



STATE VOICES: BUILDING CAPACITY FOR A MULTIRACIAL DEMOCRACY

Prepared by: Seiche
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Photo Source:
People of Alabama

ABOUT STATE VOICES

Our democracy must represent the interests of all of us. There must be civic leaders of all backgrounds, from all walks of life, to truly have a political system that works for the greater good. **We know this is the path to power.**

State Voices is a national network – built from the states up – that helps grassroots organizations **win civic engagement victories** and **build long-term political power.** We’re building a multiracial democracy that counts every vote, hears every voice and meets every need.

State Voices works year-round to **create a more accessible, inclusive, and representative democracy.** We center **the leadership, experiences, voices, and votes** of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, AAPI, and all communities of color, young adults, LGBTQ people, women, low-income, and all oppressed people. We sustain a dynamic ecosystem of **25 State Tables, 9 emerging tables,** and **organizations in every state,** comprising over **1,200 partner organizations.**

Since 2008, we’ve employed the principles of collective impact, bringing a racial equity lens to capacity building, providing the **data, tools, and support** needed to **create a healthy and thriving democracy.** We advance this work through three national programs: **Civic Engagement** (voter education, registration and turnout, issue advocacy and constituency engagement), **Civic Access** (voting rights and election administration), and **Civic Representation** (census and redistricting).

**“WE’RE WORKING TO BUILD A
MULTIRACIAL DEMOCRACY AND
BUILD POLITICAL POWER FOR
BLACK AND BROWN FOLKS AND
FIGHT AUTHORITARIANISM.
WE NEED A POWERFUL
PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT
TO FIGHT BACK AND MOVE
FORWARD.”**

Alexis Anderson-Reed, CEO, State Voices

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Photo Source: ProGeorgia



Photo Source: 2023 Network Convening

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR A MULTIRACIAL DEMOCRACY

Capacity building is critical to advancing a multiracial democracy. Democracy grows from empowered people; for many years, our movement organizations were not led by people deeply rooted in the communities most marginalized in our democratic system. **As more leaders from marginalized communities are promoted into leadership, they're rarely given the tools needed to succeed** – the resources to hire and retain good staff, the political education training and professional development of their people, the tools that make political goals achievable, and the support system invested in their success. **If we want to win progressive victories, we have to invest in the internal capacity of our movement ecosystem** – the people and the organizations working tirelessly within states to advance transformation and justice for all.

State Voices is unique among national capacity building organizations – we approach capacity building like an **organizer**, from the ground up, and with deep commitments to **building power** and **cultures of liberation**. That's because our team members *are* organizers, with many having previously worked at State Tables or other organizations advancing equity and justice.

We build with, rather than for, our State Tables and partners. We're **trusted**, because we've been there before. Through our capacity building, we invest in relationships, build from the states up and power victories that ensure vote is counted, every voice is heard, and every need is met.

DEVELOPING COLLECTIVE STRATEGIES

Every day, our team works alongside the State Voices Affiliated Network to develop collective strategies, building something bigger than each of us could accomplish alone.

- One example is our two-year process to collectively and radically re-imagine the power of the State Voices Affiliated Network. Through hundreds of responses, interviews, surveys and two conferences, we developed a [Strategic Direction](#) that moves beyond a narrow scope of civic engagement to one that moves toward justice and transformation for all. The Strategic Direction defines our role, vision, and people in the movement to build a healthy, multiracial democracy, firmly grounding our work in transforming governments and supporting our communities through the leadership of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), women, young people, poor people, TLGBTQIA+ people and Disabled people.

IN 2022, THE STATE VOICES AFFILIATED NETWORK:

- Made over **140 million contacts to voters** – including **1.9 million calls, 34.5 million texts**, over **1 million doors knocked**, and **90 million contacts** over mail via Voter Participation Center.
- Registered nearly **820,000 voters**.
- Facilitated over **50 trainings**.
- Graduated **520 data practitioners** from our Data Certification Program, of which **85% of the participants were BIPOC**.
- Answered nearly **9,000 calls** over the Election Protection hotline to help voters make their voices heard.
- Built state capacity and supported election reform efforts in **16 states** to expand rights and defend democracy.

- Continued **fighting for equitable districting and the freedom to vote** in the courts in Alabama and Louisiana.
- Heard directly from voters in critical states like Michigan, Nevada and North Carolina on **what issues mattered** most and what messages were most compelling.
- Expanded voter engagement infrastructure to include municipal elections and rights restoration for **formerly incarcerated individuals**.
- Organized and won efforts around **key ballot measures** around reproductive justice, economic justice, and more.



