



THE CENTER FOR  
**ElectionScience**

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We make **democracy** smart.

# A Year of **Transformation**

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



# Table of Contents

2

Letter from the Executive Director

3

A Year of Transformation

4

Making History: Fargo Leads the Way

6

On the World Stage: EA Global London

7

Speaking With One Voice: BC Symposium on Proportional Representation

8

Meetings of the Minds

9

A New Face for a New Era

10

Donor List

11

From Long-Shot to Big-Shot

12

Donor Spotlight

12

Financials

13

Board Spotlight

13

Staff + Board List



## MISSION

The Center for Election Science advances smarter electoral systems to improve social good in the public and private sectors by providing scholarship, election-related resources, and informed advocacy.

## VISION

Our vision is to replace problematic voting methods across all government and civic elections with methods that produce greater social benefit.

# Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Since we started, our vision has extended past the philosophical nature of voting methods. We've dreamed higher than that. We want people like you to be the beneficiaries of moving past our broken choose-one voting method. We don't need another thought experiment.

Last year was the year we made that happen. Last year we helped Fargo, ND—and its 120,000 residents—become the first US city to use approval voting. Our team (including two new staff and our contractor in Fargo) took your support and the \$600K grant from Open Philanthropy Project and converted that into this huge win. And we did it in less than a year. Charitable donations don't get much more responsive than that.

When our friends at Reform Fargo contacted us and we set forward in support, our campaign was considered a long shot. Then we won. The initiative passed by a nearly two-thirds margin. The people of Fargo alongside your support made that victory happen.

Still, we've heard little following the victory. So there's only one thing to do. Win more and win bigger. And that's where our sights will be over these important oncoming years. We hope that you'll accept our offer to join us on this amazing journey. It's time we made democracy smart.

With Great Devotion,



**AARON HAMLIN**  
Executive Director  
The Center for Election Science



**\$600K**

OPEN PHILANTHROPY  
PROJECT GRANT

+



**YOUR  
SUPPORT**

=



**1ST U.S.  
CITY**

TO USE  
APPROVAL  
VOTING



**FARGO,  
ND**



Thanks to supporters like you and Kathy, Fargo is on its way to building a better city government.

## A Year of Transformation

Our 2018 achievements wouldn't have been possible without the organizational growth afforded by our 2017 \$600K year-end grant from the Open Philanthropy Project. Prior to receiving this gift, our staff consisted of a part-time executive director who managed all operations and programs alongside our board of directors. But that all changed this year, when we were able to move our executive director, Aaron, to a full-time position and hire two new staff members—a director of philanthropy and a director of operations and programs.

With Aaron able to dedicate his full attention to CES, he was able to successfully lead our team by seeing the Fargo campaign through to victory and speaking on behalf of CES on the world stage at EA Global. Kirsten Elliott, our new director of philanthropy, has dedicated her time to building a donor-centered fundraising program that continually highlights how your investments are changing the world, one voter at a time. Caitlyn Alley Peña, our director of operations and programs, managed the project to rebuild and revitalize the CES website and worked closely with our campaign coordinator to ensure that Fargo was a success.

This additional staff support and organizational capacity has allowed CES to be more strategic in our operations, devote more resources to on-the-ground advocacy campaigns, and have an overall greater impact in the voting methods space. It is thanks to the support of you, our dedicated donors, that we were able to achieve so much this year.



# Making History: Fargo Leads the Way

November 6, 2018. CES executive director Aaron Hamlin is at the election night watch party in Fargo, along with education campaign coordinator Andrea Denault, Reform Fargo founder Jed Limke, and a slew of Approval Voting Army volunteers. In between games of bowling, the group keeps tabs on vote totals flowing in from across the city, waiting to find out if Fargo, ND will make history as the first US city to implement approval voting.

Results pour in and excitement rises in the bowling alley as the approval voting initiative wins precinct after precinct. Sometime around 11pm all of the results are in. The Approval Voting Army erupts in celebration—the approval voting initiative has passed in a landslide!

