

Statement of

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to the

**United States House of Representatives
Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol**

on

**“How Four Historic Threats to Democracy Fueled the January 6, 2021 Attack on the
United States Capitol”**

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Chairman Thompson, Vice Chair Cheney, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for your service to our country and for giving us an opportunity to address the forces that led to the January 6, 2021 attack on the United States Capitol.

We are both political scientists and each of us has studied and taught American politics for over thirty years. Suzanne Mettler is the John L. Senior Professor of American Institutions at Cornell University and the author of six books, including *Soldiers to Citizens: The GI Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* and *The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies Undermine American Democracy*. Robert C. Lieberman is the Krieger-Eisenhower Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University and the former provost of John Hopkins and dean of Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. In 2017, we established the [American Democracy Collaborative](#), a scholarly initiative to assess the state of U.S. democracy in historical and comparative perspective. Together we wrote the book *Four Threats: The Recurring Crises of American Democracy*, which informs our analysis in this statement.

Over three decades, we have watched American politics change dramatically, shifting from a system characterized by negotiation, compromise, and moderation to one that featured growing polarization between political leaders and among citizens. By the 2016 election, even long-established norms – such as the legitimacy of elections and freedom of the press – began to seem more fragile. To us, this raised a critical question that contemporary observers of American politics have rarely, if ever, had to face: whether contemporary democracy itself was in danger in the United States. As scholars of American politics, we felt ill-equipped to grapple with this question using our own field's existing analytical frameworks, and for insight we turned to knowledge produced by political scientists who study democratization and democratic deterioration in nations elsewhere in the world, including our colleagues in the American Democracy Collaborative, Thomas Pepinsky and Kenneth M. Roberts.

We learned that worldwide, any of four known threats to democracy can weaken it and lead to backsliding.¹ These include political polarization, conflict over who belongs in the political community and the status of members, high and rising economic inequality, and executive aggrandizement. We then examined the presence of these threats in each of five earlier periods in US history when many Americans were worried that democracy, in terms of its features that had been established by that time, stood in danger of deteriorating. As indicators of whether such backsliding occurred, we evaluated four pillars of democracy, assessing whether they remained intact or were crumbling: free and fair elections, the rule of law, the legitimacy of the political opposition, and the integrity of rights.

What our analysis revealed is that American democracy has often been fragile: time and again, the four threats appeared, in different configurations, endangering the system. In the 1790s, one threat alone, political polarization, was nearly enough to lead to the demise of the young nation, and its early democratic features narrowly escaped intact. In the 1850s, the combination of the first three threats engendered secession and civil war, and in the 1890s, the confluence of those same three threats produced major backsliding in the form of the disenfranchisement of millions of African American men. This damage to democracy lasted for sixty years.

Table 1. Major Threats to American Democracy By Historic Period

	Polarization	Conflict Over Who Belongs	Rising Economic Inequality	Executive Aggrandizement
1790s	X			
1850s	X	X	X	
1890s	X	X	X	
1930s				X
1970s				X
2010s-Now	X	X	X	X

Now, for the first time in our nation’s history, we face the confluence of all four threats at once, as shown in Table 1. These threats are combining with each other in ways that exacerbate the danger to a political system in which the people rule, through institutions of representative government. Analyzed through this framework, the January 6, 2021 attack on the United States Capitol was not a surprise, and the political system is likely to encounter continued damage in the coming years unless democracy can be protected and strengthened.

Four Threats to Democracy

Polarization

Democracy provides a means for societies to manage various kinds of difference without resorting to violence, and it works well when society and politics abound with “cross-cutting cleavages” or overlapping affiliations.² Each of us has many different social characteristics: ethnicity, race, income group, and political party, to name a few. When we regularly affiliate with people from different groups – at work, school, church, in our neighborhoods and civic associations – we tend to be more capable of practicing democracy. A key component of doing so means accepting the basic idea of democracy: that our side might lose an election and the other side might take power, for a time. Under these conditions, democratic politics can foster peaceful accommodation, compromise, and accountability of those in power to the public.