Photo Source:
Pennsylvania Voice

LIVING INTO OUR VALUES

Values are at the heart of State Voices' culture. A reflection of who we are – as individuals and as an organization – our values shape what we do, how we do it, and with whom we work alongside. At State Voices, we're committed to modeling the values we fight for in the outside world, within our own network. This starts with how we treat one another, how we learn together, and how we engage around topics related to freedom and liberation.

State Voices believes that a joyful and equitable workplace makes it possible to build power in our communities. Our workplace policies center equity and justice and strengthen the professional development of our 50+ person team at State Voices. We share these policies as well as what we learn, with the State Tables and partners. State partners often adopt policies (e.g. sabbatical, paid leave, etc.) that we initially created and tested within State Voices, creating ripple effects in organizational cultures across and beyond the civic engagement field.



Photo Source:
New Mexico Civic Engagement Table

We make a multiracial democracy possible by living into our values.

Caring for Our People. We all deserve care and dignity. We regularly find time for workers to rest and invest in their wellness:

- Offering the last Friday of every month as a Wellness Day.
- In the summer, shifting to a 4-day workweek.
- Implementing a Wellness Wednesday initiative during busy election years.
- Holding intentional group conversations about balancing life, work and wellness.

Learning and Growing Together. Each of us has our own special set of skills, interests, and talents that deserve attention and investment. We offer training, coaching and best practices, including:

- Advanced leadership training.
- Work plan coaching.
- Individual coaching for department leads.
- Significant professional development funds to support people in their growth.

Committing to Racial and Gender Justice. We invest in our team's growth and learning about racial and gender justice, providing:

- Political education and training to provide safer spaces for marginalized people.
- Holding anti-oppression trainings and workshops to challenge ourselves to be more inclusive.

Changing Hearts and Minds Through Art. Our network takes every opportunity we can to create and share art with a message, like with our Freedom Arts Collaborative. When it comes to democracy, our values, and changing hearts and minds, nothing reaches people quite like art.

Safeguarding for Safety and Security. We're openhearted, but also clear-eyed – building a multiracial democracy requires joy, but it also requires taking precautions to protect ourselves, our voices and our communications. State Voices provides:

- Trauma-informed, rapid response physical and digital security resources for staff and State Tables, rooted in a culture of care.
- Retained legal and crisis communications partners, ensuring that our people, our peers, and marginalized communities receive protection from both offline and online violence.

OUR APPROACH TO CAPACITY BUILDING

INTAKE

01

MAP NEEDS

02

BUILD CAPACITY

ASSESS NEAR-TERM IMPACT

ASSESS LONG-TERM IMPACT

Intake

Our intake process is highly relational. Sometimes, a State Table leader reaches out to State Voices for support. Other times, State Voices proactively reaches out to states. Either way, State Table leaders and State Voices staff discuss needs in an intake conversation, which helps all parties understand the need(s) and the request(s) for support.

Map Needs

State Voices brings an organizer's mentality to our capacity building – we center the needs of State Tables, as they define those needs, and we serve as a trusted partner and support system in advancing their goals. State Voices' staff map out capacity building offerings to meet the needs identified by the State Table. Sometimes, this draws on the expertise of a specific department (e.g, Policy). Other times, it may draw on the offerings of multiple departments (e.g. Data and Communications).

State Voices envisions a healthy multiracial democracy where everyone is free and able to live in their full dignity. In this world, **our people have agency and the resources they need to live and thrive**. When we structure capacity building engagements with State Tables, **we center the dignity and creativity of their people**, bringing a collaborative, nimble approach to balance near-term needs with longer-term organizational and movement infrastructure goals.

03

04

05

Build Capacity

State Voices serves as a trusted partner and support system for State Tables. Our capacity building offerings provide data, tools and support, including customized trainings, connecting with peers and experts, sharing templates and tools, and providing in-person site visits and on-the-ground support.

Assess Near-Term Impact

Once a capacity building engagement is complete, we follow up with State Tables to assess what worked and what could be improved. For more in-depth capacity building partnerships, we conduct deeper evaluations, ensuring continuous learning between State Tables and State Voices staff.

Assess Long-Term Impact

State Voices is developing strategies to assess its long-term impact, including metrics that track:

- Building base leadership in states;
- Strengthening collective capacities that allow people to act intentionally, strategically and effectively together;
- Wielding influence and impact in changing narratives, influencing legislative efforts and winning advocacy victories.