This was a monumental moment for US history. “From the beginning, it seemed like a nearly impossible task,” said Andrea. “But I was admittedly motivated by the fact that we would be making American history.”

Our successful campaign with Reform Fargo proved that we could overcome the odds to implement approval voting for the first time in our country. While not well known, reforms like this will reshape our political landscape.

As for the story of how Fargo came to be in this pioneering position, it’s hard to find a more heartening narrative.

Due to a series of elections rife with vote-splitting and questionable outcomes, the Fargo city commission created an elections task force to examine the city’s voting method. After reaching out to CES for expert advice and exploring options on their own, the task force recommended approval voting to the city commission.

When the city commission ignored the task force’s recommendation, Jed Limke, a member of the task force, formed Reform Fargo, a 501(c)(4). Reform Fargo then teamed up with CES to run an approval voting ballot initiative campaign in 2018.

CES hired Andrea Denault, an energetic North Dakota native and approval voting supporter, to execute the ground game for our education campaign. Andrea was at an advantage, having experience as both a grassroots organizer and a lobbyist within the North Dakota legislature. Her ability to motivate volunteers, build relationships, and convey the benefits of approval voting were essential to the success of this campaign.

THANKS TO YOUR  
DONATIONS



37,477

HOUSEHOLDS  
RECEIVED OUR  
POSTCARDS



673,641

PEOPLE SAW OUR  
DIGITAL ADS



59,594

PEOPLE WATCHED  
OUR VIDEO



153,000

PEOPLE HEARD OUR  
RADIO AD

THIS EFFECTIVE EDUCATION  
CAMPAIGN LED TO

120,000

CITIZENS WITH A BETTER  
VOTING METHOD!



Faithful volunteers out canvassing in support of approval voting

“I’m proud of the team that Jed and I put together and am grateful for CES’ faith in me.” Andrea said. “I believe in the need for election reform nationwide and am so glad I got to be part of this pivotal moment in time.”

The campaign was truly an all-hands-on-deck team effort. As Andrea noted, “We had to figure out how to explain to tens of thousands of people the benefits of an unheard of voting method and actually motivate them enough to vote for something that no other city in the US has ever done before.”

When the campaign began in May, approval voting was nearly unheard of in Fargo. By November, Fargo citizens made history by voting in favor of approval voting by a 64% margin.

This landslide victory couldn’t have been achieved without the support of our generous donors. Your funds helped secure passionate staff, volunteers, and partners who all worked tirelessly to make sure the message of approval voting reached as many Fargo voters as possible.

“We were incredibly fortunate to have had such a dedicated group of volunteers in Fargo,” said Aaron. “They knocked on hundreds of doors and made thousands of calls. It was really those supporters who ensured that every Fargo resident knew about approval voting.”

Thanks to your generous contributions, the first approval voting election in the US will take place in 2020. Thank you for helping empower Fargo citizens with a smarter democracy!

Don’t forget that the Fargo victory was set in motion by just one person deciding to take a stand when his elected representatives wouldn’t. We hope that Jed’s example can be an inspiration for you to take meaningful action toward implementing better voting methods, whether that means **contacting your legislators**, distributing educational materials in your community, or **donating to help CES run approval voting campaigns**. As you helped us prove in Fargo, the power lies in the hands of the people who are willing to take a stand. Will you join us?

# On the World Stage: EA Global London

**Effective altruism (EA)** focuses on using reasoning and evidence to maximize good. That could mean maximizing your charitable giving or deciding how to spend your skills and time. EA applies well to voting methods given that they're a simple solution that is both tractable and offers widespread societal impact.

Twice a year, EA hosts the EA Global conference where prominent figures in the movement are given a platform to talk about complex problems and the solutions that could create a major impact. This year, EA Global invited our executive director to give a talk about our choose-one voting method (plurality) at their conference in London. Speaking at EA Global gave us the opportunity to introduce the concept of alternative voting methods to a large, influential audience that is motivated to make the world a better place. Those are exactly the type of folks we need joining us in our advocacy for voting reform.

