



July 25, 2024

To: Members of the Senate

From: Alma Couverthie, Interim Co-CEO, Chief of Programs

Re: Support funding for election administration

Elections are the heart of American democracy. Yet in recent years, our elections have faced unprecedented challenges — including insufficient election staff, which exacerbates lines and delays, attacks on election infrastructure and workers, and decades-old infrastructure that has not kept up with technological advances.

These issues are largely caused by insufficient funding for elections. Elections are run locally and rely heavily on regionally generated revenue. This leads to significant disparities between affluent communities and less-resourced communities. A dearth of resources can force election officials to make tough decisions that restrict voter access, such as consolidating polling places.

LWVUS fights to increase voters' access to the polls. Increased accessibility to the electoral process is integral to ensuring that every eligible voter can exercise their right to vote.

The federal government provides some funding to states to help run federal elections through the *Help America Vote Act* (HAVA) Election Security Grants. However, these funds must be appropriated each fiscal year. That means states and local election officials do not know how much funding — if any — they'll receive. The House proposed \$0 for election funding in FY24. Although Congress ultimately appropriated \$55 million, that remains only a fraction of what election officials in 50 states, 5 territories, and DC need.

Congress must provide robust, regular funding for state and local election administration. **We urge Congress to appropriate no less than the \$1.625 billion requested by the White House, with two-thirds directed to the local level where the funds are most needed.** HAVA was originally authorized in 2002, appropriating \$3 billion to states to replace outdated voting systems. Now, those systems are over 20 years old. States need a new major investment, akin to the original HAVA investment, to update their systems in preparation for the unique challenges facing elections in 2024 and beyond.

Federal election funding has been supported across the Congressional aisle for decades. From 2018-2022, Congress appropriated nearly \$1.3 billion in election funding on a largely bipartisan basis. The issue of election funding should remain bipartisan, with all members of Congress seeking to adequately support the rights of their constituents to cast a ballot without the unnecessary barriers created by funding gaps. Voting is a fundamental right, and all Americans deserve an equal opportunity to make their voices heard in our democracy.