

Policy Summary - Democracy:

Ensuring Free and Fair Elections

June 2026



1. **Free and fair elections are vital to our democracy and are highly valued by Americans.** [Compared to autocracies](#), countries with a functioning democracy are economically better off, have better education and infrastructure, longer lifespans, and do better at protecting human rights. [And 92% of Americans](#) say "free and fair elections conducted without fraud" are very important.
2. **However, our election system is not functioning well, in the US or in Texas.**
 - [A 2024 survey](#) found that only 31% of respondents rate our democracy as well-functioning.
 - In two separate international rankings ([Freedom House](#) and [The Economist](#)), the US ranks below most other large, advanced countries in terms of the strength of our democracy.
 - And Texas is even worse. Among US states, [Texas ranks 46th in ease of voting](#). [Reasons include](#) limited mail-in voting, polling place closures leading to long lines to vote, and restrictive registration and voter ID laws.
3. **Several factors are contributing to the weakening of our elections**
 - **Misinformation**, often spread through social media, makes it very difficult to evaluate candidates fairly. [72% of Americans](#) are concerned that misinformation can distort election results.
 - One form of misinformation is **the frequent claim that our elections are subject to significant fraud**. This undermines confidence in elections. However, [voter fraud is almost non-existent](#). For example, the Heritage foundation tracks election fraud and found only 103 cases over a 17-year period, **representing less than one case of fraud for every one million votes**.
 - **Barriers to Voting** – Barriers to voting erected in the past 20 years, including cutting early voting time, restricting registration, and purging voter rolls too aggressively [have kept eligible voters from the polls](#), especially minorities, poor people, and young and old voters.
 - [Foreign interference](#), which has increased since 2016 from Russia, China, Iran and others.
 - [The increasing influence of money in politics](#)
 - **Gerrymandering**, which [distorts and undermines representative democracy](#).
4. **Several policies can help to restore and protect free and fair elections, including:**
 - **At the Federal level, pass legislation to protect voting**, including the [John Lewis Voting Rights Act](#) and the [Freedom to Vote Act](#).
 - **Reduce the corrosive effect of money on our elections**, including passing the [DISCLOSE Act](#).
 - **In Texas, make voter registration easier, expand early voting, and protect mail-in voting**
 - **Establish an independent redistricting commission in Texas** to protect against the distortions caused by gerrymandering. [This is supported by 77% of Texans](#).

More Information

- Center for Policy Progress – full paper on [Ensuring Free and Fair Elections](#).
- Texas Blue Action's ["Just the Facts" five-minute videos](#), including one on Free and Fair Elections.

For questions and comments, contact us at info@centerforpolicyprogress.org.