

**WE THE**

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## WHAT AMERICA WILL OUR CHILDREN INHERIT?



That question has been foremost in my mind since Josh Silver and I co-founded RepresentUs a decade ago.

We, the people, will ultimately provide the answer. It is the actions we take today — and

every day — that will determine the America we leave for generations to come.

Eleanor Roosevelt once wisely observed that “it takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan.”

Clearly, the days of wishing our democracy better have passed.

To that end, RepresentUs is focused on a strategic plan aimed at a clear goal: *To make America the world’s strongest democracy by 2050.*

### Three pillars to progress

To get there, we’re building on our 156 wins and dozens of breakout moments over the past decade to address emerging challenges and engage more Americans from across the political spectrum in our fight.

This strategy stands on three key pillars:

**Win victories in states and locally to build momentum for national change:** History tells us that local wins lead to national change. We’ll continue to identify opportunities in strategic locations and build, nurture, and lead campaigns to pass high-impact laws.

**Win the hearts and minds of the American people:** Durable change happens when there is broad public support for it. We’re committed to elevating the voices of our supporters and spokespeople, producing provocative messaging, and making a clear, compelling case for supporting democracy that resonates across the political divide.

**Put country over party:** In order to pass and protect laws that will last, democracy needs the support of a majority of voters, spokespeople, and lawmakers across the political spectrum. We’re working outside the constraints of the two-party system, activating people, building campaigns, and sharing messages that unite unlikely allies towards common purpose.

### A call to action

No doubt, the road ahead is fraught with danger. Our democracy is under relentless attack. The angry and armed mob that stormed our Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021 has metastasized into an anti-democracy, un-American mob of Big Lie believers scheming to hijack our elections.

Meanwhile, politicians cynically gerrymander voting districts, moneyed interests reign supreme, and the two party duopoly blocks any competition that would threaten its power. It adds up to a virtually uncontested road to power that solidifies minority party rule and emboldens would-be autocrats, while leaving whole communities unrepresented in Congress.

It’s pushing our democracy to the brink.

But, together, we can — and will — push back.

As the leading voice uniting people from across the political spectrum, RepresentUs exists to make real and lasting change to strengthen American democracy.

From exposing and stopping the worst gerrymandering, to helping pass comprehensive voting reforms in dozens of states, we’re reminded that the case for optimism endures.

My hope is that this 10-year report serves as a call to action. From sharing one of our videos, to making a donation, joining us in reaching voters, contacting elected officials, and leading campaigns for change, it all matters. And every action makes a difference.

What America do we want our children to inherit? Ask yourself that question. And join us in saving our democracy.

We’re 10 years in. And we’ve only just begun to fight.

Joshua Graham Lynn  
CEO and Co-Founder

# UNITED

**represent Us**  
10 YEARS FIGHTING FOR DEMOCRACY



## THE MAKING OF A MOVEMENT

From a coffee shop conversation, RepresentUs has grown to a democracy-saving force

Before RepresentUs existed. Before the viral videos viewed by millions. Before “badass grandmas” from North Dakota took on the system and won.

And before our grassroots movement caught fire to pile up more than 150 wins in cities and states nationwide.

Before all of that, Josh Silver and Joshua Graham Lynn would meet sometimes for morning coffee at the Cup & Top cafe in Northampton, Massachusetts. Between cups of coffee and corralling their toddlers, their conversations inevitably turned to the fragile state of America’s democracy.

Then one day Silver shared an idea with Lynn, sliding a few pages of a draft strategic plan across the table, an analysis and antidote to the threats facing American democracy.

“So, I show Josh the document I’ve been working on,” Silver recalls. “He reads it, and says something like, ‘You’ve got something here, but I’m bored. If you want people to care about the solution, they need to understand the problem.’”

### Telling a different story

“I told him that change on that scale would need a movement. And building movement requires inspiring people,” says Lynn, who was an executive in marketing at the time.

“Great ideas often come with a very complicated narrative. To get people to change their behaviors, we had to tell a different story.”

Together they expanded on the idea, charting a roadmap that showed people from across the political spectrum that they had the power to take action.

RepresentUs was born.

Silver worked with policy experts to craft the American Anti-Corruption Act, an aspirational framework for reform that remains a blueprint for securing democracy.

Lynn focused on growing the RepresentUs community by making American democracy, and American corruption, easier to understand ... and therefore easier to change.

“We broke down the issues, developed policy and organizing tools, and expanded the idea of what’s possible when we all work together,” Lynn says. “We still do that, to prove that American democracy doesn’t have to stay broken. When we unite, we can reshape the system to truly represent us.” He laughs. “I mean, there’s the name, right there.”

RepresentUs scored its first big victory in 2014, when it played a pivotal role in helping volunteers in Tallahassee, Florida to pass an anti-corruption ballot initiative. Tallahassee offered proof of concept that would evolve into Campaign Accelerator, RepresentUs’ tool for targeting resources and funding to campaigns.

### Building for the future

RepresentUs has helped secure 156 victories, and counting, over the last decade. But there is much more work to be done.

Voting rights are under attack across the United States. Politicians routinely twist states into gerrymandered shapes to protect their own power, and the Jan. 6 insurrection offered a stark reminder of what’s at stake when extreme conspiracy theories are left unchecked.

RepresentUs will not back down. We’re committed to putting country over party, uniting unlikely allies from across the political spectrum to form a more perfect union.

From a coffee shop in Massachusetts, to kitchen tables in North Dakota, from the Tallahassee city hall to the halls of the U.S. Congress, RepresentUs has achieved so much in the past 10 years. The following pages tell just some of the stories that have blazed a path to a future we can, and must, build together.

## OUR FIRST WIN!

The RepresentUs vision looked good on paper.

But could it become reality?

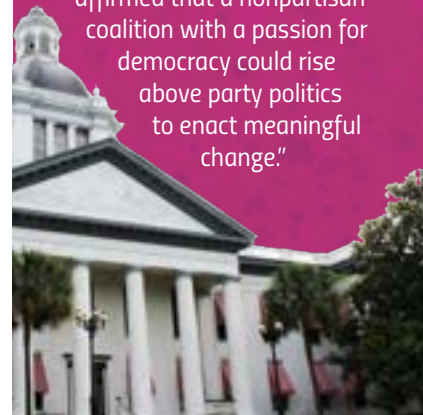
Exhibit A: Tallahassee, Florida.

In 2014, RepresentUs led the way for voters in the Sunshine State’s capital city to approve by 2 to 1 the first citywide Anti-Corruption Act in the United States.

The win was fueled by a coalition of unlikely allies consisting of progressives, conservatives, and independents.

Since Tallahassee, RepresentUs has continued to draw from the winning blueprint to score another 155 local and statewide victories.

“Tallahassee provided proof of concept,” says RepresentUs CEO Joshua Graham Lynn. “It affirmed that a nonpartisan coalition with a passion for democracy could rise above party politics to enact meaningful change.”



