

Scaling

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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MISSION

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

VISION

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

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I'm excited to share with you that we're moving into the next phase of our vision. With approval voting now implemented in multiple cities, we achieved what was once a dream. Now it's time to scale. Together, we're going to take the spark that we've created and ignite a movement. We're going to bring approval voting to voters all across the United States.

Last year we celebrated the successful execution of approval voting in St. Louis, the second city to use it following Fargo, ND. Following its adoption, approval voting freed the city of St. Louis from the limitations of their old voting method, empowering citizens to vote more freely in elections that were previously marred by issues like vote splitting.

This past year, thanks to your support, we hired our Director of Applied Data & Research, Whitney Hua. With the beginnings of a research department, we launched a landmark polling project that gave us unprecedented and invaluable insights to guide future campaigns. Our new trove of data shows that voters across the country support approval voting.

Our organizer and training program is being replicated in dozens of states. We're turning local advocates into activists. Because of this, we're seeing a new campaign in Seattle, the 18th largest US city, in 2022.

All these developments have put CES in a position to scale rapidly to meet the challenge in the coming years. Approval voting is moving from theory to reality. But we won't achieve systemic change going city-by-city alone. We're preparing a transition to state-by-state.

Our strategic plan for 2022 and beyond will carry the approval voting movement across the country, as we pursue statewide victories that will empower millions of voters.

I'm excited for you to read this report, and I remain grateful for your ongoing commitment to this essential effort. None of this progress is possible without people like you. I look forward to us growing together as we improve our democracy.

With Great Devotion,



AARON HAMLIN
Executive Director
The Center for Election Science

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Scaling for the Future: A 3-part plan

In recent years, The Center for Election Science has been proud to put approval voting on the map with our victories in Fargo and St. Louis. To date, more than 400,000 people have benefited from their city using approval voting. During those campaigns we had a singular objective, run a public education campaign to raise awareness about this important reform.

In 2021, we watched the successful implementation of approval voting in the biggest American city yet, and the results support our theory of change. Because of approval voting, St. Louis—a city beset by a history of vote-splitting—held a successful primary election in which two candidates with broad support advanced to a runoff. History was later made with the election of Mayor Tishaura Jones, the city's first Black woman elected to the office. Post-election polling showed that voters overwhelmingly supported this reform.

This past year was also a year of aggressive planning and preparation. To scale our operations and build a nationwide movement, we focused on meeting three critical needs:

- Establishing approval voting chapters with the skills necessary to take advantage of opportunities in their community.
- Building a community of organizers who provide support to one another, yielding a self-sustaining movement that makes progress from the bottom up.
- Developing fresh evidence and polling that guides our future strategy.

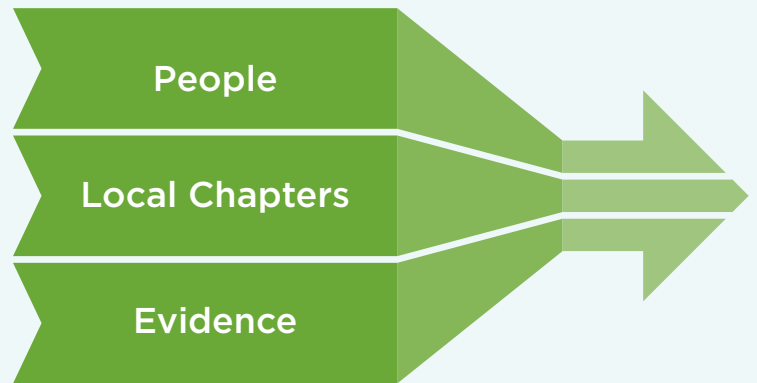
Throughout the year we achieved measurable success in all three of these focus areas.

Locally led chapters like California Approves, Seattle Approves, and Utah Approves were established as official organizations and have begun independent efforts to bring approval voting to their community. Many other chapters are developing along the same lines.

