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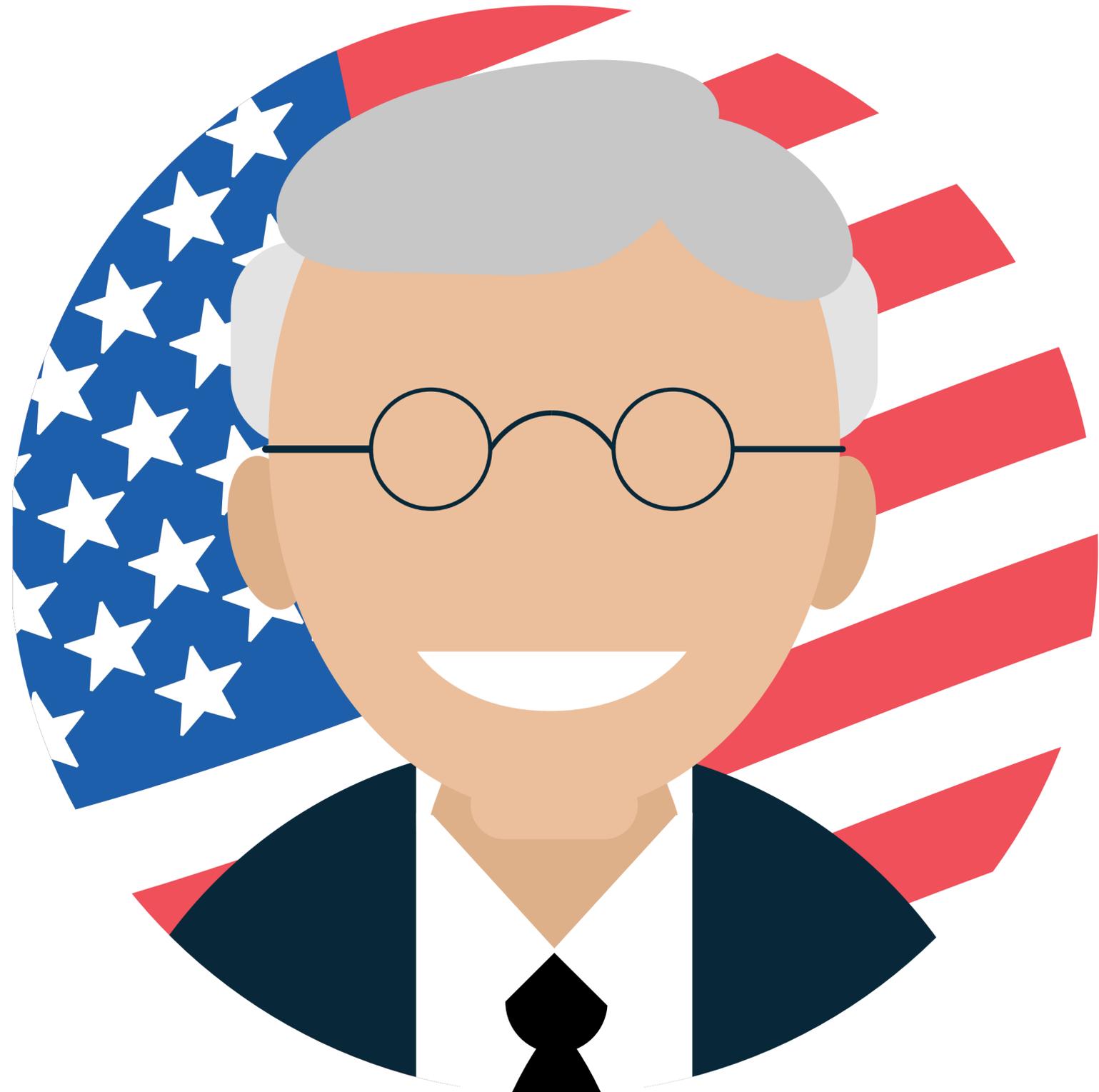
**Election Prep & Political Database App**  
*senior thesis*

