



THE CENTER FOR

Election Science

Annual Impact Report
2025



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VISION

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

MISSION

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

*Follow us on social
media*



Letter from the Board Chair

Dear Fellow Reformer,

We're still here! Despite these turbulent, unpredictable times, I am joyful and proud to report that CES continued to make progress in 2025.

Last year, despite an increasingly troubled environment for nonprofits, CES didn't just survive—we continued to advance our mission steadily and smartly, with investments in relationships that will continue to endure, grow, and bear fruit. This year, multiple American politicians running for office—at the state and national level—have publicly come out in support of approval voting. Approval voting was used to elect a state senator. These are real successes resulting from steady advocacy by CES.

As always, I'm grateful for CES's diverse community of supporters. Thank you for your continued investment in the long-term work of fundamental reform. Despite the turmoil, panic, and distractions of the world around us, you continue to invest in systemic reform. You recognize that approval voting is the real solution—for these times, or for any time. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.



MICHAEL RUVINSKY

Board Chair

The Center for Election Science

“Thank you for your continued investment in the long-term work of fundamental reform.”

Letter from the Chief Executive Officer

To our supporters and partners,

This past year has been a defining chapter for the Center for Election Science. I have watched our movement evolve from a focused academic argument into a powerful, national engine for systemic change. We aren't just talking about better math anymore; we are building a more resilient democracy.

Our primary mission this year was to bridge the gap between technical superiority and public name recognition. Through targeted education and data-driven storytelling, we have significantly increased the national understanding of Approval Voting.

More importantly, we have taken a firm stand against outdated narratives. We've successfully dismantled long-standing talking points used to stall voting reform, demonstrating through rigorous analysis that the common "fears" cited by critics simply aren't supported by the data. By replacing myths with evidence, we've cleared the path for Approval Voting to be seen as the practical, elegant solution it is.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this year has been the deepening of our political alliances. I was personally thrilled to connect with a diverse array of political figures who, after engaging with our research, have become true champions of the cause.

Perhaps our most humbling achievement was the distinct honor of drafting an amendment to the NAACP State's Voting Rights Act national resolution. This work ensures that alternative voting methods—specifically those that empower disenfranchised communities—are now a core part of their research and advocacy.

Whether in person or virtually, our team seized every opportunity to connect with you. We traveled across the country to share our work, listen to your concerns, and build a grassroots foundation that can't be ignored. These connections fueled a year of "firsts," including:

- The First Secure Internet Voting Special Election: Successfully utilizing Approval Voting in a Utah Senate Race.
- National Resolution Integration: Solidifying our place in the broader civil rights movement.

Thank you for standing with us as we rewrite the rules of the game to ensure every voice is heard.

In Solidarity,



NINA TAYLOR

Chief Executive Officer
The Center for Election Science

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NEW GRANT SUBMSSION PROCESS

In 2025, the Center for Election Science strengthened its institutional fundraising capacity by building a more structured and strategic grant development process. This effort was designed to ensure consistency in messaging, expand the organization's institutional funding pipeline, and position CES to engage a broader range of philanthropic partners supporting democracy reform.

A key first step was the creation of a comprehensive internal Language Bank. This document serves as a central reference for CES's core messaging, research summaries, program descriptions, and policy framing around approval voting and electoral reform. By standardizing language across proposals, reports, and donor communications, the Language Bank allows staff to efficiently produce grant materials while maintaining clear and consistent messaging aligned with CES's mission and strategic priorities.

Building on this foundation, CES also formalized its institutional prospecting process. Staff conducted research to identify foundations, donor collaboratives, and philanthropic funds whose priorities intersect with democracy reform, civic participation, and institutional resilience. This prospecting process helped CES move beyond opportunistic grant seeking toward a more intentional pipeline of potential partners, including both traditional democracy funders and foundations focused on governance, civic engagement, and social equity.