But when we sort ourselves so that we associate only with those with the same social identities and partisan leanings, society and politics can take on the characteristics of “us versus them.” Such social and political sorting fosters anger and resentment toward those in the other party. Citizens become more strongly motivated by “negative partisanship,” meaning antipathy to those in the other party and its candidates, which may motivate them more strongly than their ties to their own party. Partisans increasingly think of each other not as fellow citizens but as enemies. When politics takes on these characteristics, political leaders lose their willingness to negotiate and compromise; they and their supporters treat each election and policy battle as an

existential crisis and may increasingly believe that they must win at all costs because to allow the other side to do so would risk grievous harm to the country. They may consider the need for their party to gain or retain power as worth any damage to democracy that may ensue in the process.³

The Framers of the US Constitution designed the government so that power would be dispersed and it would be hard for a single group to control every lever of governmental power. What they did not imagine was that almost immediately, Americans and their elected leaders would sort themselves out into two competing and mutually antagonistic factions, the precursors of modern political parties. In the first decade of governance under the new Constitution, each side in this dispute – Washington and Hamilton’s Federalists and Jefferson and Madison’s Democratic-Republicans – believed that their view of what the new nation should become was correct and that the opposition’s approach would lead to ruin. The idea of organized, legitimate opposition to the government was still in its infancy, and the result was intense political polarization that quickly took on an existential “us versus them” character. The nation lurched from one democratic crisis to another, and the period was punctuated by violent conflict. The Whiskey Rebellion of the early 1790s, a tax revolt in western Pennsylvania, involved violent insurrection and was met with an armed response by the federal government. The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 criminalized opposition to the Adams administration’s policies and sharply curtailed civil liberties. The presidential election of 1800 produced an inconclusive outcome and had to be thrown into the House of Representatives, with militias for both sides standing by in case of perceived malfeasance; only when deadlock was finally broken and Jefferson elected did the two sides stand down. For the first time, the United States experienced a transition of presidential power from one party to another, and it occurred peacefully and successfully. But polarization, acting as a lone threat, had brought the nation perilously close to civil war or secession.

Polarization proceeded to wax and wane throughout US history, and in the middle of the twentieth century, it reached a low ebb. The nation’s two political parties at the time each contained both liberals and conservatives of various stripes and were each characterized by regional and even state-level diversity. This facilitated the “cross-cutting cleavages” mentioned above. Since then, Americans have gradually sorted themselves such that social and partisan identities increasingly stack onto each other rather than overlapping. The two parties have become ideologically distinct, with conservatives identifying as Republicans and liberals as Democrats.⁴ The Republican Party increasingly attracts the support of both rural Americans nationwide and those who attend church more regularly, with urban dwellers and infrequent churchgoers supporting the Democratic Party.⁵ As the nation has grown more racially and ethnically diverse, the Democratic Party has gained the support of a broad cross-section of the population, while support for the Republican Party remains disproportionately white: in the 2020 presidential election, for instance, Black, Hispanic, Asian and other nonwhite voters made up 39 percent of Biden’s support but only 15 percent of Trump’s.⁶ These numerous distinctions between the parties further “affective polarization” and the animosity that flows from it.

Polarization has also intensified due to partisan competition. From the 1930s to the 1980s, the Democrats were the nation’s clear majority party. But since around 1980, both parties have stood to win control of Congress in most every election, and party leaders have responded by amplifying and projecting partisan differences and playing up partisan antagonism, to the

detriment of shared efforts at policymaking.⁷ In this partisan context, the imperative of winning often takes precedence over the demands of governing; representative government becomes less accountable, and democracy suffers.