Interested  
in hearing  
Aaron's  
talk? You  
can check  
it out on  
YouTube.



In his talk, Aaron made the case that choose-one voting needs to be eradicated and replaced by a better voting system.

# Speaking With One Voice: BC Symposium on Proportional Representation

Election reform is a hot topic in Canada in general, and in British Columbia (BC) in particular. Nationally, Prime Minister Trudeau campaigned on the promise that 2015 would be “the last election under FPTP,” but he failed to deliver on that promise. In BC specifically, a number of voting methods referenda have been proposed over the last decade, but none have been successful.

In the fall of 2018, another referendum for proportional representation was scheduled, offering yet another opportunity for electoral reformers to push for a better ballot. For this referendum to be successful, it was important to create cohesion among activists and give them a platform to weigh in. To that end, The Center for Election Science raised funds for a symposium that brought together over 15 top experts and advocates from BC and around Canada. This meeting of electoral reformers consisted of two days of intensive discussion capped off by an interactive public forum. After about a week of intensively writing up our common resolutions, we submitted our final report to the BC Attorney General’s office responsible for running the referendum.

CES board member Jameson Quinn was an integral part of the planning and facilitation of the conference. “Coming to consensus is never easy,” he noted, “but it was a great group and it was absolutely worth it. Our comments are by far the most comprehensive of any that have been made public so far.”

Despite the fact that the proportional representation referendum in British Columbia eventually failed, CES is proud of our efforts. As Jameson pointed out, “We built bridges, both with other activist groups and with top experts, and we began to explore the issue of multi-winner election reform.”

Thanks to you, our generous donors, we were able to raise awareness of proportional representation and advance the needle toward a more representative government in British Columbia. To continue our advocacy efforts, we’ll need continued support from reform-minded citizens like you. If you’d like to help us have an even bigger impact, consider **making a gift to CES.**



“Coming to consensus is never easy but it was a great group and it was absolutely worth it.”

CES BOARD MEMBER  
JAMESON QUINN





CES staff and supporters meeting William Poundstone, author of *Gaming the Vote*

## A Meeting of the Minds: Social & Charity Events

As a virtual organization, it's important for us to take time to meet our supporters. Getting to know you in person helps us put a face to the people we see liking our Facebook posts, sharing our content, and engaging with our newsletters. More importantly, it gives us the chance to talk with you about how you think better voting methods would affect the community you live in. These in-person conversations remind us why folks are hungry for better voting methods. They also provide us with ideas on how to refine our strategies to find solutions.

We got to meet supporters at social gatherings and charity dinners in cities across the country this year. We even hosted a dinner with William Poundstone, author of *Gaming the Vote*. This was a special treat for our guests who had been introduced to alternative voting methods thanks to his book.

"It was an honor to meet William Poundstone," said Michael Ruvinsky, a CES supporter. "I read *Gaming the Vote* many years ago, and it's what inspired me to start advocating for better voting methods. With *Gaming the Vote*, Poundstone clarified both the problem of the spoiler effect and its solution. That eventually led me to support The Center for Election Science."

Are you interested in joining us at an in-person event? Keep tabs on our [events page](#) and come see us the next time we're in your area!



Enjoying some delicious burgers with supporters in LA!



Chatting about voting methods over dinner with supporters in DC

# A New Face for a New Era

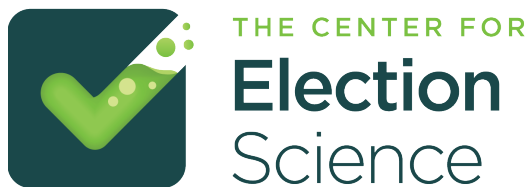
Last year was a transformative year for us. With the start of this new era, it was time for an organizational facelift in the form of new branding and a sleek new website.

