

Elections and Civics

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act provides approximately \$1.837 billion in funding that can be used to enhance election practices and promote civic education and inclusion. According to a report by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, only [1-in-4 Americans can](#) name all three branches of state government. [Further, only 65% of Americans believe the 2020 Presidential election was “free and fair.”](#) Decreased trust in the integrity of U.S. elections has prompted administrators and relevant government officials to take proactive approaches to combatting misinformation. For example, in 2019 the bipartisan National Association of Secretaries of State launched #TrustedInfo2020 to formally collaborate with federal agencies and social media companies to combat election misinformation. Given these trends, states should prioritize civic education specifically designed to educate the public on how elections are conducted and safeguards in place to ensure the accuracy of outcomes.



States can leverage The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act funds to invest in elections and civics.

\$650 million is available to The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency ([Section 4009](#))

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) works closely with the states to secure their election infrastructure. For the 2020 presidential election, [CISA was heavily involved with combating foreign disinformation and misinformation](#). The ARP allots \$650 million for CISA operations. With CISA funded for increased capacity, states should seek to maximize their partnership opportunities with CISA for both elections and other critical infrastructure. States should specifically seek to replicate their “[Rumor Control](#)” process, to both combat misinformation and educate the public on the process of elections.



\$135 million is available for the National Endowment for the Humanities ([Section 2022](#))

The National Endowment for the Humanities is allocated \$135 million to support grants to state humanities councils to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the coronavirus. Although these councils are presumably trying to regain footing from the coronavirus, these grants should be sought for the purpose of increasing civic education. The Federation of State Humanities Council lists “[strengthening democracy](#)” as a key objective of these councils’ work.



\$200 million is available for the Institute of Museum and Library Services ([Section 2023](#))

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) will receive \$200 million for necessary expenses. A grant-making organization, IMLS will seek to help museums and libraries recover from [decreased patronage due to the coronavirus](#). With increased grant availability on the horizon, museums should seek to expand civic engagement and education opportunities, if possible in partnership with educational institutions.



\$852 million is available to support the Corporation for National and Community Service and The National Service Trust ([Section 2206](#))

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and The National Service Trust will receive \$852 million. The parent agency of AmeriCorps, the stated mission is “[to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering](#).” States can seek to partner with CNCS to fill critical needs within the state and incentivize community service and engagement.



State leaders can learn how to successfully invest in elections and civics by looking to other states.

In recent years, states have pioneered initiatives to educate the public on the conduct of elections at all levels and combat global misinformation and disinformation seeking to undermine faith in U.S. elections. Funding allocations above can be used to support or partner with existing initiatives or establish new robust programs with these objectives. Examples of such initiatives include:

California



Beginning in 2018, former California Secretary of State Alex Padilla's office [sent emails to every voter](#) for whom they had an address, equipping them with information on how to report election misinformation to the state, including through the "report misinformation" link on the [Secretary's website](#). The Secretary of State's office has devoted personnel who frequently checking submitted claims.

Kentucky



Each presidential election year, the Kentucky Secretary of State's office partners with the National Student/Parent Mock Election Committee to coordinate a statewide Mock Election for students throughout the state. Since the program's inception, more than 50,000 elementary, middle, and high school students have cast a ballot through this program. To learn more about this program, [click here](#).

North Carolina



The North Carolina State Board of Elections has launched a "combatting misinformation" [landing page on their website](#). This page defines election misinformation and disinformation and outlines steps the Board is taking to combat it. For example, the page includes an archive of the "Mythbuster Monday" social media campaign where commonly common myths about voting and elections in the state are addressed. To access this archive, [click here](#).

For More Information

SARAH NEEDLER | Director of Research

The Council of State Governments, Center of Innovation

sneedler@csg.org | web.csg.org/recovery