Conflict Over Who Belongs

Democracy works well when members of a political community share broad agreement on who is included among them and how members' status is defined; conversely, when citizens disagree fundamentally on these questions, democracy can be endangered because the claims of some people for full inclusion may be met with defensive and even violent reactions from those who seek to defend an existing status hierarchy.

In the United States, this dynamic has consistently recurred over race. The defense of racial hierarchy, implicit in the Constitution's sanctioning of the enslavement of African Americans, has repeatedly limited and imperiled American democracy, even long after the demise of slavery in the nineteenth century and the dismantling of Jim Crow segregation in the twentieth. In some periods – such as the 1790s – whites with political power left racial hierarchy intact by keeping conflict over it off the agenda, protecting in essence a “white man's democracy.” In other periods, such as the 1850s and 1890s, one party took up the cause of democratization, seeking greater inclusion of Black Americans in the promises of citizenship, while the other side tried to protect existing status hierarchies, those founded on white supremacy. Conflict over who belongs can also emerge over the status of immigrants, women, and other groups. If Americans who oppose change place the preservation of what is often terms “our culture” or “our way of life” above adherence to basic democratic rules and procedures, backsliding may ensue.

Conflict over who belongs, particularly as fueled by racism, has persisted like an underground stream that perpetually flows beneath the surface of American politics, ready to be tapped and brought into the open once again even years after it might have seemed to have been receding. Occasionally, in the absence of intense polarization, cross-partisan cooperation can help overcome this kind of conflict and advance the cause of democracy. As a case in point, the struggle for racial equality in the mid-twentieth century occurred when political polarization had diminished, and the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 were both enacted with bipartisan support. As the decades continued, in many respects the United States became more diverse and inclusive, with the first Black president elected, first Black and Hispanic members of the Supreme Court confirmed, and increasing gender, racial, and ethnic diversity in the US Congress.

But in a time of high political polarization, enterprising political leaders may deliberately tap into conflict over who belongs in order to attract supporters. This combination of political polarization and conflict over who belongs can be particularly threatening to democracy. Over the past few decades, as the two parties diverged ideologically, they also grew more distinct both in their policy stands on racial equality and on immigration. The racial beliefs of Republicans and Democrats have also begun to diverge dramatically, as indicated by “racial resentment,” gleaned from a standard battery of survey questions that indicates whether respondents think the persistence of racial inequality is largely attributable to historic and present public policies or if it

owes primarily to personal characteristics such as work ethic. In the 1980s, white non-Hispanic Democrats and Republicans resembled each other on these views, but since then, Republicans have adopted more racially resentful attitudes, while Democrats have shifted to support less racially resentful ones.⁸ As the Democratic Party embraces policy positions aiming to ensure greater racial equality in American society, the Republican Party has grown more adamant in its quest to protect existing arrangements or to restore those of past decades. This is epitomized by the Trump campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again” and the recent movement to restrict the teaching of American history to downplay the role of racial inequality in shaping American politics and society.

Economic Inequality

Nations in which economic inequality is high and rising are more likely to experience democratic weakening than those with lower levels of it. Scholars observe that as income and wealth grow more unequal, the rich grow increasingly wary of a shift in political power that would lead to higher taxes and stricter business regulations. In order to protect their resource advantages, therefore, they are willing to support politicians who will do their bidding at all costs, regardless of what happens to democracy in the process.

Economic inequality escalated in the United States during the Gilded Age of the late nineteenth century. By the 1890s, it rendered political elites in both parties willing to sanction the mass disenfranchisement of African American men. In the case of white elites who ran the Democratic Party in the South and who engineered the process, it enabled them to regain political power and protect their economic status. Though Republicans had supported voting rights for Blacks in earlier decades, they abandoned the cause as their party found its political fortunes more aligned with those of industrialists in the Northeast and Midwest as well as farmers in the West.

