



DEMOCRACY DAY
IMPACT

2022

2023

2024



DEMOCRACY DAY IMPACT

REFLECTING ON 2022 AND 2023

Friends,

What does it mean for newsrooms to defend democracy?

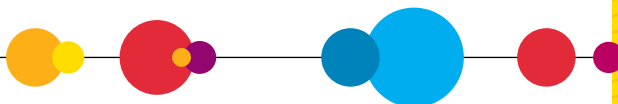
In 2022, a coalition of journalism organizations set out to answer that question. Our curiosity sparked a call to action and became the first U.S. Democracy Day collaboration.

On **September 15**, nearly 200 newsrooms and journalism organizations from across the United States rallied together for Democracy Day 2022. In 2023, 163 newsrooms stepped up to participate. Across these two milestone days, the newsrooms collectively published more than 380 stories, editorials, and posts about the democratic process.

Since then, with financial support and strategic guidance from the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University, Democracy Fund, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Democracy Day collaboration has grown to become a year-round movement focused on reshaping how journalists report on politics and government.

Contents

Why we need Democracy Day	4
Our milestones at a glance	5
Stories of impact	6
The journey to Democracy Day	6
Most common words found in 2022 and 2023 Democracy Day coverage	9
Preparing for Democracy Day 2024	10
Our team	11
Participating news organizations and partners	12



From Democracy Day's inception, the collaboration has been a space for newsrooms to unite and discuss the complex dynamic between democracy and news. We're proud that Democracy Day has opened up conversations about how news media can better help people understand democracy and how newsrooms can create political coverage that's for voters, not candidates.

Though the current deficits in our democracy have existed for decades, they require urgent action. That's why newsrooms must work together with their audiences and one another, in addition to civic organizations and academia, to create a new type of journalism. This reimagined approach is honest about what's at risk when democracy begins to erode, and honest about what it takes to fix it.

In just two years, newsrooms participating in Democracy Day have made a tremendous impact. They have fundraised to create democracy reporting positions, launched a Documenters chapter to demystify city hall meetings, and conducted high-impact investigations into dark money in local politics, the influence of utility companies on abortion rights in Florida, and the Arizona GOP's elaborate attempts to malign election workers, among others. More importantly, they have also trained one another on how to create sustainable pathways for explanatory and community-oriented civic journalism.

As we look ahead to Democracy Day 2024 and beyond, we plan to provide even more resources for reporters, expand solutions journalism efforts in regions that lack democracy coverage, and strengthen relationships with community members.

These goals are lofty, but attainable—with a little grit, a lot of planning, and even more collaboration. In this report, we celebrate Democracy Day's impact to date, while looking ahead to what's possible. **We hope you'll join us as we continue to push the boundaries of what pro-democracy journalists and newsrooms can achieve.**

Onward and upward,

Bridget Thoreson, *Director of Collaborations, Institute for Nonprofit News*

Beatrice Forman, *Project Coordinator, U.S. Democracy Day; Breaking News Reporter, The Philadelphia Inquirer*

“By shifting the attention of the media in this country to democracy rather than horse race political coverage, we believe that we can make a meaningful difference in the narrative that drives engagement and disengagement, leading to more civic participation and positive policy change.”

—STEFANIE MURRAY,
DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR
COOPERATIVE MEDIA
AT MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY

To learn more about
how to get involved for
Democracy Day 2024
email us at
info@usdemocracyday.org

WHY WE NEED DEMOCRACY DAY

Since the United States' founding, freedom of the press has been a guiding ideal for our democracy. Too often, however, mainstream media puts what advertisers want ahead of what communities need. As a result, the media tends to focus on dramatic stories and “horse race” political coverage. People in the United States end up with reporting that has entertainment value, not the information that actually helps people understand and participate in our democracy. This lack of accessible information deepens existing inequities for historically excluded populations, including communities of color and people with limited financial resources.

The foundation of our democracy is cracked, and the threats are growing. Authoritarian movements are gaining traction. Policies that disempower local and marginalized communities are spreading. Our government lacks transparency, and the average person faces dozens of roadblocks when trying to get information about their civic rights.

We don't need more political theater in our media. We need pro-democracy journalism.

In 2022, the volunteer team behind Democracy Day saw an opportunity for change. Now, each year on September 15—the International Day of Democracy—a growing number of American newsrooms write stories about democracy. Specifically, they publish pro-democracy coverage that sounds a collective alarm and equips the public with the information they need.

