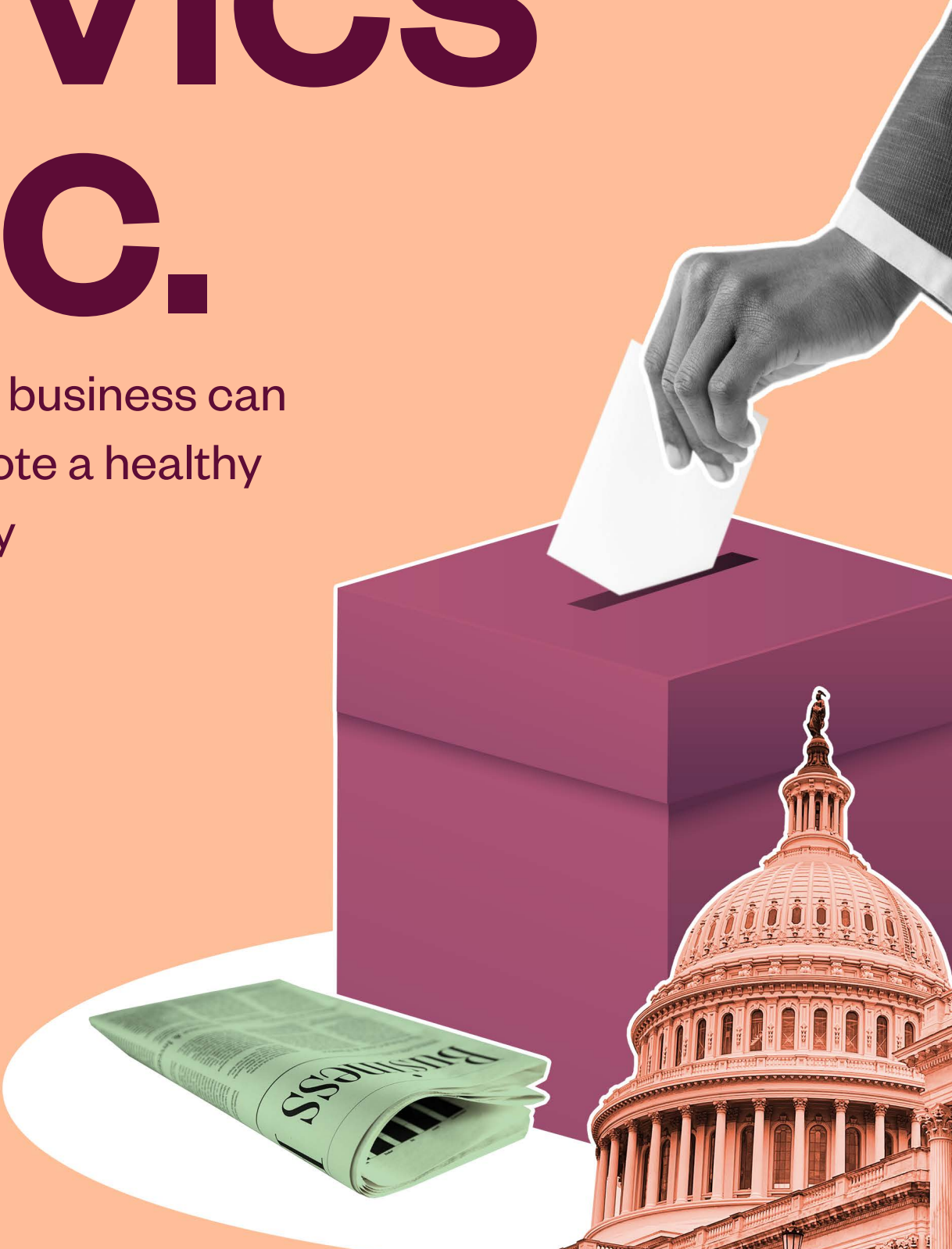


NATION
SWELL

CIVICS INC.

How every business can
help promote a healthy
democracy

MAY 2024



Foreword

Business leaders,

This will be the biggest election year in history, as citizens in countries representing half the world's population head to the polls. In many of those countries, authoritarianism is on the rise and enthusiasm for democracy is waning. At home, the 2024 U.S. election will once again put destabilizing pressure on American political processes and institutions.

We know that the moment demands more than our attention; it demands urgent action. Businesses now stand atop government, media, and other sectors as the most trusted institutions. With this trust, employers have a moral and strategic imperative to take stock, plan, and lead on the promotion of a well-functioning democracy. At the same time, business leaders face internal and external pressures that make the work feel increasingly fraught.

Employers hold outsized potential to mobilize employees and consumers in support of democracy, but to do so they need robust tools, evidence, and illustrative examples to guide their decision-making and strategies.

This resource is designed to meet that need. Inside this report, you'll discover a simple yet effective framework for organizing your company's role in civic participation, one that includes talking points – provided by other business leaders – for making your case, tactics and examples to adopt as your own, and peer-vetted partner and collaborator recommendations.

As I look ahead to this time next year, I know that I will want to feel like I stepped up in the right ways for democracy, election integrity, and the issues that matter most to me – and that work must begin now. Join me.



Greg Behrman
Founder and CEO
NationSwell

Acknowledgments

Founded in 2013, NationSwell is an invitation-only, executive membership community and advisory that works with sustainability, ESG, and philanthropy leaders from the most influential, purpose-driven organizations to help them accelerate their social impact.

NationSwell supports its prestigious membership community with strategic connections, research, and curated programming so that its members can meet the moment and develop more effective solutions for the world's most pressing issues.

NationSwell is in gratitude to the following individuals for the generous gift of their time, expertise, and wisdom in developing this report:

CHRISTIAN ARANA

Vice President of Civic Power and Policy
Latino Community Foundation

ALEXIS BECHTOL

Director of Community Affairs
Levi Strauss & Co.

COREY DUKES

Head of State Election Advocacy Team & Policy Strategist
Protect Democracy

JONATHAN GRUBER

Strategy Lead, Building
Einhorn Collaborative

CORLEY KENNA

Head of Communications and Policy
Patagonia

ATIKA KHAWAJA

Program Associate
Rockefeller Brothers Fund

CELIA MORENO

Social Impact Manager
Lyft

NEENA PATIL

Chief Legal Officer
Jazz Pharmaceuticals

EMILY CRANE PIMENTEL

Executive Director
KPMG

JOANNA RICE

SVP and Global Head of Social Impact
Match Group

NISHANT ROY

Chief Communications & Impact Officer
Chobani

ANJELICA SMITH

Senior Director of Partnerships
Democracy Works

MARGARET TAYLOR

Senior Director, Head of Public Affairs
Salesforce

ALICIA VERMAELE

Executive Director, Starbucks Foundation and Director,
Global Philanthropy and Community
Starbucks

Table of contents

- Executive summary →
- 8 cut-through insights →
- Goal 1: Encouraging and enabling civic participation →
- Goal 2: Promoting information accessibility, transparency, and quality →
- Goal 3: Supporting issues that protect fundamental rights and strengthen democracy →



Executive summary

Every business has an opportunity to meaningfully impact civic participation and the health of our democracy, but there is no single model or approach that they must adopt. Based on research interviews conducted in 2024 with 14 corporate leaders and democracy experts, this report provides a strategic framework to help employers customize their efforts based on their unique contexts, goals, and capabilities.

Strategic framework for employers

The strategic framework presented in this report organizes around three Goals – the objectives toward which a corporate civic engagement strategy should aim:



Goal 1:
Encouraging and enabling civic participation

[Jump to this section](#) →



Goal 2:
Promoting information accessibility, transparency, and quality

[Jump to this section](#) →



Goal 3:
Supporting issues that protect fundamental rights and strengthen democracy

[Jump to this section](#) →

For each of these three Goals, this report provides leaders with the following information and supports:

Talking points for making their business case, sourced directly from other business leaders and democracy experts

Tactical implementation guidance and real-world examples based on where the Goals intersect with Impact Levers – the five core assets and capabilities a company can use to advance their Goals:

- Workplace policies and benefits
- Employee engagement and people infrastructure
- Corporate products and services
- Political contributions and advocacy
- Corporate and executive voice

Peer-vetted partner and collaborator recommendations to help employers supplement their own strengths and pursue collective action

Limitations of this report

While important and worthy of additional attention, the following topics and goals are not within the scope of this report:

How to assess specific corporate risks related to democratic decline.

