



YOU HAVE AGENCY TO PROTECT DEMOCRACY – HOW BEST TO ENGAGE

Anne Applebaum, who has long warned of the dangers of fascism looming on the horizon were Trump to win the next election, in her latest piece in The Atlantic, [The Danger Is Greater Than in 2020. Be Prepared](#), reminds us that we all too often take our democracy for granted and that we do so at our peril. That said, we also have agency.

Autocrats, she also reminds us, seek to instill a sense of helplessness among citizens as they consolidate power and crush dissent. We should not give in to a sense of helplessness. Protect Democracy makes a similar point: “Authoritarianism thrives on despair, hopelessness, anger, and resentment. Democracy depends on hope and possibility. The most important tools we have are our optimism, willingness to trust and collaborate, openness to possibility, and strength in diversity. Democracy is, at its core, nothing less and nothing more than the conviction that, together, we can build a better world than any one of us could design on our own.”

I borrow heavily from Applebaum’s guide to defending our democracy and our election in setting out a roadmap to counter any emerging sense of helplessness or hopelessness.

1. Have a plan to vote, and vote. If you can, vote early. We face countless efforts by right-wing elements to make it more difficult to vote. Why? Because they don’t want you to vote. Do not give them that satisfaction.
2. Be an educated citizen. If you have yet to register or have questions about voting, consult [Vote.gov](#). If you are overseas, go to [Vote from Abroad](#). If you have questions about early voting, consult [Vote.org](#).
3. Be your own GoTV champion – urge every American citizen you know to vote, regardless of where they are entitled to vote, and urge each of them in turn to be their own GoTV champions. Add a line for the next three weeks to your email signature block reminding people of the importance of voting and of being patient immediately after election day. Voting rules often have changed, so urge your friends, family and others to make sure they know the rules and have a plan to vote.
4. Be prepared for possible voter intimidation. If you or anyone you know has trouble voting, for any reason, call 866-OUR-VOTE, a [hotline](#) set up by [Election Protection](#), a non-partisan coalition led by the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.
5. Volunteer to support the Lawyers’ Committee [effort](#). People with legal training can assist to counter election obstruction efforts and misinformation, and people without legal training can serve as poll monitors or staff the hotline. Lawyers can also volunteer with [We the Action](#).
6. Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania or Wisconsin residents can [volunteer to help All Voting Is Local](#). It seeks legal professional volunteers as well as poll monitors.
7. Volunteer to work at a polling station – find one at [PowerThePolls.org](#),



8. Volunteer to take voters to the polls - [volunteer for Rideshare2Vote](#).
9. Ensure that vulnerable neighbors feel safe.
10. Stay informed by following updates on any of the following sites:
 - [Protect Democracy](#)
 - [States United Democracy Center](#)
 - [Brennan Center for Justice](#)
 - [Democracy Docket](#)
 - [Republicans for the Rule of Law](#)
11. Be prepared in the days following the election for a rollercoaster of raw emotions and a chaotic media environment. Misinformation and disinformation will be rampant. Try not to exacerbate the flood of misinformation and disinformation by repeating or reposting unverified reports. Read past the headlines and be wary of emotionally charged content.
12. Be prepared for difficult conversations with people who have opposing political views, are apathetic or cynical, or are agitated by the uncertainty. There appears to be a consensus among experts to avoid trying to change other people's minds – it will not work, but that does not mean you should not attempt to have a conversation. The research group that analyzes political polarization, More in Common, has a roadmap for having those difficult conversations.
 - Talk about local issues: Americans are bitterly polarized over national issues but have much higher levels of trust in their state and local officials.
 - Talk about what your state and local leaders are doing to ensure a safe election.
 - Emphasize shared values.
 - Do not dismiss concerns of others about election irregularities. Many people may sincerely believe that the irregularities are real, but that does not mean there is widespread fraud.
 - Do not try to make your case by falling back on statistics. Speak instead about the actions that are being taken to protect the integrity of the electoral process.
 - Do not inadvertently feed into the narrative of those seeking to undermine democracy.
13. Be prepared to urge lawyers in your midst to refrain from undertaking spurious litigation in support of Trump's narrative that votes for him are real and votes against him are fraudulent.
14. If you own or lead a business, use your voice/position to support the integrity of elections and the democratic process:
 - offer paid time off to vote and/or volunteer as a poll worker at a polling station (see [Vote America](#), [Make Time to Vote](#), [Election Day](#) and [Civic Alliance](#)), and consider additional ways employees can assist in the electoral process on election



day, for example, by volunteering with organizations that provide free transportation to the polls;

- share nonpartisan voter resources with employees:
 - [Fact Check](#)
 - [Election Protection](#)
 - [ACLU](#)
 - [Brennan Center for Justice](#)
 - [Can I Vote](#)
- avoid scheduling business meetings on election day;
- make an affirmative statement in support of the integrity of the voting process and in opposition to political violence, frame these concepts in the context of the founding principles of the country and remind employees that supporting democracy is a bi-partisan imperative;
- urge employees to be vigilant about election-related misinformation and disinformation, whether widely shared or micro-targeted (as the Brennan Center states on its website, “informed citizens are democracy’s best defense”); and
- be prepared to speak out on/after election day if election denial is rampant.

15. Be prepared to engage in peaceful protest. Recall that in 2020, it was a group of approximately 300 concerned Michigan voters on a public Zoom call who convinced the two Republican members of the Wayne County Board of Canvassers to reverse course and issue their certification of the results of the most populous county in Michigan, which encompassed Detroit, which they were withholding after being summoned by Trump to the White House.

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