Democracy Day has become a rallying cry for newsrooms, supporting journalists in their responsibility to deliver information that helps people navigate unjust systems and institutions. By building a community of pro-democracy journalists, we can center the voices and concerns of constituents, residents, and voters—not politicians.

PRO-DEMOCRACY JOURNALISM IS GOOD FOR SOCIETY, AND GOOD FOR BUSINESS, TOO

Contrary to what some media leaders believe, Americans are eager to consume pro-democracy journalism. The following newsrooms—which participated in the Democracy Fellowship partnership from Solutions Journalism Network, Hearken, and Trusting News—benefitted from moving away from horse race coverage and instead, embraced a solutions-oriented lens.

Online traffic to **Texas Tribune's** 2022 election guide eclipsed previous election coverage, including coverage on the 2020 presidential election.

Enlace Latino NC saw a 300% traffic increase to their election page in the lead up to the 2022 midterms.

In 2022 **WITF in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania** used a solutions frame for a [story](#) on a leading candidates' proposal to purge voter rolls. It was one of their best performing stories of the year.

Wisconsin Watch received widespread media coverage for a [solutions story](#) examining how people in Wisconsin jails are disenfranchised because local officials lack mechanisms to help them vote. Published in 2022, the story highlighted best practices from other states.

OUR MILESTONES AT A GLANCE

Democracy Day’s impact goes far beyond a single day each year. The initiative has helped newsrooms learn from each other, revamp their editorial approaches, and provide people with the information they need to help shape the democratic process.

2023 AT-A-GLANCE

163 Participating newsrooms

135 Pieces of pro-democracy content produced

8 Pieces of pro-democracy content for Spanish-speaking audiences

8 Collaborations among participants to develop pro-democracy content

IMPACT OVER TIME

43 States represented by participating newsrooms (vs. 41 in 2022)

2 Partner funders (vs. 1 in 2022)

125,000 Dollars invested in Democracy Day by our partners (vs. \$20,000 in 2022)

13 Webinars, trainings, and how-to guides produced (vs. 2 in 2022)

WHAT DOES PRO-DEMOCRACY JOURNALISM LOOK LIKE?

Democratic practices go beyond the polls and the halls of Congress. Democracy in action also looks like labor union strikes, tenants sourcing information about their rights, and parents pushing their county to fulfill its promise for a new park.

Any journalist, no matter what beat they cover, can bring a pro-democracy approach to their reporting. Here’s how:

Frame stories through a democracy lens, not a partisan lens.

Focus on what is at stake, not how likely an outcome is.

Avoid bias. Do not bolster anti-democratic viewpoints just to please “both sides.”

Uncover corruption, signs of authoritarianism, and systemic injustices.

Don’t just tell people what’s going wrong. Show people how to make a difference—tell them how to vote, how to run for office, how to organize, how to ask for public information.

Democracy Day is proud to be part of a growing number of projects and organizations pushing for change in how journalism covers democracy in the United States. Our peers include Howard University’s Center for Journalism & Democracy, Election SOS/Democracy SOS, Solution Journalism Network’s Advancing Democracy initiative, and more.

THE JOURNEY TO DEMOCRACY DAY

Key moments



JANUARY 3, 2022

Rachel Glickhouse (then of News Revenue Hub) [posts a thread on Twitter](#) that sparks conversation about media and democracy.

JANUARY 10, 2022

Four journalism leaders get together for a brainstorm that brings Democracy Day to life.

SPRING 2022

100+ journalists show interest in participating in Democracy Day.

JUNE 2022

Applications open for Democracy Day participants.

STORIES OF IMPACT

CASE STUDY: DEMOCRACY INFUSION PROJECT

Inspiring and preparing the next generation of pro-democracy journalists

For Jane Elizabeth, a media consultant and adjunct journalism lecturer at Ohio University and Radford University, Democracy Day came at the perfect time. She first heard about the new initiative while developing a report about how newsrooms were covering the 2022 midterm elections. Immediately, she wanted to be involved.

Jane joined the initial volunteer committee that launched Democracy Day, and the experience launched an idea for her, too—college journalism students need to learn about the importance of pro-democracy reporting.

