

EVERY VOICE, EVERY VOTE
BETO O’ROURKE’S PLAN TO REALIZE THE FULL POTENTIAL OF OUR DEMOCRACY
PLEDGING TO REGISTER MORE THAN 50 MILLION VOTERS AND ENSURE 35 MILLION
ADDITIONAL VOTES ARE CAST IN 2024

Ours is a government for the people and by the people. Yet when it comes to that quintessentially democratic act—people voting—the numbers tell a different story. For decades, tens of millions of people have been disenfranchised, by law or practice. Many have not voted—not because they love our democracy any less, but because they have been literally drawn out of it.

For generations, insiders have known that with racist, discriminatory policies like voter identification laws, poll taxes, and grandfather clauses, they can restrict who gets a say in the composition of our elected officials and cement their grip on the levers of government. It is no surprise then, that participation is lowest among groups that have remained underrepresented in the halls of power.

These structural barriers are exacerbated by a lack of accountability for elected officials and the outsized influence of corporate and special interests—together responsible for the distrust and disengagement of millions of Americans who rightly see their government captured by those paying for access and outcomes. And the American people’s faith in the electoral process is further undermined as foreign powers execute systematic efforts to interfere with our elections and our leaders take no action to stop it.

If we are to reclaim our democracy, we must draw people back into the political process, expand the franchise, and guarantee that every voice counts. From holding town halls every week on City Council and every month in Congress to refusing all PAC contributions for the past five years, Beto has made the political process more accessible and accountable by reconnecting people with their democracy.

This is also how Beto is running this campaign: taking more questions and meeting with more voters than any other candidate. **Ultimately, Beto firmly believes that who casts a ballot is every bit as important as who is on the ballot, which is why today, he is unveiling a three-part plan to increase voter registration by 50 million voters and raise voter turnout to a historic 65%. Together, these reforms will seek to have 35 million new voters cast ballots in 2024**, which would represent the largest single increase in the number of voters in a presidential election year.

As President, Beto would work with Congress to pass the type of bold structural reforms exemplified in the once-in-a-generation H.R.1 package recently passed in the House of Representatives. Beto will push for changes that:

- 1) Increase participation in our democracy by growing the ranks of eligible, registered voters and limiting permanent incumbency to inspire a new generation of Americans to run for office;
- 2) Remove barriers within our democracy by making it easier for *everyone* to make their voices heard, and;
- 3) Rebuild confidence in our democracy by aggressively confronting interference in our elections and building confidence in our institutions so Americans have faith that our electoral process represents their interests—not those of corporations, special interests, or foreign powers.

I. Increase Participation in Our Democracy

It is long past time that the reality of voting in America lived up to our democratic ideals. As president, Beto will do everything in his power to significantly increase voter registration and participation. Too many people, including new Americans and those that have lost their right to vote but have served their sentences, are currently excluded from our political process and ought to be welcomed into our democracy. To that end, Beto will pursue a plan to register at least 50 million additional voters. It does not matter to Beto whether these voters are Democratic, Republican or independent—adding more voices will make our system more effective, more representative, and more resilient in the decades to come. And with this new generation of voters, by limiting the permanent incumbency that defines so much of our system, Beto will also fight to inspire a new generation of leaders. His plan will:

Spearhead a nationwide shift to automatic and same day voter registration.

Americans should not have to jump through hoops to exercise their fundamental right to vote. Being registered should be the default. Same Day Voter Registration (allowing citizens to register on election day) is simple, effective, and secure, and is currently working well in 20 states plus the District of Columbia. Automatic voter registration (electronically registering citizens to vote any time they do business with a government office) is currently working well in 15 states plus the District of Columbia. Both have dramatically increased turnout and should be the law of the land. Beto will champion legislation to allow Same Day Voter Registration and Automatic Voter Registration in all 50 states leading to at least 50 million more registered voters.

Ensure that young people are registered to vote.

Because younger voters are often the least likely to navigate onerous registration requirements, Beto will:

- Ensure any Automatic Voter Registration plan also includes pre-registration for sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds.
- Mobilize high schools, vocational schools, colleges and universities to play their part in amplifying the next generation's voices at the ballot box, by registering students, encouraging participation and providing campus vote coordinators.

Limit permanent incumbency to promote progress, reduce gridlock and inspire more to run for office.

All too often politicians focus on their own re-election at the expense of addressing the challenges our country faces. If we want to truly have faith in those we serve, if we want our government to reflect the diversity and strength and creativity of our communities, and if we want to inspire a new generation of voters, then let's help clear the way for new leaders to step up and bring their unique experiences, expertise, and energy to bear on the problems and opportunities we're facing. Beto would support a constitutional amendment creating the following term limits for federal elected officials and Justices of the Supreme Court (counting of time served would begin only on the passage of the legislation necessary to impose the limit):

- US President: 2 terms (no change)
- US House: 6 terms (12 years)
- US Senate: 2 terms (12 years)
- Supreme Court: 18-year terms for the Supreme Court, after which the Justices would be permitted to serve on the federal courts of appeals.

