheaper.

"Starlink" pioneers the use of low-orbit satellites to provide more efficient internet for the world. Overcoming both rival complaints and regulatory issues, the FCC has approved the endeavor. This is a massive win for Musk, as well as most of the people of Earth.

With the implementation of Starlink, Mr. Musk is providing something much more down to earth than a "trip to Mars," but that does not mean it is less useful.

Fast internet is something many in the developed world take for granted. Unfortunately, broadband speed is hugely variable around the globe. Look at the world rankings, and you will see that the divide between poor and wealthy nations is especially apparent when it comes to Mb/s. Given how much learning is done through the internet it is easy to see the negative impact this can have on a society's development.

Obviously not everyone in wealthier nations is rich. Fortunately by cutting transition latency Elon Musk's plans can ensure lower-income individuals get better access to everything the internet has to offer. Gwynne Shotwell, COO and President of SpaceX talks of the plan "This approval underscores the FCC's confidence in SpaceX's plans to deploy its next-generation satellite constellation and connect people around the world with reliable and affordable broadband service. Starlink production is well underway, and the first group of satellites have already arrived at the launch site for processing."

As SpaceX prepares to undergo the uniquely precise yet dramatic process of launching a satellite into space, we can all hope that this project is a success. With the Boring Company and Tesla, Musk and his team's ability to come up with technological solutions to real-world problems is noteworthy. With SpaceX and Starlink, it is out of this world.

Futurist New Deal and Online Learning Options for K-12

The future of higher education lies with online learning. Increasingly, colleges and university students now find themselves with other obligations beyond that of getting a degree. Jobs and family commitments make equal demands on their time. Having the option of taking online classes and studying on their own time is critically important. At the same time, many state institutions are unable to accommodate all those who want to take classes on campus, escalating the demand for online learning.

Finally, lifelong learning must now be a part of everyone's career plans. In today's job market, taking online courses help workers remain competitive and they do not need to take time off from their jobs to do this.

K-12 students and parents will need to determine if online learning is an option for them because not everyone does well with this type of study. Some questions that any potential online students should ask is whether or not they can learn independently; how organized they are with their time; whether they are computer savvy; their level of reading comprehension; and if they have at least ten hours a week to devote to each course.

Many make the mistake of assuming that an online class will be easier than one taken in a traditional classroom. Often online instructors assign more reading materials than required in a regular classroom to ensure that students are engaged. Motivation is the key to an online student's success as is his ability to reach out to both instructors and fellow students using software such as Blackboard.

That software program seamlessly integrates social media, making it possible to create online communities that are course specific. Blogs,

tweets, podcasts, webcasts, online chats, discussion boards, and virtual study jams are all part of the online mix. Success in an online course often depends on how connected a student feels to his instructor and fellow students.

Students will be able to learn at their own pace and problems as simple as finding a place to park will be eliminated. It makes good financial sense for a student to have the option to take core courses online at any level.

Local businesses can also benefit from online learning. Online learning not only trains the workers of the future, it can also provide a career path for someone employed, who needs to learn new skills.

For online learning to succeed it is also essential that we find and train instructors who can adapt to this new medium. Fortunately, new technology makes it possible for instructors to create exciting new ways to learn online that engage students in ways that are more effective than a lecture hall with hundreds of students.

We also need to develop a national transfer pool so that certain online courses can be taken anywhere in the country and then transferred to the student's home institution. No student should face being shut out of a class he needs to get a degree when he can take the same course online at another institution.

Higher education officials need to seek out partnerships with technology companies to ensure that their online learning courses take advantage of all new developments that increase the capacity to learn.

I foresee a time when there will be totally virtual colleges and universities and students will not only take classes at their own institution, but expand their scope by enrolling in courses at the great institutions of learning around the world.

Background on the Green New Deal as it Relates to the Futurist New Deal Plan to Ban Crude Exports and Fossil Fuel Subsidies

The Futurist New Deal, like the Green New Deal is a plan to fight climate change. The Green New Deal plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, cutting them in half by 2030. That is what it would take to limit global warming to less than 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100. It is the Paris Agreement's climate goal.

To achieve the Green New Deal goal, the plan calls for the United States to switch to 100% renewable energy in 10 years. In 2017, only 11% of the nation's energy consumption came from renewables, according to the Energy Information Administration. Another 9% is generated by nuclear power; it does not emit carbon dioxide.

The oil and carbon-based energy system must be changed to reduce further emissions. Technology must be introduced to absorb existing CO_2 levels. And it all must happen within the next 10 years. Otherwise, the United Nations warned temperatures could exceed a tipping point that leads to a hothouse planet.

On February 7, 2019, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., and Representative Edward Markey, D-Mass., introduced a five-page nonbinding resolution to the House. Sixty House members endorsed the plan. So did four Senate Democrats running for president. That ensures that solutions to climate change will be a major issue in 2020.

It includes seven goals previously introduced by Ocasio-Cortez:

Shift 100% of national power generation to renewable sources.
Build a national energy-efficient "smart" grid.

Upgrade all buildings to become energy efficient.
Decarbonize manufacturing and agricultural industries.
Decarbonize, repair, and upgrade the nation's infrastructure, especially transportation.
Fund massive investment in the drawdown and capture of greenhouse gases.
Adopting these goals would make "green" technology, industry, expertise, products, and services a major U.S. export. As a result, America could become an international leader in helping other countries transition to completely carbon-neutral economies.

The resolution also requires that any new infrastructure spending must address climate change. It wants the government to push for more zero-emission vehicles and invest in high-speed rail and other public transit.

The Green New Deal adds some goals to address income inequality. The effects of climate change are worse on low-income people. For example, droughts raise food prices. Low-income households spend a greater percentage of their earnings on food and can least afford higher prices.

Businesses can create a profitable competitive advantage by adopting Green New Deal goals. States, like California and Hawaii, have already set goals to become carbon-free. Nations are seeking to meet their goals under the Paris Climate Accord. So have 20 states and 50 major cities. As the price for wind energy and solar power falls, companies that source renewable energy will be ahead of those that don't.

The Green New Deal funds new jobs, including installing solar panels, retrofitting coastal infrastructure, and manufacturing electric vehicles. It asks for new trade rules to stop "the transfer of jobs and pollution overseas."

It would make universal health care available. It also advocates a universal basic income. This is a government guarantee that each citizen receives a minimum income. It pays enough to cover the cost of living.

In October 2018, the United Nations international climate science panel released an alarming report. It found that the effects of global warming could become irreversible by 2030 without rapid action. The West Antarctic ice sheet could melt, raising sea levels another 4 inches. Without the ice sheet to reflect the sun's rays, oceans would absorb even more heat. That would melt more ice, worsening the heating cycle.

At least 100 million people would die from increased heat waves, drought, and infectious diseases. The heat would also kill off 90% of the world's coral reefs.

To avoid this fate, the U.N. report said the world must cut greenhouse gases by almost half by 2030. To stop further warming, greenhouse gases must be reduced to 350 parts per million. Carbon dioxide levels are already above 400 parts per million.

Since the 1880s, the earth's average temperature has risen 2.1 Fahrenheit. That's 1.2 degrees Celsius. Warming is occurring at a faster rate than at any other time in the Earth's history.

Ocasio-Cortez made the New Green Deal the centerpiece of her 2018 campaign. She said, "This is going to be the New Deal, the Great Society, the moon shot, the civil-rights movement of our generation."