MOVING MONEY TO THE STATES

Money and people power are some of the most valuable resources in our fight for a healthy democracy. That's why we're committed to **building intentional relationships and investing in lasting civic infrastructure** in our communities – we know that **resourcing people power**, at the local level, **propels change**, and we also know that **resourcing people power requires financial resources that are challenging for any individual group to raise on its own.**

Funding in the civic engagement space can be volatile. After 2020, we recognized how early and significant investments across our network better equip our State Tables to navigate the tremendous challenges and opportunities we continue to face. **State Voices catalyzes financial resources for states – both the long-term funding needed to build healthy State Tables, and the surge funding necessary to secure critical victories.**

\$800K

to support state-specific policy work related to redistricting, election protection and voting rights.

\$1M

to fund at least one data staff position at each State Table and support tables' data and technology needs.

\$3M+

for general operating and core support staff, including funding to hire full-time resource development and communications staff members.

\$5M+

to support redistricting education, voting rights, organizational capacity, and technology – a 454% increase in regranting totals compared to past off-year cycles.

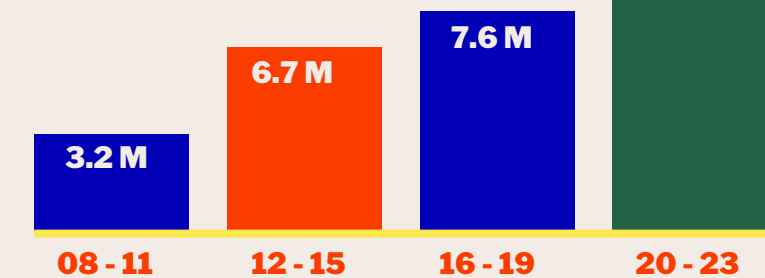
*2021 data

STATES

REGRANTING 2008-2023

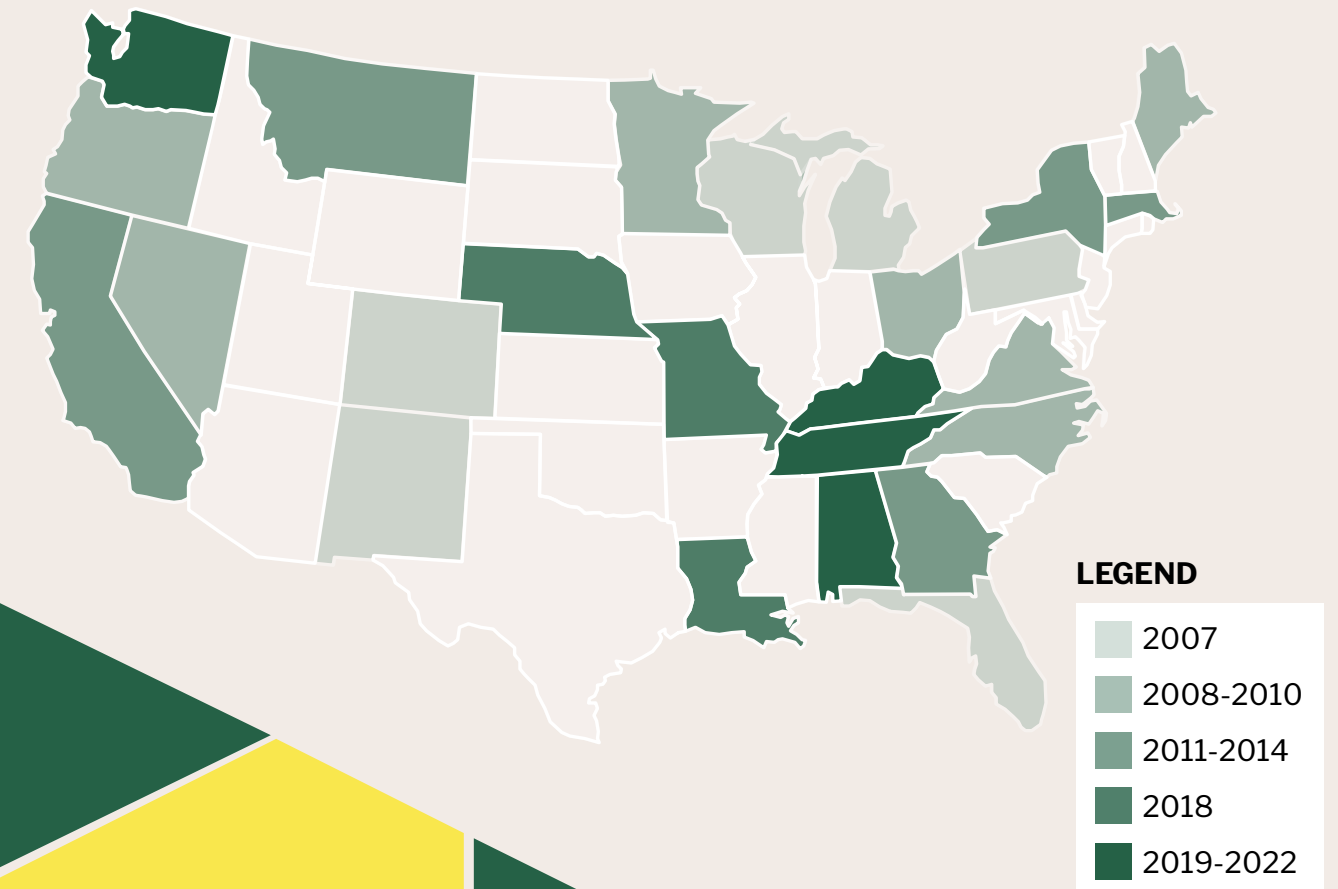
State Voices has regranted funds totaling over \$45 million to State Tables and partners since 2008.