The United States grew more egalitarian in the middle of the twentieth century, a period known as the “Great Compression” since the distance between the rich and the poor decreased and the middle class swelled. Since the 1970s, however, inequality has soared, owing partly to economic trends such as globalization and technological development, but also to public policy changes that have promoted those trends and failed to mitigate their consequences for displaced industries and workers. As a result, the United States today features far greater economic inequality than any other long-standing democratic nation. With rising economic inequality comes the growing concentration of political power among the wealthy, owing to ambitious organization as well as campaign contributions and lobbying investments. Through the process, the rich gain greater capacity to protect their advantages, regardless of the cost to democracy.

Executive Aggrandizement

The fourth and final threat to democracy involves the growth of power of the nation’s top leader; as the executive gains more authority relative to the legislature and develops a seemingly personal relationship to citizens, particularly through innovative new types of media, the potential for tyranny grows.

In the United States, the presidency was traditionally a relatively restrained component of the political system, but executive power has grown particularly from the 1930s to the present. Presidents of both political parties have expanded the powers of the office, typically to increase their ability to deliver on promises to the American people or to strengthen their role in national security. Such increased power carries with it the potential, however, that presidents will use it for their own personal gain or to advantage their political party.

Twice in the twentieth century, the growth of executive power threatened to put democracy at risk. During the Great Depression and World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt used expanded executive power to respond to both crises. Some Americans, watching the rise of Nazism and fascism abroad, feared that the United States would also dissolve into authoritarianism. Certainly the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II resembled the tyrannical governance and violation of human rights that the nation was fighting abroad. Similar to the 1790s, furthermore, this period involved a tacit agreement among political leaders to leave existing racial hierarchy intact. In other respects, Roosevelt managed to navigate the nation through domestic crises and war in a manner that salvaged the economy and saved democracy. The fact that the first three threats remained at a low ebb likely helped to ensure this outcome, although it came at the cost of perpetuating the anti-democratic exclusion of most African Americans from full membership in the political community.

In the 1970s, President Richard Nixon deliberately used enlarged executive powers to further his own personal and political interests. Remarkably, other actors in the political system, including members of both parties in Congress, each played their constitutionally appointed roles to check executive power, and the political system emerged unscathed. Again, the fact that the first three threats were muted involved helped contain the crisis and permitted a bipartisan congressional committee to enact long-lasting reforms.

Now, all four threats have been on the rise for years. When Donald Trump entered the presidential race in 2015, it was the presence of these forces that helped to make him a viable candidate; his rise was a symptom rather than a cause of democracy in crisis. Once on the campaign trail and then in the White House, he stoked all four threats, particularly political polarization. As his presidency continued, all four threats continue to advance, creating a combustible mix, particularly as the 2020 election approached. Afterward, when Biden was declared the winner, Trump and his supporters began to plot ways to reverse the results so that he could remain in office. President Trump's insistence through the 2020 campaign and in its aftermath that his opponent's victory was illegitimate, followed by his administration's resort to legally dubious, clumsy, and ultimately violent tactics to nullify his defeat are in keeping with the conditions that gave rise to his presidency in the first place. With the four threats at high tide, these actions led to the attack on the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Comparing November 10, 1898 and January 6, 2021

On January 6, 2021, as each of us watched our television screens in horror, we were reminded of another day in American history: November 10, 1898. In contrast to January 6, that day, in Wilmington, North Carolina, saw a successful coup d'état that commenced severe democratic backsliding that endured for decades. Although the 2021 insurrection on the US Capitol was unsuccessful, in other respects both the parallels and the differences between the two events are alarming.

Rolling Back Democracy in 1898⁹

In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, American democracy appeared in many respects to be on the rise. Elections generated lively political participation and high voter turnout, including among African American men in the South, who had gained voting right just after the Civil War. Black voter turnout remained high in most states long after the end of Reconstruction, because the Supreme Court continued to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment. Vibrant political parties competed for support, including not only the Democratic and Republican parties but also the agrarian People's Party (known as the Populists), which attracted the support of many low- and middle-income white voters. In some southern states, Black Republicans and Populists realized that if they joined forces and ran candidates on a "fusion" ticket, they might have a chance of beating the Democrats, the party run at that time by white elites. In North Carolina, the fusion proponents enjoyed dramatic victories in 1894 and 1896, managing to win the majority of seats in the state legislature, several congressional seats, a US Senate seat, and the governorship.

