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**VOTERS**  
NOT POLITICIANS

**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

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# LETTER FROM JAMIE

**Since we began seven years ago, Voters Not Politicians has worked to put voters in charge of their democracy by bringing issues to the ballot and letting the voters of Michigan decide how they want their government to work.**



We started by drafting and championing Proposal 2 in 2018, then played a critical role in getting Proposal 2 on the ballot and passed in 2022. Together with 2018's Proposal 3, we've created a democracy in Michigan that is stronger, more accessible, and more pro-voter than ever before.

With the successful passage of Prop 22-2 and election of a pro-voter majority legislature, we knew that 2023 was the perfect time to start advancing even more good-government reforms through the legislature. We launched a brand new citizens grassroots lobbying program, testified before state house and senate committees, canvassed key districts to connect voters to their legislators, and helped move Michigan's democracy forward through the legislative process.

Even though we didn't run a ballot initiative this year, we couldn't let the general public forget about democracy reform or Voters Not Politicians. That's why we also tabled at events across the state, including fairs, festivals, pride events, and parades! Volunteers used this opportunity to talk to voters, share information about their new voting rights, and let them know what's next for VNP and Michigan democracy.

We closed out 2023 with [a long list of legislative wins](#), and still have even more we plan to push across the finish line in 2024. We will continue to use our grassroots movement to restrict guns at polling places, end prison gerrymandering, pass the Michigan Voting Rights Act, and finally reform Michigan's lackluster and loophole-filled Freedom of Information Act.

We are also facing a surprise priority for 2024. In December of 2023, a panel of federal judges ruled that the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission violated the Equal Protection Clause of the US Constitution by relying heavily on race when drawing Detroit area districts, and ordered a redraw of six state senate and seven state house districts. Nothing in the court's decision calls into question the process that voters overwhelmingly approved in the Prop 18-2 redistricting amendment, and Voters Not Politicians is fully committed to protecting the independent, transparent, and citizen-led redistricting process that Michigan voters demanded in 2018.

From the beginning, Voters Not Politicians has been a grassroots organization built on a guiding truth: All political power is inherent to the people. As we expand and evolve our programs, and take on challenges both existing and new, our supporters and volunteers can rest assured that we remain committed to that principle and to the work of nonpartisan, pro-democracy reforms for Michigan voters.

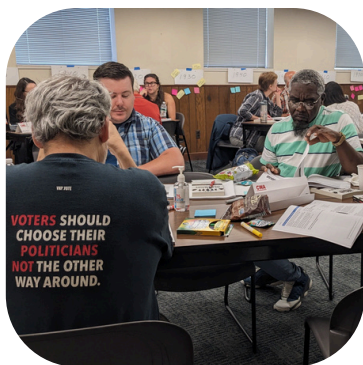
**Jamie Lyons-Eddy, Executive Director**

# About Us

**Voters Not Politicians** is the leading democracy and voting rights group in Michigan. Made up of thousands of volunteers, the nonpartisan, grassroots organization fights for structural democracy reform in the state.

Founded in 2016 by a group of Michigan voters alarmed about gerrymandering, and without any major funding or institutional support, Voters Not Politicians was responsible for collecting more than 428,000 signatures to put a proposal on the 2018 statewide ballot that established an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission. Voters Not Politicians converted its signature collection effort to a successful statewide ballot campaign, and the constitutional amendment to establish independent, citizen-led redistricting in Michigan passed with 61% of the vote.

Since then, Voters Not Politicians, along with the affiliated Voters Not Politicians Education Fund, has continued to harness the power of concerned voters across the state to support and monitor the new redistricting process and advance good-government reforms to strengthen the democratic process in the state of Michigan. Engaging thousands of volunteers and supporters, Voters Not Politicians' work is grounded in the principle set forth in the first line of the state's constitution: *"All political power is inherent in the people."*



## Vision

Voters Not Politicians envisions a truly representative democracy, where the will of the voters drives government decision-making and public policy in Michigan.