Approaches to measuring and evaluating the impact of corporate civic participation efforts.

The role of philanthropic grants and contributions in supporting civic participation and democracy

Opportunities to support civic participation and democracy outside of the U.S.

Please reach out to us at insights@nationswell.com to discuss how this framework can be further tailored to your organization.

8 cut-through insights from business leaders and democracy experts

Across our research interviews, some ideas emerged as having the potential to sharpen and elevate the ways employers understand, frame, and approach their role in promoting civic participation. These insights cut across our strategic framework and are echoed in the tactical guidance provided in the body of this report. Therefore, we share them first:

1. Refuse the notion that civic participation or democracy are four-letter words

Unfortunately, many of the same forces acting to delegitimize ESG and DEIB are also attempting to recast elements of the democratic processes as partisan. Voting, democracy, civic education, and advocacy around the integrity of our electoral system are not partisan notions, and employers have a responsibility to reject any premise to the contrary. Like democracy itself, some issues that relate to fundamental rights are being spun as partisan politics. By shifting the frame, bad faith actors are intending to discourage businesses and others from voicing support or taking action when those fundamental rights are put at risk. Employers must be clear-eyed about this tactic and maintain their convictions in the face of such pressures.

2. Increase emphasis on local and state-level engagement

The phrase “all politics is local” may feel less resonant during a moment when the country’s political attention seems singularly focused on candidates for the presidency, but the reality is that most people are deeply impacted by the decisions made by local and state elected officials. Particularly in an election cycle where some experts fear low voter enthusiasm for candidates at the top of the ticket, employers can and should direct more attention toward engaging their employees, customers, and other audiences around the issues that are closest to home. Doing so will drive volunteerism, voting, and various other forms of civic participation.

3. Empower neutral champions to push the organization beyond its status quo

The best business case for democracy won't succeed if delivered by the wrong messenger. As leaders consider their organization's path toward increased civic engagement, they should identify and support internal champions who can advocate with credibility and without over-expressing their self interest. Individuals in marketing or legal roles may have biases toward certain company behaviors based on the particular incentives of their roles, which may mean they're less effective at influencing C-level executives. Individuals in public affairs and communications roles may be more successful.

4. Encourage early voting where applicable

Many states allow voters to cast their ballots early, either in-person, through the mail, or both. Of those states, 26 offer some number of weekend days for early in-person voting. While early voting opportunities should not excuse employers from providing adequate time off to vote on Election Day, they do offer employees meaningful flexibility in terms of how they exercise their right to participate.

5. Help employees improve their information quality through training and resources, but adjudicate factuality sparingly

While some companies, particularly those in the tech and media sectors, have opportunities to help directly stem the spread of mis/disinformation, most companies cannot. And by and large, most employers should not and can not position themselves as adjudicators of what's good information and what's not. Instead, the employer's most effective role is one that acknowledges that many people are not properly equipped to assess information quality for themselves. Through training and tools, employers can serve a function that is widely absent for working-age adults. Only in very select instances – like widespread election result conspiracies – should employers activate their public voice to correct falsehoods.

6. Help employees deploy their interests and voices in service of civic engagement

As the risks associated with active engagement around sensitive or polarizing issues rise for companies, some are discovering that their opportunity to empower individual employees is also rising. Even when a company cannot or should not speak out on an issue, they can provide their workers with the tools and confidence to participate effectively, responsibly, and respectfully outside of the workplace.

7. Stay ahead of the potential for internal debate and conflict

Generally speaking, workplaces reflect a wide range of political opinions and perspectives. In an election year, particularly one in which the stakes feel high for both sides of the partisan spectrum, the opportunity for workplace tension is high. Employers thus have a unique set of conflicting interests to navigate: on one hand, the occasion to help individuals practice civil dialogue, a social muscle that is atrophying; on the other, the responsibility to provide employees with a safe, healthy, and productive workplace. Policies and support to managers, who are likely to be in the middle of any resulting conflicts, are critical to have in place in advance of the election.

8. Rally other businesses through executive-to-executive engagement

In civic engagement and democracy, there are several powerful examples of third-party led coalitions and collective action groups that have made – and continue to make – significant impact. Some of them are referenced throughout this report. Yet, there is little replacement for the power of one business executive calling on another to drive action. Initiatives such as Time to Vote – spearheaded by executive leaders at companies like Patagonia and Levi’s – show the potential for scaled impact and strength in numbers.

GOAL

1

Encouraging and enabling civic participation

Public participation in civic activities – voting, poll working, running for office, community organizing, and so on – is the lifeblood of a healthy and vibrant democracy. When individuals feel empowered, equipped, and able to engage, their efforts are rewarded by a more representative, responsive, and accountable government at all levels. Employers wield considerable influence over individual civic participation, both in terms of their opportunity to inform and activate workers as well as their ability to pull down barriers to access. At a minimum, employers must provide employees with the opportunity to cast their vote on Election Day without penalty, including loss of pay. But the ceiling for what companies can do to promote civic participation is considerably higher.

Talking points for making the business case →

Tactical framework for implementation →

Partner and collaborator recommendations →



Making the business case for encouraging and enabling civic participation

Civic participation is good for democracy, and democracy is good for business. But don't take our word for it. Here's how other leaders are making the case for why employers should encourage and enable civic participation:



In the words of Margaret Taylor,

Senior Director and Head of Public Affairs, Salesforce

Investing in employee nonpartisan civic engagement has long been a priority for Salesforce.

It's a way to encourage our employees to be involved in their communities where they live and work.

It's a way for our government affairs team to build internal relationships with civically minded colleagues.

Civic engagement, and get out the vote programs in particular, might seem like an “and” for some companies. By that I mean, it is another project that teams take on without a clear return on investment. But that is not the case. There is absolutely a business case.

First and foremost, a healthy democracy provides certainty that the market seeks. Fitch [cited](#) heightened political divisions as a reason to downgrade the U.S. credit rating in 2023.

In the words of Margaret Taylor,

Senior Director and Head of Public Affairs, Salesforce

And at Salesforce, we understand that a healthy democracy depends on civic participation, and voting in particular. When citizens don't vote, we increase the risk of unrepresentative government, low institutional trust, and further marginalization of minority groups. When citizens do vote, our government is more representative and accountable to their interests. High participation helps to legitimize the institutions we depend on for the regulatory and market stability our business needs.

Civic participation is not just good for our democracy and, by extension, our markets. It is also good for individual wellbeing. As an employer, we're more resilient, productive, and valuable when our employees enjoy physical, psychological, and social wellbeing. Many studies show that civic participation – voting, volunteering, and so on – has a direct impact on individuals' sense of health.

Finally, nonpartisan civic engagement helps people connect to their neighbors and communities. It provides an outlet for employees to grow their internal networks and meet others who are passionate about the same issues as they are. That investment in the places where we live and work helps to foster a belonging and greater understanding of one another, two goals that are fundamental to our understanding of employer engagement.

”

Tactical framework for encouraging and enabling civic participation

Click an “Impact Lever” to jump to more detailed guidance and real world examples supporting adoption of the related tactics.