As an educator, Jane saw that her students were not being prepared to develop democracy-centric stories, and many had never even seen an election ballot. To help journalism students across the country learn more about how our democracy works and how government impacts our daily lives, Jane developed the Democracy Infusion Project alongside her collaborator Tamara Wilner at the University of Texas at Austin.

The Democracy Infusion Project is a set of curriculum materials designed for journalism educators to more easily embed democracy throughout their courses so that students can practice teaching their readers about how democracy works in every single story, whether the journalist's beat is sports, fashion, politics, or business. The curriculum was released on August 15 and is free for educators to access at www.collaborativejournalism.org/democracyday/curriculum/.

THE JOURNEY TO DEMOCRACY DAY

Key moments



SEPTEMBER 15, 2022

First annual Democracy Day. 187 newsrooms across the U.S. participate.



WINTER 2022

Democracy Day establishes a six-member advisory board and hires a Project Coordinator.

AUGUST 2023

Democracy Day launches a free collegiate journalism and civics curriculum.



SUMMER 2023

Democracy Day commissions its first batch of work from freelance journalists.



SEPTEMBER 15, 2023

Second annual Democracy Day.



CASE STUDY: LA NOTICIA

Equipping North Carolina's Latino community with essential voting information

North Carolina has one of the fastest-growing Latino communities in the United States. However, it remains difficult for Spanish-speaking people in North Carolina to find news and information that is accessible and resonates. For the past 25 years, La Noticia has worked to fill that gap by reporting about issues affecting the Latino community in North Carolina. Other outlets in the state rarely cover these issues.

As often as La Noticia shares information, the newsroom's staff regularly seeks input from readers and attends local events to speak with community members. Through years of authentic relationship-building, La Noticia learned that the Latino community in North Carolina was exposed to high rates of misinformation. The Latino community needed reassurance that the electoral systems in the state could be trusted.

Democracy Day served as the push La Noticia needed to expand pro-democracy coverage and fight misinformation, rather than defaulting to following trends to increase pageviews. For Democracy Day 2022, the newsroom developed several voter explainer guides to let the Latino community know how to register to vote, why every vote matters, how votes are counted, and more. Newsroom staff also translated public information related to the election into Spanish.

Since then, La Noticia has continued to develop explainers and guides to support Latino voters in North Carolina. By addressing the community's concerns and questions, La Noticia has equipped Latino voters across the state with the information they need to participate.

By clearly explaining the process and addressing the community's concerns, La Noticia helped encourage voter turnout.

CASE STUDY: THE OBJECTIVE

Building a community of pro-democracy newsrooms

Since The Objective was launched in 2020, the nonprofit newsroom has focused on bringing a democracy lens to every story, with a specific emphasis on democratic practices across media and labor. The Objective's work seeks to transform the journalism industry by holding the sector accountable for systemic biases in reporting and newsroom practices.

While The Objective was already experienced in reporting about democracy issues, Democracy Day offered an opportunity to be part of a community of organizations working toward the same goal. By participating in Democracy Day, The Objective joined a movement to talk openly about journalism's role in democracy. For Democracy Day 2023, The Objective continued this effort through a wide-ranging interview with the publisher of The 19th about inequities in journalism.

Democracy Day also allowed The Objective to build its own team. As part of its participation in Democracy Day, The Objective received funding to hire a Democracy Correspondent to cover how democracy and journalism co-exist in the United States. For example, thanks to the Democracy Correspondent's work in 2023, The Objective was one of the only media-focused newsrooms to report on how a large media organization laid off their Black unionized employees. The Objective explained that if a news organization in the United States does not reflect the American population, it is a democratic issue that affects us all.

With the funding for the Democracy Correspondent, The Objective has been able to pursue critical coverage that the team would not have otherwise had the capacity for.

DEMOCRACY DAY'S IMPACT GOES BEYOND WRITTEN CONTENT

In addition to producing pro-democracy articles and guides, several newsrooms have also launched pro-democracy programs and events designed to **make journalism and civic participation more accessible.**

These are just a few of the programs and events Democracy Day helped inspire:

Documenters

Through insource, financial incentives and trainings will encourage San Diego community members to actively attend and participate in public government meetings.

Vote: Your life depends on it

The Charlotte Observer partnered with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library to host a voter engagement panel.

Productive conversations without confrontation

The News Literacy Project teamed up with the National Institute for Civil Discourse and the League of Women Voters to host two free public webinars about how to talk to loved ones who share misinformation.