Supporting For the People Act  
Oakland, California  
August 2021

# WE THE CHANGEMAKERS



## POWERED BY THE PEOPLE

### Donors and volunteers across the U.S. have joined with RepresentUs in the fight to save democracy

From day one, RepresentUs has empowered Americans from all walks of life and from across the political spectrum with the information, resources, and inspiration to build a powerful grassroots movement.

RepresentUs volunteer Justin Whitty got involved after viewing our 2015 video "Corruption is Legal in America." The video details how our dysfunctional political system encourages politicians to push legislation that favors special interests, rather than backing laws favored by a vast majority of Americans.

"You have to have the belief that something can change," Justin says. "I think that it's a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy for people to say that nothing will change so there's no point in getting involved. There's dozens of things that you can do today if you have the political will."

Partnering with RepresentUs staff has helped keep Justin motivated.



"The people at RepresentUs are always eager to help," Justin says. "They seem to have their own internal spring of optimism and energy."

#### Donors making a difference

RepresentUs supporters and volunteers do whatever it takes to secure these wins. Donors are vital to fueling the 156 wins over the past decade.

All told, in 2021 alone, nearly 39,000 supporters made donations ranging from \$2 to \$2 million, contributing more than \$13 million combined to strengthen democracy.

Those donations help fund our Campaign

Accelerator on-the-ground resources to support volunteer texting campaigns and phone banks as well as organizing rallies, contacting lawmakers, and spreading the message via social media.

#### 'People with a heart like ours'

College student Julia Lin of Maryland was attracted by RepresentUs' steady commitment to nonpartisanship. Living in one of the country's most ridiculously gerrymandered districts, Julia says RepresentUs helps give her a voice.

"I live where my political opinions are not reflected in my community, especially during the very divided times of 2020," Julia says. "I found that the people with RepresentUs were really willing to have those conversations with others, even with those who have completely different political opinions."

Halfway across the country in Nebraska, lawyer Wes Dodge works with RepresentUs to help ensure his children and grandchildren will "have a workable, representative government."

His message to others looking to get involved?

"Persevere," he says. "People with a heart like ours know what democracy is supposed to be about."

## FINDING THEIR VOICE

For years, Rich and Lena Eng were disengaged conservative voters who steered clear of politics.

Yet when they saw how our broken political system increasingly threatened democracy and weakened America's middle class, the Wisconsin couple knew they could no longer stay silent, or still.

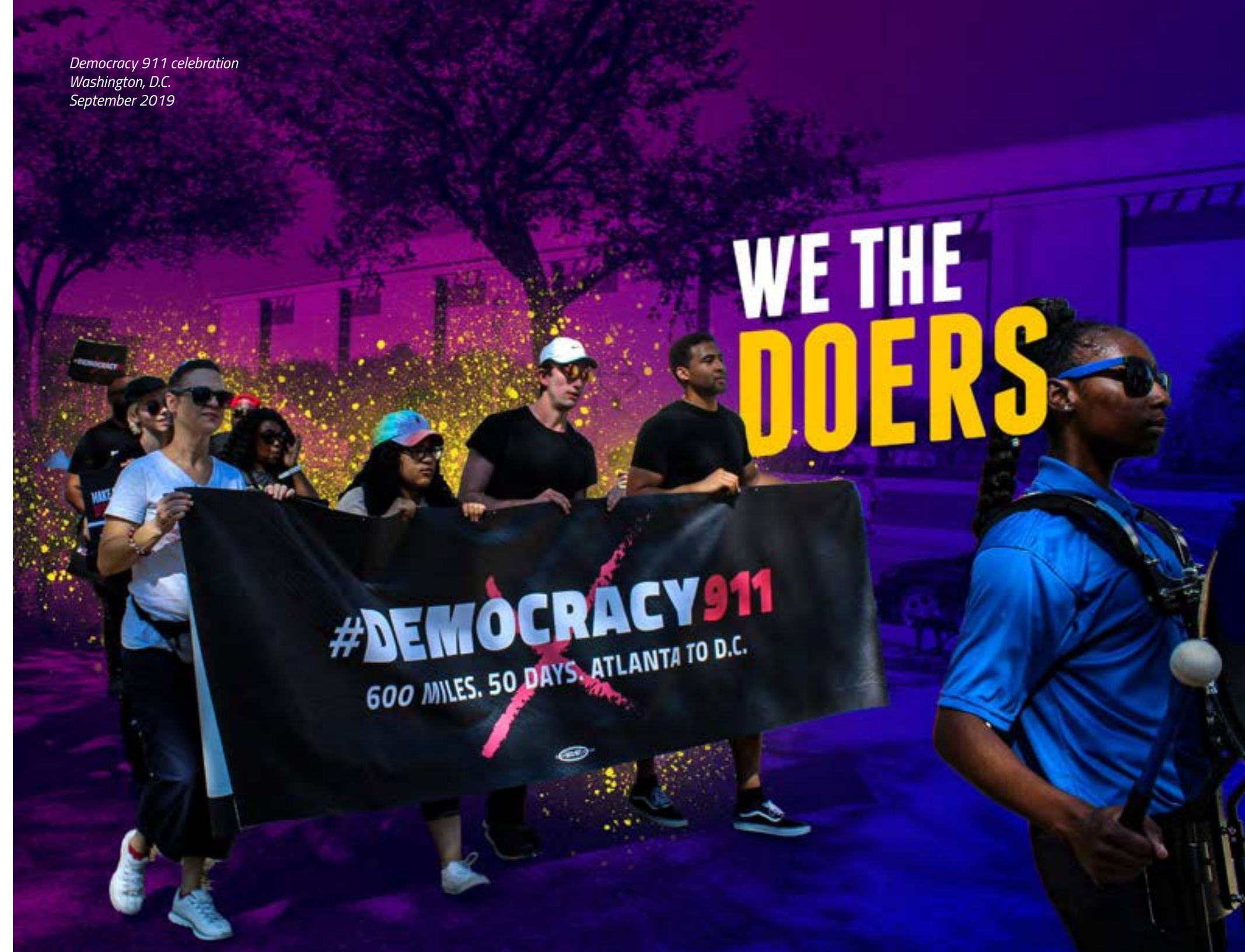
Lena and Rich took action, volunteering with RepresentUs to help make calls to legislators, launch text campaigns to recruit more volunteers, and organize in-person events.

"We volunteer with RepresentUs to imagine a better future, where Americans feel their voices are heard, and their elected officials truly represent all of us, not big money donors," Rich says.

"Whether it's health care or immigration, we're never going to make any progress on the thorny issues of our time until both sides work together."



Democracy 911 celebration  
Washington, D.C.  
September 2019



## NONPARTISAN BY DESIGN

### Uniting unlikely allies, RepresentUs remains committed to country over party

When they launched RepresentUs, Joshua Graham Lynn and Josh Silver saw a center lane in the American democracy movement. A lane with virtually no traffic.