IMPACT LEVERS	TACTICS
Workplace policies and benefits Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Support Election Day flexible scheduling <input type="checkbox"/> Offer Election Day paid time off <input type="checkbox"/> Close firmwide for all or part of Election Day <input type="checkbox"/> Offer annual civic time off
Employee engagement and people infrastructure Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Create an internal resource hub with voting information, tools, and resources <input type="checkbox"/> Educate employees on government, civics, and the role of individual participation <input type="checkbox"/> Host a workplace voter registration drive <input type="checkbox"/> Engage with a civics oriented employee network and/or Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) <input type="checkbox"/> Provide volunteer and employee giving opportunities aligned with civic participation <input type="checkbox"/> Support poll worker recruitment <input type="checkbox"/> Reward and celebrate civic participation
Corporate products and services Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Run a point-of-service voter registration campaign <input type="checkbox"/> Donate business facilities as polling places <input type="checkbox"/> Launch a product-based voter and civic engagement awareness campaign
Political contributions and advocacy Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Advocate and lobby for voting rights and access <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate and lobby for increased election funding at the local, state, and federal level
Corporate and executive voice Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Make a public statement in support of civic participation, voting rights, and voting access <input type="checkbox"/> Run a creative campaign around civic participation

Impact Lever: Workplace policies and benefits

TACTIC	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES
Support Election Day flexible scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible scheduling means that any employee who wishes to take time off to vote has the opportunity to adjust their schedule in advance to accommodate their voting• This option should be considered the minimum accommodation for employees to vote; it is most appropriate for organizations with a large number of hourly shift workers• In addition to a written policy for employees to clarify their opportunities and responsibilities, employers should communicate early and often with shift managers and other parties who are in direct contact with scheduling processes in order to mitigate the potential for conflict and confusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Starbucks supports employees (known as partners) with planning resources and tools around voting, enabling them to exercise their right to vote in every election. Starbucks leaders work with employees in their stores to ensure partners have the time they need to vote and a plan ahead of Election Day.• >70% of Chobani's employees are frontline workers in their plants; many of them work 12 hour shifts and live ~35 minutes from work. To ensure that these employees have the time to vote at their polling location, Chobani works closely with plant supervisors to provide staggered time off on Election Day, rotating among workers. At some plants, they start operations later or end earlier to accommodate voting, while others shut down certain lines or parts of the operation to lessen the labor needs.
Offer Election Day paid time off	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some employers provide workers with a set amount of paid time off to vote on Election Day; a minimum of 3 hours is recommended• Before setting a paid time off policy, employers should study the realities of how long it takes for individuals to vote in relevant geographies; employees should never feel pressured to leave a line at a polling location because they're reaching the end of their paid time off benefit• To encourage utilization of paid time off on Election Day, companies should communicate early and often with managers to ensure that employees feel supported in using this benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lyft provides employees up to 4 hours paid time off to vote. Additionally, the company has a "no meetings" policy on Election Day, ensuring that employees can vote at any time during the day.• Salesforce sends Slack reminders to employees prior to, and on, Election Days to remind them to make a plan to vote. Additionally, their employees use Slack emojis related to voting to indicate that they are exercising their right to vote.
Close firmwide for all or part of Election Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some employers close the entire organization for some or all of Election Day, even when not required to do so by state law• De facto election holidays help remove any pressure on employees to work instead of vote, and eliminate the potential for conflict between managers and employees over the use of more limited benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 2020, Best Buy closed its offices until noon (local time) on Election Day.• Patagonia institutes a firm-wide shut down on Election Day for general elections, including all stores, distribution centers, and headquarters.• For Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota (BCBSMN), Election Day is a paid company holiday on all even-numbered years (2024, 2026, etc.).

Impact Lever: Workplace policies and benefits

TACTIC

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

EXAMPLES

Offer annual civic time off

- A more flexible benefit than voting paid time off, civic time off allows employees to take off a certain number of paid hours across a benefit cycle to engage in a range of relevant civic activities, including poll working, voter registration, peaceful demonstration, and more
- It is important for employers to clearly define what activities are eligible for this benefit; one of the most important considerations is whether ostensibly partisan volunteer activities (like campaign volunteering, public demonstrations, and so forth) are eligible

- **Peloton** provides five paid days off for team members to participate in civic engagement activities, such as volunteering at polling places, volunteering for a candidate, and attending a demonstration.

Impact Lever: Employee engagement and people infrastructure

TACTIC	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES
<p>Create an internal resource hub with voting information, tools, and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers can equip employees with nonpartisan tools and information about voting via an intranet site or another internal resource hub Foundational resources to offer employees include: tools and guidance on registering to vote, information on how to find your polling location, primary and general elections calendars, early voting requirements and instructions, and corporate civic participation benefits and policy information Some employers also provide employees with access to nonpartisan information about specific candidates, ballot measures, and other issues that are up for a vote; doing so requires a well-vetted and trusted partner (like secretaries of state) to ensure accuracy and avoid partisan bias Visit Civic Alliance's 2024 Elections Toolkit, which includes information on the election landscape (calendar, ballot, redistricting, etc.), a voter engagement timeline, resources for messaging (e.g. social media and email templates), and a glossary of elected officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a core aspect of their Citizen Travelers program, Travelers provides information and tools for civic participation through an employee portal, including a function that allows employees to communicate with each other about pertinent issues across geographies and interest areas. Target partnered with League of Women Voters to create Vote411.org/Target, "which has everything needed to get started in the voting process, including information on how to register, check your voter registration status and find what's on your local ballot." Starbucks hosts a public website on civic engagement for both employees and consumers. The site features turnkey steps to engage in the voting process and resources to learn about issues impacting voters and their communities. Levi Strauss & Co. partners with Ballotready to host a one-stop-shop for employees to register to vote, check their status, learn of new and existing laws in their state, understand what's on their ballot and key dates and deadlines for their local elections.
<p>Educate employees on government, civics, and the role of individual participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civic participation is enabled by civic education; some employers are providing their workers with access to live and/or asynchronous programming to inform them about a range of civic issues Programming topics could include: how government works, how elections work, the range of opportunities for individuals to participate in democratic processes, how to run for office, and more While civic education programming should be optional for employees, employers can look for ways to make participation easy and appealing; interactivity, gamification, social elements, and active participation by all levels of management may help Visit The Civic Trust's curated resources for businesses to use for civics learning and engagement, including a white paper on the business case for civic education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travelers hosts nonpartisan webinars, called the "Civics Conversations Series," during which speakers provide information to employees and the public on civic engagement topics. For example, a webinar in May 2024 focuses on "The Importance of Balanced Information and Human Connections in a Pluralist Democracy." During election cycles, Salesforce invites candidates from across the political spectrum to record and share videos with employees to help them understand the candidates' policy positions on relevant issues. Additionally, to promote employee education about civics, Salesforce created and distributed its own version of Schoolhouse Rock videos, known as "Salesforce Rock." The four videos were filmed in DC on the National Mall and focused on Congress, the presidential administration, regulatory agencies, and the Supreme Court. In 2024, Lyft plans to partner with the ACLU or the League of Women Voters to bring in a speaker to talk about voting rights and the importance of civic participation.

Impact Lever: Employee engagement and people infrastructure

TACTIC	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES
<p>Host a workplace voter registration drive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to providing voter registration information in an evergreen location, employers can develop concentrated communications campaigns to encourage employees to register • Consider leveraging existing moments like National Voter Registration Day, or create your own focal point, to draw attention to the issue • Engage individuals at all levels of the organization to serve as champions for voter registration; consider offering incentives or perks for team members to volunteer their time for internal registration efforts • Make voter registration a fun and celebratory affair; consider social events in the workplace and bring levity into communications around the drive • Figure out what you're comfortable tracking and reporting on; one option includes inviting employees to opt-in to sharing whether they've registered to vote as a result of the drive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salesforce aims to make voter registration fun for employees. For instance, the company provides giveaways like "I Voted" socks, custom stickers, and shirts during events and voter registration drives. Salesforce partners with TurboVote on its employee registration efforts. • Salesforce has learned to work closely (and early) with its internal communications team to tailor employee messaging in line with company policy. Knowing which cities or states have large employee communities allows the company to build relevant voting registration and voting engagement strategies, such as encouraging early voting where available or providing location-specific information on how to vote (i.e., your location allows mail in voting).
<p>Engage with a civics oriented employee network and/or Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some employers have created formal employee networks around civic participation; these networks provide a place for employees to connect over civic issues and champion civic participation within the organization • Existing ERGs also offer a rich infrastructure for driving civic participation; ERGs can help engage their members in civic activities in ways that are reflective of their identities and common interests • Employers can invite ERGs to identify gaps and opportunities for better civic engagement resources from the company • ERGs may be well-positioned to identify relevant civic organizations for grant funding and/or programming partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each year, Salesforce's government affairs team presents to all ERG leaders from across the company at its Global Equality Leadership Summit. The government affairs team outlines its strategy for the year, including what issues they plan to work on and a rationale for what they're not focused on, and then strategizes how to partner with ERGs. • Target has an employee network called "Citizens@Target" which encourages active participation in democracy. The group is intended to create "a space for team members to learn about and discuss issues and access resources on voting and the civic process." • Levi Strauss & Co. partners with their ERGs to select and invite organizations working to educate voters and get out the vote across their diverse number of ERGs to host informal conversations on civic engagement.