MOST COMMON WORDS FOUND IN 2022 AND 2023 DEMOCRACY DAY COVERAGE



PREPARING FOR DEMOCRACY DAY 2024

With the success of Democracy Day in 2022 and 2023, we're building the foundation for Democracy Day's impact for years to come.

In 2024, we will continue to grow participation in U.S. Democracy Day, while also expanding our efforts to broaden the work year-round in partnership with other democracy and journalism initiatives. We also intend to further diversify the participants to include more broadcast and legacy media organizations.

We invite you to join our growing movement for pro-democracy journalism. Together, we can ensure Democracy Day 2024 reaches even more newsrooms and communities. Scan the QR code to learn about how to fund our work or participate as a newsroom or journalist.



With continued investment and engagement this year and beyond, Democracy Day can:

Contribute to a stronger American democracy by keeping the public informed and engaged.

Increase journalistic collaboration that extends beyond Democracy Day, leading to more impactful reporting on critical issues.

Encourage partnerships between media organizations, civic groups, and other stakeholders to promote democratic values.

This work needs all of us—the health and safety of our democracy depend on it.

Email us at info@usdemocracyday.org to learn more and get involved in **Democracy Day 2024**

“Our featured story on Democracy Day (“Where’s Celia?”) broke our record for pageviews on Apple News after it was featured on the Top Stories feed. This story to date has received more than 240,000 pageviews on the platform, and democracy champions, including David Becker, took to Twitter to commend the story. Shortly after the story was published, Maricopa County Recorder Stephen Richer cited it while testifying in court in Arizona about the many election employees in the county that have already faced harassment.”

—CHAD LORENZ, VOTEBEAT
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

OUR TEAM

The Democracy Day team consists of a small and mighty group of volunteers who are passionate about pro-democracy journalism.



Beatrice Forman
Project Coordinator,
U.S. Democracy Day;
Breaking News
Reporter, The
Philadelphia Inquirer



Stefanie Murray
Director, Center for
Cooperative Media
at Montclair State
University



Joe Amditis
Assistant Director for
Products and Events,
Center for Cooperative
Media at Montclair
State University



Bridget Thoreson
Director of
Collaborations, Institute
for Nonprofit News



Rachel Glickhouse
Director of
Partnerships, Grist



Jaisal Noor
Democracy Cohort
Manager, Solutions
Journalism Network



Jennifer Brandel
Co-Founder and CEO,
Hearken

“Our experience with Democracy Day was uniformly positive. Democracy Day serves as a useful tool for us to engage with and build stronger relationships with our partners.”

**—LEE PEDINOFF, DIRECTOR
OF DEVELOPMENT &
OPERATIONS AT FLOODLIGHT**

PARTICIPATING NEWS ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTNERS

100 Days in Appalachia	Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)	Foothills Forum
Akaku Maui Community Media	Center for Media and Democracy	Fort Worth-Star Telegram
Alabama Reflector	Center for Public Integrity	Freelance / Penn State Bellisario College of Communications*
Alaska Beacon	CHANGE Illinois	Fresnoland*
Alaska Public Media*	Charesha Barrett, Independent Contributor	FunTimes Magazine
Alicia Benjamin, Independent Contributor	Charlotte Journalism Collaborative	Futuro Media
Alliance for Community Media	Charlottesville Tomorrow	Gannett
American Journalism Project	Chatham News & Record	Georgia Recorder*
American Press Institute	Chicago Sun-Times	Global Investigative Journalism Network*
Arizona Agenda	Choose Democracy	Granite State News Collaborative
Arizona Daily Star	CivicLex	Greater Northshire Access Television
Arizona Luminaria	CivicStory	Hamden Patch, Independent Contributor
Arizona Mirror*	CoastAlaska (KRBD)	Head Set Immersive
Ark Valley Voice	Colorado Newslines*	Hearken*
Arkansas Advocate	Committee of Seventy	Homewood-Flossmoor Chronicle*
Atlanta Journal-Constitution	Communities of Hope (RWU)*	Hoptown Chronicle
Bay City News Foundation*	Community Info Coop/ Bloomfield Info Project*	HowStuffWorks.com
Berkeleyside	Consult Creative LLC	Idaho Capital Sun
MoCo360	Daily Montanan	Ideastream Public Media
Better to Speak*	Drilled	Indiana Capital Chronicle*
Billy Penn at WHY?Y	Durham Skywriter	inewsources*
Bolts*	El Don	Institute for Nonprofit News
Boulder Reporting Lab	Enlace Latino NC*	Institute for Analytic Journalism
Buck Ryan, Freelancer	FairPlanet	InvestigateWest
Business for Democracy (A Campaign of the American Sustainable Business Network)	First Amendment Museum	Iowa Capital Dispatch
Carole King, Independent Contributor	Floodlight	JCAD-International*
Carolina Public Press*	Florida Phoenix	
Center for Cooperative Media*		