Congress is paying attention to Ocasio-Cortez' success. She beat an incumbent who outspent her by 10 times. They are every day more willing to listen to her and her supporters.

In December 2018, Congressional Democrats launched a Green New Deal proposal. It called for a new House select committee to draft a bill that executes the Green New Deal goals.

On March 26, 2019, the Senate voted against the bill. Republicans planned to use the vote to accuse Democrats who voted for the bill as unrealistic socialists. Four Democrats in moderate states voted against the bill. All other Senate Democrats voted "present" to avoid an intra party fight. Ocasio-Cortez said the vote was a sham since there were no hearings or expert testimony. Some Republicans are drafting their own proposals but the Republican party does not have a plan to stop global warming.

In March 2019, House Democrats drafted a bill requiring the United States to live up to its commitment under the Paris Climate Accord. It also announced a committee to report on the economic and national security consequences of Congressional failure to do something about climate change.

In April 2019, Ocasio-Cortez released a video that added details to a Green New Deal proposal. She advocated national high-speed trains, restored wetlands, and universal healthcare. The Sunrise Movement will promote the Green New Deal in an eight-city tour ahead of the 2020 election.

The Green New Deal was first introduced in the 2016 presidential election by Jill Stein, the candidate for the Green Party. It committed to 100% renewable energy by 2030, costing $200 billion. It would create a Renewable Energy Administration to create up to 20 million new

green-centered jobs. That would cost $400 billion a year. It also included free education through college.

It paid for these programs in three ways. First, by cutting the defense budget by 50%. Total U.S. military spending is $890 billion a year. Second, it advocates a $60 per ton carbon fee, generating $360 billion a year. More progressive taxation on the super wealthy would raise $130 billion annually. It proposes a 70% tax on income above $10 million.

The research group Data for Progress also outlines a Green New Deal. It is broad in scope yet detailed. It includes clean air and water, reforestation and wetlands restoration, and zero waste by 2040. It would create 10 million new private and public sector jobs. Its research shows that most Americans support the Green New Deal's jobs program.

In 2016, a bipartisan group of House members formed the Climate Solutions Caucus. The caucus is affiliated with the Citizens' Climate Lobby, which supports a carbon fee. It has 90 members.

In 2011, the Environmental Protection Agency used its powers under the Clean Air Act to limit carbon as a pollutant. The Trump administration terminated the Clean Power Plan.

In 2009, Democrats proposed a cap and trade policy. The Waxman-Markey bill was defeated in the Republican-controlled Senate.

In 2009, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act jump-started the alternative energy industry in America. It provided $17 billion in renewable energy tax cuts and $5 billion to weatherize homes.

The Deal goes beyond the 2007 Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming. Pelosi formed it when she was first

elected speaker in 2007. Republicans eliminated it when they took the majority in 2011.

In 2009, the American Clean Energy and Security Act was approved by the House of Representatives. But the bill never passed the Republican-controlled Senate.

In 2005, the federal government mandated food-based biofuels. It raised food prices, causing riots in 2008. Ethanol and biodiesel seemed cleaner than fossil fuel, but their production destroyed ecosystems that absorbed carbon.

The Futurist New Deal and Drug Decriminalization

By any measure the U.S. "war on drugs," a constellation of policies that seeks to prevent the use of certain drugs, primarily through punishment and coercion, has been a catastrophic failure. Indeed, federal and state policies that are designed to be "tough" on people who use and sell illegal drugs have helped over-fill our jails and prisons, permanently branded millions of otherwise law-abiding civilians as "criminals", and exacerbated drug-related death, disease and suffering — all while failing at their stated aims.

The Futurist New Deal offers a roadmap for how to begin to unwind our failed drug war. It focuses on one practical step that can and should be taken to avoid many of the harms that flow from punitive prohibitionist drug laws and to promote proven, effective health-based interventions.

Drug decriminalization is a critical next step toward achieving a rational drug policy that puts science and public health before punishment and incarceration. Decades of evidence has clearly demonstrated that decriminalization is a sensible path forward that would reap vast human and fiscal benefits, while protecting families and communities.

Drug decriminalization is the elimination of criminal penalties for drug use and possession, as well as the elimination of criminal penalties for the possession of equipment used for the purpose of introducing drugs into the human body, such as syringes.

Drug decriminalization entails the elimination of all punitive, abstinence-based, coercive approaches to drug use; the term here

encompasses a spectrum of efforts to eliminate criminal penalties, even if such efforts do not eliminate all forms of coercion entirely. Drug decriminalization also ideally entails the removal of criminal penalties for low-level sales, given that the line between seller and user is often blurred.

The criminalization of drug possession is a major driver of mass incarceration and mass criminalization in the United States. Each year, U.S. law enforcement makes more than 1.5 million drug arrests — more arrests than for all violent crimes combined. The overwhelming majority — more than 80 percent — are for possession only and involve no violent offense.

On any given night, there are at least 133,000 people behind bars in U.S. prisons and jails for drug possession — and 63,000 of them are held pre-trial. Hundreds of thousands of people also remain under some form of correctional supervision (probation, parole, or other post-prison supervision) for drug possession. People convicted of drug possession face a host of additional consequences, including the loss of federal financial aid, eviction from public housing, disqualification from a wide range of occupational licenses, loss of the right to vote, and denial of public assistance.

Discriminatory enforcement of drug possession laws has produced profound racial and ethnic disparities at all levels of the criminal justice system. Black people comprise just 13 percent of the U.S. population and use drugs at a similar rate as other racial and ethnic groups – but they comprise 29 percent of those arrested for drug law violations and roughly 35 percent of those incarcerated in state prison for drug possession only.

Drug criminalization also fuels mass detentions and deportations. For noncitizens, including legal permanent residents — many of whom have been in the U.S. for decades and have jobs and families — possession of any amount of any drug (except first-time possession of less than 30 grams

of marijuana) can trigger automatic detention and deportation, often without the possibility of return.

Drug courts have spread across the country in an attempt to ameliorate some of the most devastating effects of the nation's misguided drug laws. Yet available research does not support their continued expansion. Most drug courts do not reduce imprisonment, do not save money or improve public safety, and fail to help those struggling with drug problems. Most drug courts fail to offer real treatment to people in actual need of it, and they often inflict more (not less) punishment on people suffering drug problems than traditional criminal courts.

Decriminalization is a sound, effective solution to some of the myriad fiscal, public health, social, and public safety issues caused by the criminalization of drug possession.

Drastically reduces the number of people arrested, incarcerated, or otherwise swept into the justice system, thereby allowing people, their families and communities to avoid the many harms that flow from drug arrests, incarceration, and the lifelong burden of a criminal record;
Alleviates racial, ethnic and income-based disparities in the criminal justice system;
Improves the cost-effectiveness of limited public health resources;
Revises the current law enforcement incentive structure and redirects resources to prevent serious and violent crime;
Creates a climate in which people who are using drugs problematically have an incentive to seek treatment;
Improves treatment outcomes (when treatment is called for);
Removes barriers to the implementation of practices that reduce the potential harms of drug use, such as drug checking (adulterant screening); and

Improves relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they have sworn to protect and serve.