## Mission

Voters Not Politicians is a nonpartisan advocacy organization that works to effect structural and systemic democracy reform through engagement of people in Michigan

## Values

Integrity  
Inclusiveness  
Empowerment  
Innovation  
Impartiality  
Excellence

# Top Headlines

## THE GLOBE AND MAIL

*Michigan has emerged as a model for U.S. electoral reform*

- [Should you be able to carry a gun while voting? Michigan lawmakers hear debate](#) MLive | February 28, 2023
- [National popular vote for president builds momentum in Michigan](#) Bridge Michigan | March 1, 2023
- [Voting rights advocate calls recall petitions against state lawmakers 'anti-democratic'](#) Michigan Advance | July 22, 2023
- [Activists call for resignation of Shelby Twp. clerk after he's charged in false electors scheme](#) Detroit News | August 15, 2023
- [Eddy: State legislature should tackle ethics, transparency issues](#) Detroit News | August 28, 2023
- [Lawmakers push forward on package addressing deepfakes in political ads](#) Michigan Advance | October 17, 2023
- [Michigan has emerged as a model for U.S. electoral reform](#) Globe and Mail | November 2, 2023
- [Eyeing 2024, Michigan Democrats expand voter registration and election safeguards in the swing state](#) AP News | November 30, 2023
- [New Michigan law means people leaving prison will automatically be registered to vote](#) NPR | December 16, 2023

## 2023 Fundraising Update

Individual Donors	\$275,822
Grants	\$175,000
Other	\$139,314
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>\$590,136</b>

# Program Updates

## Legislative Liaisons

When we launched our citizen lobbying program in January, our goal was not only to show legislators the grassroots strength of Voters Not Politicians, but also to increase civic engagement outside of election season. We all win when people use their voices to advocate for the pro-democracy policies that matter to them.

Over the course of the year, 125 Legislative Liaison volunteers had 178 meetings with legislators in 115 districts. They advocated for policies around election funding, Freedom of Information Act reform, ending prison gerrymandering, banning guns at polling places, financial disclosure, and more. Legislators learned to expect Voters Not Politicians volunteers at their coffee hours and district meetings, and many lawmakers knew their VNP liaison by name.

Legislative Liaison volunteer Kim Peters joined her state senator, Majority Floor Leader Sam Singh, to speak to our Board of Directors at their September meeting about the highly successful program. Kim shared the value she receives from being a Legislative Liaison, saying "Being a legislative liaison allows me to see what concerns other people bring up in the community and the different things that are important to them. And I feel like I know more about what's going on both in the various communities [of my district] and also with my local government."

Sen. Singh, in turn, spoke about Kim (and fellow Legislative Liaison Chris Andrews) being a consistent presence at every coffee hour, whether in person or virtual, and shared how effective they were at making sure pro-democracy issues were brought to his attention at every meeting. "I think they've done a great job of being there not only for me to kind of hear and be able to report out what we're doing, but also for the other people that are in the [meeting] and can then hear about [VNP's] issues and what they're thinking about."

**178**

**meetings with  
lawmakers**

**115**

**legislative  
districts covered**

# Tabling Events

Volunteers in 2023 helped Voters Not Politicians reach voters where they already are, by participating in tabling events and Democracy Canvass walks.

Voters Not Politicians and Voters Ed Fund hosted tables at community events, fairs, and festivals including the Ann Arbor Art Fair, Ferndale Pride, and Kalamazoo Democracy Fest. Throughout the 57 tabling shifts filled, volunteers gave out information about new voting rights and options thanks to Proposal 22-2, and shared the ongoing mission and upcoming priorities of Voters Not Politicians. We will be ramping up our voting access grassroots education program dramatically in 2024.

Volunteers at the Ann Arbor Art Fair also took the time to share with Voters Not Politicians why they continue volunteering with us and what makes VNP so meaningful to our democracy.