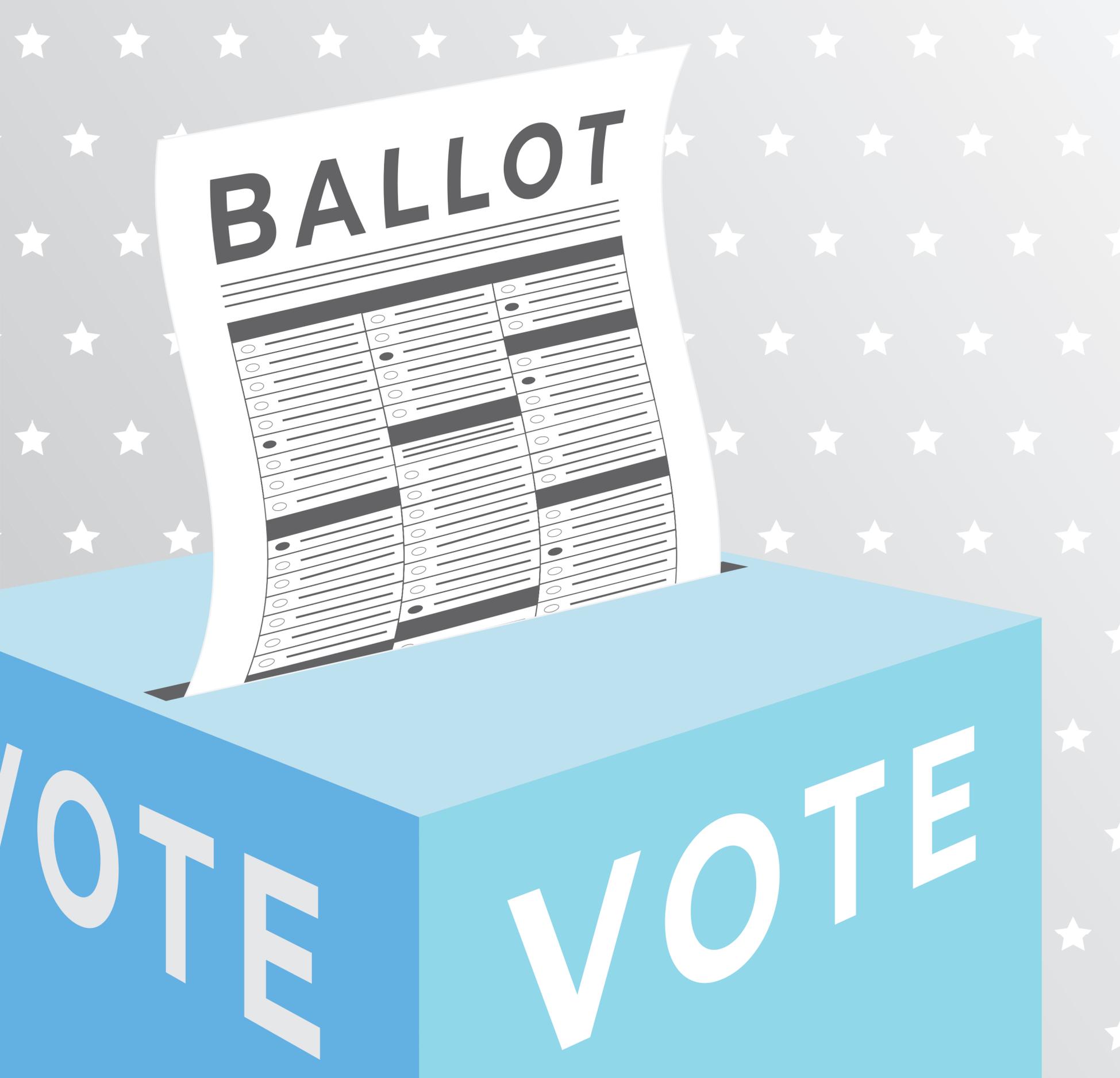
 Michael J Hyla

# A Quotation From Former President Franklin D. Roosevelt

July 08, 1938

“Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and Senators and Congressman and Government officials, but the voters of this country.”





## Introduction

Voting. It's one of the most fundamental aspects of American democracy. During the Revolutionary War, the soon-to-be United States of America rallied behind the phrase "no taxation without representation", yet today so many Americans aren't even familiar with the representation that their predecessors fought for them to have.

