



Braver Angels Trustworthy Elections Campaign Report to the Nation: Pre-Read for Events

Written by The Trustworthy Elections Leadership Team

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I. Executive Summary

No issue is more polarized within our nation than how we conduct our elections. Conservatives and liberals distrust our electoral system for vastly different reasons, from voter fraud and election security to voter suppression and peaceful transfer of power. Leading up to the crucial 2024 elections, Braver Angels worked to rebuild this trust by seeking solutions supported by people across the political spectrum.

The "secret sauce" of the Braver Angels Trustworthy Election Campaign was that we gathered our input on how elections might be made more trustworthy via open dialogue and not by polls. We used the Braver Angels Common Ground workshop format to have moderated open discussions in 26 separate workshops over a 3-year span (from October 2020 to November 2023) hosted at locations across the country and held either in-person or online. Each workshop had a balanced number of Red (conservative-leaning) and Blue (liberal-leaning) participants, drawing people from 27 states in an open, moderated dialogue. The dialogue was "robust" across over 100 hours of total workshop time.

The 727 values, concerns and solutions that were adopted without objection collectively across 26 workshops with 194 evenly balanced Red and Blue participants are the informed basis for our report.

This report focuses on three principles:

"Voting should be easy. Cheating should be hard."

"Every citizen should have an equal say in who will govern them; this is done through free and fair elections."

"The American government will fail if candidates refuse to accept any outcome other than victory."

The U.S. democratic republic is vulnerable. It depends entirely on trust. Today, our system is facing an existential threat: many Americans no longer consider our elections trustworthy and as a consequence refuse to support the outcome.

Through hundreds of person-hours of discussion, debate and personal connection, our Braver Angels community reached a “Red/Blue” consensus: ***We must, as one people, take action to rebuild confidence in our election process. If we fail to act now, we run the risk of losing our republic, and devolving into violence, chaos and balkanization backed by force of arms. We will cease to be the “United” States.***

It is with this mandate that the Braver Angels Trustworthy Elections Campaign was formed: To craft a set of actionable solutions that Americans across the political and cultural divides can support.

This report is the culmination of work performed collectively by over 200 volunteers from 27 states, balanced evenly between those who identify as either “Red” or “Blue”. Using the unique Braver Angels method at 26 separate local workshops, the balanced teams arrived at 727 individual Points of Agreement (POA’s). To be counted as a POA, every word must have been agreed to by the unanimous consent of each participant at the workshop, Red and Blue alike. Guided by the POA’s, the Leadership Team, also equally balanced, arrived at the set of solutions in this report.

We believe that every one of the solutions recommended in this report can be implemented swiftly and successfully. It only requires the will of the people and their representatives.

The solutions offered in this report are by no means comprehensive, nor are they a panacea. They are a statement of solidarity and collaborative consensus after many intense hours of discussion across the political divide. They are a blueprint that we believe will rebuild Americans’ confidence in our elections.

II. Summary of Solutions

This report proposes 23 specific solutions grouped into seven Election Topics.

A. Fair and Equal Access to Voting

1. Make Federal Election Day a National Holiday
2. To remedy concerns about Election Day access to polls and ballot boxes, state and local governments should staff up and open additional polling stations (such as at post offices in rural places), among other remedies.
3. In order to address the problem of long lines, provide Election Day remedies and swift responses to concerns at polling stations.
4. All states should implement no-excuse-needed absentee ballots.

B. Verifiable Voter Identity and Eligibility

1. States should join a shared database of voters, such as the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), to improve the accuracy of voter rolls and eliminate dual voters.
2. States should require a person to show voter ID when voting. It should be an affirmative duty of state governments to provide an acceptable free voter ID (either photo or non-photo) to every eligible voter.
3. Government-provided voter ID should be one, but not the only, acceptable ID. The alternate ID should be a photo-verifiable ID.

C. Transparency and Accountability

1. Training for all poll watchers should be required. Engaging poll watchers from multiple parties should be encouraged but not required.
2. All high schools should teach civics with the focus on constitutional rights and electoral processes.
3. To promote transparency and accountability, we call on the National Governors Association to form a politically independent institution to recommend best practices for state and national elections (including setting standards for auditing, voter ID, ballot structuring, polling access, etc.)

D. Redistricting - Gerrymandering

1. States should appoint independent commissions to form voting districts. The commissions should not include currently elected officials.
2. Legislative districts should prioritize the “4 C’s”: compactness, competitiveness, contiguity, and compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

E. Confidence in Vote Counting

1. Voting machines should be adequately tested before all elections.
2. All votes that are cast using machines should also have a paper record.
3. Once ballots have been received by governmental officials, standard statewide chain of custody procedures should be implemented and should encompass the entire process, starting at the polling place and continuing through the handling and counting of ballots.
4. Statewide chain of custody procedures should be implemented to protect ballots before they enter the custody of government officials.

Specifically, we recommend the following three reforms:

- States should report their receipt of mailed ballots in a way that enables voters to determine when and whether their ballots have been received.
- In jurisdictions where ballots are permitted to be collected in exchange for compensation, such compensation should not be based on the number of ballots collected.
- The voter and person delivering the ballot, if they are different people, must both sign a statement on the ballot envelope granting delivery permission to the person delivering their ballot to a government collection point.

5. Handling and counting of ballots should be recorded on camera.

F. Safety and Security in the Elections Process

1. States should conduct a systemic review and evaluation of the processes of unsolicited mail-in ballots to prevent fraud and irregularities.
2. Establish cyber security industry infrastructure standards to prevent interference in elections.
3. Laws protecting election workers and staff from harassment and threats should be strengthened through tougher sentencing guidelines.

G. Peaceful Transfer of Power

1. All candidates and citizens are encouraged to sign Team Democracy’s Safe and Fair Elections Pledge:

I respect the checks and balances defined in the United States Constitution and I support the electoral processes that protect the freedoms, liberties, and opportunities that are assured by our democratic institutions and norms.

Therefore, I commit to act according to the following:

- I. Elections are conducted according to the rule of law, without partisan bias.***
 - II. All citizens can easily exercise their right to participate in a transparent, safe and secure electoral process.***
 - III. All claims of election irregularities are submitted in good faith for judgment by the judicial system, in accordance with the law, and all participants accept and support the final results.***
 - IV. The election process, including the transfer of power, is conducted peacefully, absent intimidation, violence, or other unlawful means.***
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2. Political parties should include a plank in their platforms that asks their supporters to take and honor the pledge.
3. No state legislature or elected or appointed (non-judicial) official should be able to overturn election results. In 2023, the Supreme Court affirmed this position, rejecting the “independent state legislature” theory (*Moore v. Harper*).

The full report will be available on February 29, 2024.