Coerced treatment is ethically unjustifiable, especially when voluntary treatment can yield equal or more positive outcomes. --American Public Health Association, 2013

Many of the concerns often raised in opposition to drug decriminalization are not supported by evidence. Available data from the U.S. and around the world strongly suggests that eliminating criminal penalties for possession of some or all drugs would not significantly increase rates of drug use. As with drug use rates, crime rates do not appear to correlate to the severity of criminal penalties. Use of the criminal justice system to get people into treatment is counter-productive for the majority of people who use drugs problematically. And though many people believe that so-called "hard drugs" like cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine are more addictive than other substances, the data suggests that most people who use these drugs never become addicted.

There have been many modest, successful efforts to reduce drug penalties in the United States. Some of these efforts include "defelonizing" drug possession by reducing it to a misdemeanor, decriminalizing or legalizing marijuana possession, establishing pre-arrest diversion programs such as Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), and enacting 911 Good Samaritan laws, which allow for limited decriminalization of drug use and possession at the scene of an overdose for those who are witnesses and call for emergency medical assistance. But more ambitious efforts are needed in the U.S.

Public sentiment in favor of reducing criminal penalties for drug possession is growing across the country. Polls of presidential primary voters in Maine, New Hampshire and even South Carolina recently found that substantial majorities in each state support ending arrests for drug use and possession. In 2016, the first-ever state-level decriminalization bill was

introduced in Maryland, and a similar version of that bill was reintroduced in 2017. The Hawaii legislature, meanwhile, overwhelmingly approved a bill last year creating a commission to study decriminalization, the first of its kind in the U.S.

Most countries' drug laws exist on a spectrum between criminalization and decriminalization. Some have eliminated penalties for possession of all drugs, while some countries (and U.S. states) have eliminated penalties only for marijuana possession. Still other countries and states have taken steps in the right direction by reducing criminal penalties, without eliminating them entirely.

Several countries have experience with decriminalization, most notably Portugal. The Portuguese policy emerged in reaction to an escalation of problematic drug use — in particular unsafe injection and its impact on public safety and health. In 2001, Portuguese legislators enacted a comprehensive form of decriminalization — eliminating criminal penalties for low-level possession and consumption of all drugs and reclassifying these activities as administrative violations.

Portugal's decriminalization was one aspect of a much larger drug policy shift — a deliberate decision to address low-level drug possession through their public health system instead of their criminal justice system. The policy was part of a comprehensive health-oriented approach to addressing problematic drug use that also included a major expansion of treatment and harm reduction services, including access to sterile syringes, methadone maintenance and other health interventions, and the elimination of most barriers to such vital services.

Independent research of the Portuguese policy has shown promising outcomes. Today in Portugal, no one is arrested or incarcerated for drug possession, many more people are receiving treatment, and HIV/AIDS and drug overdose have drastically decreased.

Can it really be true that most people in jail are being held before trial? And how much of mass incarceration is a result of the war on drugs? These questions are harder to answer than you might think, because our country's systems of confinement are so fragmented. The various government agencies involved in the justice system collect a lot of critical data, but it is not designed to help policymakers or the public understand what is going on. As public support for criminal justice reform continues to build, however, it is more important than ever that we get the facts straight and understand the big picture.

The American criminal justice system holds almost 2.3 million people in 1,719 state prisons, 109 federal prisons, 1,772 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,163 local jails, and 80 Indian Country jails as well as in military prisons, immigration detention facilities, civil commitment centers, state psychiatric hospitals, and prisons in the U.S. territories.

A big-picture view allows us to focus on the most important drivers of mass incarceration and identify important, but often ignored, systems of confinement and bring these overlooked systems to light, from immigration detention to civil commitment and youth confinement. In particular, local jails often receive short shrift in larger discussions about criminal justice, but they play a critical role as "incarceration's front door" and have a far greater impact than the daily population suggests.

Every year, over 600,000 people enter prison gates, but people go to jail 10.6 million times each year. Jail churn is particularly high because most people in jails have not been convicted. Some have just been arrested and will make bail within hours or days, while many others are too poor to make bail and remain behind bars until their trial. Only a small number (less than 150,000 on any given day) have been convicted, and are generally serving misdemeanor sentences under a year.

Why are so many people locked up? How many are incarcerated for drug offenses? Are the profit motives of private companies driving incarceration? Or is it really about public safety and keeping dangerous people off the streets? There are a plethora of modern myths about incarceration. Most have a kernel of truth, but these myths distract us from focusing on the most important drivers of incarceration.

The overcriminalization of drug use, the use of private prisons, and low-paid or unpaid prison labor are among the most contentious issues in criminal justice today because they inspire moral outrage. But they do not answer the question of why most people are incarcerated, or how we can dramatically – and safely – reduce our use of confinement. Likewise, emotional responses to sexual and violent offenses often derail important conversations about the social, economic, and moral costs of incarceration and lifelong punishment. Finally, simplistic solutions to reducing incarceration, such as moving people from jails and prisons to community supervision, ignore the fact that "alternatives" to incarceration often lead to incarceration anyway. Focusing on the policy changes that can end mass incarceration, and not just put a dent in it, requires the public to put these issues into perspective.

The first myth: Releasing "nonviolent drug offenders" would end mass incarceration
It is true that police, prosecutors, and judges continue to punish people harshly for nothing more than drug possession. Drug offenses still account for the incarceration of almost half a million people, and nonviolent drug convictions remain a defining feature of the federal prison system. Police still make over 1 million drug possession arrests each year, and many of these arrests do lead to prison sentences. Drug arrests continue to give residents of over-policed communities criminal records, hurting their employment prospects and increasing the likelihood of longer sentences for any future offenses.

But at the state and local levels, far more people are locked up for violent and property offenses than for drug offenses alone. To end mass incarceration, reforms will have to go further than the "low hanging fruit" of nonviolent drug offenses. (As it happens, some of the boldest strategies for reforming the criminal justice system – such as heavy investments in social services and community-based alternatives to incarceration – benefit not only those with substance use disorders, but people at risk of incarceration for any offense.)

The second myth: Private prisons are the corrupt heart of mass incarceration
In fact, less than 8% of all incarcerated people are held in private prisons; the vast majority are in publicly-owned prisons and jails. Some states have more people in private prisons than others, of course, and the industry has lobbied to maintain high levels of incarceration, but private prisons are essentially a parasite on the massive publicly-owned system – not the root of it.

Nevertheless, a range of private industries and even some public agencies continue to profit from mass incarceration. Many city and county jails rent space to other agencies, including state prison systems, the U.S. Marshals Service, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Private companies are frequently granted contracts to operate prison food and health services (often so bad they result in major lawsuits), and prison and jail telecom and commissary functions have spawned multi-billion dollar private industries. By privatizing services like phone calls, medical care and commissary, prisons and jails are unloading the costs of incarceration onto incarcerated people and their families, trimming their budgets at an unconscionable social cost.

Graph showing that only a small portion of incarcerated people, for all facility types are incarcerated in privately owned prisons. In total, less than 8% are in private prisons, with 94,000 held for state prisons, 43,000 for the Bureau of Prisons and the U.S. Marshals Service, 15,000 for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 13,000 held for youth systems and 6,000 held for local authorities. Private prisons and jails hold less than 8 percent of all incarcerated people, making them a relatively small part of a mostly publicly-run correctional system.