According to FairVote.org, only 60.1% of registered voters voted in the 2016 presidential election and just under 50% of registered voters voted in the 2018 midterm elections, the latter statistic being the highest recorded voter turnout for a midterm election ever. When account for unregistered Americans, there's never been an election where at least half of the population participated in the election process; Only 43% of Americans voted in the 2008 election, the most voted-in election in American history.

## Why Is It That so Many People Don't Vote Then?

Well, it's confusing. It's stressful. It's overwhelming. It's time consuming and - to some - it's a total waste of time.

Some people express that their views aren't accurately represented by the available candidates, or because they feel that their vote won't even matter.



# Problem Statement

If you do decide to vote, you'd ideally want to be educated on all of the issues, but that can be arduous in itself.

You can watch the biased and often defamatory campaign advertisements; however, those ads manipulate the viewers' emotional reactions and rarely present facts.

You can skim through thousands of news articles from dozens of different media sources to piece together a composition of a single candidate's policy stances.

You could watch every single debate, attend local campaign rallies, you could attempt to read every line on every candidate's website.

## But, honestly, who has the time?

Not to mention, presidential campaigns run for years before the election even happens, and many people burnout early in the process

HUFFPOST

In a world overflowing with information and misinformation, **the American public needs a simple, concise, and unbiased platform to better understand national and state level political issues and candidates on which to vote.**

The Economist

Forbes

USA TODAY

abc NEWS

INFO

WASHINGTON Examiner

THE NEW YORKER

CBS

NEWS

WSJ

f

WSJ

THE NEW YORKER

WASHINGTON Examiner

THE NEW YORKER

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NEWS

New York Times

FOX NEWS Channel

THE HILL

DRUDGE REPORT

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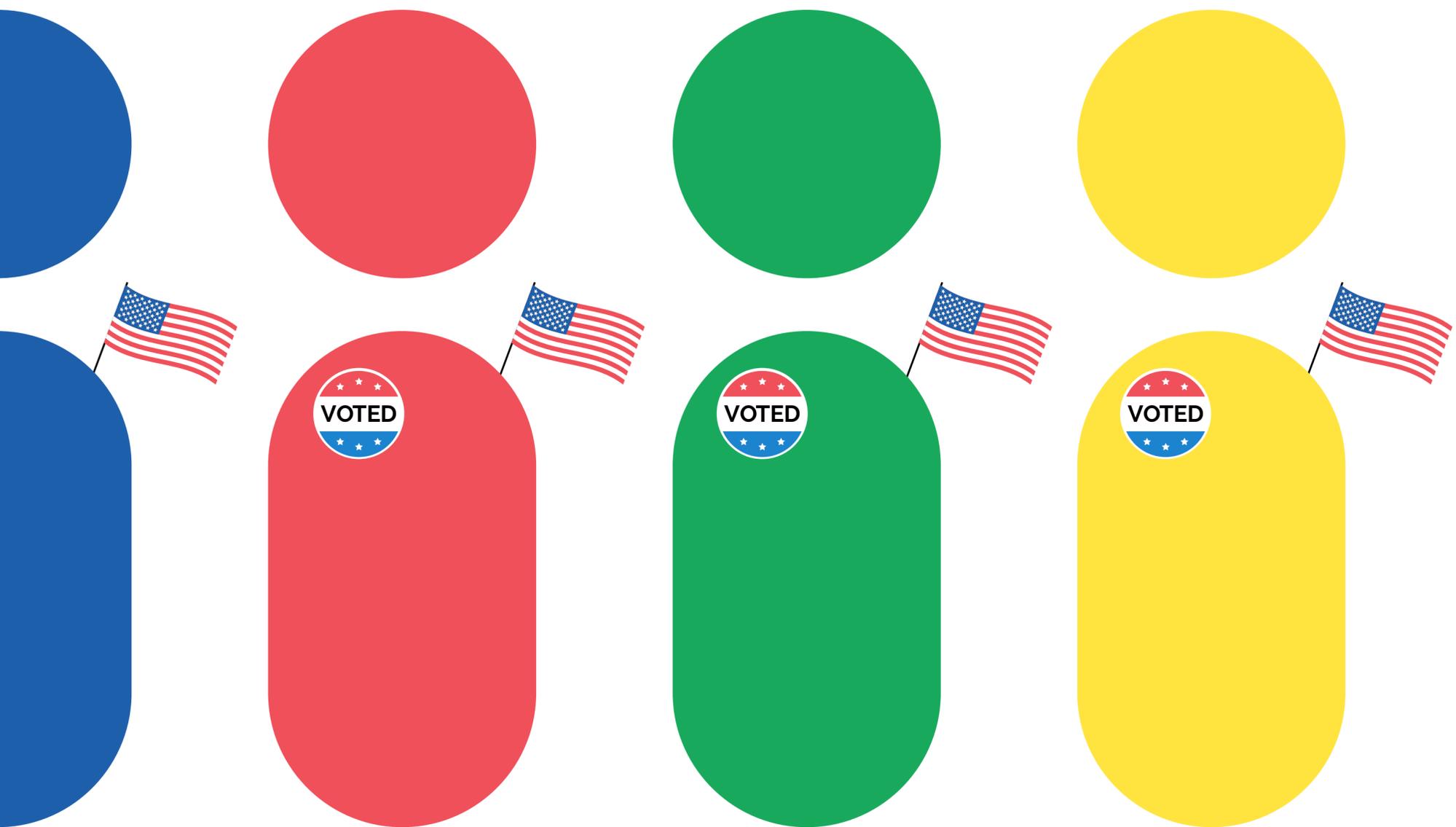
BREITBART