Nearly \$28 million of those funds was regranted between 2020 and 2023, an unprecedented increase in moving money to the ground in states.



HOW WE'VE GROWN

The presence of State Voices has grown from six states in 2007 to 25 states as of 2023.





With Expertise in Civic Engagement, Civic Access, and Civic Representation, State Voices offers capacity building in:

- DATA
- TOOLS
- SUPPORT

DATA

The data field isn't renowned for its multiracial leadership. State Voices took on this challenge, developing certifications, hiring pipelines, mentorship and training for BIPOC organizers interested in becoming data practitioners. Today, **75% of State Voices data staff across the network identify as women and/or BIPOC leaders.**

State Voices offers a **leadership development pipeline** for organizers to become data and technology practitioners. This pipeline includes:

Data Certification Program

The State Voices Data Certification Program VAN gives organizers a training course in basic VAN administration.

Hiring, training, and mentorship of data staffers

We support State Tables in hiring, training and mentoring data staffers, finding the right people for the jobs and then providing the peer-to-peer learning, skill-sharing, training, and convenings to ensure their success.

On-the-ground staffing

When data capacity is tight or missing at State Tables, we place experienced data staffers on the ground. That way, State Tables don't miss a beat as they work to effect progressive change.

We also offer:

- **Resources**, like the [2023-2024 Tools and Tech Guide](#), which offers insights into the latest tools and tech vendors for advocacy and organizing.
- **Sophisticated Forecasting**, which helps state leaders understand and predict the landscapes for change.
- **Data and Technology Infrastructure**, which empowers states and communities with a suite of civic data and technology tools to use in pursuit of a better democracy.
- **Movement-Owned Technology**, a longer-term strategy to ensure that data and technology tools are cooperatively owned by the organizers and campaigners who rely upon them to secure victories.
- [State Voices Dispatch](#), which delivers person-to-person SMS messaging as an incredibly effective tool for civic engagement, engineered and operated by data practitioners who are Black, Indigenous and people of color.
- **Changemaker Skills Camps**, a practical training intensive at the intersection of technology, operations and digital practice for progressive, nonprofit professionals.

TOOLS

Through the State Voices Data & Technology Department and Tools for All, State Voices provides civic engagement data, technology and expertise to over 800 national and state-based social change organizations in every state. State Voices supports The State Voices Digital Tools Suite; it has relationships with each of the vendors and costs vary depending on the tool.



**BUILDING CAPACITY FOR A
MULTIRACIAL DEMOCRACY**

SUPPORT

State Voices is the support system for State Tables, and this support is **led by relational, trusted, experienced staff** – many of who previously worked at State Tables. This leads to **powerful, trusted partnerships** that build capacity to take on multiracial base-building, long-term governing power, narrative shifts, increased civic participation and winning change that affects our lives.

State Voices offers **capacity building partnership** in **Development and Fundraising, Issue and Electoral Organizing, Communications, State Capacity Building, and Policy**.

DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDRAISING

In addition to moving regranting resources to State Tables quickly and efficiently, State Voices helps State Tables:

- **Fundraise**, identifying and building relationships with funders, as well as partnering with State Tables to raise resources for their tables and their states.
- **Hire and strengthen development capacity**. Through programs like Project PowerUp, State Voices helps State Tables hire development staff and offer one-on-one coaching, peer-to-peer mentorship, and training to ensure their success.

ISSUE AND ELECTORAL ORGANIZING

State Voices supports voter registration, voter education, get-out-the-vote mobilization, and issue advocacy campaigns within the State Voices Affiliated Network. This includes:

- **Digital organizing**, with a focus on conducting text and phone campaigns to increase voter turnout ahead of elections.
- **On-the-ground staffing**, placing experienced campaign staff on-the-ground in states to provide leadership tactical support to train staff/volunteers.
- **Coaching, partnership and support** on issues ranging from field strategy to the coordination of voter contact efforts, as well as approaches that successfully register and engage BIPOC voters and voters from suppressed/marginalized communities.
- **Resources, tools and trainings** on critical topics related to voter registration, GOTV and more. Recent trainings have included: GOTV Mobilization, Voter Registration/Quality Control, Legislative Advocacy Series (offered in partnership with State Voices' Policy department), and Ballot Initiative Series with a focus on Reproductive Freedom.

Photo Source: Missouri Organizing and Voter Engagement Collaborative



COMMUNICATIONS

State Voices works with state tables to advance powerful narratives that illustrate what it takes to advance a multiracial democracy. This includes:

- Hosting the **State Voices Communications Choir**, which offers peer-to-peer connection, strategizing and learning for communications leadership at state tables. State Voices strategizes on common issues together, and develop communications calendars and content templates for usage across states. State Voices also hosts Buddies Across Tables, which pairs communications leaders from different state tables, and State Voices runs a Slack channel, monthly calls and an annual retreat for communications leadership within states.
- **Hiring and strengthening communications capacity.** Through programs like Project Power Up, we help State Tables hire communications staff and offer one-on-one coaching, peer-to-peer mentorship, and training to ensure their success.
- **Sourcing, pitching and placing stories** in state and national media outlets, including placements in [Essence](#), [Truthout](#) and [Rewire News Group](#).
- Providing **on-call partnership** in narrative strategy, communications plan/campaign development, content creation and design support (print, web and data visualization), message research and development, and crisis communications (via a retained crisis communications partner).
- Collaborating with State Tables and survey research experts to conduct original **research** on key topics, such as misinformation and disinformation within states.
- Managing a **listserv** and **resource library** that provides access to planning materials, toolkits and templates on communications topics, including audience identification/development, communications planning, narrative and messaging strategy, digital benchmarks, and press/media landscapes within states.
- **Social media shout-outs**, which amplify the work of state tables via social media.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR A MULTIRACIAL DEMOCRACY

STATE CAPACITY BUILDING

We build healthy, sustainable organizational infrastructure across the State Voices Affiliated Network by providing strategic partnership and support to 25+ State Tables and affiliates. This includes:

- **Assessing overall organizational health**, including communications, fundraising, finance, governance, and overall organizational health.
- **Capacity funding and technical support (multiyear)**, through initiatives like Project Power Up, which provided two-year funding and technical support to a cohort of State Tables to hire, train, and retain full-time professional core-capacity staff positions in communications and/or fundraising.
- **Facilitating critical conversations** within tables and coalitions.
- **Hiring, mentoring, professional development and training leaders of State Tables**, as well as offering **one-to-one coaching**.
- **Intake** of organizational needs, serving as a one-stop resource for State Tables to access other functions of State Voices (e.g. policy, data, etc.).
- **Leadership transition support**, helping State Tables navigate leadership and staff transitions, including through **on-the-ground staffing** that places experienced executive leadership with State Tables to provide leadership and hiring partnership during transitions.
- **On-call partnership** in culture, HR, finance, governance, management, organizational and program strategy, and crisis management.
- **Peer-to-peer learning, training and workshops** on key organizational development topics (e.g. organizational and program development, culture, finance, fundraising, hiring, HR, management, operations, program planning, strategic planning, etc.) through monthly state director calls, state director convenings, strategy summit convenings and a Slack channel for table leadership.
- **Strategy planning**, overseeing, managing and supporting the strategy planning process for all State Tables.
- Access to **organizational development resources**, including templates, toolkits and sample policies.