The third myth: Prisons are "factories behind fences" that exist to provide companies with a huge slave labor force. Simply put, private companies using prison labor are not what stands in the way of ending mass incarceration, nor are they the source of most prison jobs. Only about 5,000 people in prison – less than 1% – are employed by private companies through the federal PIECP program, which requires them to pay at least minimum wage before deductions. (A larger portion work for state-owned "correctional industries," which pay much less, but this still only represents about 6% of people incarcerated in state prisons.)
But prisons do rely on the labor of incarcerated people for food service, laundry and other operations, and they pay incarcerated workers unconscionably low wages: our 2017 study found that on average, incarcerated people earn between 86 cents and $3.45 per day for the most common prison jobs. In at least five states, those jobs pay nothing at all. Moreover, work in prison is compulsory, with little regulation or oversight, and incarcerated workers have few rights and protections. Forcing people to work for low or no pay and no benefits allows prisons to shift the costs of incarceration to incarcerated people – hiding the true cost of running prisons from most Americans.

The fourth myth: Expanding community supervision is the best way to reduce incarceration
Community supervision, which includes probation, parole, and pretrial supervision, is often seen as a "lenient" punishment, or as an ideal

"alternative" to incarceration. But while remaining in the community is certainly preferable to being locked up, the conditions imposed on those under supervision are often so restrictive that they set people up to fail. The long supervision terms, numerous and burdensome requirements, and constant surveillance (especially with electronic monitoring) result in frequent "failures," often for minor infractions like breaking curfew or failing to pay unaffordable supervision fees.

In 2016, at least 168,000 people were incarcerated for such "technical violations" of probation or parole – that is, not for any new crime. Probation, in particular, leads to unnecessary incarceration; until it is reformed to support and reward success rather than detect mistakes, it is not a reliable "alternative."

The fifth myth: People in prison for violent or sexual crimes are too dangerous to be released

Finally, we come to the myth that people who commit violent or sexual crimes are incapable of rehabilitation and thus warrant many decades or even a lifetime of punishment. As lawmakers and the public increasingly agree that past policies have led to unnecessary incarceration, it is time to consider policy changes that go beyond the low-hanging fruit of "non-non-nons" – people convicted of non-violent, non-serious, non-sexual offenses. If we are serious about ending mass incarceration, we will have to change our responses to more serious and violent crime.

Recidivism: A slippery statistic

What changes when we define recidivism different ways? 34 states could not tell you, because they only collect one measure. We discuss the implications.

The data supports changing our responses to some of the crimes that scare people most: people convicted of sexual assault and homicide are actually among the least likely to reoffend after release. People convicted

of homicide are the least likely to be re-arrested, and those convicted of rape or sexual assault have re-arrest rates roughly 30-50% lower than people convicted of larceny or motor vehicle theft. More broadly, people convicted of any violent offense are less likely to be re-arrested in the years after release than those convicted of property, drug, or public order offenses. Yet people convicted of violent offenses often face decades of incarceration, and those convicted of sexual offenses can be committed to indefinite confinement or stigmatized by sex offender registries long after completing their sentences.

Offense categories might not mean what you think
To understand the main drivers of incarceration, the public needs to see how many people are incarcerated for different offense types. But the reported offense data oversimplifies how people interact with the criminal justice system in two important ways: it reports only one offense category per person, and it reflects the outcome of the legal process, obscuring important details of actual events.

When a person is in prison for multiple offenses, only the most serious offense is reported. So, for example, there are people in prison for violent offenses who were also convicted of drug offenses, but they are included only in the "violent" category in the data. This makes it hard to grasp the complexity of criminal events, such as the role drugs may have played in violent or property offenses. We must also consider that almost all convictions are the result of plea bargains, where defendants plead guilty to a lesser offense, possibly in a different category, or one that they did not actually commit.

Secondly, many of these categories group together people convicted of a wide range of offenses. For violent offenses especially, these labels can distort perceptions of individual "violent offenders" and exaggerate the scale of dangerous violent crime. For example, "murder" is an extremely serious offense, but that category groups together the small number of

serial killers with people who committed acts that are unlikely, for reasons of circumstance or advanced age, to ever happen again. It also includes offenses that the average person may not consider to be murder at all. In particular, the felony murder rule says that if someone dies during the commission of a felony, everyone involved can be as guilty of murder as the person who pulled the trigger. Acting as lookout during a break-in where someone was accidentally killed is indeed a serious offense, but many may be surprised that this can be considered murder in the U.S.

Lessons from the smaller "slices": Youth, immigration, and involuntary commitment

Looking more closely at incarceration by offense type also exposes some disturbing facts about the 63,000 youth in confinement in the United States: Too many are there for a "most serious offense" that is not even a crime. For example, there are over 8,100 youth behind bars for technical violations of their probation, rather than for a new offense. An additional 2,200 youth are locked up for "status" offenses, which are "behaviors that are not law violations for adults, such as running away, truancy, and incorrigibility." Nearly 1 in 10 youth held for a criminal or delinquent offense is locked in an adult jail or prison, and most of the others are held in juvenile facilities that look and operate a lot like prisons and jails.

Turning to the people who are locked up criminally and civilly for immigration-related reasons, we find that 13,000 people are in federal prisons for criminal convictions of immigration offenses, and 10,600 more are held pretrial by U.S. Marshals. The vast majority of people incarcerated for criminal immigration offenses are accused of illegal entry or illegal re-entry – in other words, for no more serious offense than crossing the border without permission.

Another 49,000 people are civilly detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) not for any crime, but simply for their undocumented immigrant status. ICE detainees are physically confined in

federally-run or privately-run immigration detention facilities, or in local jails under contract with ICE. An additional 11,800 unaccompanied children are held in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), awaiting placement with parents, family members, or friends. While these children are not held for any criminal or delinquent offense, most are held in shelters or even juvenile placement facilities under detention-like conditions. Adding to the universe of people who are confined because of justice system involvement, 22,000 people are involuntarily detained or committed to state psychiatric hospitals and civil commitment centers. Many of these people are not even convicted, and some are held indefinitely. 9,000 are being evaluated pre-trial or treated for incompetency to stand trial; 6,000 have been found not guilty by reason of insanity or guilty but mentally ill; another 6,000 are people convicted of sexual crimes who are involuntarily committed or detained after their prison sentences are complete. While these facilities are not typically run by departments of correction, they are in reality much like prisons.

Beyond the "Whole picture": Community supervision, poverty, and race and gender disparities
While this section provides a view of the various systems of confinement in the U.S. justice system available, this data cannot capture all of the important systemic issues. Once we have wrapped our minds around the "whole picture" of mass incarceration, for example, we should zoom out and note that confinement is just one piece of the larger system of correctional control. There are another 840,000 people on parole and a staggering 3.6 million people on probation. Given the onerous conditions of probation and the steep consequences for technical violations, policymakers should be wary of "alternatives to incarceration" that can easily lead to incarceration for people who pose no threat to public safety.

Beyond identifying the parts of the criminal justice system that impact the most people, we should also focus on who is most impacted and who is left behind by policy change. Poverty, for example, plays a central role in mass

incarceration. People in prison and jail are disproportionately poor compared to the overall U.S. population. The criminal justice system punishes poverty, beginning with the high price of money bail: The median felony bail bond amount ($10,000) is the equivalent of 8 months' income for the typical detained defendant. As a result, people with low incomes are more likely to face the harms of pretrial detention. Poverty is not only a predictor of incarceration; it is also frequently the outcome, as a criminal record and time spent in prison destroys wealth, creates debt, and decimates job opportunities.