RT

The Atlantic

NBC





# What Do Voters Have to Say?

## Survey Responses & Statistics

Over this past semester, I sent out a survey and received 110 responses from Americans on their experience as a voter (or nonvoter) throughout the election process. I also included information from surveys carried out by other organizations.

# “What information do you wish you had easily available to you leading up to an election?”

<p>“</p> <p><i>What candidates are really about, NOT what they have to say about their opponents</i></p>	<p><i>Accurate, concise info on the ballot items, including candidates</i></p>	<p><i>A list to take into the vote booth</i></p>	<p><i>A clear discussion of what the candidates want to do instead of attacking other candidates.</i></p>	<p><i>Current information on candidates, including their history of service and accomplishments</i></p>	<p><i>Positions on hot-button issues ... for all candidates</i></p>
<p><i>A simplified summary or resource in layman's terms of the issues and various candidates</i></p>	<p><i>Information on all of the current issues with each of the candidates perspectives on each topic</i></p>	<p><i>Just one place where I can go to see what the issues are, see what the candidates stances are and not have to jump around twenty different websites trying to find out</i></p>	<p><i>What issues would affect me most prevalently</i></p>	<p><i>A quiz to align me to someone I should vote for</i></p>	<p><i>Party affiliation of judicial candidates</i></p>
<p><i>Some candidates in my local elections didn't have platforms available online, which is a bummer</i></p>	<p><i>Somewhere where everything is easily accessible, maybe I could even enter in my political leanings and it would suggest candidates to research more about.</i></p>	<p><i>I wish that there was a way I could easily flip through all of my voting options, whether it be candidates or issues to vote on</i></p>	<p><i>Who the big donors are for a specific candidate</i></p>	<p><i>There is lots of information on major offices - the more local, the less there is</i></p>	<p><i>Maybe a condensed list of which politicians stand for what or what their core focus is.</i></p> <p>”</p>

Multiple Times a Day

26.4%

Once a Day

21.8%

Multiple Times a Week

16.4%

Once a Week

15.5%

Once a Month

6.4%

Never

10.0%

**“How often do you make a point to keep up-to-date with ongoing politics?”**

The results of this survey question displays a trend that Americans are spending an increasing amount of time on trying to educate themselves on politics. Throughout the survey, respondents often commented that researching issues and candidates took too much time.





## Ballots Can Be Confusing

Of the people I surveyed, a shocking number of people had difficulties filling out a ballot in one way another.