"We focused from the start on being nonpartisan," Silver says. "Up until RepresentUs, that just never happened. We were the first organization, in both rhetoric and action, to bring together all Americans in support of structural changes to democracy."

*"We weave this nonpartisan thread through everything we do."*

*Joshua Graham Lynn, CEO and Co-Founder*

For Lynn, this approach was logical. After all, only about one-quarter of Americans identify as liberal or progressive, but most pro-democracy efforts come from the left. Further, Lynn's real-life experiences didn't jibe with the conventional wisdom that the partisan divide was unbreachable.

"I've never bought the idea that you can't possibly have something in common with somebody who votes across the aisle," Lynn says. "There isn't a monopoly on good ideas, and people on both sides often share common beliefs. The challenge is they lack the common language to see the opportunity for collaboration."

RepresentUs has stayed true to its nonpartisan roots. In doing so, we've consistently, and often cleverly, changed the tone and substance of the conversation in ways that resonate beyond political affiliation or ideology.

We weave this nonpartisan thread through everything we do, from videos and messaging that keep the focus on attacking a flawed and corrupt system to establishing programs and supporting campaigns that seek to unify across artificial political lines.

### Navigating a deepened divide

No doubt, the nonpartisan path has hit some turbulence in more recent years. The Jan. 6 insurrection and the Big Lie have, to put it mildly, complicated matters.

But RepresentUs doesn't exist to appease those on the fringe extremes.

"The reality is, there are some constituencies that are lost to us," says Jen Johnson, RepresentUs' movement director. "If you still believe in the Big Lie, then you likely aren't interested in what we have to say."

"But there is a larger group of voters, regardless of party, who believe in free and fair elections. Our strategy is focused on making sure there are messengers from across the political spectrum willing to speak out against authoritarianism."

### Tapping trusted voices

To that end, RepresentUs has been increasingly intentional about engaging a broad range of trusted voices and uniting unlikely allies behind a common cause.

This includes recent initiatives such as our collaborative **2020 VoteSafe campaign**, which set the record straight on safe, secure mail-in voting and accessible in-person voting options. VoteSafe was co-chaired by former swing-state governors: Pennsylvania Republican Tom Ridge and Democrat Jennifer Granholm from Michigan.

The effort is further amplified by **Count Every Hero**, a program chaired by retired four-star generals and admirals from all branches of the military, enlisting veterans to defend democracy and fight political corruption as a continuation of their oath to serve. RepresentUs is also formalizing a new coalition, The Board of Democracy, which equips business leaders to advocate for democracy reforms.

"Ultimately, this is a cultural movement, in addition to a political one," Lynn says. "That is what draws people to RepresentUs. There's an abiding understanding across America that something is broken in our system, and we need to band together to fix it."

## TRUSTED VOICES



Retired four-star generals and admirals from all branches of the military have united to chair **Count Every Hero**, an effort to enlist veterans to defend democracy and fight political corruption as a continuation of their oath to serve.



Former Republican Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge (pictured here) co-chaired **VoteSafe** with former Democratic Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm. **VoteSafe** aimed to battle misinformation and advocate for secure mail-in voting and accessible in-person voting options.

*Unrig Summit  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
February 2018*

# WE THE COLLABORATORS



DEFEATING

# GERRYMANDERING

**9** OUT OF **10** VOTERS, REGARDLESS OF PARTY AFFILIATION, OPPOSE GERRYMANDERING

## RepresentUs takes a stand against gerrymandering

"A broken-winged pterodactyl!" is how one Maryland judge once described a Congressional district sprawling around metro Baltimore.

In Ohio, one ridiculously drawn district resembled a sea monster snaking hundreds of miles along the shores of Lake Erie.

And down in Texas, it's as if politicians used an Etch-a-Sketch to craft a horseshoe-shaped district wrapping around three sides of Houston.

These districts are often cited among the most brazen examples of gerrymandering. While 2020 redistricting has led to some reconfiguring of districts such as these, they represent only a fraction of a larger threat to our democracy. Just as insidious are the many more subtle scheming by politicians to draw maps that stack the deck in their party's favor.

For years, RepresentUs has been sounding the alarm on gerrymandering, creating educational campaigns aimed at increasing public awareness, while developing tools to keep politicians accountable and voters informed and activated.

This is one issue virtually everyone can get behind. Our national polling shows that nine out of ten voters – regardless of party affiliation – oppose gerrymandering.

### Tracking the threats, taking action

With your support and through key partnerships, we've been able to push back.

In 2018, we won a series of five statewide victories that led to the creation of independent redistricting commissions, proven to generate fairer maps.

That success created a strong foundation to prepare for the gathering storm triggered by the 2020 census, which required all 50 states to redraw voting maps.

RepresentUs was ready.

We partnered with Princeton to develop the **Redistricting Report Card**, an interactive tool that relies on a powerful and unique set of analytics to grade each state's newly-drawn maps during the redistricting process to help the media and public identify gerrymandered maps.

Concurrently, RepresentUs launched the **Gerrymandering Threat Index**, a 50-state research effort to help the public understand the risks of gerrymandering in each state. The report found that 27 states were at "extreme risk" for gerrymandering, with eight states close behind at "high risk."

### Looking 10 years ahead

The quest to eradicate gerrymandering is far from over. That's why we're committed to seeing anti-gerrymandering campaigns through to completion as a key priority in our **2022 Election Protection** program.

We've also developed an in-state organizing infrastructure to guide us through the next 10 years of election reform, and lay the groundwork to pass commissions in more states to be ready for the 2031 redistricting process

We're in this fight for the long haul. We won't relent until gerrymandering goes the way of the pterodactyl.

## 2018 VICTORIES

COLORADO

### Colorado:

A bipartisan coalition rallied behind two anti-gerrymandering initiatives to form an independent commission to oversee federal and state map drawing. RepresentUs members joined the cause and helped inform voters and get out the vote. Because of all that hard work, Colorado voters approved of the amendments and put an end to partisan gerrymandering.



### Michigan:

In 2016, a 27-year-old, self-described political novice named Katie Fahey posted to Facebook, calling for a volunteer effort to end gerrymandering in Michigan. Thousands heeded her call, gathering 425,000 signatures to place an initiative on the ballot that would create an impartial citizen commission to draw district lines. Michigan voters approved Proposition 2 and put an end to gerrymandered districts in Michigan.



### Missouri:

In 2015, the legislature refused to vote on the Missouri Anti-Corruption Amendment, proposed by conservative State Senator and RepresentUs Advisory Council member Rob Schaaf. Three months later, a right-left coalition kicked off a signature drive for the Clean Missouri Amendment that ensured no political party is given an unfair advantage in map-drawing. Missouri voters approved Amendment 1 in 2018.



### Ohio:

Voters passed a law forcing bipartisan agreement about where district lines are drawn, requiring public input on maps, and requiring that districts cannot be drawn to favor or disfavor a political party or its incumbents.



### Utah:

This voter-approved initiative created an independent commission to propose state legislative and congressional voting district maps that must be geographically compact without unfairly favoring one party over another.