***In Michigan, I think that VNP has made a huge difference, we're ahead of many other states in [regards to democracy], in terms of getting rid of gerrymandering and access to voting... I consider myself part of VNP and I look forward to future campaigns.***

**— Gregory Fox**

***I don't have an unlimited amount of time to volunteer, so I want to volunteer for an organization that is thoughtful, well organized, and successful, so I think that in the future, picking issues that the group can be successful in making a change is really important in my mind.***

**— Jim Haman**

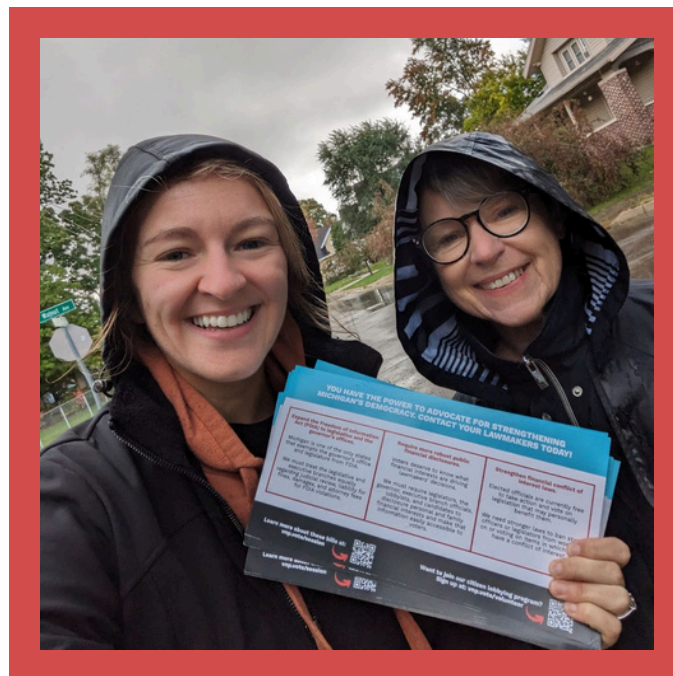


# Democracy Canvass

This fall, the field team met voters right at their door, canvassing key districts to talk to voters about ethics and transparency reforms needed in Lansing. Volunteer canvassers knocked over 550 doors in 7 municipalities, and over 72% of voters they spoke to committed to contacting their state legislator and advocating for stronger legislation on ethics and transparency.

In Battle Creek, first-time volunteer and first-time canvasser Mary S. joined our Democracy Canvass and shared, "I took action because I want to participate in nonpartisan issues. My experience was good because Mariah Phelps made such a positive experience on my first time canvassing."

Mariah, VNP's Director of Democracy Engagement, had an equally positive experience working with Mary. "It was very refreshing to see a first-time VNP volunteer come out to knock doors in support of financial disclosure. This just goes to show how important robust disclosure is to Michigan residents and that people are committed to holding their elected officials accountable."



# Volunteer Leadership

Volunteer leaders are the glue that holds Voters Not Politicians together, keeping volunteers in their areas informed about our work, and serving as organizational hubs during ballot initiative and voter contact campaigns. Even without active campaigns, there's still plenty of work for volunteer leaders to do to help keep our army of volunteers active and engaged.

For example, Syma Echeandia showed what local volunteer organizing looks like this August, when she organized both VNP volunteers and her own private network to call on their local township clerk, an indicted fake elector, to resign. While many organizations signed on to a letter calling for the clerk's resignation, Syma went further, making dozens of calls to VNP supporters as well as her own contacts, packing a city meeting with local voters calling for the clerk's resignation, and a strong, clear statement to the Township Board. Syma's leadership and organizing efforts were even captured in [an article by Votebeat Michigan](#), who quoted her public comment during the meeting.