**68.2%**

had to guess on one or more of their ballot sections

**88.8%**

didn't recognize one or more candidates on their ballot

**58.9%**

had difficulty or didn't understand one or more issues on their ballot

# Let's Face It

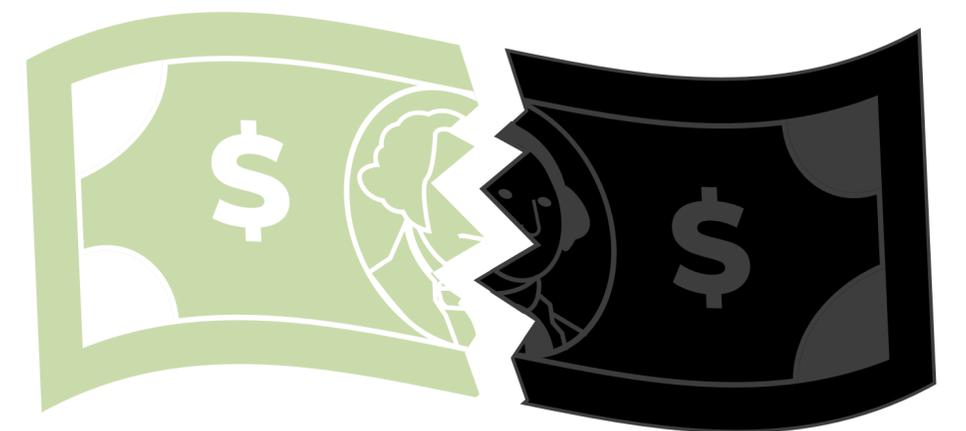
We don't always know everything

And that's okay! Who does? But does that mean we shouldn't do our best to continue to learn more than we did before?

**>20% of citizens**  
didn't even know their own state legislators



**Almost 50% of citizens**  
couldn't say what their state spent the most on





# The Increasingly Polarized and Divided States of America

According to a Pew Research Center article written by Bradley Jones, Americans are becoming increasingly divided about the nation's priorities.

In the article, Jones states that there is “virtually no common ground in the priorities that rise to the top of the lists for Democrats and Republicans.” While some areas such as transportation and social security are similarly prioritized across the aisle, other areas such as environment, military spending, and terrorism were much more polarizing between the two main parties.

Oftentimes, Americans feel as though that they end up with two options to choose between, and if they vote outside of those two options then they're throwing their vote away. Other parties, such as the Libertarian or Green Party, are often drowned out in the noise of the Democrats and Republicans. With just two parties controlling the country, it doesn't leave people a lot of wiggle room.



# Elise Adams, 22

Elise is a senior in college. She first voted during the 2015 Primary Election leading up to the 2016 Presidential Election. She was really excited to be able to vote for the first time as an American citizen, so she did her basic research but neglected to research much on more than just presidential candidate she wanted to support. When it comes to her political views, she considers herself to be more of an independent

## SAYS

- Excuse me, which way do I go?
- Can I use my phone to check something?
- Where do I get my sticker?

## FEELS

- Proud, Patriotic
- Overwhelmed
- Confused

## THINKS

- I don't recognize half of these names!
- What does this even mean?
- So... should I vote yes or no?

## DOES

- Overthink her options
- Nervously bubble in the answers
- Reread the ballot multiple times

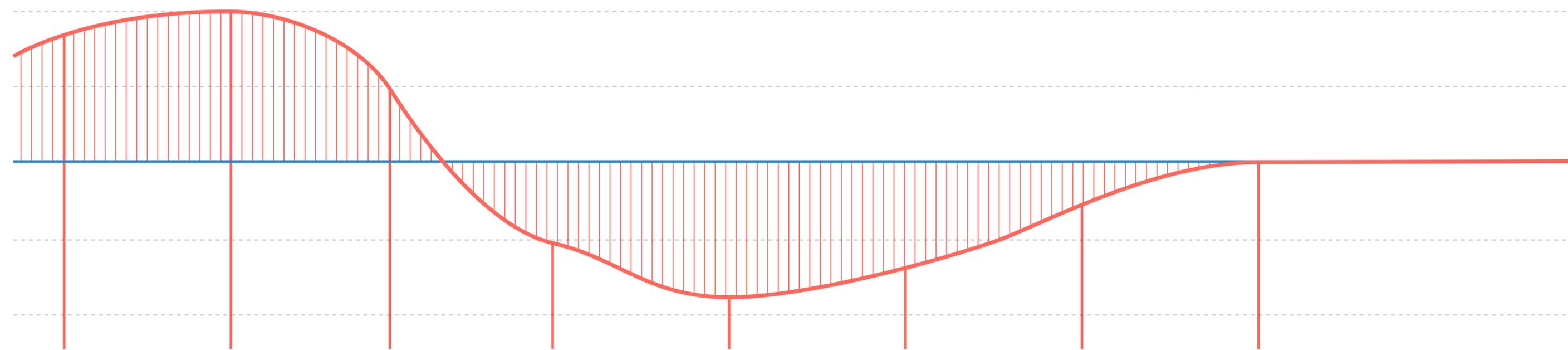
"I've got this!"