## GERRY'S PIZZA



RepresentUs delivers.

Literally.

Always on the lookout for creative ways to raise awareness, we launched **Gerry's Partisan Pizza**, our 'cheesy' campaign to target the serious business of gerrymandering.

The campaign connected with those hungry for change. Over two weeks on the road, Gerry's Pizza Truck traversed nearly **5,000 miles**, and served up thousands of pizza slices.

The effort generated news coverage from local and national media outlets coast-to-coast. Most importantly, Gerry's delivered scores of new volunteers from all walks of life to join in the fight against gerrymandering.

# ACROSS THE FINISH LINE

## RepresentUs' Campaign Accelerator fast-tracks democracy-saving wins

Saving democracy requires tough choices and strategic precision.

That's why our Campaign Accelerator program focuses on where we can have maximum impact, zeroing in on campaigns that carry the dual promise of political viability and policy impact. Put another way: Can we win? And if we do, will that win make a meaningful difference?



"We look for ways to organize and energize early-stage campaigns, while for more developed campaigns, we focus on the best ways to drive them over the finish line," says RepresentUs National Field Director Rob Booth. "Campaign Accelerator allows us to quickly shift into high gear to build real momentum."

The roots of that momentum are RepresentUs' relentless tracking and analysis of reform efforts in cities and states across the country. We're able to flag the best investments of time, money, energy, and precious volunteer hours to deliver substantive and sustainable change.

*"Those who benefit from the corrupt system fire up cigars knowing nothing really changed."*

*Megan Caska, political lead for RepresentUs*

### Addressing persistent challenges

Campaign Accelerator has racked up key wins across the country, while steering clear of two historically challenging dilemmas:

First, the well-meaning efforts to pursue campaigns that have transformative potential, but politically are dead on arrival.

"Chasing these chew up time and resources," says Megan Caska, political lead for RepresentUs. "And their inevitable demise can sap enthusiasm and dash hope for otherwise important policies."

Second, are the likely "easy" wins that ultimately make little impact.

"These are tempting, but these scenarios risk a double whammy," Megan says. "Those who benefit from the corrupt system fire up cigars knowing nothing really changed. At the same time, those who were pushing for change see their efforts resulted in the same old same old, discouraging them from trying again."

### Our winning strategies include:

- 1 Grassroots mobilization
- 2 Policy design, legal support and political strategy
- 3 Branding communications and messaging
- 4 Digital media and amplification
- 5 Moderate and conservative voter engagement
- 6 Hard-hitting accountability campaigns

### Accelerating success

Once a viable and winnable campaign is selected for Campaign Accelerator, RepresentUs pivots into action mode, deploying a blend of six core services tailored the most pressing on-the-ground needs.

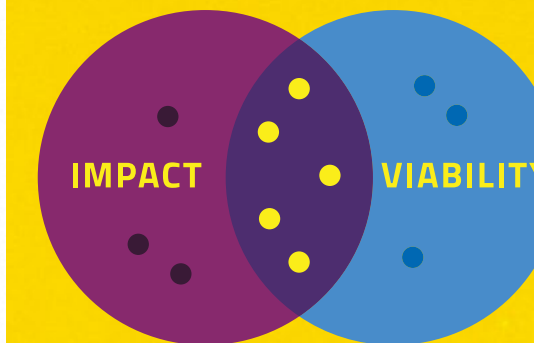
Our track record of **156 wins and counting** continues to affirm that Campaign Accelerator is among the democracy movement's most effective programs when it comes to delivering results.

And we're slamming pedal to the metal, strategically deploying Campaign Accelerator to deliver rapid-fire wins that make impact now, and build toward a movement so powerful it will reach a tipping point that unleashes a red-white-and-blue wave of victories at the local, state, and, ultimately, federal level.

"When you score a win in a state or city, you are making real immediate change, but it also has enormous effect in paving the way to broader reforms elsewhere," says RepresentUs CEO Joshua Graham Lynn. "To be clear, this is likely a decades-long fight. But we're talking about democracy here, and when you look at our nation's history, whether it was the fight for women's suffrage or states leading the charge to lower the voting age from 21 to 18, we know that consistent progress ultimately builds towards a critical mass of revolutionary change."



## KEYS TO THE ACCELERATOR



- 1 Focus on policies at the intersection of policy impact and political viability.
- 2 Provide strategic political, legal, branding and media support.
- 3 Mobilize grassroots, and engage voters across the political spectrum behind hard-hitting accountability campaigns.

*Above left: Katy Fahey (right), Campaign Director for the anti-gerrymandering effort Voters Not Politicians, celebrates with a supporter.*

