



February 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2433 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

**RE: Bipartisan Call to Fund Local Election Departments**

Dear Speaker McCarthy, Leader Schumer, Leader Jeffries, and Leader McConnell:

In a time when the public scrutiny of elections is higher than ever, elections offices require your support to meet the needs of the voters in their communities. That is why we are renewing our call for consistent, adequate funding to meet the full need of elections offices in future budget and appropriations cycles: \$20 billion over the next decade.<sup>1</sup>

As a down payment on that investment, we are asking Congress to appropriate at least \$400 million to fund needed repairs and improvements to our nation's election infrastructure in the 2024 fiscal year in advance of the election season. We are continuing to advocate for this funding to be allocated with two-thirds of the funds being sent directly to local election offices where the need is greatest and most informed by local conditions, and one-third of the funds being sent to state election officials to address statewide needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Stewart III, "The Cost of Conducting Elections," Common Sense American and MIT Election Data + Science Lab, accessed October 1, 2022, <https://www.common senseamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/TheCostofConductingElections-2022.pdf>; Mohr et al., "Election Administration Spending in Local Election Jurisdictions: Results from a Nationwide Data Collection Project" (paper submitted for the Election Sciences, Reform, and Administration (ESRA) conference, University of Wisconsin-Madison, July 26-27, 2018), <https://esra.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1556/2020/11/mohr.pdf>; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Securing the Vote: Protecting American Democracy* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2018), 153.

While the 2022 midterm election was successfully and securely administered, local election officials across the country faced a multitude of resource constraints that made their jobs harder and impeded voter access. As the 2024 election cycle approaches, greater investment from the federal government is necessary to ensure the security of that election and to keep these constraints from recurring with potentially worse effects.

Local and state elections officials face massive, increasing challenges to making our elections possible, from rising security threats to the growing stock of aging equipment in need of replacement. Years of unmet infrastructure needs have led to challenges such as melted voting equipment, polling place closures, and cyber and physical security threats that hurt public trust in election security and limit access. At the same time, election offices are struggling to bear the price of basic necessities amidst higher labor costs and ballot paper supply shortages. These challenges are not unique to any single jurisdiction, they harm rural communities and urban communities; big states and small states alike.

Federal elections in particular are the costliest for local election officials to administer, due in part to their higher turnout and longer ballots, yet federal funding for election infrastructure has remained flat and minimal over successive federal budgets. The most recent budget allocation amounted to less than 30 cents per eligible voter.<sup>2</sup> Local election officials are seeing their machines degrade and supplies deplete, largely from their use in federal elections, but they receive little federal funding to defray these costs. Election offices need the federal government to pay its fair share of federal elections – if it continues to fail to do so, it will create long-lasting challenges for elections departments.

We understand that there are competing fiscal priorities, but this need cannot be ignored. The flat funding in the 2023 fiscal year budget was just not enough to fill the growing gaps in our election infrastructure. As we look to next year, we ask Congress to listen to local election officials rather than replicating a budget that has failed to meet their needs across the country. The federal government should adequately and responsibly invest in local election infrastructure in order to ensure efficient, safe, and fair elections across the country.

Sincerely,

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<sup>2</sup> \$75,000,000 in funding spread amongst the 258,327,312 voting age population according to the US Department of Commerce. See: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/03/30/2022-06654/estimates-of-the-voting-age-population-for-2021>.