It is no surprise that people of color – who face much greater rates of poverty – are dramatically overrepresented in the nation's prisons and jails. These racial disparities are particularly stark for Black Americans, who make up 40% of the incarcerated population despite representing only 13% of U.S residents. The same is true for women, whose incarceration rates have for decades risen faster than men's, and who are often behind bars because of financial obstacles such as an inability to pay bail. As policymakers continue to push for reforms that reduce incarceration, they should avoid changes that will widen disparities, as has happened with juvenile confinement and with women in state prisons.

Equipped with the full picture of how many people are locked up in the United States, where, and why, our nation has a better foundation for the long overdue conversation about criminal justice reform. For example, the data makes it clear that ending the war on drugs will not alone end mass incarceration, though the federal government and some states have taken an important step by reducing the number of people incarcerated for drug offenses. Looking at the "whole picture" also opens up other conversations about where we should focus our energies:

Are state officials and prosecutors willing to rethink not just long sentences for drug offenses, but the reflexive, simplistic policymaking that has served to increase incarceration for violent offenses as well?

Do policymakers and the public have the stamina to confront the second largest issue- the thousands of locally administered jails? Will state, county, and city governments be brave enough to end money bail without imposing unnecessary conditions in order to bring down pretrial detention rates? Will local leaders be brave enough to redirect public spending to smarter investments like community-based drug treatment and job training?

What is the role of the federal government in ending mass incarceration? The federal prison system is just a small slice of the total picture, but the federal government can certainly use its financial and ideological power to incentivize and illuminate better paths forward. At the same time, how can elected sheriffs, district attorneys, and judges — who all control larger shares of the correctional system — slow the flow of people into the criminal justice system?

Given that the companies with the greatest impact on incarcerated people are not private prison operators, but service providers that contract with public facilities, will states respond to public pressure to end contracts that squeeze money from people behind bars?

Can we implement reforms that both reduce the number of people incarcerated in the U.S. and the well-known racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system?

Now that we can see the big picture of how many people are locked up in the United States in the various types of facilities, we can see that something needs to change. Looking at the big picture requires us to ask if it really makes sense to lock up 2.3 million people on any given day, giving this nation the dubious distinction of having the highest incarceration rate in the world. Both policymakers and the public have the responsibility to carefully consider each individual slice in turn to ask whether legitimate social goals are served by putting each group behind bars, and whether any benefit really outweighs the social and fiscal costs.

Even narrow policy changes, like reforms to money bail, can meaningfully reduce our society's use of incarceration. At the same time, we should be wary of proposed reforms that seem promising but will have only minimal

effect, because they simply transfer people from one slice of the correctional "picture" to another. Keeping the big picture in mind is critical if we hope to develop strategies that actually shrink the "whole picture."

In the Ben Zion Adminstration, Sex Workers are People too.

Sex workers are adults who receive money or other
forms of compensation in exchange for consensual sexual
services, either regularly or occasionally. Sex workers are
frequently penalized for non-criminal offenses such
as loitering, vagrancy, and impeding the flow of traffic. By
limiting sex workers' freedom to negotiate condom use with
clients, access public services like health care, and organize
and advocate for their rights, criminalization increases sex
workers' vulnerability to violence, extortion, and health risks.

Decriminalization refers to the removal of all
criminal and administrative prohibitions and penalties on sex
work, including laws targeting clients and brothel owners.
It differs from legalization, which is a legislative regime
characterized by significant regulations—many of which can
limit rights and protections, create mechanisms for abuse by
authorities, and have other negative impacts on sex workers.
Nevada in the USA, New Zealand and New South Wales, Australia are
jurisdictions known for their legalized or decriminalized sex industries.
Decriminalization goes hand-in-hand with recognizing
sex work as work and protecting the rights of sex workers
through labor law, and workplace health and safety
regulations. When sex work is decriminalized, sex workers
can press for safer working conditions and use the justice
system to seek redress for discrimination and abuse.
Sex workers are more likely to live without stigma, social
exclusion, or fear of violence. Even where sex work is
decriminalized, the prostitution of minors and human

trafficking can and should remain criminal acts.

A cornerstone of contemporary human rights is that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. There are many reasons why adults do sex work, whether it is their main livelihood, a temporary means to survive, or an opportunity to supplement other income. Some people find that sex work offers better pay and more flexible working conditions. Whatever the reasons, sex work is work, and sex workers should be treated with dignity. Sex workers in many parts of the world have organized to fight for human rights that cannot be fully realized as long as criminal laws threaten sex workers' access to justice, health, and social services; undermine their right to labor and workplace protections; and expose them to violence, discrimination, and arbitrary arrest.

Sex work is not inherently violent; it is criminalization that places sex workers at greatest risk. The need to avoid arrest— of both sex workers and their clients—means that street-based sex workers must often move to more isolated areas that are less visible to law enforcement, and where violence is more prevalent. Fear of arrest and police abuse limits the time and methods that sex workers can use to conduct safety screenings of clients without detection by police. For sex workers who are not street-based, authorities have even shut down online sex work forums, like Redbook, which have offered sex workers more detailed client screening possibilities and thus greater security. These factors, plus real or perceived impunity for perpetrators of violence against sex workers, place sex workers at heightened risk. For example, after Scotland instituted laws criminalizing solicitation in 2007, groups recorded a doubling in reported rapes and assaults. In jurisdictions that have decriminalized sex work such as New Zealand, sex workers

have an increased ability to screen clients, work in safe areas with better access to security services, and refer to police in cases of violence.

Where sex work is criminalized, police wield power over sex workers. Police threaten sex workers with arrest, public humiliation, and extortion. In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, a high proportion of sex workers have reported suffering sexual assault by police—as high as 90 percent in Kyrgyzstan. In Cambodia, nearly half of all freelance sex workers have been beaten and nearly half have been raped by police; and nearly three of every four brothel-based sex workers have been beaten, and more than half have been raped by police. From Namibia to Serbia, sex workers report rape by police while in custody, often without condoms and often as a pre-condition for release on bail. In these instances police abuse sex workers with impunity, in part because sex workers fear arrest or further abuse for reporting these crimes. Decriminalization empowers sex workers to come forward to register complaints against police who act unlawfully, and to bring offenders to justice without fear of negative consequences for their own lives. In New Zealand, 57 percent of sex workers reported that police attitudes improved following decriminalization in 2003.

Laws that criminalize sex work cause sex workers to feel unsafe reporting crimes—including violent crimes and other abuses—because they fear prosecution, police surveillance, stigma, and discrimination. In both Norway and Sweden, for instance, many sex workers report that the thresholds at which they will report crimes to the police are high as a result of laws that criminalize sex work. Decriminalization removes these kinds of barriers. After New Zealand reformed its laws in 2003, many sex workers reported that they could turn to

the police and courts for help without fear of prosecution for the first time in their lives. In 2014, for example, a sex worker in Wellington was awarded $25,000 after a brothel operator repeatedly harassed her, violating her rights under the country's Human Rights Act.