We executed our first six-week training program for a cohort of our chapter leaders who have now formed a national community of self-sustaining activists working in communities across America.

Our new Director of Applied Data & Research successfully implemented a national polling project, testing voter attitudes about approval voting in the 21 states where ballot initiatives are legal. This dataset represents the largest body of evidence ever collected about voter attitudes toward approval voting. Overall, polling for states nationwide shows support ranging from 65-75%.

In 2021, we made significant strides to put these foundational elements in place so that we can rapidly scale to meet the challenge and opportunities.





Seattle Approves: A Scalable Model

After our initial victories in Fargo and St. Louis, it became clear that locally-led campaigns were the most efficient means to spread the approval voting movement at an aggressive rate.

Independent chapters could lead local campaigns while CES provides resources and strategic support. Since the inception of the chapter program, we have received more than 240 chapter requests. We have chapters from California to Massachusetts at various levels of development. Each jurisdiction presents unique challenges. But the leaders of Seattle Approves provide a scalable model that will carry us into future campaigns.

Committed Local Leaders with Local Awareness

Logan Bowers and Troy Davis have long been members of the CES community. They have deep roots in Emerald City. Logan ran for the Seattle city council in 2018, campaigning on housing issues. Troy, one of his long-time friends, helped run his campaign. Bolstered by local roots, experience in the community and a network of relationships, we quickly saw that their chapter leadership was well-suited to lead a ballot measure campaign. As locals on the ground, Logan and Troy have spearheaded structuring the campaign. This included drafting the initiative, fundraising, and finding volunteers and contractors to assist with campaign activities. Our success depends on local leaders dedicated to change. People who know the local power structure and potential political allies or barriers to avoid. Thanks to local leaders like Logan and Troy, Seattle Approves is in a prime position to get their initiative on the ballot, to win the campaign, and to support the future implementation of approval voting.

Bringing in data, legal & financial resources

The Center for Election Science doesn't direct our chapter's actions. We support our partners before, during, and after a campaign. We aim to reduce the barriers between activists and action. We use our national size and experience to help activists overcome the initial stages of campaign groundwork that are often overwhelming for the average organizer.

When asked about its partnership with CES, Seattle Approves co-leader, Troy Davis said:

"The Center for Election Science has been a valuable partner. Without CES, an approval voting initiative would still be in an idea phase. Thanks to their financial and organizational support, we have the information necessary to move forward. We couldn't do this without them."



A partnership for now and the future

Back in 2020, like most American cities, Seattle had a few committed but disparate advocates of approval voting. So CES embarked on a campaign to change that.