While we wanted to keep the same idea that our old logo conveyed, we knew it needed to be updated with a modern aesthetic. We kept the beaker check mark symbol that so deftly conveys our combination of elections and science, while incorporating new colors, fonts, and a modern design.

As a completely virtual organization, we have no storefront, so our website serves as our public face to the world. Thanks to your support, we were able to completely overhaul our outdated website, creating a sleek, engaging, and easily-navigable website. This new site provides you with features to help you bring better voting methods to your community while giving our organization a virtual “facelift” that better reflects the expertise we have to offer.



OLD LOGO



NEW LOGO



2.4K+

FACEBOOK  
FOLLOWERS



1K+

TWITTER  
FOLLOWERS



140+

LINKEDIN  
FOLLOWERS



600+

YOUTUBE  
SUBSCRIBERS



1.8K+

NEWSLETTER  
SUBSCRIBERS



65K+

WEBSITE VISITORS

# Donor List

Aside from noticing the new, sleek look of our annual report, one thing you'll notice right away is the size of this year's donor list. It's more than doubled since last year, and we owe that all to you, our loyal donors. With your support, we've been able to spread the message that there's an easy way to fix our broken elections. And what we've seen is that once folks learn this, they're excited to invest in this movement to make democracy smart.

To those of you who have been supporting us since our early days, thank you for laying the strong foundation that has led to this moment. And to those of you who have only just become a part of the CES family, welcome. We can't wait to share more victories with you.

## \$100,000+

Martin Crowley

## \$10,000-\$99,999

*Jeff Justice*

Open Philanthropy  
Project

Robert Norman  
Matt Wage

## \$2,500-\$9,9999

Mira Bernstein

*Kerry Keys*

Nathan Nerode

*Jon Roberts*

Jonathan Summers

**Tim Swast**

## \$1,000-\$2,499

Branscomb Family  
Foundation

Juliet Elizondo

Jeff and Staci Mankoff

*Helen and Dan Quinn, in  
honor of Jameson Quinn*

**Felix Sargent**

Lester Schwalb

*Nate Schwalb*

Kevin Ulug

## \$500-\$999

Daniel Allison

Steven Brams

Eric Cornell

Brian Hauer

Ian McCullough

Justine Metz

Adam Moore

Mike Osenar

## \$250-\$499

William Bartholomew

Kit Basom

**Ben Creasy**

Charles Engelke

Jonathan Heebner

Jordon Kalilich

**Jan Kok**

Rob Lanphier

**Grey Nearing**

**Dominic Paris**

**Michael Ruvinsky**

## \$100-\$249

Frank Atwood

Will Bartholomew

Joel Blondy

**Jonathan Bright**

Stijn Bruers

Paul Butler

**Stephen Cobb**

Andrew Davidson

Christopher DeSantis

*Janice Dru*

**Doug Dysart**

Randall Henderson

**Dylan Hirsch-Shell**

Bart Ingles

Rick Joi

Thomas Kiefer

Claudia Lang

Steve Levin

Daniel Loeb

Patrick Lundh

Andrew Mehler

Portia Mills

William Poundstone

Alison Roberts

Matthew Ricketson

Jack Santucci

**Leon Smith**

Bradley Svee

Laurie White

## \$50-\$99

Arlen Anderson

Eric Arthen

David Benbow

Grace Brennan

Herbert Britt

**Derek Britz**

Neil Castine

James Cooper

John Dusenbury

Kristin DeKuiper

Jacobine Dru

Jocelyn Dru

**Patrick Eschenfeldt**

Carl Forsythe

Brandon Fulcher

Brad Garcia

Donna Garcia

Kieron George

Ilona Globa

Adam Haber

Aaron Hamlin

Nick Huang

David Johnson

Dan Karlan

Kathleen Malin

Renee Millett-Gosier

Catherine Olsson

Matthew Pereira

Sam Randolph

Brian Shank

David Sokal

Jeff Sweeney

Weiping Wu

# Corporate Donors

Amazon  
Apple  
Artefact  
Genentech  
Google  
MediaMath  
Microsoft  
Ogden CAP Properties  
PwC  
The RMG Group  
TripAdvisor  
Two Sigma  
Voya Financial

Thank you to our many corporate donors for supporting our donors' philanthropy this year! During 2018, these companies provided over \$4,000 in matching gifts. Interested in making your gift go twice as far? Contact Kirsten, Director of Philanthropy, for more information on employer matching gift programs.