Impact Lever: Employee engagement and people infrastructure

TACTIC	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES
Provide volunteer and employee giving opportunities aligned with civic participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employers can support employees in channeling their time and resources toward civic wellbeing by providing structured volunteer engagement opportunities, facilitating employee giving to community and civic organizations, and celebrating team members for their individual and collective efforts• By supporting more intensive forms of civic volunteering, like serving on a school board, employers can help employees develop important professional skills to bring back to the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Travelers connects employees with volunteer opportunities that align with their organizational civic priorities. For example, Travelers partnered with the National Constitution Center on Memorial Day to offer free admission to the public, and encouraged employees to volunteer. Additionally, the company encourages employees to consider public leadership; in 2023, Travelers held a webinar that helped participants examine the skills they already have to be a successful elected official.• Levi Strauss & Co. incentivizes employees to volunteer at voter registration drives. For example, the company partnered with Head Count to offer employees free entrance to a music festival if they helped to register voters at concerts and music festivals. Additionally, Levi's recommends aligning voter registration with pre-existing days of action. For example, in 2024, Levi's aims to align its Annual Day of Service ("Community Day") with voter registration volunteer opportunities, including at food banks that typically have high voter registration rates.• Jazz Pharmaceuticals' Legal Department partners with law firms to provide pro bono services to support clemency and the restoration of civil rights for previously convicted individuals. During recent elections, lawyers for the company also volunteered and staffed regional call centers of the national voter hotline on Election Day to provide immediate assistance to voters who encounter problems attempting to vote in states with high risk of election day problems, including dissemination of misinformation by poll workers, problems with voting machines, and potential voter intimidation.
Support poll worker recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Given the poll worker shortage during the 2020 election cycle, many companies encouraged employees to volunteer as poll workers during early voting or on Election Day• If supported through paid time off, volunteering as a poll worker can be a mechanism for employees to strengthen the human infrastructure in our electoral system while deepening their understanding of election processes• To ensure that employees feel prepared and safe while volunteering as poll workers, companies should provide training materials and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• During the 2020 U.S. election, Old Navy, Target, and Warby Parker (among others) offered employees paid time off to volunteer as poll workers, an effort motivated by Civic Alliance and Power to the Polls to recruit 250,000 new poll workers.• As a benefit, Salesforce employees have access to a global safety and security team. When employees volunteer as nonpartisan poll workers, they can opt to alert the safety and security team of their location, enabling support if any safety issues arise. Managers are reminded of this employee benefit and are encouraged to support their teams in feeling safe and confident in being a civic volunteer.

Impact Lever: Employee engagement and people infrastructure

TACTIC

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

EXAMPLES

Reward and celebrate civic participation

- Consider recognizing employees for their civic participation at workplace events, in internal corporate communications, and in public spaces like the corporate social impact website
- Invite ERGs and civics-oriented employee networks to nominate individuals for recognition
- In addition to formal recognition moments, create spaces and opportunities for individuals to celebrate themselves and each other for their civic activities, such as inviting employees to share a 30 second sound bite or written testimonial about why civic participation is important to them

- **Travelers** celebrates employees who are civically engaged through [spotlights](#). This incentivizes employee involvement and rewards innovative or exemplary approaches. Additionally, **Travelers'** CEO gives an award to the most civically engaged employee (the Citizen Travelers Award) during the annual meeting of shareholders.
- In 2018, in addition to ample information and reminders about voting, **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota (BCBSMN)** aimed to make the process fun and exciting through an "I Voted" selfie station. In the same year, they reported [88%](#) voter participation among employees.

Impact lever: Corporate products and services

TACTIC	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES
<p>Run a point-of-service voter registration campaign</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers with physical and/or virtual retail locations can provide customers with opportunities to register to vote at their point-of-service • Some retailers have designated specific locations for voter registration hubs, offering scannable barcodes and QR codes or even dedicated tablets for customers to process their voter registration in the moment • Employers may consider promoting special guests and other entertainment as part of onsite registration activities in order to bring additional attention to the effort • Social comms can help companies advertise and promote their point-of-service voter registration activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2020, Saks Fifth Avenue offered voter registration at its flagship store. Customers were invited to register, complete an absentee ballot, and/or check their voter status. They also provided online voting registration through their website. • Beginning in July 2020, Facebook pinned a box with voting registration information to the top of News Feeds for all U.S. users of voting age. The company's goal was to get 4M people registered to vote. Additionally, Facebook allowed users to turn off all political ads during the 2020 election cycle, an effort to focus on increasing voting over moderating misinformation. • In 2024, Levi Strauss & Co., Lyft, and corporate partners are convening the business community to focus a portion of their civic engagement efforts on community colleges. The Community College Commitment is intended to close the voter participation gap between four year colleges/universities and community colleges, which traditionally see lower registration and turnout rates.
<p>Donate business facilities as polling places</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too few polling locations in certain geographies can lead to long wait times for voters and discourage voting altogether • Businesses are able to donate their facilities to serve as polling locations, assuming they meet the guidelines and requirements set forth by elections administrators • Employers with an interest in offering facilities for polling locations should start by contacting their state elections officials • Visit Civic Alliance's guidance for how to host a polling place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2020, organizations including the NBA and Live Nation converted their arenas and venues into polling locations.

Impact lever: Corporate products and services

TACTIC	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES
<p>Launch a product-based voter and civic engagement awareness campaign</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some companies, particularly consumer brands, develop product campaigns around elections to promote voting and other forms of civic participation • Product-based awareness campaigns offer opportunities to collaborate with designers and brand ambassadors that have powerful platforms and messages related to civic participation • Companies should consider partnering with a nonprofit and nonpartisan voter registration or civic participation organization in order to convert message awareness into specific behaviors like registering to vote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through its Lyft Up Voting Access Program, Lyft offers a discount code that anyone in the U.S. with a valid Lyft account can use to get a discounted ride (50% off up to \$10) to the polls on Election Day. Additionally, Lyft donates discount ride codes to nonprofit partners based on its goal of ensuring that everyone can access the polls. During the 2020 election cycle, Lyft’s corporate clients – including Nike and Starbucks – provided their employees with Lyft ride codes for voting purposes. Lyft launched their Voting Access program in 2018 when it discovered that, “over 15 million people were registered but didn’t vote in 2016 because of transportation issues.” • In 2020, Shake Shack encourage early voting with a free fry promotion and offered free burgers to badged poll workers. • La Colombe has provided free samples at polling locations and has donated products to ACLU teams in Georgia, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. • In 2018, Spotify created curated playlists for each U.S. state that were released on October 30 to encourage voter turnout. • In 2020, Under Armour created a #RunToVote challenge through MapMyRun that encouraged users to run 11.3 miles between October 12 and Election Day (November 3). They encouraged runners to spell out “vote” on their route via their app and share a screenshot to social media. • In 2020, Levi Strauss & Co. launched a Vote Collection, featuring celebrity ads and clothes for sale with taglines like “Don’t Just Think About It, Vote About It.”

Impact lever: Political contributions and advocacy

TACTIC	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES
Advocate and lobby for voting rights and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocacy for general and specific legislation that expands voting rights is an important and effective way for companies to assert their influence on an issue that significantly impacts the health of our democracy• Employers and their leaders also have the opportunity to advocate against specific legislation that threatens the rights and abilities of individuals to participate in voting• Group statements and joint advocacy efforts between companies offer strength in numbers by increasing efficacy and reducing the share of risk owned by a single entity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 2021, 150+ companies, including Levi Strauss & Co., signed a letter asking Congress to introduce and pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would hinder voting discrimination and support states in reporting changes in election law.
Advocate and lobby for increased election funding at the local, state, and federal levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Like voting rights, adequate funding is determinant of the health and quality of elections administration in the United States• Employers can consider advocacy for general or specific legislation that increases public funding for election administration or its component parts, like hardware or health and safety measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ben & Jerry's has actively worked on campaign finance reform, specifically advocating for the overturn of the Supreme Court's ruling on Citizens United vs. FEC.