To support this work, CES developed internal systems for tracking grant opportunities, proposal deadlines, and funder engagement. This included organizing proposal templates, budgets, and supporting materials so they could be easily adapted for different funders. The organization also began maintaining clearer records of funder conversations and submission outcomes, allowing CES to refine its approach over time and strengthen follow-up with prospective partners.

Together, these improvements have laid the groundwork for a more sustainable and scalable fundraising program. By investing in clearer messaging, stronger prospecting, and more organized proposal development, CES has positioned itself to pursue institutional funding opportunities more strategically while continuing to expand the reach and impact of its work in election reform.

VIRTUAL EDUCATION



In 2025, CES reached hundreds of advocates through an expanded virtual programming slate, including a Summer Training Series session on legislator engagement led by Pinnacle Strategies, a Learning Hour on Proportional Representation with long-time CES collaborators Felix Sargent and Clay Shentrup, and an Op-Ed Writing Training with attorney Jean-Paul Ciardullo that had immediate real-world results. All trainings have been incorporated into evergreen toolboxes for continued advocate use, cementing CES's role as a coordinator and leader in the space. Capping the year, CES hosted its first-ever Civic Impact Summit: The Path to 2026, which drew 250+ registrants for a full-day convening of organizers, researchers, and movement leaders, with the full recording now available on YouTube for ongoing reach.

Top 3 Webinars

1

Civic Impact Summit: The Road to 2026

2

How to Speak to Your Legislator, featuring Pinnacle Strategies

3

How to Write an Op-Ed with attorney Jean-Paul Ciardullo

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

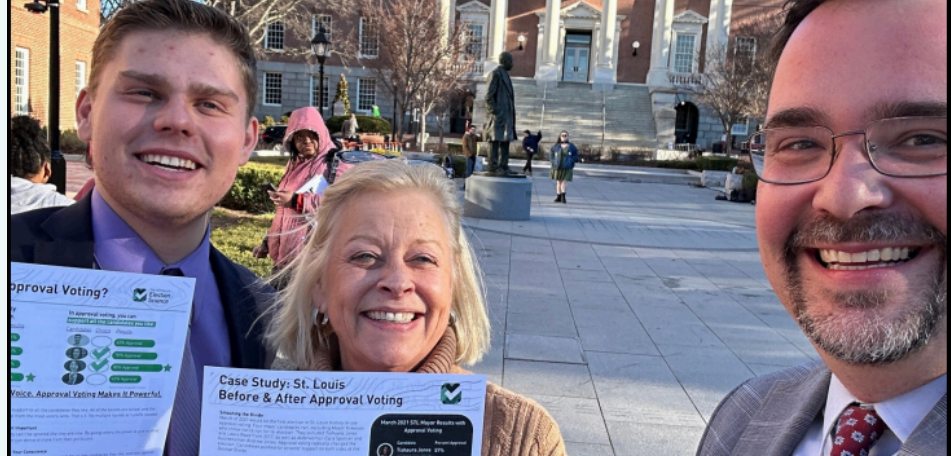
In 2025, years of steady legislative advocacy produced a historic result: for the first time anywhere in the country, approval voting was used to elect someone to statewide office. Voters in Utah's District 11 used the method to fill a vacant state senate seat in a Special Replacement Election, a breakthrough made possible by CES's sustained investment in relationships with legislators and local partners, most notably our partnership with Utah Approves. Their targeted education campaigns had already secured endorsements from all 29 Utah County Clerks. That foundation of trust and knowledge, built legislator by legislator and conversation by conversation, is what allowed CES to identify and move quickly on the District 11 opportunity, turning a political moment into a democratic pilot with national implications.

The election itself was a proof of concept on two fronts. Voters selected their new senator through a secure internet voting platform that allowed every participant to confirm their ballot was accurately recorded, pairing electoral innovation with radical transparency. The results demonstrated that approval voting is not only viable but inspiring, offering a credible model for communities across the country seeking greater representation and accountability from their elected officials.