# WINNING

ACROSS THE USA

## 156

ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTS AND RESOLUTION

# WINS

35 RANKED CHOICE VOTING WINS

15 ANTI-GERRYMANDERING WINS

64 ELECTIONS WINS

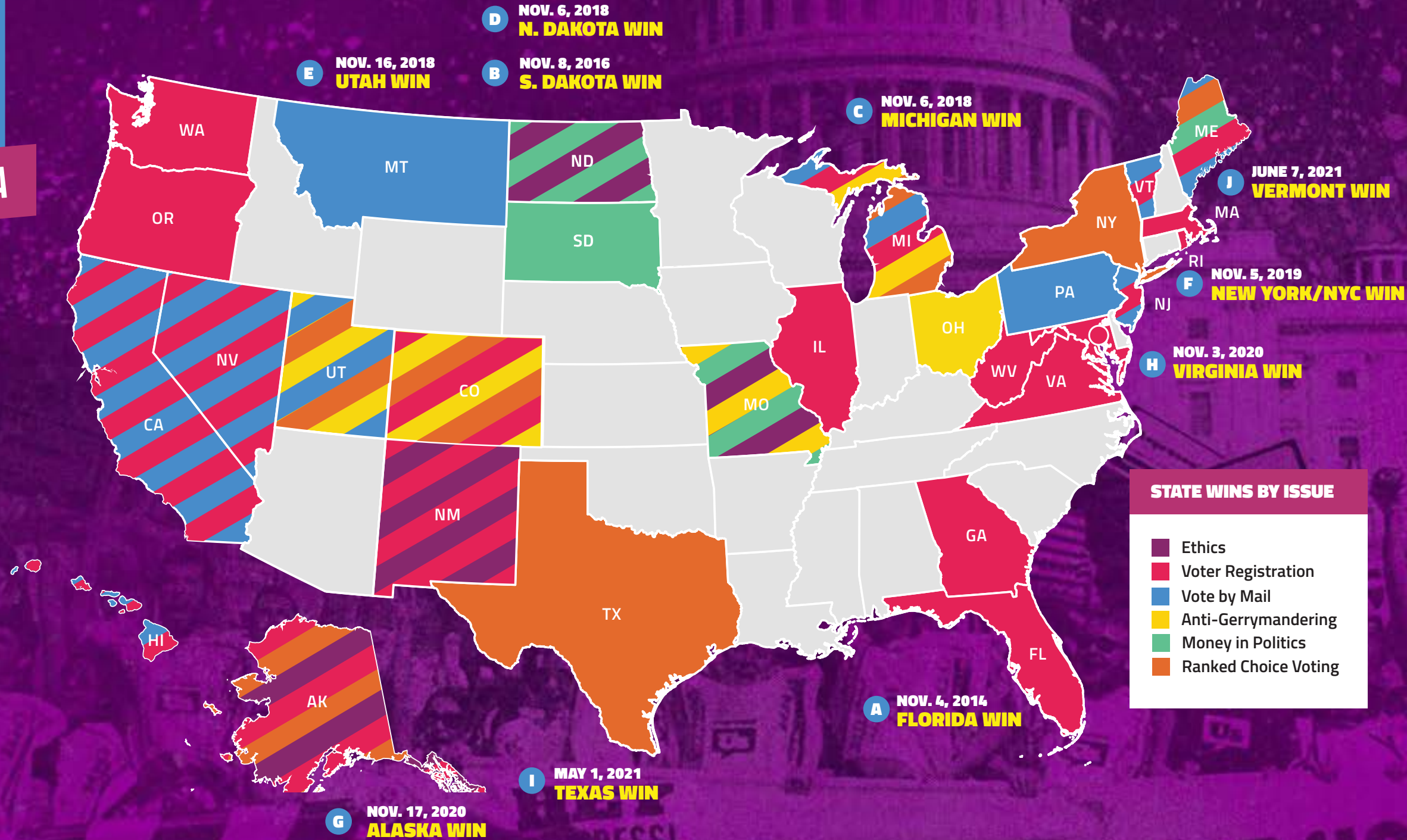
73 ANTI-CORRUPTION RESOLUTION WINS

9 ETHICS WINS

47 ELECTION/VOTING WINS

18 CAMPAIGN FINANCE WINS

11 VOTING ACCESS WINS



## REPRESENTUS LANDMARK WINS

### A FLORIDA

2014: Our first win in Tallahassee passing the Anti-Corruption Act.

### B S. DAKOTA

2016: Wins included Elections, Campaign Finance, Public Finance, Contribution Limits, Ethics Enforcement, Revolving Door and Lobbying Regulation.

### C MICHIGAN

2018: Voters in Michigan decisively rejected gerrymandering for congressional and state legislative districts by approving Proposal 2 that was initially attacked by a dark money group trying to take it off the ballot.

### D N. DAKOTA

2018: Among our notable wins were Elections, Campaign Finance, Transparency, Ethics Enforcement and Lobbyist Regulation.

### E UTAH

2018: An incredible grassroots win in Utah by voters pushing through legislation cracking down on gerrymandering by restricting the ability of politicians to draw their own district lines.

### F NEW YORK/NYC

2019: Wins included Elections, Voting, Voting Process, and Ranked Choice Voting.

### G ALASKA

2020: Our long list of wins included Elections, Voting Process, Ranked Choice Voting, Voting Access, Open Primaries, Campaign Finance and Transparency.

### H VIRGINIA

2020: In an impressive display of bipartisan cooperation, Virginia voters transferred the power of drawing the state's congressional and legislative districts from the state to a redistricting commission composed of both legislators and citizens.

### I TEXAS

2021: Wins included Elections, Voting, Voting Process and Ranked Choice Voting.

### J VERMONT

2021: Victories included Elections, Voting, Voting Access and Vote by Mail.



# ‘REPRESENTUS AFFIRMS MY HOPE’

Q+A WITH JON DeVAAAN

Former Microsoft executive Jon DeVaan remembers the precise moment in the mid-1990s when he came face-to-face with the ugly truth about money in America’s political system.

“At the time, Microsoft was being sued for antitrust by the federal government,” DeVaan recalls. “And Sen. Orrin Hatch, in veiled but clear language, basically tells Microsoft that if you had been giving your political contributions, you wouldn’t have any of this trouble now. That just struck me as so wrong on so many levels.”

The experience could have jaded DeVaan. Instead, it moved him to action. He started supporting efforts to fight the corrupt system ruled by dark money and special interest contributions. After retiring from Microsoft, he stepped up his involvement with RepresentUs, where he now serves as co-chair of the Board of Directors.

## Why did you turn to RepresentUs?

I did my homework, and RepresentUs had the clearest message and simplest language around the Anti-Corruption Act and the defects in the political system. They also played a role in the passage of the Seattle Honest Elections Initiative, which included several key campaign finance reforms that shifted the power from lobbyists to the people. RepresentUs looked like it could get things done, and it’s proven to be the case.

## RepresentUs has consistently focused on being nonpartisan. Is that more challenging an increasingly divided America?

There’s no doubt that it’s difficult when one party is pushing anti-democratic legislation, but the reality is, there are plenty of pro-democracy conservatives, and they remain critical to our work. Democracy should not be about your political ideology, but rather maintaining rules of the road that allow for honest debate and fair elections in which both sides abide by the outcome. That’s something that I think the vast majority of Americans believe in, regardless of their political affiliation.

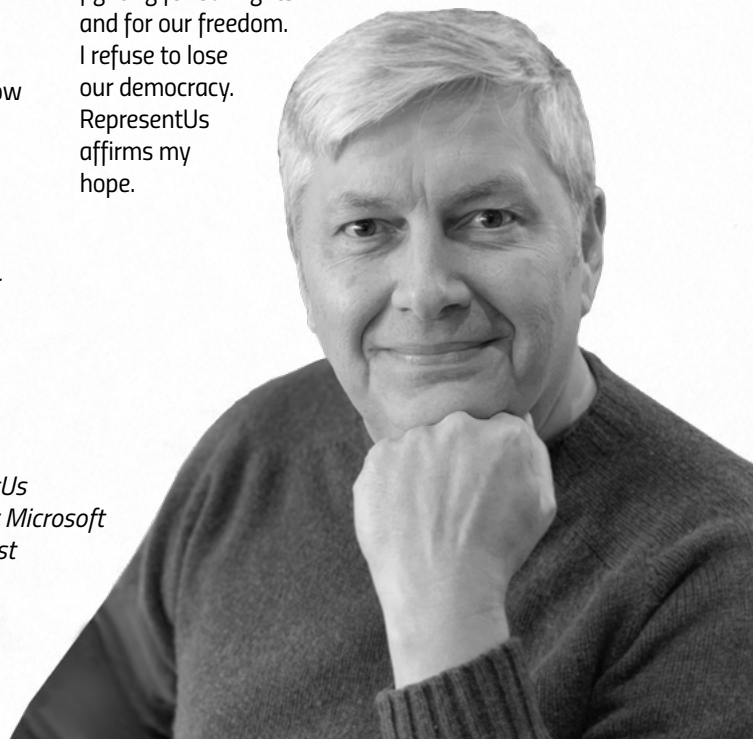
## How have you applied your past experience as a Microsoft engineering leader in your role with RepresentUs?