II. Remove Barriers within Our Democracy

In America, too many states still make it far too hard to vote—often a pernicious and persistent legacy of our nation’s original sin of slavery and Jim Crow. Voting is a fundamental right of every citizen, and our government ought to be doing everything in its power to make exercising this civic duty as seamless and easy as possible, both for those currently registered to vote, and the 35 million new voters that Beto will bring into our system by 2024. This is not just a “red state issue”; until recently, New York had some of the most restrictive voter registration laws in the country. No matter where people live, there is more we can and must be doing to re-connect them with their democracy. As President, Beto will support a new Voting Rights Act for the 21st century. No longer will politically-motivated officials be able to suppress the vote by imposing draconian voter ID laws, strategically close polling sites, or purge voter rolls. Specifically, Beto will:

- Introduce legislation amending Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act to make clear that even seemingly race-neutral election regulations are unlawful when they result in disproportionate impact on racial minorities.
- Redirect resources at the Department of Justice towards robust, aggressive enforcement of current laws protecting all of our voting rights.

Crack down on draconian voter ID laws.

Voter ID laws reduce turnout, period. And the burden these laws create is felt most strongly by voters of color—who are more likely to not have government-issued identification in the first place, and more likely to be asked to show ID when they actually go to vote. As President, Beto will work with Congress to pass legislation that allows people without identification to vote with a sworn written statement of identity.

Prevent politically-motivated state officials from purging the voter rolls to game the system.

All across the country, voter purges are preventing voters from exercising their rights. Beto will propose legislation preventing states from striking inactive voters from the rolls without verifying that the voter no longer lives in the state and put in place “fail-safe” procedures for wrongly removed voters.

Invest in Human-Centered Voter Design that expands vote-by-mail and early voting and makes National Voting Day a national holiday.

Showing up to vote in-person on a workday can be hard—especially for families with two income-earners, the elderly or disabled, and hourly wage-earners. Beto will:

- Call on Congress to establish a National Voting Day holiday.
- Provide federal resources to facilitate voting by mail, which is particularly important for primaries and local elections, where turnout is usually lower and work with Congress to pass legislation preventing states from limiting those who can vote by mail.
- Extend early voting to 2 weeks, including weekends, before election day.
- Expand human-centered design thinking in voting to make it less daunting, more accessible, and more interesting for individuals, including
 - Placing polling stations at “[grand, iconic locations](#),” near public transportation;
 - Improving voting [accessibility for individuals with disabilities](#) by addressing issues with poll worker training and physical barriers to access; and

- Making it easier for voters to be educated and informed, to “[feel like experts](#),” as they should in a democracy that relies on their genius, funding civic education grants and piloting efforts to “[interact with and pre-mark](#)” ballots.

III. Rebuild Confidence in Our Democracy

Until recently, most Americans took the safety and sanctity of our elections for granted. Then, in 2016, we watched a foreign power openly interfere in our electoral processes—in many cases, with the explicit invitation of then-candidate Donald Trump. We need to make sure the will of the people can never again be subverted by actors within or outside our democracy. No global adversary, no domestic actors, and not even a president should ever again be able to influence or diminish the collective voice of the American electorate. And by bringing another 35 million voters in to our democracy by 2024, we will ensure that our voices are heard loudly and clearly, both at home and abroad. As president, Beto will aggressively pursue the following steps:

Enhanced election security.

Beto will work with Congress to improve our election infrastructure and aggressively tackle interference in our elections. Federal funding would be provided to states to align their systems with cybersecurity standards, invest in paper ballot systems and perform “risk-limiting” audits to confirm election outcomes. He will also require online platforms to disclose sponsors of political ads on their sites.

End gerrymandering: Each American's vote should count equally.

Beto will work with Congress to enact legislation that empowers independent commissions for redistricting to ensure the make up of districts reflects the preferences of voters statewide.

Protect the accuracy of the census:

The census is critical to allocating political power as well as over \$800 billion in government services. Beto would eliminate the citizenship question on the Census this administration is trying to add in a brazen attempt to discourage people from being counted. Multiple independent and nonpartisan researchers have concluded that the question will result in a 5 percent reduction in reporting, undermining representation (and funding) for disadvantaged communities.

Get money out of politics:

Voters not dollars should control our democracy. That is why Beto has refused to take a single dollar from a PAC, corporation, or special interest—not just this campaign but for the past five years. As president, Beto will call for legislation that will:

- End the inappropriate influence of Political Action Committees by
 - banning PAC contributions to campaigns;
 - limiting contributions to issue PACs, inaugural committees & post-retirement foundations to \$2,000 (indexed with inflation); and
 - requiring PACs to disclose all donors at any amount.
- Support low dollar contributions by providing a match for contributions up to \$500 and make them tax deductible.
- Bring transparency to corporate donations by requiring public companies, large private companies and all government contractors to disclose all political contributions and federal lobbying efforts.
- Institute real-time transparency for donations of \$1000 or more by requiring disclosure within 48 hours.

- Prevent U.S. companies with substantial foreign ownership from inappropriately spending money to affect our elections.
- Reduce contribution limits for political parties. Currently, a single donor can give more than \$2.5 million to state and national committees of a political party.

Ensure a government for the people not special interests:

- As President, Beto, as well as every member of his cabinet, will hold monthly town halls, and he will encourage federal elected officials to do the same.
- Ban federal lobbying by anyone who was in a federal elected office and prohibit senior staff from federal lobbying for a period equal to the time they were in such a role or 6 years – whichever is greater.
- Ban anyone who was in a federally-elected office or Senate-approved office or anyone reporting directly to them from working for or owning any part of an entity they regulated while in government, for a period equal to the time they were in such a role or 6 years – whichever is greater.
- Prohibit members of Congress from accepting political contributions from companies representing a sector regulated by a committee on which the member sits. Rank-and-file employees, small businesses, and people who live in the member's district would be exempt.