Impact lever: Corporate and executive voice

TACTIC	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES
<p>Make a public statement in support of civic participation, voting rights, and voting access</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Op-eds, press interviews, and social media all offer opportunities for companies to voice their support of civic participation Public statements can be proactive – i.e., made in service to advancing support for and awareness of the importance of civic engagement – or reactive – i.e., made in response to specific threats, challenges, or opportunities in the environment Companies can make public statements alone, or in conjunction with coalitions like Civic Alliance and Time to Vote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2021, Patagonia released a public statement in support of voting rights and access. They encouraged business leaders to fund activists supporting voting registration efforts, send letters to senators representing states where they conduct business, and reach out to business partners to encourage them to speak out against restrictive voting laws In 2018, Patagonia, Levi Strauss & Co., and PayPal founded Time to Vote, a nonpartisan initiative to encourage companies to give employees the time they need to vote. With over 2,000 members, the coalition is a leader in the movement to ensure that employees don't have to choose between a paycheck and casting a vote.
<p>Run a creative campaign around civic participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to public statements, some companies develop strategic and creative marketing campaigns to promote awareness and participation around civic activities Companies can consider paid advertising campaigns as well as content pushed through owned social, email, and other communications channels Civically-oriented marketing campaigns may or may not be connected with a particular product promotion; in either case, employers should include a specific call to action for public audiences, like registering to vote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2020, Nike encouraged the public to vote through an ad campaign – “You Can't Stop Our Voice” – featuring famous athletes including LeBron James, Naomi Osaka, Odell Beckham, Jr., Sue Bird, Ja Morant, A'Ja Wilson, and Tim Anderson. In 2020, Under Armour promoted voting through its “Run to Vote” initiative, which provided public information on registering to vote, finding your polling location, and requesting an absentee ballot. The initiative is publicly supported by the company's former CEO, Patrik Frisk, who voted for the first time in the U.S. during the 2020 election cycle. In 2020, in partnership with Georgia Voting Works, Coca-Cola ran public-service announcements/ads on the importance of early, in-person voting in Georgia.

Peer-vetted partner organizations

The following organizations were identified by contributors to this project as key nonpartisan partners in their efforts to promote civic participation:

BALLOT READY

Provides personalized, nonpartisan information to voters and helps voters register, make a plan to vote, and look up their elected representatives. BallotReady for Organizations fuels efforts by companies and organizations to recruit candidates and inform and turn out voters through a customized digital platform, working with companies like Spotify, Tinder, and Snapchat to mobilize users nationwide.

BUSINESS FOR VOTING RIGHTS

An opportunity for businesses to sign a letter urging Congress to restore the protections of the Voting Rights Act.

CIVIC ALLIANCE

A nonpartisan coalition of businesses united by our commitment to a thriving democracy.

EVERY VOTE COUNTS

We build towards our vision of an engaged public by helping students, chapters and partners become year-round hubs of civic engagement on campus, and by activating our student network across three initiative areas: elections and voter engagement, civic education, and pro-voter advocacy and reform. We help students either start a dedicated, institutionalized organization on campus, or work to support and amplify existing student-led efforts.

FUTURE CAUCUS

Works directly with our nation's leading, young policymakers on both a federal and state level to bridge the partisan divide and lead a new era of collaborative governance.

HEAD COUNT

A nonpartisan organization that uses the power of music to register voters and promote participation in democracy. We reach young people and music fans where they already are - at concerts and online - to inform and empower.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

A nonpartisan, grassroots organization working to protect and expand voting rights and ensure everyone is represented in our democracy. We empower voters and defend democracy through advocacy, education, and litigation, at the local, state, and national levels.

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

Brings together people of all ages and perspectives, across America and around the world, to learn about, debate, and celebrate the greatest vision of human freedom in history, the U.S. Constitution.

NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY

A nonpartisan civic holiday celebrating our democracy...has quickly gained momentum since it was first observed in 2012, with more than 5 million voters registered to vote on the holiday to date. Celebrated every September, National Voter Registration Day involves volunteers and organizations from all over the country hitting the streets in a single day of coordinated field, technology, and media efforts.

POWER THE POLLS

A nonpartisan initiative that recruits potential poll workers through a coalition of partners, identifies the need for poll workers by working with election administrations and state-based partners, and houses a centralized hub for localized poll worker information.

STUDENT VOTE

A project of the Student PIRGs' New Voters Project, which is America's oldest and largest field-based nonpartisan youth voter mobilization program. The Student PIRGs' New Voters Project, a 501(c)(3) organization with 4945(f) status, has run peer-to-peer young voter mobilization drives to turn out the youth vote on college campuses for more than 25 years.

TIME TO VOTE

A coalition of companies that are committed to ensuring that employees have a work schedule that allows them time to vote.

THE CIVIC TRUST

Energizing and modernizing America's civic life by changing the conversation and perception of civics in classrooms, board rooms, on social media and through other platforms. We actively support and engage leading national and local stakeholders in areas like civic literacy and civics at work.

VOTE.ORG

The largest 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan voting registration and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) technology platform in America. We aim to increase voting behavior and reach historically underserved voters of color and underrepresented young voters.

VOTERIDERS

A nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with a mission to ensure that all citizens are able to exercise their freedom to vote. VoteRiders informs and helps citizens to secure their voter ID as well as inspires and supports organizations, local volunteers, and communities to sustain voter ID education and assistance efforts.

VOTE RUN LEAD

Trains women to run for office and win, reaching over 55,000 women across America. Our alumni serve on city councils, county boards, state houses, supreme courts, and Congress.

WHEN WE ALL VOTE

A leading national, nonpartisan initiative on a mission to change the culture around voting and to increase participation in each and every election by helping to close the race and age gap. Created by Michelle Obama, When We All Vote brings together individuals, institutions, brands, and organizations to register new voters across the country and advance civic education for the entire family and voters of every age to build an informed and engaged electorate for today and generations to come.

GOAL 2

Promoting information accessibility, transparency, and quality

The political and electoral information environment is becoming more saturated, polarized, and infused with mis/disinformation. Many people lack the knowledge or tools to recognize manipulated media, and many are retreating to partisan echo chambers or low-quality information sources. The results are easy to spot: growing distrust of differing points of view, the spread of conspiratorial viewpoints, and a breakdown in our shared understanding of factuality, among other challenges. At a moment when the public trusts businesses above other institutions, including government and media, employers ought to consider their unique responsibility to help individuals regain their orientation to the kinds of information that will help them to participate fully and constructively in civic life.

Note: It is critical for technology and social media companies to play an active role in combating mis/disinformation this year. We recommend [“Digital Risks to the 2024 Elections: Safeguarding Democracy in the Era of Disinformation”](#) as important reading for technology companies.