I am trying to use my skill set to help RepresentUs grow and be able to do more. There is a natural evolution that occurs from scrappy start-up to a more powerful and established organization, and we’re focused on navigating that in a way that allows RepresentUs to continue to make a bigger impact. One area where I think we have made real progress is the quality of our partnerships. There is no one single organization that can just swoop in and do it all. We’ve seen this make a difference in a lot of wins, including some really big victories in Alaska, North Dakota and Michigan

*Jon DeVaan, RepresentUs Board Member, former Microsoft Executive, Social Activist*

## With all the threats to democracy, how do you stay motivated?

You have to remember that there are many more pro-democracy conservatives and pro-democracy liberals than there are people who believe the Big Lie. A while back, I visited the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, which is commonly known as the Lynching Memorial. There’s an inscription there of a saying that was used during the civil rights movement that states: ‘Hopelessness is the enemy of justice.’ That was really profound to me and inspiring, because that is what we have to believe if we are to maintain our hope. Whatever happens, you have to keep fighting for our rights and for our freedom. I refuse to lose our democracy. RepresentUs affirms my hope.



# ‘SACRED ACT’

Q+A WITH DESMOND MEADE

RepresentUs Board member Desmond Meade knows what it’s like to have the right to vote stripped away, and the transformative power of getting it back.

For years, Meade was ineligible to vote in Florida because of a past felony conviction. He and more than 1 million other Floridians in similar circumstances were banned from voting for life.

Meade believes those who have served their debt to society deserve to have a voice in American democracy. So he took action.

As executive director of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, Meade in 2018 led the successful effort to pass Amendment 4, a grassroots initiative that restored voting rights to more than 1.4 million Floridians with past felony convictions.

The win marked the single largest expansion of voting rights in the United States in half a century and earned Meade a spot on Time magazine’s 100 Most Influential People in the World in 2019. In 2021, Meade was named a MacArthur “genius grant” winner for his voting rights advocacy.

## What was it that attracted you to RepresentUs?

The big thing is the nonpartisan focus, that is crucial to what we are trying to achieve. It’s so easy to point fingers at the other side, but where RepresentUs gets it right is to attack the flawed system. It’s the system

that creates this hypertribalism. Here in Florida, our governor is trying to carve out extra seats for Republicans, but Democrats are doing the same in blue states. It needs to be less about partisan divide and more about Americans coming together for the sake of our democracy.

## How did it feel to finally have the freedom to cast your vote?

Most people view voting as being a highly political act. But what I found when I had my right to vote restored is that voting is much deeper than just being political. When I was finally in that voting booth, I realized that I wasn’t voting as a Democrat or a Republican. I was engaging in a sacred act that people have given their life for. Being able to vote served as an affirmation of my humanity, my existence, and my place within a society.

## What do you say to those who may feel daunted by the threats to our democracy?

You have to remain resilient. It’s easy to go down these rabbit holes, and there is plenty of justification to go down those holes. But you have to fight through that and keep focused. We cannot allow ourselves to get lost in chaos. You have to latch on to a guiding principle, hold on tight, and keep pushing forward, knowing that if you do that, you can break through.

## What would your advice be to someone who wants to get involved with RepresentUs?

If you have the means, donate, because that funding is so vital to help us continue to do the work. Also, there are simple ways to get involved, whether that is signing petitions or phone banking or even just sharing RepresentUs videos and memes.

But most important is your willingness to look at this challenge from a nonpolitical, nonpartisan perspective. What do you want your democracy to look like? Do you always want one side to have an unfair advantage over the other side? We need to move beyond that. When you work with RepresentUs, you can help us get there.

*Desmond Meade, RepresentUs Board Member and Executive Director, Florida Rights Restoration Coalition*



# UNMATCHED

## ENGAGEMENT

The RepresentUs recipe for online success:

- 1 Take a complex topic and make it simple and accessible.
- 2 Employ a catchy and creative approach.
- 3 Engage a well-known, trusted American to deliver the message.
- 4 Add emotion, a twist of humor, irony or satire.
- 5 Promote the message where lots of people can find and share it.

From the beginning, RepresentUs has taken the fight to save democracy right to the people's smartphones and computers, setting the organization apart through cutting-edge branding and creative videos amplified by social media.

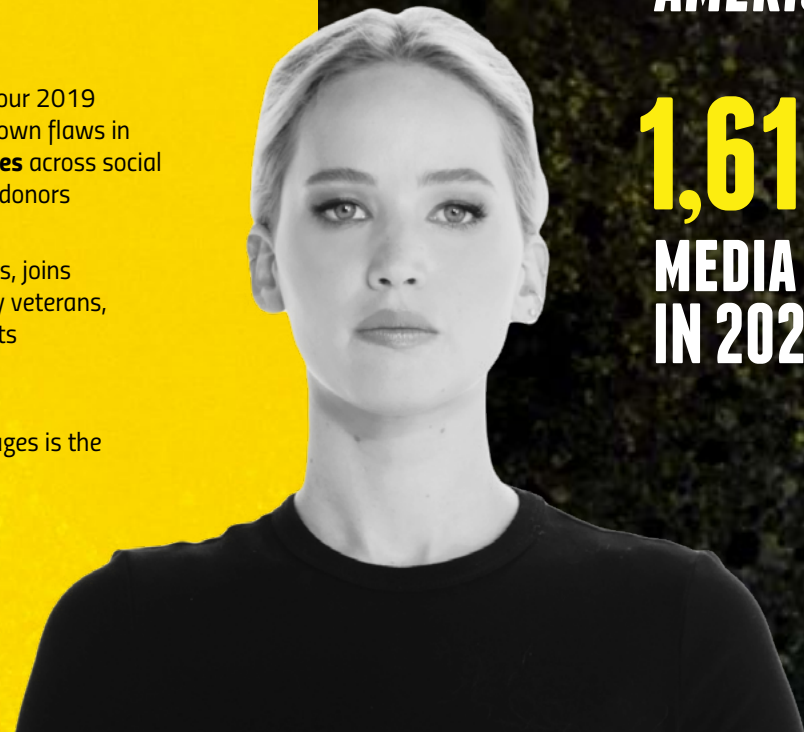
Prime example: Our short film series: *Unbreaking America*.

Starring Academy award-winning actor Jennifer Lawrence, our 2019 *Unbreaking America, Solving the Corruption Crisis*, breaks down flaws in our political system, has been viewed nearly **10 million times** across social media channels and motivated more than 4,000 first-time donors to contribute to RepresentUs.

Jennifer, who also serves on RepresentUs' Board of Directors, joins an all-star cast of high-profile celebrities, decorated military veterans, artists and ordinary folks who have lent their time, talents and creativity to delivering our message in fresh, clever and compelling ways.

We try to have some fun — but underlying all of our messages is the starkly serious business of saving democracy.

We're not done yet — so stay tuned.