In many countries, harsh and biased application of criminal law ensures that a large proportion of sex workers will have criminal records. Criminal records are often a source of stigma, and can drastically limit one's future. In some parts of the United States, for example, people convicted of sex work-related offenses are registered as sex offenders and must carry documents identifying themselves as such. Sex offenders are often ineligible to receive loans, educational scholarships, or public housing. Individuals with sex work related criminal records face great difficulty finding non-sex work employment. Employer background check policies and restrictions on licenses required for certain fields of work make it next to impossible to change careers. In addition, criminal convictions for sex work-related offenses have been used as the basis for arbitrary re-arrest and to remove parental custody. Countries that decriminalize sex work should consider retroactively removing sex work-related criminal records.

Decriminalization is associated with the best access by outreach workers to brothels, and the greatest financial support for sex worker health programs. Better financial support means greater capacity to conduct health outreach in the evening, an important feature because the evenings are often the busiest times for sex workers. Decriminalization has also been shown to increase condom access and rates of use by sex workers. For example, in the state of New South Wales, Australia where

sex work is decriminalized, sex workers' access to and use of condoms is higher than in other Australian jurisdictions that have varying levels of criminalization.

In addition, decriminalization enables sex workers to work in collectives in which they can organize appropriate, accessible modalities.

Decriminalization of sex work could avert up to 46 percent of new HIV infections among female sex workers over the next decade. A recent study published in The Lancet concluded that decriminalization of sex work had the single greatest potential to reduce HIV infections in female sex worker communities—even more than increasing access to antiretroviral treatment. When sex work is decriminalized, sex workers are empowered to insist on condom use by clients, and are better able to access testing and treatment for HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

In contrast, criminalization harms sex workers' ability to negotiate condom use with clients. Visible condoms and openly negotiating condom use put sex workers at greater risk of arrest. This deters sex workers and clients from condom use, particularly among street-based sex workers who are often at highest risk of HIV infection. In response to this, various police departments around the world have decided to stop using condoms as evidence of prostitution against sex workers.

Decriminalization makes possible the creation of workplace health and safety regulations that are relevant to the sex industry. In New Zealand, for instance, decriminalization enabled the inclusion of sex work in the Health and Safety Employment Act, resulting in the creation of occupational health guidelines that sex workers have used to assert their

rights with employers and clients. In New South Wales, Australia, decriminalization has been associated with sex workers' decreased risk of occupational injury and insecurity as compared to other Australian jurisdictions. Decriminalization also promotes safer working conditions for sex workers by enabling them to organize. Collectively, sex workers can address risk factors in their workplaces and insist upon improved conditions. For example, the mobilizing efforts of the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective have been key to asserting workplace safety rights.

Trafficking is an egregious human rights violation involving coercion of individuals for sexual exploitation or forced labor. Sex workers can be natural allies in the fight against trafficking, and may be well placed to refer trafficking victims to appropriate services. For example, through a sex worker run self-regulatory board, the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee in Sonagachi (Kolkata) India was able to identify and support women who had been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. When freed from the threat of criminal penalties, sex workers can organize and collaborate with law enforcement.
Despite this, laws prohibiting the purchase of sexual services are often promoted as a successful means to combat trafficking. However, there is no evidence that this is so. A 2014 report by the Swedish police found no reduction in trafficking in the country after 15 years of criminalization.

Decriminalization of sex work recognizes the right of all people to privacy and freedom from undue state control over sex and sexual expression. The different treatment of sex work from other types of work is an example of governments' long history of exerting control over bodily autonomy, self-determination,

and sexuality. Decriminalization respects gender equality and sexual rights. Laws against sex work intrude into private sexual behaviors and constitute a form of state control over the bodies of women and LGBTI persons who make up a large majority of sex workers worldwide.40 Like state controls over reproductive rights and sexual acts between consenting adults, criminal laws prohibiting sex work attempt to legislate morality with scant regard for bodily autonomy.

The majority opinion in Citizens United takes up 57 pages, but it is pretty efficiently boiled down thusly. Money is speech. Corporations are people. Therefore, under the First Amendment, the government cannot stop corporations from spending money on politics pretty much however they choose.

Citizens United set off a torrent of outrage, culminating in the high drama of the President (a constitutional law professor, lest we forget) condemning the court in the State of the Union for opening "the floodgates for special interests—including foreign corporations—to spend without limit in our elections." Anger spanned the political spectrum (80 percent were opposed shortly after the ruling, 65 percent "strongly") and helped spark the Occupy movement.

Most Americans, 88 percent, want to reduce the influence large campaign donors wield over lawmakers at a time when a single congressional election may cost tens of millions of dollars.

The right recognizes something that few on the left recognize: that campaign finance law underlies all other substantive law.
But Americans' disgust did not stop the bagmen, on both sides of the aisle, from seizing the opportunity. Just ask Dan Maffei, a Democrat in upstate New York's 25th District who led Ann Marie Buerkle, a pro-life activist with scant political experience, by 12 points two weeks before the election. Then Karl Rove's American Crossroads buried him with $400,000 worth of attack ads—and Buerkle won by a mere 648 votes.

So how to put elections back in the hands of voters? Here are the four options:

Constitutional amendment: Okay, it takes two-thirds majorities in both houses of Congress and ratification by three-fourths of the state legislatures. Nevertheless, we did just that to bring about Prohibition in 1919 and then to overturn it in 1933, and to lower the voting age to 18 in 1971. That last one wrapped in a mere five months; then again, the 27th Amendment, which regulated congressional raises, was in the works for 203 years. And recall the Equal Rights Amendment: "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States." No-brainer, right? The ERA passed Congress in a landslide in '72 (354 to 24 in the House, 84 to 8 in the Senate). It was endorsed by Richard Nixon, included in the Republican Party platform, and ratified by 30 state legislatures within another year. And then Phyllis "Stop Unisex Bathrooms" Schlafly whipped up a major froth, got enough culture war firebrands elected to state legislatures, and stopped it cold.

So yes, it is technically possible to pass an amendment clarifying that corporations are not quite the same as people and money is not quite the same as speech. (Several organizations, including People for the American Way and a new outfit called Move to Amend, are pushing for this.) But there is also a lot of dark-money groups waiting to underwrite a Schlafly-like play.

 How about waiting for a conservative justice or two to die while Democrats hold the White House and the Senate? Absent the plot devices of a John Grisham thriller, do not hold your breath. Then again, know who has been the master of this kind of waiting game? The folks who brought you Citizens United. When he started flooding the docket with anti-campaign-finance-regulation cases in the 1980s, conservative lawyer James Bopp Jr. was facing a hostile court. But he kept at it until the majority shifted—and slammed the ball he had teed up.

In the nearer term, there is the option the Roberts court expressly invited in Citizens United. Not long after the ruling, Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) introduced the DISCLOSE Act with 114 cosponsors, just two of them Republicans. It would have banned most secret donations, forced companies to report their giving to shareholders, and shut foreign corporations out of electioneering. The bill's life was brief and full of ironies (among the clauses tacked on in the House was one exempting the NRA); it passed the House in a 219-206 vote—36 Dems voted nay—and died, as all good legislation must, when the Senate fell one vote short of a filibuster-proof 60 votes. But Congress is not the only game in town. Court after court has come down squarely on the side of disclosure, and in May, the DC court of appeals ruled that nonprofits like Rove's Crossroads GPS and the US Chamber of Commerce must reveal their donors' names. In another promising step, the IRS has made noises about revoking the tax exemption of dark-money groups.