"Pretty good!"

"Okay."

"Hmm..."

"I'm lost."



Wakes up, looks up the polling location she has to go to.

Drives over to the polling location and waits in the long line with other voters there.

Walks up to the attendant who asks, "Republican or Democrat?" Elise is thrown off by being asked that directly.

Receives her ballot and goes to the designated area. Immediately doesn't third-party and less popular candidates.

Bubbles in names that she recognizes. She is then later confused by the wording for the issues, which is also new information.

Double-checks all of her responses, worries over the issues and candidates that she doesn't recognize.

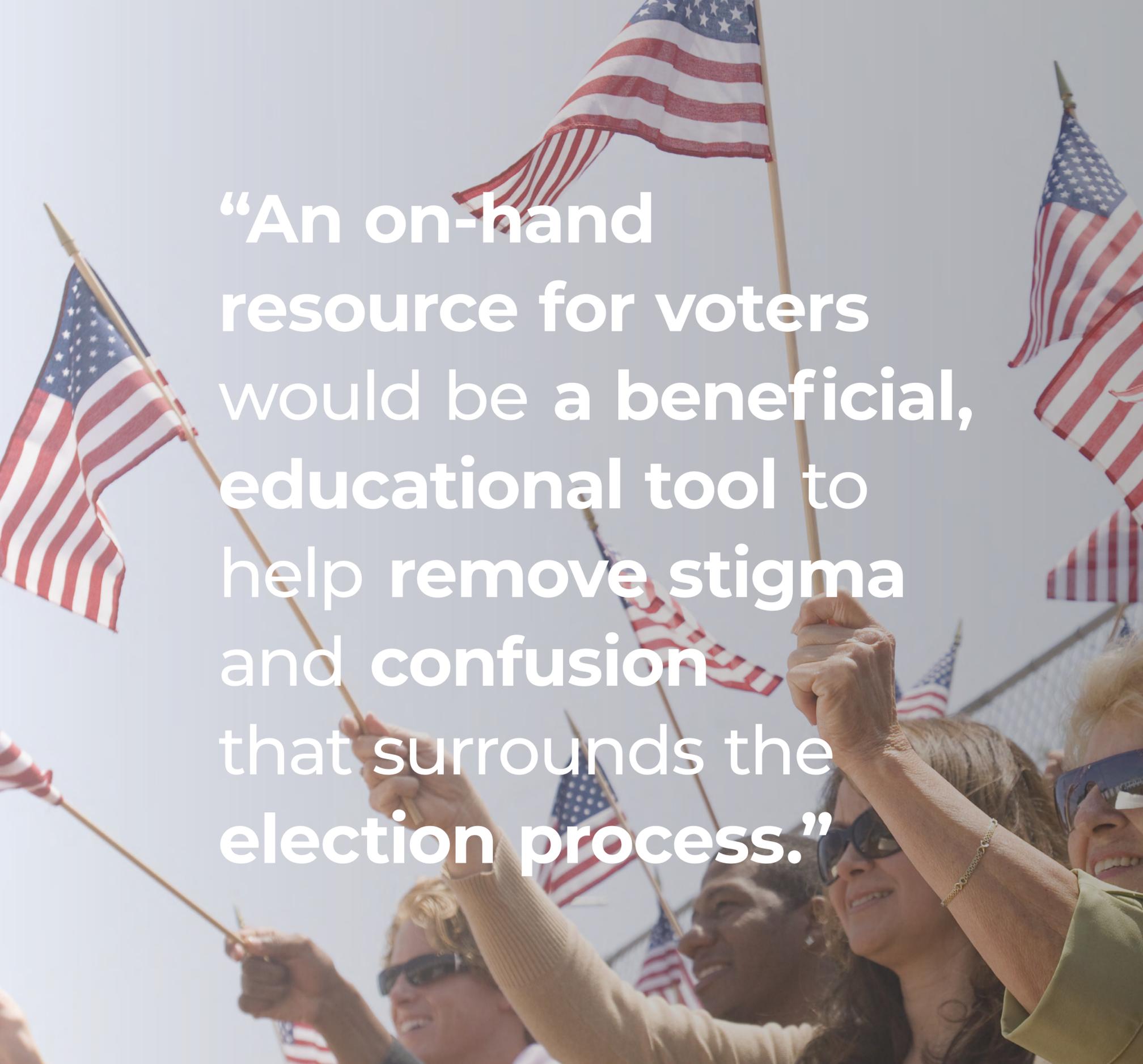
Hesitantly seals the ballot and turns it into the polling staff. Receives her first voter sticker.