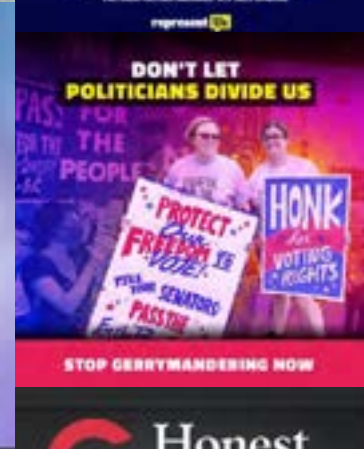
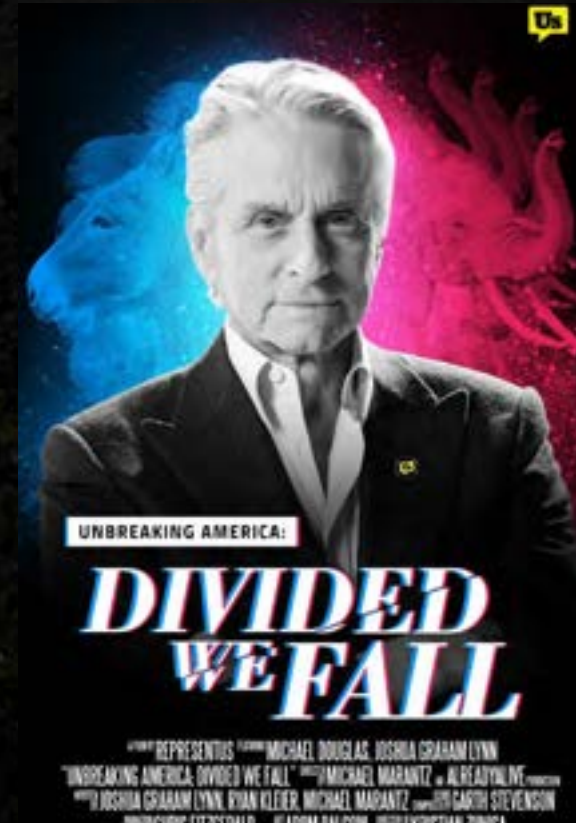
**1 BILLION**  
SOCIAL MEDIA  
IMPRESSIONS

**10 MILLION**  
VIEWS OF  
**UNBREAKING  
AMERICA**

**1,618**  
MEDIA HITS  
IN 2021

LOBBYING & LEGAL INDUSTRY  
**\$190 MILLION**

Us



## FIXING A BROKEN SYSTEM

### RepresentUs has a clear vision to fight corruption and save our democracy

Early in our existence, we proposed a policy blueprint, a collection of policies designed to restore power and influence to the people, and defang special interests and corrupt politicians. We called it the "American Anti-Corruption Act."

"The Anti-Corruption Act represents our best thinking on how to fix the system and strengthen democracy," says RepresentUs CEO Joshua Graham Lynn. "It serves as an organizing tool and a policy platform that underscores that if we were to achieve all these policies, we would have a strong democracy. We can present it to policymakers and allies, and say, 'If you are looking for solutions, here they are.'"

#### The Act includes seven tenets that address the most pressing threats to democracy.

- 1 Establish ranked-choice voting:** Voters can rank their top candidates, allowing them to support their top choice without fear of inadvertently helping elect the other party's candidate. This makes it easier to elect independent-minded candidates not beholden to establishment special interests.
- 2 End gerrymandering:** The act aims to end gerrymandering by creating independent, fully transparent redistricting commissions that follow strict guidelines to ensure accurate representation for all voters, regardless of political party.
- 3 Let all voters participate in open primaries:** The act requires all candidates for the same office compete in a single, open primary controlled by voters, not the political establishment. This gives voters more control over our elections and more choices at the voting booth.

- 4 Allow all Americans to vote absentee:** Absentee voting, also known as vote by mail, gives every American the choice to securely vote from the comfort and safety of their home.
- 5 Change how elections are funded:** Most politicians are dependent upon, and therefore responsive to, a tiny fraction of special-interest donors. The Act offers every voter a small credit they can use to make a political donation with no out-of-pocket expense. Candidates and political groups are only eligible to receive these credits if they agree to fundraise solely from small donors. The Act also empowers political action committees that only take donations from small donors.
- 6 Enact reasonable term limits:** When elected officials are allowed to become career politicians, our elections become uncompetitive and new ideas have a harder time being heard. The act sets reasonable term limits of 18 years at each level of government so candidates focus on public service.
- 7 Enact automatic voter registration:** The act automatically registers all interested eligible voters when they interact with government agencies, whether they are registering their car, getting a hunting license, applying for food assistance, or signing up for the national guard. Voters can always opt out from being registered. Information is transmitted electronically and securely to a central source maintained by the state.

## ALASKA LEADS THE WAY

America's 'last frontier' has moved to the front of the pack when it comes to securing American democracy.

In November 2020, Alaskan voters passed a suite of reforms that serve as the 'gold standard' for the other 49 states. RepresentUs was on the ground to help make it happen.

At the core of the reforms is a revamped voting system that gives Alaskans more choices at the ballot box. From the 2022 midterm election moving forward Alaska will be the first state to have the transformative combination of **nonpartisan primaries**, followed by **ranked choice voting** in general elections called Final Four Voting.

Why is this significant?

When it comes to primaries, the nonpartisan (or open-single ballot) system avoids the closed or semi-closed partisan primaries held by many states, which can disadvantage independent and unaffiliated voters, while also preventing Democrats and Republicans from voting across the aisle for a candidate they may prefer.

For the general elections, ranked choice voting allows voters to vote for their preferred candidate, even a Green Party or Libertarian candidate, without worrying that they are throwing their vote away or helping a candidate they don't like win. It also ensures that the eventual winner has majority support.

In a ranked-choice election, voters rank as many candidates as they wish in order of preference. If one candidate receives more, this process continues until there is a majority winner.

Ranked choice voting saves money by avoiding expensive runoff elections. It also promotes less divisive campaigning, which, over time, holds the promise of narrowing our nation's deep political divides and strengthening our democracy for the future.

Unrig Summit  
Nashville, Tennessee  
March 2019

# WE THE BUILDERS



## GRANDMAS GET IT DONE IN NORTH DAKOTA

It's not often that the words 'badass' and 'grandma' make their way into the same sentence.

But it makes perfect sense when you hear the story of a group of North Dakota grandmas who parlayed their daily coffee shop gripes about corrupt government into a historic victory for democracy in their state.

Led by two bipartisan baddies, Dina Butcher and Ellen Chaffee, the Badass Grandmas (a name coined by Chaffee's 17-year-old grandson) worked with RepresentUs to capture 36,000 signatures supporting a constitutional amendment they drafted, and then generated enough support to pass it on Election Day.

The amendment, approved by North Dakota voters in 2018, formed one of the nation's toughest ethics and transparency laws. It overhauled government ethics oversight, banned foreign money from elections, restricted lobbying, and created an independent ethics commission.