Taxpayer-financed campaigns: No one likes big money in politics—least of all, perhaps, members of Congress who toil in the Hill's drab call centers, dialing donors to beg for cash. That is why public financing was key to the post-Watergate reforms, and until billionaire Steve Forbes opted out in 1996, every major presidential candidate took it. But the system failed to keep up with the cost of elections; this year, candidates could hope to get about $90 million in public financing, whereas Obama expects to raise up to $1 billion. Nevertheless, public financing can still make a big difference in down-ballot races, from the statehouse all the way to obscure but critical judicial elections. And keep in mind, today's state legislator is tomorrow's US senator.

As the rich get richer, throwing six-figure sums at presidential campaigns is increasingly de rigeur.
In the end, all these avenues need to be pursued, and here's why: As Paul S. Ryan of the Campaign Legal Center told MoJo's Andy Kroll, the right "recognizes something that few on the left recognize: that campaign

finance law underlies all other substantive law." In other words, no matter what you care about—climate change, abortion, taxes, net neutrality—it all comes back to who pays for our elections. Need a more selfish reason? Because the 1 percent have bent the system to their advantage, America's median household income—your income—is $40,000 lower than it would have been had incomes continued to keep pace with economic growth. Conversely, as the rich get richer, throwing six-figure sums at presidential campaigns is just like tipping for good service.

So yes, we might agree with Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), no stranger to corporate campaign money, that Citizens United is the court's worst decision since it upheld segregation in Plessy v. Ferguson. But bad law is not without redress—if voters shame reluctant representatives into getting off the dark-money addiction. "At bottom," wrote Justice Stevens, the court's opinion is "a rejection of the common sense of the American people, who have recognized a need to prevent corporations from undermining self-government since the founding…While American democracy is imperfect, few outside the majority of this Court would have thought its flaws included a dearth of corporate money in politics."

ALEC will also be dismantled under The Futurist New Deal.

ALEC is a group that devises various arch-conservative and corporatist policies so they can be pushed in state legislatures across the country. It has facilitated collusion among state legislators, large corporations, conservative think tanks to craft numerous "model bills" — bills those legislators can then introduce in their home states, and perhaps get passed into law. In recent years, more than 1,000 of ALEC's model bills have been introduced to state legislatures across the country, and around 200 usually become law, the group has estimated.

While ALEC is technically run by its state legislators, it raises the bulk of its yearly funding — around $8 million a year — from mega-corporations and conservative groups or foundations. ALEC's model bills largely reflect the business interests of those corporate members. In 2010, ALEC's policy director told NPR, "Most of the bills are written by outside sources and companies, attorneys, and legislative counsels." The white-washed standard two-party interpretation of this is that ALEC helps policy experts and stakeholders share their knowledge with state legislators who might not have the legal expertise to write high-quality bills on their own. The more critical take is that ALEC is making state legislators do the bidding of corporatist and arch-conservative interests.

ALEC maintains that while it promotes these various model bills, it does not directly lobby state legislatures to pass them — insisting that it is a "think tank" rather than a lobbying operation. But according to a report by the New York Times' Mike McIntire, "special interests effectively turn ALEC's lawmaker members into stealth lobbyists, providing them with talking points, signaling how they should vote and collaborating on bills affecting hundreds of issues."

In recent years, about one quarter of US state legislators have been members of ALEC. But though the group advertises itself as a nonpartisan organization, all of its current officers and board members, and the vast majority of its dues-paying rank-and-file members, are Republican state legislators. While ALEC has been chaired by Democrats in the past, one of those former chairs, former Iowa representative Dolores Mertz, has since publicly blasted the group as overly partisan.

The upshot of this is that the group is most influential in states with Republican-controlled legislatures and governors. ALEC does not elect Republicans to legislatures, but it gives the party, businesses, and conservatives a menu of potential bills to choose from once the GOP does gain power.

ALEC's main focus is promoting pro-business and conservative economic policies. It is organized into 9 main task forces run by state legislators that corporations or nonprofits can contribute to and participate in. Here are each of them, and examples of positions they back:

Civil Justice (Tort reform)
Commerce, Insurance, and Economic Development (Opposition to minimum wage increases, right to work, regulatory flexibility)
Communications and Technology (Opposition to net neutrality, various other policies favored by large telecom companies)
Education (School choice and education reform)
Energy, Environment and Agriculture (Opposing EPA carbon regulations, opposing state renewable energy mandates)
Health and Human Services (Repealing Obamacare, block granting Medicaid)
International Relations (Promoting free trade, supporting the Keystone XL pipeline)
Tax and Fiscal Policy (tax cuts, overhauls to public employee pensions)

Justice Performance Project (various changes to state bail programs, decriminalization)

But ALEC has frequently been criticized for blurring the lines between bills intended to benefit business generally, and bills designed to help its particular corporate members.

For instance, the Washington Post's Anita Kumar reported that one ALEC member company, Crown Cork & Seal, helped craft a bill that would shield it from asbestos claims, and pushed it around the country. The version of that bill introduced in Virginia would have applied to only one company operating in the state — Crown Cork. It was pushed hard by the Virginia House of Delegates Speaker William Howell (R) — and Howell's chief of staff told Kumar that he backed the bill because of his involvement in ALEC.

Another ALEC bill proposed to alter "the tax on smokeless tobacco products from one based on the price of the tobacco to one based on weight," according to Daniel Bice of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Bice pointed out that ALEC member Altria (the former Philip Morris) would have benefited most from this, since "it manufactures smokeless tobacco products that are far lighter than those of other manufacturers."

ALEC's close ties to corporations and the economic policies it has pushed have been the source of some controversy. But the group was co-founded by social conservative activist Paul Weyrich, and it has also promoted model bills on gun rights, voter ID, and immigration that have been at the center of some of the biggest state controversies of the past few years. For instance:

Months before Arizona's legislature passed a tough anti-illegal immigration law in 2010, its lead sponsor introduced the bill at an ALEC meeting, and the group's Public Safety and Elections Task Force adopted it. The meeting included officials from the Corrections Corporation of America, which

expected to benefit financially from increased detention of immigrants, according to NPR's Laura Sullivan.

ALEC has drafted and pushed voter ID laws, which critics say make voting more burdensome for minorities, the poor, and the elderly.

After Florida legislators passed the nation's first "Stand Your Ground" law in 2005, ALEC collaborated with the NRA to promote the law nationwide. Since 2005, more than 30 states have enacted some version of Stand Your Ground, according to the Washington Post.

In 2012, the killing of Florida teenager Trayvon Martin brought nationwide attention to Stand Your Ground laws — and ALEC's role in promoting them came under scrutiny. Liberal groups like Color of Change campaigned to get corporations to pull their funding from ALEC — focusing on both Stand Your Ground and voter ID — and leaks of documents from the group that had begun the previous year, to progressive organizations like the Center for Media and Democracy, continued.

The ensuing controversy severely hurt ALEC. Its various corporate funders, and its few conservative Democrat members, had joined the group for economic and business issues, not to get tarred with hot-button national controversies. According to internal documents obtained by the Guardian's Ed Pilkington and Suzanne Goldenberg, ALEC lost nearly 400 state legislators and 64 corporate members between 2011 and 2013. The Center for Media and Democracy lists many companies that have reportedly cut ties to the group — including Amazon, General Electric, Pepsi, McDonald's, Merck, General Motors, Microsoft, and Walgreens.

In an apparent attempt to stop the bleeding, ALEC shut down its "Public Safety and Elections Task Force" — responsible for the guns, voter ID, and immigration model bills — and announced that it would refocus on economic issues.