**participated in both 2022 and 2023*

Jordan Gass-Pooré, Independent Contributor	Media and Democracy Project*	Oklahoma Media Center
Journalism Education Association	Miami New Times	Oklahoma Watch
Journalism Funding Partners	Michigan Advance*	Online News Association (ONA)
Julesburg Advocate	Minnesota Reformer	Open Secrets
Kansas City Star	Missouri Independent	Oregon Capital Chronicle*
Kansas Reflector*	Montclair Local	Orlando Sentinel
KCUR 89.3, Kansas City, MO	MuckRock*	Oviedo Community News
Kentucky Lantern	National Democracy Week	Pasquines
KHOL, Jackson Hole Community Radio	National Press Club Journalism Institute	Patch Labs
KIFI Local News 8, Wyoming	Native American Journalists Association	PEN America*
KMTV 3, Omaha, NE	NBC 7 and Telemundo 20	Pennsylvania Capital-Star*
KPBS Public Media, San Diego, CA*	NC Local News Workshop	Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts
KPCC Southern California / LAist / LAist Studios	NC Newslines*	PhillyCAM*
KQED, San Francisco, CA	Nebraska Examiner*	Planet Detroit
KSAT 12, San Antonio, TX	Nebraska News Service, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*	Planet Princeton
KTOO, Juneau, AK	NepYork	Press Watch
KUNM 89.FM, University of New Mexico	Network for Responsible Public Policy	Project&
KXXV 25, Central Texas	Nevada Current	Proud Stutter/California Common Cause
La Esquina TX	New Hampshire Bulletin	Public Media Network
La Noticia	New Jersey Monitor	Public Square Amplified*
Lake Forest Park Town Crier	New Mexico In Depth Inc.	PublicSource*
Lansing City Pulse	New Mexico Local News Fund*	Qnotes*
Latino News Network	New York Daily News	Religion News Service*
Lexington Herald-Leader	News Literacy Project*	Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press*
Limestone Post Magazine*	News Revenue Hub	Resolve Philly*
Local Journalism Initiative of Delaware	Nieman Reports	Rhode Island Current
Louisiana Illuminator	NJ Advance Media	Roanoke Rapids Daily Herald
Marian High School Journalism	NJ Spotlight News	Route 40
Maryland Matters	NorthCentralPA.com	RTDNA: Radio Television Digital News Association*
McClatchy News Media	Nyapui Radio	Saco Bay News
	Ohio Capital Journal*	San Francisco Public Press
	Oklahoma City Free Press	