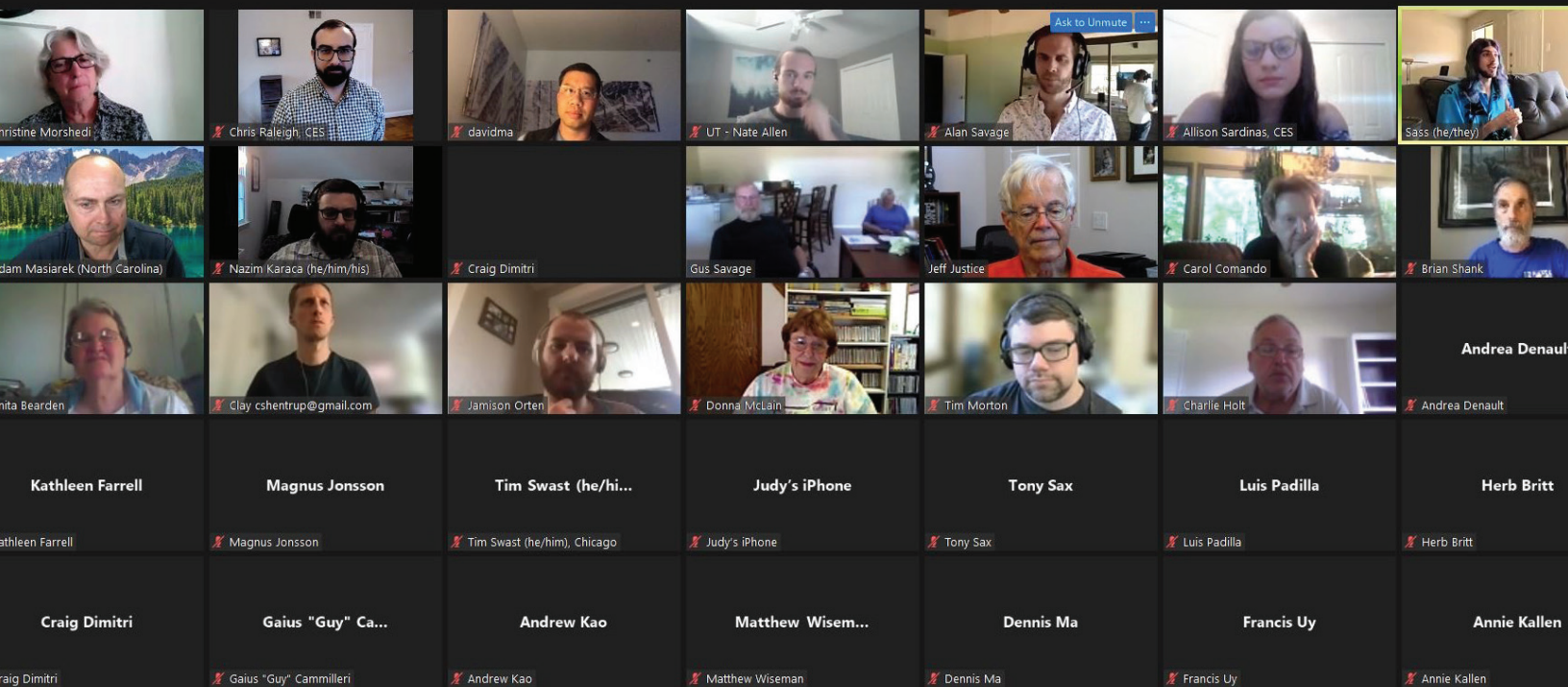
By taking the steps to bring these people together in a chapter, we provided a space for this conversation to take place and for relationships to be built. Week over week, more activists joined their Thursday hangouts on Discord, and an activist-led campaign seemed more possible.

In essence, we see our job as serving as a conduit through which local activism leads. Now that Seattle Approves has launched a campaign, CES will continue to contribute to the cause with a public education campaign that informs voters with accurate information about approval voting. CES will also stand ready to support Seattle Approves should any challenges arise after the initiative is passed, as we have in other cities.

Seattle Approves has provided a model for future success, and we are excited to follow its example in more jurisdictions in the future.

The locally-led campaign team at Seattle Approves submits the official initiative petition to the City Clerk





Members of our first nationwide organizer training cohort meet on Zoom to collaborate and learn new skills

Building Our Network: Training Activists to Lead

For a growing organization like CES, the members of our community are our biggest asset. As we scale and support multiple campaigns simultaneously, it will be the local activists who carry the work forward. Building a campaign and passing an initiative is not an easy task. Success requires numerous skills, such as communication, campaign planning, and organizing to turn an idea into reality.

One of the essential aspects of our partnership with our chapters is to provide resources that support their work. When looking at our nascent chapter program, we realized that would be a huge value add to bolster their capability. That's why we launched our first official six-week training program last summer. Through the program, we equipped some of our most committed community members with the skills necessary to turn their advocacy into activism.