The bulk of ALEC's funding (around $8 million a year) comes from corporations, trade associations, or conservative foundations. Hundreds of

corporations and trade groups have had varying levels of involvement with ALEC over the years. The group's Private Enterprise Advisory Council currently includes representatives from ExxonMobil, PhRMA, AT&T, UPS, State Farm Insurance, Altria (formerly Philip Morris), and the American Bail Coalition.

Koch Industries has also been a key funder. When ALEC faced funding troubles and nearly went defunct in the mid-1990s, the Kochs gave the group a $430,000 loan, according to Lisa Graves of the Center for Media and Democracy. Then, from 1999 through 2002, a Koch Industries official chaired ALEC's private enterprise board, and he remains on that board today. Koch foundations have given ALEC hundreds of thousands of dollars in recent years.

….And Last but not Least, The Futurist New Deal is a 52k Basic Income Deal.

A Basic Income is an unconditional payment to each individual (ie it is not based on household). It is a building block for security and is designed to support the individual as they work, care (or are cared for), set up a business, or learn.

Here in the US, as well as in Switzerland, Netherlands, Finland and Canada there is an energetic debate about a Basic Income and pilots are being carried out. A system that has mainly been tried in the developing world is starting to gain real traction elsewhere including in the US state of Alaska. Basic Income-type experiments were first carried out in the US and Canada in the 1970s.

Increasing modern concerns about the impact of automation, artificial intelligence, and superlative computing power has also driven interest. The Futurist New Deal is becoming involved in the debate not simply to add to noise. We have accepted the argument that Basic Income is the best system to support the range of contributions that people wish to make - as well as being the most humane system- and we set ourselves the goal of helping shift the idea more towards the mainstream and practical reality.

Payments are made to every citizen on a universal basis. The weekly amount that any working age person receives is a 'basic' amount. In other words, if they are fit and able to work they would have a very strong incentive to do so. And they would not get trapped at low earning levels. This contrasts very heavily with the current system.

All recipients over 21 could be required to be on the electoral roll, thereby reinforcing citizenship. A 'contribution contract' for those between 18 and 21 could also be introduced. It is made with their friends, family and

community to ensure they are contributing and these 'contracts' would be in return for the basic income. However, there should be no state monitoring of these contracts and sanctions will not be imposed if commitments are not kept for any reason. This stops sanctions being reintroduced via another mechanism.

The Futurist New Deal Basic Income would be paid as follows (based on 2019 prices):

Basic Income of $1000 a week for all qualifying citizens between 21 and 65.

Social Security benefits for all qualifying citizens over 65.

It is fairly easy to see how our system achieves a much more sane, comprehensible and less distorting way of taxing and redistributing than the current tax codes. We estimate that the changes we have made would cost up to 9 percent of GDP over and above the current model; however land leases as described below would make up the difference, making this basic income more resistant to hyper-inflation than that proposed by Democrat Andrew Yang or Transhumanist Rachel Haywire. In any event, it is no greater than the changes that have been made in the original New Deal, or not far removed from other tax reform or easing measures. If the benefits of Basic Income come to be accepted as did major changes to Social Security in the 1980s then 9 percent of GDP is more than affordable.

With increased economic security, people are far less prone to stress, disease, and self-destructive behavior. A basic income experiment in Canada saw hospitalization rates go down 8.5% in short order. The Futurist New Deal basic income will improve labor market efficiency because fewer workers will be stuck in jobs that are a bad fit. National productivity will improve because people will be able to seek work that is more rewarding and promote higher job satisfaction. There are

tremendous hidden and not so hidden costs to economic uncertainty, this is why many economists predict that humane economic policies, like a middle class basic income would grow the economy enormously. A Roosevelt Institute study found that even a smaller basic income at $12,000 per year per adult policy would permanently grow the economy by 12.56 to 13.10 percent, or about $2.5 trillion by 2025 as well as increasing the percentage of Americans with jobs by about 2 percent, and expanding the labor force by 4.5 to 4.7 million people.

So that is some of the technical hurdles out of the way. Why do this? A middle class basic income supports people in nurturing their lives and frees them to create a new future. Those many young parents who are settling for low paid work to pay off student debt are a case in point. Had there not been such an intrusion into their power to choose they would have a different career and be making a far bigger contribution. With their new-found flexibility they may even have started a business. Does that matter? Their family life could have felt like it was on an even greater upwards trajectory instead of being locked between low quality work and a red-tape driven means tested welfare state. Their mental health, educational outcomes, life satisfaction, all around well-being could be much enhanced.

The US government owns nearly 200 trillion of federal land and resources. Most of it is unused and sitting idle. If you divide $200 trillion by America's 330 million citizens, you get a half million dollars per person.
The US must monetize that federal land and distribute its equity equally, to move Americans out of poverty, diminish real risks and protect against various healthcare issues, and the impending "jobless future"— where increasing automation replaces tens of millions of human jobs.

 Leasing out federal land will provide a permanent regular income to every American, without giving up ownership of the land or contributing to the climate crisis and provide 173 trillion dollars of new tax revenue over 10

years, an amount large enough to also allow for the establishment of a modernized national public health service. The funding plan, the "Futurist New Deal: Federal Land Dividend," is the most credible universal basic income plan as it does not raise taxes on the middle class.

The Futurist New Deal Land Dividend works by issuing leases anywhere from 25 years to 99 years. Companies will then offer bids for land and resources they wanted, and binding lease agreements would be created. Most leases would be structured around a standard 5% annual interest rate, plus inflation when necessary.

The strongest opposition to the The Futurist New Deal Land Dividend comes from environmentalists. They have all sorts of reservations, some even relating to the lives of human beings, but mostly they are peeved at the thought of America's pristine lands and waters being rented out.

We would do well to try to respect those opinions, and the best way to do this is simple. Leave all the national parks alone, and make all leases contain contract language that requires companies to return the land and environment just as they found it when their lease is over.

Environmentalists will probably still find a reason not to be happy with the plan, but they must remember that the Futurist New Deal Land Dividend's goal is to eliminate poverty and increase opportunity and human development. Currently, 13 million American kids go to bed hungry at night and upwards of 2 million people will be homeless in the US at some point in 2019. Our country's assets, the land and its resources belonging to the people, should be used for the health and security of our citizens.

Besides, there is a huge national and global threat on the horizon the US must prepare for: automation taking most human jobs. Over the next five years, machines will replace millions of human jobs in the US. Just a few years ago, McDonald's stock reached an all-time high as investors gladly

accepted automated ordering kiosks replacing cashiers. And the approximately 3.5 million truck drivers will soon be replaced by driverless vehicles.

The threat is real, and the Futurist New Deal provides a constant income that American families can live and thrive on, whether they're employed or not. The Futurist New Deal Land Dividend will provide an estimated 173 trillion dollars, enough to fund such a constant income and build a more robust national health service that does not leave anyone behind- these two achievements alone would transform our economy and our middle class both into the envy of the developed world.

There is a reason that so many of the billionaire CEOs in Silicon Valley support the idea of novel approaches to funding a basic income. The Futurist New Deal Land Dividend is a nonpartisan plan that benefits all, particularly the most vulnerable.

The time has come. The USA must set itself to the task of utilizing our vast resources and sharing them with each American before we wake up one day and realize that we live in a third-world country, a pale shadow of what it ought to have been.