

Preparing for Election Uncertainty | Messages for Leadership

Guidance for how to talk with senior leadership, funders, and your board of directors

This election will be different from any other we have seen. The likelihood of a contested outcome means it could be days, weeks, even months before the election is resolved. Therefore, rather than thinking about the immediate election results as a binary outcome (i.e., Trump wins or Biden wins), we must prepare for a period of chaos and uncertainty.

Defending democracy may not be in your mission statement, but it is essential to protecting the environment. We need our community to be ready and willing to protect every vote and defend our democracy.

Please use these talking points to communicate the urgency to engage and plan for election uncertainty to your senior leadership, funders, and board of directors.

The environment, climate, and environmental justice depend on our democracy's health and the fairness of this election.

- Defending democracy is probably not in your mission statement, and may push your organization out of its comfort zone. But, unprecedented threats require unprecedented planning and action to protect our election. Defending our democracy is essential to achieving progress on environmental protection.
- There are troubling efforts underway to threaten the safety of voting, suppress the vote and an accurate vote count, undermine the results of the election, and destabilize our democracy.
- We cannot protect our air, water, lands, climate, and communities without ensuring that our democracy works for everyone, especially the communities of color who carry the heaviest environmental injustice burden and have historically had their vote suppressed.

A powerful grassroots movement may be critical in protecting the integrity of the election.

- We know how to fight. The thought of a contested election may be daunting, but we must remind ourselves that our community knows how to exercise power to ensure that all votes are counted.
- With our history of mobilizations, advocacy off and online, and large grassroots memberships, our community can contribute much-needed capacity, public education support, and grassroots mobilization to nonpartisan participation to protect the vote.
- We must stay mindful of the stress facing our staff and organizations—from families fighting to keep their loved ones healthy during the pandemic, to communities that have been on the frontlines of the climate crisis for decades. But we are stronger together.

- The most effective organizations will act now to educate the public, register voters, act in solidarity with allies to minimize uncertainty surrounding this election while preparing staff internally to mobilize to protect the vote in an unprecedented contested election.

Setting expectations now will help minimize the uncertainty around the election.

- It is increasingly likely that the combination of COVID-19, new ways of voting, and an unprecedented environment of disinformation and voter intimidation will lead to a dangerous storm of uncertainty, confusion, and mishaps that could result in an extended period of controversy and uncertainty about the election result that stretches past election day.
- This period of uncertainty could put the fate of free and fair elections at stake—and with it, our ability to pull the levers of our democracy to protect all that we cherish, from environmental justice to wildlife protections to climate action.
- We must work with partners and allies to demand that every vote be counted, so we can continue protecting our climate, environment, and health.
- We must plan for the worst and hope for the best by expecting that it will be days, weeks, even months before the election is resolved. We must have hard conversations about this scenario and prepare now so that we can rise to the challenge of protecting our democracy. History will expect no less from us.