Beginning in May we brought our inaugural cohort together over many zoom meetings to learn the fundamentals of organizing. Creating change requires a mixture of skills, including motivational storytelling, relationship and network building, and campaign planning. Every module focused on an essential part of building a winning movement:



As an example, our trainees learned how to tell their “story of self”, “story of us”, and “story of now” an effective communications tactic that delivers the context for why people are working toward change as individuals and as a group. One participant, Nate Allen, had this to say about the training modules, “The training program was a great opportunity to bring approval voting advocates together for an exchange of ideas and to learn core tactics for the field. I learned a lot about organizing—from telling my story to planning key events.”

Unlike other organizations that train activists for individual careers, we have bigger plans for our initial cohort of trained organizers. Each of our 12 has become part of our new National Leadership Council, which will support the activities of other chapters across the country. In August, the council held its first National Open House, their capstone project, to discuss approval voting and their place within the movement. The Leadership Council will take the lead on future training and gives CES another medium through which we can scale for future opportunities. We’re very excited about the future of this program.

Celebrating Success in St. Louis: The Voters Loved Approval Voting

In March 2021, voters in St. Louis used approval voting for the first time. Our post-election polling, partnership with Change Research, shows that the voters were overwhelmingly positive about their new voting method. According to the poll, approval voting was simple, it changed the campaign for the better, and it allowed voters to express their true preferences.

POLLSTER: Change Research

SAMPLE: 411 Registered Voters

DATES: March 3-7, 2021



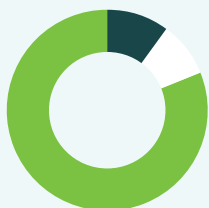
YES



NO

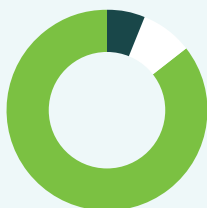


NO OPINION



81%

**APPRECIATED THE
SIMPLICITY OF
APPROVAL VOTING**



84%

**APPROVAL VOTING
WAS EASY TO USE**



60%

**VOTERS WANT TO
EXPAND THE USE OF
APPROVAL VOTING**



67%

**VOTERS APPRECIATED
BEING ABLE TO EXPRESS
THEIR PREFERENCES
SIMPLY, WITHOUT
WORRYING ABOUT
ELECTABILITY**



49%

**VOTERS THOUGHT THAT
APPROVAL VOTING
MADE THE TONE OF THE
CAMPAIGN MUCH MORE
POSITIVE**



55%

**VOTERS THINK THAT
APPROVAL VOTING
COULD INCREASE
INTEREST IN VOTING
MORE GENERALLY**

Donor Spotlight:

Jon Summers

For Jonathan Summers, his first interaction with the American electoral system brought him face to face with a familiar story. As he analyzed the potential field of candidates, there was someone with whom he shared values and for whom he would enthusiastically cast a ballot if given a chance. Unfortunately, that candidate didn't belong to a major political party, and the familiar electability narrative that choose-one voting enforces came into play. Eventually, Jonathan was forced to choose between the "lesser of two evils" and left the experience feeling that he was denied authentic engagement with the electoral system and stuck with a ballot that didn't communicate his preference. This experience helped shape his interest in voting reform and the work of The Center for Election Science.

As an actuary in his professional life, the logic of mathematics is used to assess risk and financial implications. Math is often the key to solving problems. He was interested in our foundational analysis of voting methods. Could math and data solve the paradoxical elements of our elections and government? Fundamentally, Jonathan shares our belief that the voting experience can be much better for everyone. He wants a voting experience where everyone is excited to go to the polls to cast their vote for candidates they truly support.

Like CES, Jonathan has embraced approval voting as a genuinely democratic solution to systemic reform. Not from a partisan lens but rather from the perspective of accuracy and fairness. His goal is to democratize our elections, where results and outcomes reflect the diversity of opinions in the electorate.

"I'm not looking for candidates who are always, 'middle of the road.' I am looking for elections that reflect the true will of the people."