### Standing up to special interests

The unlikely path to victory was anything but easy. The Badass Grandmas had to stand up to fierce opposition from oil companies ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips, as well other multinationals, trade associations, and political organizations who were hellbent on maintaining their control over the state's lawmakers.

And then there was the peer pressure that can be exerted in North Dakota, where Chaffee quips "you always assume that the person you're talking to is a relative of the person you're talking about."

Previous ethics proposals championed by the Democratic Party in deep red North Dakota

faced swift deaths in the Republican controlled legislature.

As a result, the grandmas knew this effort needed to be multi-partisan for any chance of success.

Butcher, a Republican, and Chaffee, who has registered as both a Democrat and Independent over the years, made for the perfect public face for the group. Together, they formed an unassuming duo who delivered an anti-corruption, pro-transparency

message that resonated in both red and blue households across the state.

Later, Butcher and Chaffee would recount their story at RepresentUs' Unrig Summit in Nashville.

"Jennifer Lawrence was on stage and presented us with RepresentUs' Courage Award,"

Chaffee recalls. "That pretty much cemented our badass bona-fides with all our grandchildren."

### Following the RepresentUs roadmap

The women believe their campaign is a model for others who want to team up with RepresentUs to enact powerful change.

"Obviously, we never could have accomplished what we did without RepresentUs," Chaffee says. "They gave us the network. They gave us the spine and encouragement when we were down. And they gave us a roadmap that helped us through to the end."

"I remember just waking up every day, being stunned with gratitude and awe. RepresentUs kept delivering. They kept teaching us and supporting us. Honestly, it makes me want to cry knowing there are people out there like those at RepresentUs. They'll always have our greatest loyalty and gratitude."

Totally badass.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM A NEIGHBOR



When the Badass Grandmas needed inspiration, and some key lessons learned, they merely needed to look to their sister state to the south.

South Dakota had a blueprint for much of what the Badass Grandmas hoped to achieve in North Dakota. That blueprint came in the form of the 2016 South Dakota Government Accountability and Anti-Corruption Act.

The sweeping measure, backed by people of all political backgrounds, increased transparency and accountability and empowered voters across the state.

Victory was sweet. But unfortunately, it was short-lived.

Turned out that the will of the people didn't sit well with some of those in power and their special interest allies.

In 2017, establishment politicians repealed the law, and then funded a massive misinformation campaign that beat back an attempt in 2018 to re-establish key elements of the accountability and anti-corruption bill.

Democracy defenders in South Dakota haven't given up. And their experience provided essential lessons learned for bringing about durable change in other states such as North Dakota, where reforms have held strong.

The Badass grandmas accept their courage award at the Unrig Summit in Nashville, Tennessee. March 2019



# DEMOCRACY 2050

A VISION FOR TODAY, AND TOMORROW

When it comes to saving our democracy, RepresentUs has a big, bold vision:

**Make America the world's strongest democracy by 2050.**

Our vision focuses on ensuring your children, grandchildren and the generations of Americans to follow can thrive in a free and uncorrupted democracy.

Over the past 10 years we've made progress by building a fiercely nonpartisan movement. But winning lasting change requires us to redouble our efforts and bring together unlikely allies from the political spectrum, and across the country, to join in our fight.

Our 2050 strategy aims to amplify our success in three key areas:

- 1 Put country over party
- 2 Build a movement
- 3 Win impactful campaigns in states and cities nationwide

What will American democracy look like in 2050?

Imagine a nation where the best and brightest run for office and win. Where the best ideas, not the biggest wallets, determine political outcomes. Where elected officials serve the public interest, not special interests.

And a nation where We the People pursue life, liberty and happiness on behalf of this generation and the next.

That vision can become our reality, and our legacy.

Let's get to work.

## NATIONAL FOCUS



### RepresentUs is making our presence known in Washington, DC

In 2021 and 2022, RepresentUs moved closer than ever to realizing federal reforms we've been working towards for the past 10 years.

We're committed to staying on the ground, and giving you a voice in Washington, DC. To that end, we're executing on federal strategies for 2022 and beyond to:

- Build long-term relationships and bolster brand awareness to establish RepresentUs as a key federal partner.
- Share expert research and policy analysis to guide future legislation before it's even introduced.
- Engage federal lawmakers to support pro-democracy campaigns in their states and districts to support a durable democracy.

We haven't yet reached the pivotal tipping point when local and state momentum spills over into the halls of Congress. But we're confident that day will come.

Activist surveys the capitol after walking over 700 miles from Atlanta to DC to protest corruption. Washington, D.C. September 2019

# WE THE PEOPLE



# REPRESENTING YOU

THE PEOPLE BEHIND REPRESENTUS

Over a decade of working to save democracy, the numbers start to add up. And every number you see on this page has been powered by people. People like you, your friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Heck, even the folks that you may disagree with on everything except the belief that American democracy is worth fighting for. Together, united, we can do this!

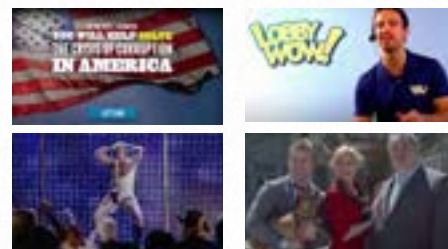
# 24,588

VOLUNTEERS



# 160M

VIRAL VIDEO VIEWS



# 207,045

ACTIONS

# 156+

WINS

# 1.5M

PETITION SIGNATURES



# 2

CO-FOUNDERS IN 2011

# 60

STAFF IN 2021



MORE THAN

# 38,826

DONORS IN 2021

\$800,000 RAISED IN 2011

# \$13M

RAISED IN 2021



## ASK YOURSELF: WHAT WILL I DO TO SAVE OUR DEMOCRACY?

There are a number of ways you can support RepresentUs including:



### Join the Founding Family

Make a pledge of \$50,000 or more per year for three years to fund our unsexy-but-essential core operating expenses.



### Become a Change Maker

Fund long-term solutions with a gift of \$5,000 to \$49,999/year for two years.



### Be a part of the Common Wealth

Give a monthly gift of any amount to join the Common Wealth, and support local campaigns across the country.

OR

Make a one-time gift to meet urgent needs

For other ways to give or get involved, please scan the QR Code, contact us at [info@represent.us](mailto:info@represent.us), or visit [act.represent.us](http://act.represent.us)



# 3

## WAYS YOUR DONATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE

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### 1 DEFEND

Defend American democracy by protecting free and fair elections, cutting out political corruption, and fighting political extremism.

### 2 EDUCATE

Educate everyday Americans about how our government is supposed to work, where it falls short, and what policies can ensure it actually represents us.

### 3 INSPIRE


Inspire Americans to take action in their communities, and win, to make America the world's strongest democracy by 2050.

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Let's start a conversation. Contact us at [info@represent.us](mailto:info@represent.us) | 413.333.5600 ex. 2  
Read this report online: <https://represent.us/wethepeople>

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