*participated in both 2022 and 2023

San José Spotlight	The GroundTruth Project	Urban Milwaukee
Shasta Scout*	The Guardian	USA Today Network*
Signal Cleveland	The Hartford Times*	Vallejo Sun
Society of Professional Journalists	The Hays Daily News	Valley Journal
Solutions Journalism Network*	The Henry Herald	Victoria Mankanjuola, Independent Contributor
Source New Mexico*	The Herald and News	Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism at WHRO
South Dakota News Watch	The Idaho 97 Project	Virginia Mercury
South Dakota Searchlight	The JOLT News Organization	Votebeat*
SouthernMinn.com	The Media and Democracy Project	Waging Nonviolence*
Spotlight PA*	The Mitchell Daily Republic	Washington State Standard
Sree's Sunday #NYT Read Along	The Oaklandside	Wausau Pilot & Review
Stacker*	The Objective*	WBAI Pacifica Radio Company and Podcast*
States Newsroom*	The Philadelphia Citizen	West Virginia Watch
Technical.ly	The Pivot Fund	WFAE Public Radio, Charlotte, NC*
Tennessee Lookout	The Postman24	WHYY Public Radio, Philadelphia, PA
The 19th	The Real News Network	Wichita Journalism Collaborative*
The Associated Press	The Red Hook Daily Catch	WisCommunity
The Border Chronicle*	The Sacramento Bee	Wisconsin Examiner*
The Bowie Sun*	The Salt Lake Tribune	WITF Public Radio, Harrisburg, PA
The Brookings Register	The Sierra Nevada Ally	WJXT TV, Jacksonville, FL
The Bucks County Beacon	The Southern Maryland Chronicle*	WNYC Public Radio & Gothamist
The Burlington Record	The Texas Tribune*	WPRN Public Radio, Tampa, FL*
The Charlotte Observer	The Tributary	WSHU Public Radio, Westport, CT
The Clifton Times	The War Horse	WSLR Public Radio, Sarasota, FL
The Common Good Movement	The Wellness Feed	WUWM Public Radio, Milwaukee, WI
The Commonwealth Journal	Trail Gazette	Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan
The Conversation US	TrollBusters / Media Innovation Collaboratory	YubaNet.com*
The Current GA*	Truth in Common	
The Daily Yonder*	Tucson Sentinel*	
The Derrick	Twenty-First Digital	
The Digital Democracy Project	UNC-Chapel Hill, 2022 Advanced Reporting Class	
The Duncan Banner	University Press Student Newspaper, Lamar University*	
The Fort Morgan Times		
The Free-Lance Star		

*participated in both 2022 and 2023



DEMOCRACY DAY

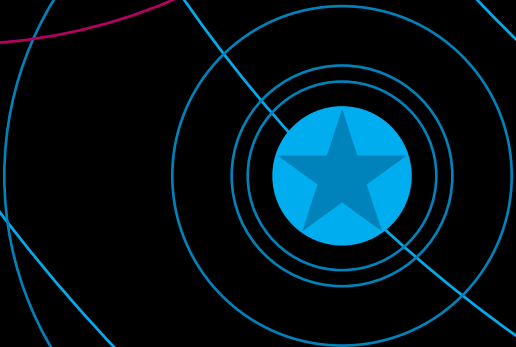
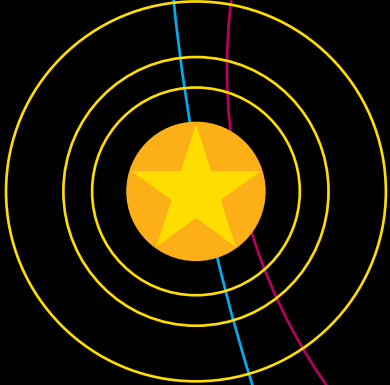
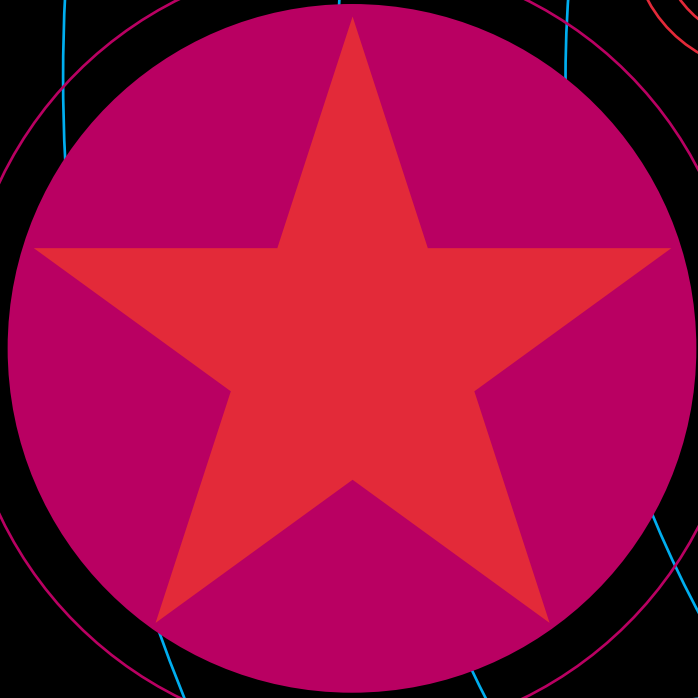
2022

2023

SEPTEMBER 15, **2024**

Prepare to participate!





USDEMOCRACYDAY.ORG

Published December 2023