## \$1-\$49

Zera Alexander  
Caitlyn Alley Peña  
Andrea Baumgardner  
Chip Bennett  
Cathy Cilcius  
Robert Crowner  
James D'Arcangelo  
Kirsten Elliott  
Sheila Elliott  
Valarie Embrey  
Whitney Fish  
Parker Friedland  
Michael Fulvio  
William Garfinkel  
Jeremy Golant  
Herschel Goldfield  
Eduardo Gonzalez  
Diana Harris  
Mark Hechim  
**William Heidrich**  
Nathan Helm-burger  
Timothy Henry  
Emily Katz  
Colleen Kawamura  
Britton Kerin  
Ariel Kirkwood  
Bernard Kobes  
William Krieger  
Nicholas Marino

Jonathan Marshall  
*Neal McBurnett*  
Curtis McCartney  
Tresavon McClary  
Dianne McGuire  
John McMullen  
Martin Misenhimer  
Alexander More  
Christine Morshedi  
Diane Mountain  
Kim O'Connell Saysana  
Mahendra Prasad  
Patrick Quinn  
Alec Ricciuti  
David Roberts  
Jamie Rose  
Mot Rosembaun  
Linda Scott Powell  
Benjamin Singer  
Steve Smith  
Roy Speckhardt  
Jerry St-Cyr  
Lauren Surzyn  
Christopher Tatlock  
Jenni Thomas  
**Arthur Thomas IV**  
Kennita Watson  
Debra Wheatman  
Ben Woosley  
Sharon Zens

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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 better voting methods.

• • •

**Recurring donors' names appear in bold.**

We owe our success to all of our donors, but especially those who have made the choice to invest in our work on a recurring basis. Thank you, recurring donors, for your commitment to implementing better voting methods!



## NOTABLE MEDIA MENTIONS

### VOX

“The resulting landslide vote in favor of the [approval voting] system — which goes into effect the next election cycle — suggests that voters are intrigued by the idea of improving our political processes.”

### REASON

“There are very few instances where voters and citizens can't be ignored, and that's when they are voting. Right now we have a horrible tool for how we vote. This is upgrading that tool.”

### 80,000 HOURS PODCAST

“According to Aaron Hamlin, Executive Director of The Center for Election Science (CES), there's a simple way to make sure we never have to elect someone hated by more than half the electorate: change how we vote.”

### INSIDE PHILANTHROPY

“If approval voting ever catches on—and that's a big if—it would pose an obvious challenge to the two-party lock on American politics.”

# From Long-Shot to Big-Shot

With all that you helped us accomplish this year, CES was able to secure a number of high-profile media features. Perhaps the most significant was our feature in Vox, which detailed our history-making campaign in Fargo and also shone light on the field of election science more broadly. One of our primary barriers to success has been a lack of public awareness and knowledge of alternative voting methods. So naturally, any opportunity we have to educate the public on the problem of choose-one voting is invaluable to our mission. If you haven't yet had a chance to read it, be sure to check out **Vox's feature**.

In addition to our story in Vox, we were also featured in a number of other media outlets and podcasts, including Reason; 80,000 Hours; and Inside Philanthropy.

# Donor Spotlight: Investing in Efficiency

Hours turned into days and then weeks. All eyes were on Florida, as people around the country waited to learn whether George W. Bush or Al Gore would secure the victory in the closest race in the history of presidential elections. Growing up, Jordon Kalilich tinkered with computers in Broward County, Florida. Jordon noted that while computers and software were rapidly evolving, the way we voted was not. And it was leading to terrible inefficiencies.