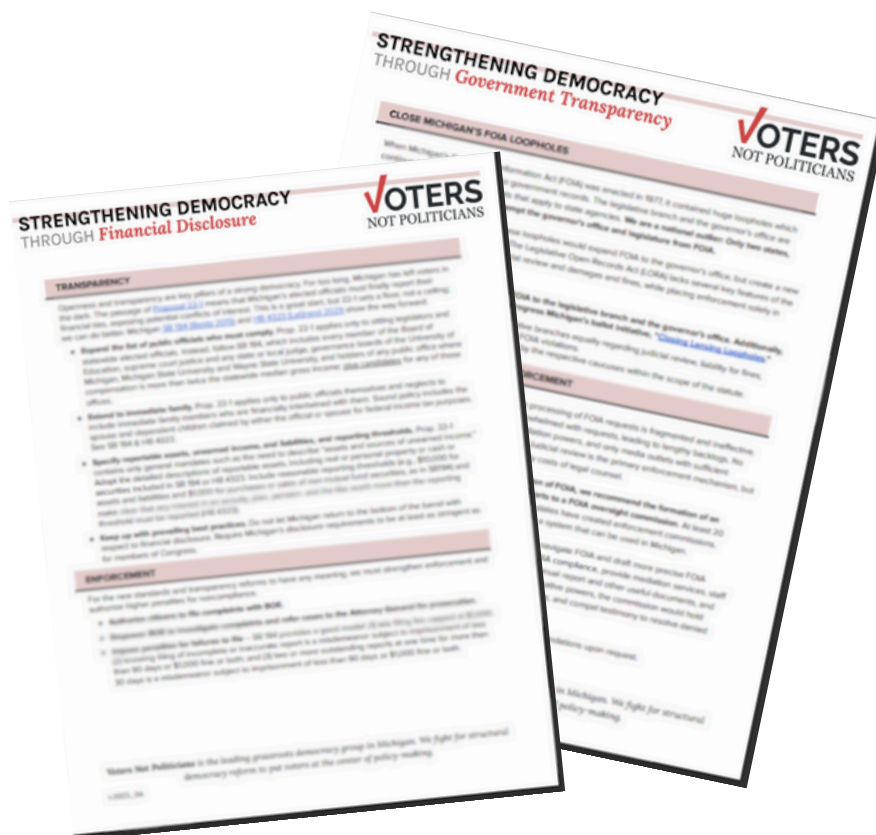
Some volunteer leaders have maintained active teams for years, quick to mobilize when the need arises, and proactive in finding ways for Voters Not Politicians volunteers to their local communities. In Ann Arbor, the Triple Threat team of Lisa Jevens, Marie Knoerl, and Rita Turner-Sheerin continue to do amazing work organizing volunteers around Washtenaw County, and constantly keeping VNP moving forward for our goals of strengthening our democracy. Likewise, Mary Brown, an extraordinarily creative leader in Ingham County, has continued to maintain an active and engaged team since the Proposal 22-2 campaign ended last year.



# Policy Committee

One under-the-radar volunteer team was instrumental to all of the legislative wins Voters Not Politicians achieved this year. The Policy Committee, a long-standing internal volunteer think tank that focuses on pro-democracy policy research, did a deep dive into the practices of other states and the federal government, and gave recommendations on financial disclosure, FOIA, election security beyond Prop 22-2, and AI/deepfake policies.

They provide important context and guidance about citizen-led initiatives and referendums. The Policy Committee's current work is looking towards future VNP priorities and potential campaigns, researching jail voting policies and preparing for the 2026 vote on a state constitutional convention.



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- **Lisa Wozniak, Board Vice Chair**
- **David Daley - Board Treasurer**
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- **Jeff Padden, Director**
- **Buzz Thomas, Director**
- **Dana Thompson, Director**

# Staff

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- **Charles W. Beall, Director of Education Programs**
- **Ricky Bicknell, Government Affairs Manager**
- **Melinda Billingsley, Communications Manager**
- **Mariah Bryant, Director of Democracy Engagement**
- **Katie Costello, Senior Development Director**
- **Lyndon DeFoe, Deputy Campaign Manager**
- **Debbie Diesen, Development Associate**
- **Caranne Fields, Operations Manager**
- **Alyson Grigsby, Education Program Manager**
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- **Jamie Lyons-Eddy, Executive Director**
- **Kim Murphy-Kovalick, Programs Director**
- **Paul Rincon, Deputy Director of Democracy Engagement**
- **Melissa Zinn, Administrative Assistant**

# Contact Us

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