In Maryland, 2025 marked the return of a critical ally. Senator Mike McKay of Western Maryland, who championed CES's efforts in 2024, came back to sponsor Senate Bill 996, which would have authorized counties to adopt approval voting for executive and legislative offices. Working alongside lobbyist partners Pinnacle Strategies, CES conducted an intensive 90-day session effort: over 20 individualized legislator meetings, 752 distributed documents ranging from fact sheets to testimony packets, and active tracking of 91 election-related bills. CES also built new bipartisan relationships with Delegate Vogel, Delegate Fair, Delegate Griffith, and Senator Simonaire. While SB996 was not heard in committee due to the legislature's focus on a historically difficult budget year, the session produced a meaningful milestone: CES secured a letter of interest from Cumberland, a municipality in Senator McKay's Western Maryland district, signaling growing local appetite for reform. Notably, multiple ranked-choice voting bills also failed during the session, reinforcing approval voting's position as the simpler, more auditable alternative. Additionally, our education efforts on the benefits of Risk-Limiting Audits led to a bill being signed into law by Governor Wes. Moore.

As 2025 drew to a close, momentum was building in both states. Bills and plans for 2026 were already underway in Maryland and Utah, with exciting developments on the horizon that promise to build on the hard-won successes of this landmark year.





A HISTORIC WIN FOR VOTING REFORM

Building on our commitment to systemic equity, our recent efforts with the NAACP marks a historic milestone for the voting rights movement. We were deeply honored to collaborate on an amendment to the State's Voting Rights Act. This work integrates alternative voting methods into the NAACP's formal research agenda, ensuring that the quest for racial equity in the democratic process includes a thorough investigation of how systems like Approval Voting can empower marginalized voices. By embedding these methods into one of the nation's most influential civil rights frameworks, we are moving beyond mere advocacy and into the realm of long-term institutional reform.

This collaboration reached its pinnacle with the passage of the first national civil rights resolution specifically calling out Approval Voting as a critical tool for study and implementation. This resolution acknowledges that "winner-take-all" and "choose-only-one" systems often dilute the political efficacy of minority communities. By formalizing a call to explore alternative models, the NAACP has signaled that the future of the Voting Rights Act must include modernizing the mechanics of the ballot itself. We are immensely proud to see our data-driven approach used to support the NAACP's mission, bridging the gap between election science and the fundamental fight for representative justice.



ADVANCING THE SCIENCE OF DEMOCRACY

Our research department reached new heights this year, anchoring our advocacy in rigorous, peer-reviewed evidence. A primary highlight was Dr. Whitney Hua's presentation at the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Annual Meeting, where she shared our latest findings with the broader academic community. This scholarly engagement is vital to ensuring that Approval Voting is recognized not just as a theory, but as a scientifically validated tool for better governance.

Complementing this academic outreach, Felix Sargent released a definitive analysis of cast voter records from the 2025 St. Louis mayoral election. His research provided the empirical proof we needed to silence critics: the data confirmed that voters did not "bullet vote" (selecting only one candidate). Instead, St. Louis voters embraced the flexibility of the system, proving that when given the choice, the electorate seeks to express a broader range of support.

Beyond our internal team, we have fostered prestigious academic partnerships to deepen our understanding of voter behavior. This year, we were proud to collaborate with the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University. Through this partnership, two talented student scholars joined forces with CES to analyze a massive dataset from 7,500 registered voters. This deep dive explored the direct correlation between electoral design and the qualitative voter experience, specifically looking at how Approval Voting impacts participation rates and voter satisfaction. By integrating these future policy leaders into our work, we are ensuring that the next generation of civil servants is equipped with the data to champion more inclusive voting systems.

To cement our commitment to academic excellence, the CES Board of Directors officially passed a research motion to establish the Steven J. Brams Distinguished Researcher Awards. This initiative allows us to honor the immense legacy of Dr. Brams, a co-inventor of Approval Voting and a titan in the field of game theory and political science. By honoring Dr. Brams and incentivizing new scholarship through these awards, we are building a permanent infrastructure for election science research. This ensures that the pursuit of a fairer ballot remains a rigorous, celebrated, and ever-evolving field of study for decades to come.



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