It was at that very juncture that Democratic Party leaders in North Carolina decided it was time to fight back and shut down the opposition permanently. As they plotted to reclaim power in the state, they set their sights on the coastal city of Wilmington, which featured a politically empowered and growing black middle class. African Americans owned many businesses in the city, including restaurants frequented by Blacks and whites alike, and they held several seats on the Board of Alderman. The *Wilmington Daily Record* was a Black-owned newspaper, and one of the only ones in the nation that published a new edition daily. Democrats developed a multi-pronged strategy to win back the majority in the state legislature in the November 1898 election. They organized two white supremacist groups, the White Government Union (WGU) and the paramilitary Red Shirts, to roam the streets and intimidate Black voters so that they would stay away from the polls. The strategy worked. Then they sought to take control of Wilmington.

On the morning of November 10, 1898, two thousand men from the Red Shirts and WGU gathered at the city armory, brandishing rifles and pistols. They burned down the office of the *Daily Record*. They then advanced through Black neighborhoods, killing hundreds of residents as the day wore on. They dragged prominent community members from their homes, marched them to the train station, and forced them to leave town. Before the day was out, the Democrats forced – at gunpoint – the resignations of the members of the biracial Fusionist city government, installing their own in their place.

In the months that followed, the Democrats took action at the state level to make their power permanent. Within a few months, they had secured a new constitutional amendment that imposed poll taxes, literacy tests, and other measures that would disenfranchise almost all African Americans and many poor whites for nearly seventy years to come. The coup d'état in North Carolina brought out into the open what proceeded to happen more quietly in states throughout the South, as Democrats across the region replicated the disenfranchisement efforts. The establishment of racial segregation in all aspects of social life – American apartheid – followed. The multiracial democracy that had been on the rise was vanquished, replaced by white supremacist, authoritarian rule.

Similarities and Differences

We are struck by several similarities between the events of November 10, 1898, and January 6, 2021. In both instances, ordinary people – mostly men – occupied the most visible roles in the insurrection. They included members of groups, from the Red Shirts to the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers, that embraced white supremacy and the use of violence. In each instance, political party leaders themselves actually coordinated and promoted the events, using them as a means to try to reclaim power they felt was rightfully theirs. After the day's events, furthermore, these same individuals took action to change the rules and procedures governing elections in order to ensure that they would prevail in the future and the opposition would not have a chance. Specifically, efforts by Republicans since early in 2021 to politicize election administration in numerous states remind us of the changes wrought by Democrats in North Carolina and other southern states in the 1890s.

More broadly, what motivated both insurrections – the successful coup in 1898 and the unsuccessful *autogolpe* or self-coup (meaning an attempt to stay in power) in 2021 – was that partisans were unwilling to accept the outcome of elections. Elections are the most fundamental feature of democracies, the essential component that all theorists agree must be present, and they must be free and fair, and participants need to respect the outcome. Political scientist Adam Przeworski defines democracy simply as, “a system in which parties lose elections.” Democrats in North Carolina in the 1890s could not accept losing, and they sought to regain power by violating all of the rules of democratic political competition and resorting instead to the tools of authoritarians. Republicans in 2020 could not accept Trump's loss, despite the lack of any evidence produced by election administrators in any state that suggested a different outcome. They resorted to an attack on Congress and the democratic process, attempting to overturn the decisions of the people of various states and reverse the outcome for the nation as a whole.