Talking points for making the business case →

Tactical framework for implementation →

Partner and collaborator recommendations →



Making the business case for promoting information accessibility, transparency, and quality

High-quality and widely available information is good for democracy, and democracy is good for business. But don't take our word for it. Here's how other leaders are making the case for why employers should promote information accessibility, transparency, and quality:



In the words of Christian Arana,

Vice President of Civic Power and Policy, Latino Community Foundation

The risks of mis/disinformation to organizations include reputational loss, financial loss, and disruption of business objectives. As consumers evolve in their behavior in how they spend their time and resources, ensuring accuracy is tantamount given how it can affect consumer choice. Company culture and the way in which information is shared among employees are major factors in protecting against mis/disinformation ([Bank of America](#))

A vital, robust, and productive business environment requires an impartial judicial system that is void from influence, corruption, and misconduct. Demanding transparency and accountability in our democracy, especially in the judicial system, can ensure contracts are honored and business disputes are settled in a fair manner

Businesses can, and must, play a bigger role in strengthening the information ecosystems in their communities. A 2023 study by researchers at Medill School of Journalism and Northwestern University found that over half of U.S. counties have no or very limited access to a reliable local news source ([Northwestern University](#)). Ensuring that reliable, consistent, and trusted information is safeguarded is not only good for communities to stay informed, but it presents businesses an opportunity to take part in a larger discourse in their role in the community

In the words of Christian Arana,

Vice President of Civic Power and Policy, Latino Community Foundation

Despite the growing political polarization we are experiencing in our society, businesses can create safe and welcoming environments that can engender long-term employee satisfaction and retention. According to a company that provided civic education training to employees, being trained in how to recognize and respond to hate speech and misinformation makes employees more self-assured in doing their jobs ([New York Times, 2023](#))

Businesses can leverage their social media and communication platforms to encourage their employees, consumers, and supply-chain partners to participate in elections. This information can include vital information on where and how to vote. Half of American adults get at least some of their news from social media, with the largest share (30% of all U.S. adults) saying they regularly get news from Facebook ([Pew Research Center](#))

”



In the words of Corley Kenna, Head of Communications and Policy, Patagonia
and J.J. Huggins, PR and Communications Manager, Patagonia

Voting and a strong democracy should be a priority for every business because it enables economic and cultural stability and creates a foundation for progress.

Several factors could inhibit voter participation in US elections this year including:

- [Misinformation and disinformation](#) are expected to be more rampant and sophisticated than ever. We have already seen this in primaries.
- There are growing [racial disparities](#) in voter turnout.
- There's an enthusiasm gap with the presidential candidates.

Our colleagues and communities will be exposed to information from a range of sources. One of the clearest ways we can foster trust is by providing high-quality information about the logistics of voting and information about the candidates and the issues they care about from trustworthy sources.

- According to the [2024 and Edelman Trust Barometer](#), the public trusts business more than government and the media, and employees trust their employers. This means businesses have an opportunity—and responsibility—to amplify the importance of voting.

CEOs and the private sector can advocate for democracy and encourage their communities—especially their employees—to vote and volunteer. Examples include:

- Provide trusted sources to learn what's on the ballot and how to serve as an election-related volunteer. Encourage interactive sessions for questions and for employees to practice filling out their ballots and to hear about all the various ways to engage in their communities regardless of their political affiliation.

Join [Time to Vote](#), which is an initiative that Patagonia, Levi Strauss & Co. and PayPal founded in 2018. Time to Vote has grown to include more than 2,000 companies willing to provide time and resources to help their employees vote.

In the words of Corley Kenna, Head of Communications and Policy, Patagonia
and J.J. Huggins, PR and Communications Manager, Patagonia

While time to vote on Election Day is not as big of a barrier as it was in 2018—thanks to the growing popularity of voting by mail and early voting—corporate initiatives that encourage voting are still important, and it’s one way to address something both political parties agree on: Our democracy is in a [precarious place](#).

Share the importance of voting for everything on the ballot: There’s more to vote for than POTUS. Local and state-level candidates and ballot initiatives play an outsized role on many issues, including climate and other environmental issues. Additionally, Maryland, New York, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada and South Dakota could all have abortion or abortion-related measures on the ballot this year.

”

Tactical framework for promoting information accessibility, transparency, and quality

Click an “Impact Lever” to jump to more detailed guidance and real world examples supporting adoption of the related tactics.

IMPACT LEVERS	TACTICS
Workplace policies and benefits Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Offer employees paid subscriptions to reliable news sources as a workplace benefit <input type="checkbox"/> Develop policies governing the use of AI in the workplace
Employee engagement and people infrastructure Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Educate employees and provide resources on assessing information quality
Political contributions and advocacy Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Advocate and lobby for effective regulation to promote the responsible use of AI <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate and lobby for the regulation of the use of deepfakes and manipulated media, particularly as part of federal elections and campaigns
Corporate and executive voice Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Take a public stance on election results and/or election integrity

Impact lever: Workplace policies and benefits

TACTIC

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

EXAMPLES

Offer employees paid subscriptions to reliable news sources as a workplace benefit

- Many high-quality digital media outlets and online newspapers require paid subscriptions to access content, which may discourage employees from visiting those sites
- In addition to sponsoring subscriptions to trade press or informational resources relevant to specific business goals, employers should consider the opportunity to sponsor access to more general national news sources as an employee benefit
- Employers should assess the quality of potential subscriptions based on whether the news source is well-staffed with reporters and adheres to strict fact-checking editorial processes

- **NationSwell** subscribes to 18 digital media outlets and offers sponsored access to all staff. Subscriptions include Bloomberg, The Economist, New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and more.

Develop policies governing the use of AI in the workplace

- Despite the rapidly evolving landscape of AI tools and technologies, employers will benefit from creating policies that instruct employees on safe and appropriate uses of AI for work purposes
- Topics covered in a policy may include: which AI tools are approved for workplace usage and under what circumstances, how to protect confidential and private information, how to verify the accuracy of information provided by generative AI tools like chatGPT, and guidance on attributing information gathered from AI tools

- **KPMG's "Trusted AI approach"** focuses on sharing out its "principles, ethical pillars, and governance approach" to the use of artificial intelligence. The company also convenes a cross-functional group called the "Trusted AI Council," which reviews its AI principles in compliance with regulations and technological advancements. The Council supports the company in training employees on the ethical and responsible use of AI.

Impact lever: Employee engagement and people infrastructure

TACTIC

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

EXAMPLES

Educate employees and provide resources on assessing information quality

- With the decrease in local news outlets and the rise in AI-powered mis/disinformation, employees are likely to encounter less high-quality information and more misleading information related to politics, the election, and a wide range of other issues
 - Employers can partner with nonpartisan organizations to conduct trainings and share informational resources with employees related to digital literacy, media literacy, identifying AI-generated content, and other skills related to navigating the information environment
 - Employers can partner with their IT and information security teams to develop content, trainings, and other resources for employees related to AI-generated information
 - Employers can also orient employees toward publicly available fact-checking tools like factcheck.org
- [Companies in Germany and the U.S.](#) are offering seminars on civics and democratic principles – such as the importance of voting or recognizing the dangers of disinformation, conspiracy theories and hate speech – to promote healthier relationships in the workplace and society. According to a company that provides civic education, training employees on how to recognize and respond to hate speech and misinformation helps them be more self-assured in doing their jobs.

Impact lever: Political contributions and advocacy

TACTIC	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES
Advocate and lobby for effective regulation to promote the responsible use of AI	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calls for regulatory action or support for particular legislative outcomes may be most appropriate for companies within certain sectors – like technology – and/or those with a heightened exposure to the risks and benefits of AI• Some employers with particular expertise or a relevant point of view may contribute to the regulatory conversation by outlining potential policy objectives and frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Several technology companies have released white papers and roadmaps for responsible AI governance, including Google, Microsoft, and IBM.
Advocate and lobby for the regulation of the use of deepfakes and manipulated media, particularly as part of federal elections and campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calls for regulatory action or support for particular legislative outcomes may be most appropriate for companies within certain sectors – like technology – and/or those with a heightened exposure to the risks and benefits of manipulated media• Some employers with particular expertise or a relevant point of view may contribute to the regulatory conversation by outlining potential policy objectives and frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Brennan Center for Justice has developed extensive guidance on regulating AI deepfakes and “synthetic media” during elections, including term definitions and policy considerations, which companies can reference in advocacy and lobbying efforts. Additionally, the Center provides context on proposed legislation for regulating AI, including the REAL Political Advertisements Act and the Protect Elections from Deceptive AI legislation, among others.• To advocate for more information regulation, companies can work with organizations like Business for America to sign onto letters of support.