Walks out of the building and gets back into her car.

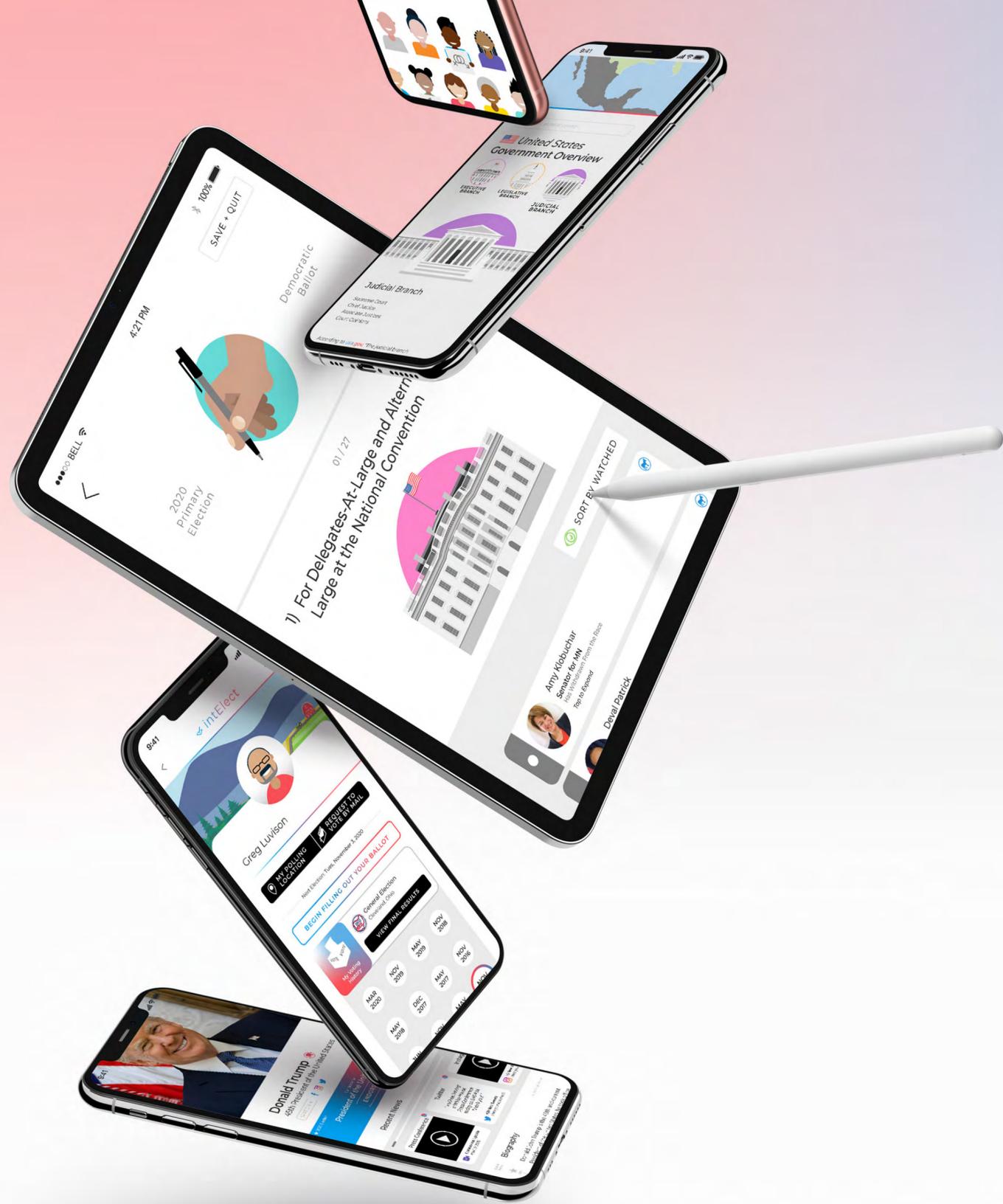


## Solution Statement

By 2020, in the world of the internet, Americans should be able to easily find all of the relevant information for upcoming elections, yet it is increasingly difficult to do so without spending hours upon hours researching. By creating an app that maintains profiles for each candidate, educates voters on major issues and political topics, informs voters on important polling deadlines and locations, acts as a resource for quick national and state-level information (and more) we can begin to create a community of informed voters who can go into the polls armed with confidence.



“An on-hand resource for voters would be a beneficial, educational tool to help remove stigma and confusion that surrounds the election process.”



INTRODUCING

 intElect

Prototype

<https://invis.io/8KX1DAWCEJ2>





**Let's Get You Setup.**

For starters, who are you?



# Possible Future Expansion

By creating a government overview for federal, state, and local governments, citizens will have access to learn all of the basics about who is in charge of what in their own government, from simple information such as who the president is and what powers he or she has to recent published Supreme Court opinions



search for state or county

## United States Government Overview



### Legislative Branch

### Presidential Powers

Commander in Chief Executive Orders Nominations Pardons Special Sessions Treaties Vetoes War Powers



The President is responsible for nominating candidates for the head positions of government offices. The President will typically nominate cabinet officials and secretaries at the beginning of his or her presidency and will fill vacancies as necessary. In addition, the President is responsible for nominating Federal Circuit Court judges and Supreme Court justices and choosing the chief justice. These nominations must be confirmed by the Senate.



48th Vice President of the United States Mike Pence

view profile

From [usa.gov](http://usa.gov):