Reflecting on our victories in Fargo and St. Louis, Jonathan appreciates the agile nature of CES and our commitment to a "bottom-up" approach to change through our chapter network. "CES is a people-driven organization, building a people-driven movement to democratize our elections."

Thanks to his support, we will continue to push for reform while testing our assumptions. We remain a research organization driven by a data-backed strategy. As Jonathan says, "CES should remain open-minded and agnostic, and continue testing everything."



"I'm not looking for candidates who are always, 'middle of the road.' I am looking for elections that reflect the true will of the people."

Board Spotlight:

John Hegeman

Like many of us, John Hegeman, our newest board member, understands that America is at a critical moment in our politics. Not in the typical terms of the two-way partisan battle, but in the future function of our institutions. The desire to see a systemic change that improves the incentives driving our electoral system inspired him to join the CES board in 2020.

John first began to consider questions about our electoral system as a Ph.D. student studying economics at Stanford. It struck him that an enormous amount of effort was put into electing specific candidates, but relatively little attention was given to the system by which those candidates are elected. “It seemed to me that a lot of the undesirable behavior we’ve seen from candidates can be attributed to the incentives that partisan primaries and plurality voting create.”

This misalignment of goals and outcomes isn’t entirely surprising given the combination of choose-one voting and partisan primaries. Partisan primaries using plurality voting create the incentive to appeal only to your strongest supporters, which may be all you need to win.

“Politicians from both parties are focused on appealing to the more extreme members of their party, partly because of how our voting method works. It increases the likelihood for dysfunction in our national politics.”

This question of incentives led John to join the approval voting movement. He believes that approval voting, coupled with other electoral reforms like open primaries, can create an electoral system that is easier for voters to navigate, while changing the incentives that influence candidate behavior.

His belief that approval voting and other electoral reforms can help us overcome this challenging era in American politics made him a perfect addition to the board of directors. Like the staff, John sees the members of the CES community as the vanguard of political reform. “With each donation or action we collectively take to advance the movement, we increase our chances of scaling to the national level and delivering reform at all levels of government.”

John also serves as the Vice President of Advertising at Meta.



“With each donation or action we collectively take to advance the movement, we increase our chances of scaling to the national level and delivering reform at all levels of government.”

Donor List

\$100,000+

John Hegeman
Dylan Hirsch-Shell
Jeff Justice

\$10,000-\$99,999

Nathan Helm-Burger
Justine Metz
Paul Piong
Jon Roberts
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Megan Somogyi
Jonathan Summers

\$2,500-\$9,999

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In 2021, these companies helped our individual donors double their donations through matching gifts. Interested in making your gift go twice as far? **Contact Mike Piel**, Director of Philanthropy, for more information on employer matching gift programs.

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Victor Veitch
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Board members' names appear in italics.

The foundation of our fundraising is a strong internal commitment to our programs—demonstrated by the fact that 100% of our board financially supports our work to implement fairer, more representative voting methods.

• • •

Recurring donors' names appear in bold.

We owe our success to all of our donors, but especially those who have made a monthly commitment to empowering voters' with a better voting method. Thank you for being a part of the CES family.



FINANCIALS

TOTAL REVENUE
\$966,648.66

INDIVIDUAL PUBLIC SUPPORT
\$575,816.65

BOARD SUPPORT
\$272,502.07

CORPORATE SUPPORT
\$318.41

DIRECT PUBLIC GRANTS
\$53,338.79

FEDERAL LOAN
\$63,474.00

INVESTMENTS
\$986.05

MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE
\$212.69

TOTAL EXPENDITURES
\$1,255,410.59

RESEARCH ADVANCEMENT
\$34,488.79

PUBLIC OUTREACH
\$90,328.24

VOTING METHOD ADVANCEMENT
\$396,428.67

FUNDRAISING
\$200,166.48

ADMINISTRATIVE
\$101,264.18

STAFFING AND RELATED COSTS*
\$432,734.23

*Includes staff time appropriated to programs