Impact lever: Corporate and executive voice

TACTIC

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

EXAMPLES

Take a public stance on election results and/or election integrity

- There is a chance that parties acting in bad faith will once again call into question the validity of election results, and the integrity of underlying electoral processes, in the aftermath of the next election
- Corporate communications teams should work closely with senior leadership to scenario plan their messaging strategy – both internally and externally – around a range of eventualities, including a contested election result

- On November 6, 2021, a group of 30 prominent CEOs [met](#) (with 10 hours of notice) to discuss a response plan for Donald Trump's denial of the election result. Yale Management Professor **Jeffrey Sonnenfeld** [brought the CEOs together](#), and revealed that the group included Disney Executive Chairman Robert Iger, Blackstone CEO Stephen Schwarzman, Johnson & Johnson CEO Alex Gorsky, Goldman Sachs CEO David Solomon, and Merck CEO Ken Frazier. The day after the meeting, [Business Roundtable](#) (which represents a coalition of CEOs) released a statement congratulating Biden's victory and encouraging a smooth transition process.

Peer-vetted partner organizations

The following organizations were identified by contributors to this project as key nonpartisan partners in their efforts to promote information accessibility, transparency, and quality:

[AIANDYOU](#)

Aims to help people understand with easy-to-understand information about AI online and through community conversations and events with policymakers.

[BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE](#)

We work to ensure that all Americans have an equal voice in our elections and that our government advances the public interest and upholds the rule of law. We lead national efforts to ensure that citizens — not special interests or partisan operatives — are at the center of our politics.

[CENTER FOR TECH AND CIVIC LIFE](#)

We connect Americans with the information they need to become and remain civically engaged, and ensure that our elections are more professional, inclusive, and secure.

[CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE INSTITUTE](#)

We develop research-based educational tools, resources, and frameworks to equip schools, universities, and workplaces with a shared language and practical set of skills to build inclusive cultures and engage constructively across differences.

[NEW PLURALISTS](#)

A funder collaborative focused on supporting the growing field of practitioners, storytellers, researchers, and innovators working to foster a culture of pluralism in America.

GOAL 3

Supporting issues that protect fundamental rights and strengthen democracy

Democracies flourish when people are empowered to express their views and advocate for the legislative and policy solutions they most believe in. Democracies suffer when people's fundamental rights come under attack, or the institutions that protect those rights are undermined.

Employers, while typically disinterested in appearing partisan, can and do play a role in the protection of fundamental rights. They engage directly through their own issue advocacy, and indirectly through the tools, protections, and spaces they offer for employees to make their individual voices heard. The benefits of doing so include heightened employee engagement, but extend far beyond to the core of what makes the American promise so enduring.

Unfortunately, companies today are confronting new challenges as more social issues become politicized and the potential for legal and rhetorical attacks rise. Employers – now more than ever – need a robust toolkit of proactive and reactive tactics to ensure they stay true to their values while mitigating risks.

Talking points for making the business case →

Tactical framework for implementation →

Partner and collaborator recommendations →



Making the business case for supporting issues that protect fundamental rights and strengthen democracy

Policies and laws that protect rights are good for democracy, and democracy is good for business. But don't take our word for it. Here's how other leaders are making the case for why employers should support issues that protect fundamental rights:



In the words of Joanna Rice,
SVP and Global Head of Social Impact, Match Group

At Match Group, the business case for issue advocacy relies on supporting our stakeholders

Our employees expect us to act on our values. Our issue advocacy directly supports employee engagement. Here's some supporting evidence:

- Employees are up to 14.5x more likely to prefer working for a company that publicly supports and demonstrates a commitment to particular issues ([Edelman Special Report 2023](#))
- Employees are more satisfied (84%) at companies where leaders speak up about critical events and issues than those at companies where leaders do not speak up (57%) ([Weber Shandwick, 2023](#))
- Nearly half (44%) of employees want their employers to financially support the causes they speak out on, and "more than half would contribute their own time or money if their employers created opportunities for them to do so" ([Business.com, 2024](#))
- In solidarity with our employees and our members, Match Group and our U.S.-based brands took a public stand against restricted access to reproductive care by joining the Don't Ban Equality coalition, reaffirming that reproductive healthcare restrictions contradict our company values and negatively affect efforts to promote equality in the workplace.

In the words of Joanna Rice, SVP and Global Head of Social Impact, Match Group

Our users want us to speak out on issues they care about. Here's some supporting evidence:

- The majority of consumers expect companies to take public positions on sociopolitical issues, including human rights (82%), climate change (73%), racism (72%) and gun violence (70%) ([Weber Shandwick, 2023](#))
- “Tinder is an important part of our love story, and the fact that the company is using its resources to take a stand for the LGBTQ+ community shows just how much they value the relationships they help form.” – Mando and Raul, a couple who met on Tinder and featured on our Marriage Equality campaign.
- “We are grateful that Tinder supports our marriage, and so many others. Tinder helped amplify our voice in the continued fight for marriage equality and we are glad that the law followed through this time!” – Jasmine and Alex Wilson-McKenzie, a couple who met on Tinder.

Our business depends on a healthy democracy, and a healthy democracy depends on voter turnout. It is in our interest to drive engagement by educating and motivating our audiences around issues rather than candidates. Here's some supporting evidence:

- In 2022, the midterm elections saw unprecedented state-level wins for abortion-related ballot measures ([NPR, 2022](#))
- Younger generations are motivated to vote more by issues and causes than partisan politics; more by their search for candidates who share their values than those who share their party affiliation ([Brookings, 2023](#))

”

Tactical framework for supporting issues that protect fundamental rights and strengthen democracy

Click an “Impact Lever” to jump to more detailed guidance and real world examples supporting adoption of the related tactics.

IMPACT LEVERS	TACTICS
Workplace policies and benefits Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop policies and guidelines for workplace political discourse <input type="checkbox"/> Develop anti-discrimination and harassment policies
Employee engagement and people infrastructure Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Connect with ERGs to identify issues that matter most to employees <input type="checkbox"/> Provide advocacy training for employees
Corporate products and services Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Use products as vehicles for issue advocacy
Political contributions and advocacy Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop policies that govern the use of corporate funds (PAC or treasury) for campaigns and candidates that pose direct threats to fundamental rights and/or U.S. democracy <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate and lobby for issues that advance fundamental rights and safeguard democracy <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntarily disclose political contributions in a public report
Corporate and executive voice Jump to this section →	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop and adopt a response framework for political, cultural, and social events

Impact lever: Workplace policies and benefits

TACTIC

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

EXAMPLES

Develop policies and guidelines for workplace political discourse

- Political discourse can help individuals better understand their colleagues, discover shared values, build bridges, and develop important conflict resolution and interpersonal skills; but workplace political discourse can also contribute to bullying, avoidance of working with colleagues, and other negative effects
- While some employers allow or even encourage political discourse in the workplace, others expressly prohibit it
- Employers, regardless of their posture, should craft and promote policies related to political discourse and political activities in the workplace. Policies should expressly identify the sorts of topics that are permissible and impermissible for employees to discuss in the workplace, how political issues can be discussed on company platforms, and the consequences of violating any stated policies
- Policies should be paired with formal processes and tools for managers to resolve conflict if and when it arises between employees; conflict may require HR intervention, particularly if it violates anti-discrimination or harassment policies
- Reminding employees about policies and guidelines early and often during an election year is important for establishing workplace norms

- **Salesforce** has “chatiquette” guidelines for all employees that include policies for discussing political issues over Slack. During election cycles, managers are reminded about the communications guidelines. Additionally, in an effort to limit the spread of mis/disinformation, the chatiquette policies include guidelines for what employees should not post, including news sources that can’t be verified.
- **Civic Alliance** developed [a guide](#) to navigating politics and polarization in the workplace, which includes strategies for promoting understanding through nonpartisan resources, providing conflict resolution and empathy-building tools, encouraging respectful communication, and connecting with nonpartisan organizations.

Develop anti-discrimination and harassment policies

- Regardless of whether political discourse is encouraged or prohibited in the workplace, it will happen; when it does, it can lead to forms of harassment and discrimination against legally protected classes
- Employers must align their policies governing political expression and activity with their anti-discrimination and harassment policies in order to ensure internal consistency

Impact lever: Employee engagement and people infrastructure

TACTIC

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

EXAMPLES

Connect with ERGs to identify issues that matter most to employees

- Employee resource groups (ERGs) offer companies a rich source of information about the views and preferences of employees
- Corporate public affairs and external communications leaders should work closely with ERGs to surface learnings for the company's advocacy and explore employee engagement opportunities around those issue areas
- Companies can also encourage employees to join ERG networks, like the **Latino Community Foundation's [Latinos in Tech Giving Circle](#)**, to make volunteer and/or financial commitments to the issues they care about

- **Salesforce** works closely with its ERGs to identify policy issues their employees are most concerned and passionate about. Government Affairs partners with ERGs to invite external speakers to present on related topics, furthering the education of their employee base while indicating leadership investment in employee-led causes.