Photo Source:
Massachusetts
Voter Table

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR A MULTIRACIAL DEMOCRACY

POLICY

We provide policy support on voting rights advocacy, election protection, Census, redistricting, voter registration verification and more to 23 states. This includes:

- **Direct state support**, giving each State Table a point of contact who offers expertise in strategic partnership, campaign and program planning, coalition management, issue resolution processes and other best practices.
- **Policy and legal research**, conducting quick-turn research (e.g. compiling a list of litigation filed after Georgia passed SB 202).
- **Materials development**, drafting and reviewing policy materials such as fact sheets, legislation, resolutions, talking points and testimony.
- **Resource development**, providing on-demand and shared resources such as best practices, toolkits and resources sharing from national partners.
- **Peer-to-peer learning**, convening calls and workgroups to discuss elements of policy work, including approaches, best practices, common challenges and lessons learned. We also present on policy topics to State Tables and lead workgroups that bring together policy staff to work on shared challenges.
- **Training and workshops** for State Tables, which has recently included State Legislative Process 101, Communications Advocacy & Media Strategies (in partnership with Communications), Grassroots Advocacy & Mobilization Strategies, and a Legislative Advocacy Strategy Series. We also run compliance training (e.g. c3 vs. c4 advocacy) and disability access training.
- **On-the-ground staffing**, placing experienced policy leadership on-the-ground in states to replace or add capacity at critical moments.
- Participation in **national workgroups and State Tables**, amplifying the work of State Tables and sharing information back with state leadership. Recently, we have participated in the **Voter Purge Threat Table** (helping State Tables flag removals from voter rolls), the **State Democracy Amplification Calls** (elevating state democracy action alerts to national organizations with strong state memberships), and the **Election Protection Coalition** (connecting states with cutting-edge data, tools and resources).



Photo Source:
CivicTN

“THE TOOLS WERE REALLY HELPFUL! ULTIMATELY, IF YOU CAN SAVE ME 10-20 HOURS BY PROVIDING A TEMPLATE OR GUIDANCE ON A THORNY ISSUE, THAT’S TIME I CAN REDIRECT TO OTHER SUBJECTS THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN PUT ON THE BACK BURNER OTHERWISE.”

State Table leader

PARTNERSHIPS

The movement for healthy, multiracial democracy is a collaborative one. Following are some of the national partners with whom State Voices partners to advance advocacy and civic technology:

18by Vote

ACCESS

ACE (Action for the Climate Emergency)

Advancement Project

Alliance for Youth Organizing

America Votes

Analyst Institute

Arab American Institute

Asian Americans Advancing Justice

Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote

The Ballot Initiative Strategy Center

Black Voters Matter Fund – Capacity Building Institute

Bolder Advocacy

Brennan Center for Justice

Campaign Legal Center (CLC)

The Center for Popular Democracy

Color of Change

Common Cause

Community Change

Demos

Equality Federation

Fair Count

Fair Elections Center

Faith in Action

Gamaliel

Institute for Asian Pacific American Leadership & Advancement (IAPALA)

International Planned Parenthood Federation

Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

LCV Education Fund

The Leadership Conference

League of Women Voters

Mi Familia Vota

The Movement Cooperative

MoveOn

NAACP

NALEO Education Fund

National Congress of American Indians

National Disability Rights Network

NEO Philanthropy State Infrastructure Fund

Nonprofit VOTE

Re:power

Prison Policy Initiative

Protect Democracy

The Public Interest Network

The Sentencing Project

Southern Coalition for Social Justice

Stand Up America

United We Dream

Verified Voting

Voter Participation Center

Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC)

Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

WANT TO HELP?

State Voices works year-round to break down barriers to voting and advocate for access to resources. We invest in BIPOC leadership and organizing, advocating for a democracy where we can all thrive and live in our full dignity. We do this to eradicate white supremacy and oppressive systems, and to create equitable systems and a true democracy in their place. The end result? A democracy in which regular people have a say in the public decisions affecting their lives.

Investing holistically in state-based capacity building is one of the most powerful ways to support state leaders working tirelessly to protect and expand our rights and participation in civic life.

State Tables use State Voices' capacity building offerings at the same rate in non-election years and in election years. In non-election years, State Tables invest in the long-term health of their work, pursuing organizational development, strategic planning, staffing plans, forecasting and professional development/skills building. In election years, State Tables seek direct partnership and support in data, technology, on-the-ground staffing and coaching. **To learn more about our work, visit statevoices.org.**

To support our work, please contact giving@statevoices.org. We'll work with you to develop a giving plan, working together to build a multiracial democracy that allows all of us to thrive and live in our full dignity.



Photo Source: The Power Coalition for Equity and Justice