“What America has experienced over the past few decades is worse than any government shutdown: it’s a political shutdown, where holding power and keeping it from others is more important than actually using it,” Jordon said.

That passion for finding more efficient ways of doing things led Jordon to a career as a software engineer and to interests such as the easy-to-learn language of Esperanto and voting methods.

After reading about various methods, Jordon learned that approval voting was superior to our current choose-one method, was easy to understand and implement, and that a new organization called The Center for Election Science was fighting for its adoption.

“Approval voting is the latest in a long line of things I’ve found to be both pleasantly logical and potentially world-changing,” Jordon recalled.

With approval voting, Jordon thinks that local elections in his home of Seattle would result in candidates more representative of voters and that issues like copyright reform would be taken more seriously. “Old copyrights are usually extended by law when they’re about to expire, and so the public domain, a rich source of inspiration for creative works, rarely grows,” Jordon explained. “Over the years, [these] have been extended repeatedly at the behest of big media companies that bankroll congressional candidates.”

Several close presidential elections later, Jordon can’t believe that more people aren’t curious about ways to innovate in this area. But, Jordon believes that with CES leading the charge, that there is an opportunity for us to fix the way we vote.

“CES is the only organization I know of that advocates for approval voting, and America needs to know about it,” Jordon said.



## FINANCIALS

**TOTAL REVENUE**  
\$252,522.63

**INDIVIDUAL PUBLIC SUPPORT**  
\$130,480.60

**BOARD SUPPORT**  
\$35,300.34

**CORPORATE SUPPORT**  
\$747.16

**DIRECT PUBLIC GRANTS**  
\$85,836.91

**INTEREST**  
\$126.36

**TOTAL EXPENDITURES**  
\$492,744.49

**RESEARCH ADVANCEMENT**  
\$7,941.02

**PUBLIC OUTREACH**  
\$85,624.06

**VOTING METHOD ADVANCEMENT**  
\$140,648.67

**ADMINISTRATIVE**  
\$25,690.67

**FUNDRAISING**  
\$10,588.58

**STAFFING AND RELATED COSTS\***  
\$222,251.49

\*Includes staff time appropriated to programs

# Board Member Spotlight

## NATE SCHWALB

Cambridge, MA

Loves exercising, listening to podcasts and debating absurd hypotheticals

### 1. What is your professional and academic background?

I started my career in strategy consulting and now I work with faculty on research at Harvard Business School. During college, I studied a broad set of topics in policy, finance, and economics.



### 2. How did you first become interested in voting methods?

I first learned about voting methods during a college course on game theory and political institutions. My interest was re-kindled, as many people's interests were, by the 2016 U.S. election. It laid bare how "choose-one" voting creates a negative electoral environment and limits the influence voters ostensibly have over government.

### 3. Are there any issues you care about that you think could be helped by better voting methods?

I am very proud of CES for its strict non-partisan stance. I'm excited that better voting methods can create a more direct connection between what voters want and what they ultimately receive. And, I believe better voting methods will encourage politicians to put more effort into solving problems and less energy slinging mud at each other.

### 4. What do you envision as the future for CES? Where do you hope to see the organization in 5 or 10 years?

I'm really proud of the recent win in Fargo. The ultimate direction for CES will be decided by the executive director and our donors. However, in my vision, the next 5-10 years will see more electoral wins for voting reform, more research on the impact of voting methods on political institutions, and more public awareness of the problems inherent in "choose-one" voting.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Janice Dru  
(Outgoing) Chair

Felix Sargent  
(Incoming) Chair

Jameson Quinn  
Vice Chair

Kerry Keys, CPA  
Treasurer

Jeff Justice  
Secretary

Neal McBurnett  
Director

Jon Roberts  
Director

Nate Schwalb  
Director

## STAFF

Aaron Hamlin  
Executive Director

Caitlyn Alley Peña  
Director of Operations  
and Programs

Kirsten Elliott  
Director of Philanthropy

## INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR

Andrea Denault  
Education Campaign  
Coordinator