Provide advocacy training for employees

- Companies cannot and should not advocate on behalf of every interest and belief held by individual employees
- Employers can help employees find their own voice in issue advocacy by providing them with nonpartisan training and tools on how to participate in this dimension of civic life outside of work
- Learning and training opportunities could include: how to contact representatives and elected officials, how to organize and register a lawful demonstration, how to run for office, and more

- **Starbucks** developed an online, open-source community advocacy course in partnership with subject matter experts and nonprofit organizations. This course is hosted on Starbucks Global Academy as part of a [collection of free courses](#) grounded in social impact and community engagement.

Impact lever: Corporate products and services

TACTIC

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

EXAMPLES

Use products as vehicles for issue advocacy

- Product design, branding, and marketing can each help drive customer awareness and action around specific social or environmental issues
- Product-based issue advocacy is most effective when consistent with the brand, values, and established positions of a company
- Product-based issue advocacy should consider the interests, and range of potential reactions, of all relevant stakeholder groups (particularly employees, customers, and investors)
- As a starting point, consider what issues directly impact your consumer base

- **Tinder and Match Group** partnered with the [Human Rights Campaign](#) (HRC) to promote awareness of and encourage sign-ups for the FDA's ADVANCE Study, which was conducted to help end the ban on blood donations from sexually active gay and bisexual men. The joint "All Types" campaign kicked off with an [op-ed](#) from Tinder CEO Renate Nyborg in Fortune explaining why Tinder is speaking up on this issue and how Tinder and Match Group are fighting discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community with the HRC. The campaign included in-app ads pointing Tinder users to an ADVANCE Study landing page that Match Group built. The ads and page mobilized eligible gay and bisexual men to sign up for the study in eight pilot cities. Match Group also sent a letter to the FDA urging them to devote more resources to ADVANCE Study recruitment.

Subsequently, The FDA announced they're ending their ban on blood donation from sexually active gay and bisexual men. They made this decision in part based on the results of the ADVANCE Study.

Impact lever: Political contributions and advocacy

TACTIC	IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES
<p>Develop policies that govern the use of corporate funds (PAC or treasury) for campaigns and candidates that pose direct threats to fundamental rights and/or U.S. democracy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While corporate PAC and treasury funds are most often used to support candidates and issues that align with core business interests, including candidates from both major political parties, employers should identify and adopt additional criteria for their political contributions to ensure that monies are not being used to support the suppression of rights or direct threats to U.S. democracy To create meaningful accountability, employers should make their political contribution policies and criteria available to employees and the public Transparency around how political contributions are directed is particularly critical when a corporate PAC solicits funds from employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In January 2021 many companies, including American Express, Google, and Marriott, publicly stopped donations to Republican members of Congress who voted against the certification of Biden's electoral college win. Jazz Pharmaceuticals developed guidelines for its political action committee or PAC. Specifically, the company believes that candidates that it supports through PAC contributions should be aligned to the values of the company. In general, candidates who have made statements or taken actions that threaten fundamental rights and are not aligned to democratic principles may be disqualified from receiving future contributions from the PAC.
<p>Advocate and lobby for issues that advance fundamental rights and safeguard democracy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When determining whether to support a particular policy or electoral outcome, employers should consider the impacts of the outcome on their workforce, customers, and business operations Companies and leaders should also consider the impact of advocacy and lobbying efforts on their brand and reputation; brand benefits will be maximized and harm minimized when the company's position is consistent with its values and past behaviors In some instances, companies and/or their executives have made public endorsements of candidates, campaigns, and ballot measures; employers must take care not to exert any direct pressure on employees to vote in a particular way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For many years, Patagonia encouraged employees to "Vote the Planet." While protecting the planet is core to Patagonia's mission, they found that more specificity was needed to effectively motivate employees to vote. Over the past few years, Patagonia has shifted to educating employees on specific issues and candidates that they feel are important to support. In 2022, Patagonia made the strategic decision to publicly endorse Senators Tester (Montana) and Rosen (Nevada). The company identified these senate races as particularly close, and felt that the large outdoor communities in those states would be invested in the outcomes due to the implications for climate policy. Though the company did not donate financially to the campaigns, it ran ads on the candidates' behalf, effectively impacting the outcome of the campaigns. Both senators won their races and have publicly acknowledged Patagonia's efforts. In 2022, Match Group's former CEO endorsed reproductive rights by setting up a personal fund to support employees in traveling for abortions.
<p>Voluntarily disclose political contributions in a public report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voluntary disclosures should reflect contributions from corporate PACs as well as any contributions from the corporate treasury to super PACs and other outside groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salesforce has a federal corporate PAC and publicly discloses its contributions. The company has a political contributions committee that reviews every political contribution, which keeps internal processes consistent and rigorous.

Impact lever: Corporate and executive voice

TACTIC

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

EXAMPLES

Develop and adopt a response framework for political, cultural, and social events

- Using corporate and executive voice, both internally and externally, is a powerful tool for the promotion of fundamental rights among employees, customers, and the public
- Responding to urgent issues and events is not without risk; companies should engage in intentional and deliberate processes to identify when and how to respond most effectively, including:

Creating mechanisms for understanding what employees and customers expect of your organization

Assessing the impacts of sociopolitical issues on your company, and your company's opportunity to influence those issues

Using a decision framework to weigh and resolve the best available information before acting

Consulting an external advisory council to expand your perspective

- In 2023, **NationSwell** developed [recommendations and tools](#) for companies to use in navigating their response to social and political moments. This resource is based on data collected from a survey of 74 ESG leaders and interviews with 12 more.

Peer-vetted partner organizations

The following organizations were identified by contributors to this project as key nonpartisan partners in their efforts to support issues that protect fundamental rights and strengthen democracy:

[BUSINESS FOR AMERICA](#)

A coalition of civic-minded business leaders and purpose-driven companies who are ready to take action and promote government that works for all Americans.

[DON'T BAN EQUALITY](#)

A coalition of 1,000+ businesses, large to small, located in all 50 states, publicly traded and private, U.S. based and globally headquartered, making the case that abortion access is a workforce and economic issue.

Thank you for engaging with this report.

NationSwell welcomes input on this research and invites you to reach out with questions, feedback, and suggestions for how we can further support your work. Please feel free to email us at Insights@nationswell.com.

LEGAL NOTICE

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations presented in this report are those of NationSwell alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the individuals or organizations cited herein. NationSwell has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the information it provides to readers of this report. However, this report relies on data obtained from many sources and NationSwell cannot guarantee the complete accuracy of the information provided or any analysis based thereon. Content found in this report is not intended to serve as or shall be deemed individual investment, legal, tax, accounting, or other regulated advice. You should not rely on any legal commentary in this report as a basis for action, or assume that any tactics described herein would be permitted by applicable law or appropriate for a given organization's situation. You are advised to consult with appropriate professionals concerning legal, medical, tax, or accounting issues, before implementing any of these tactics. Neither NationSwell nor its officers, directors, trustees, employees, and agents shall be liable for any indirect, incidental, consequential, or punitive damages or losses for lost revenue or profits, whether or not advised of the possibility of such damages or loss and regardless of the theory of liability.

"NationSwell" is a registered trademark. You are not permitted to use this or any other trademark, product name, service name, trade name, and logo of NationSwell without prior written consent. All other trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos used within these pages are the property of their respective holders. Use of other company trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos or images of the same does not necessarily constitute (a) an endorsement by such company of NationSwell and its products and services, or (b) an endorsement of the company or its products or services by NationSwell.

These Terms are governed by the laws of the State of New York without reference to the principles of conflicts of laws thereof.