The vice president supports the president. If the president is unable to serve, the vice president becomes president. The vice president can be elected and serve an unlimited number of four-year terms as vice president, even under a different president.

### The Cabinet

From [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov):

“Established in Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution, the Cabinet’s role is to advise the President on any subject he may require relating to the duties of each member’s respective office.”



Sonny Perdue  
SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE



William Barr  
ATTORNEY GENERAL



Gina Haspel  
DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY



Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.  
SECRETARY OF COMMERCE



17th Chief Justice of the United States John G. Roberts, Jr.

view profile

From [britannica.com](http://britannica.com):

“Chief justice, the presiding judge in the Supreme Court of the United States, and the highest judicial officer of the nation. The chief justice is appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate and has life tenure. His primary functions are to preside over the Supreme Court in its public sessions when the court is hearing arguments and during its private conferences when it is discussing and deciding cases. He serves as chairman in the court and has authority to assign the writing of opinions in cases where he is a member of the majority; otherwise his powers are the same as those of any other Supreme Court justice. The chief justice customarily administers the oath of office to the president and vice-president at the time of their inauguration. The chief justice is also the presiding officer of the Judicial Conference of the United States, an assembly of judges representing all the federal courts that reviews and investigates problems relating to the administration of justice in those courts.”

### Associate Justices



Clarence Thomas  
Appointed by George H. W. Bush  
Sworn In October 23, 1991  
view profile



Ruth Bader Ginsburg  
Appointed by Bill Clinton  
Sworn In August 10, 1993  
view profile



Stephen G. Breyer  
Appointed by Bill Clinton  
Sworn In August 3, 1994  
view profile





See You At the Polls!