We are also struck by crucial and sobering differences between these two events. While the first three threats combined to fuel anti-democratic politics in 1898, in our own times those three are joined by the fourth, executive aggrandizement. This time, the president himself stood at the center of the effort, aiming to stay in power and using the power and influence of his office to try to do so. The 1898 coup occurred at the level of subnational government – in an individual state – and while national political leaders sanctioned it by refusing to intervene, they did not themselves help coordinate it. Democracy died within one state, and subsequently, throughout an entire region. In 2021, by contrast, national political leaders, both Trump and some in his White House staff and Republicans in Congress tried to maintain control of the presidency itself

through illegitimate means. Democracy for the entire nation stood in the brink, and while the legitimate results of the election were upheld and democracy survived the episode, the conditions that led us to the edge of the abyss remain with us.

Protecting Democracy

The historical record reveals that on many occasions in the American past, elections involved malfeasance, as partisans attempted to intimidate potential voters, stuff ballot boxes, rig vote counts, or otherwise alter outcomes. Scholars who study election administration find that by contrast, elections in the contemporary United States are very well run. Numerous studies over the past several years find negligible instances of fraud.¹⁰ Indeed, Americans should feel proud of their system of elections.¹¹

Yet, ambitious politicians have stoked doubt in the nation's elections as a means to further their own political power. Although Americans' confidence in our elections remains high overall, it is increasingly partisan; people express less confidence in the integrity of their elections when their party loses. This partisan divide reached alarming levels in the aftermath of the 2020 election; not only are people who voted for Donald Trump more likely to express doubt in the integrity of the election than Biden voters, but a majority of Republicans also continue to believe, without evidence, that the election was fraudulent and the current president illegitimate.¹² If Americans do not have confidence – win or lose – in the legitimacy of elections, democracy may well become increasingly unstable as partisans are willing to resort to undemocratic, and even violent, tactics to ensure that their side will win.

A full-fledged effort needs to be made to reverse these trends. While this broader agenda lies beyond our scope here, we strongly recommend that Congress act quickly to update the Electoral Count Act of 1887, ridding it of dangerous ambiguities. The law should make it clear that the role of Congress is to certify the electoral votes reported by the states, not to appoint alternate electors or to overturn any states' certified election results through other means. It should clarify that the vice president's role is ministerial and largely ceremonial, not to intervene in vote counting. Furthermore, the passage of legislation such as the Freedom to Vote Act would further secure the integrity of American elections by promoting uniform ballot access for all Americans regardless of party and by inhibiting partisan interference in the electoral process.

The four threats that made American democracy vulnerable in the past have converged, for the first time in US history, and they coalesced to fuel the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol. Unless we take action now to fortify democracy, the United States risks backsliding toward authoritarianism.

¹ Here and throughout this statement, we draw on our book, Suzanne Mettler and Robert C. Lieberman, *Four Threats: The Recurring Crises of American Democracy*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2020.

² Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review*. 53 (1959): 69-105.

³ Lilliana Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Donald R. Kinder and Cindy D. Kam, *Us Against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Jennifer McCoy and Murat Somer, "Toward a Theory of Pernicious Polarization and How It Harms Democracies: Comparative Evidence and Possible Remedies" *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681 (2019): 234-71.

⁴ Alan I. Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and the Rise of Donald Trump* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018) p. 51.

⁵ Trevor Brown, Suzanne Mettler, and Samantha Puzzi, "When Rural and Urban Become 'Us' versus 'Them': How a Growing Divide is Reshaping American Politics," *The Forum* 19 (2021): 365-393; Michele F. Margolis, "The Religious Sort: The Causes and Consequences of the Religiosity Gap in America" in *Democratic Resilience: Can the United States Withstand Rising Polarization?* ed. Robert C. Lieberman, Suzanne Mettler, and Kenneth M. Roberts (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 226-45.

⁶ Pew Research Center, "Behind Biden's Victory," June 2021, p. 15. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/06/30/behind-bidens-2020-victory/>

⁷ Frances E. Lee, *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

⁸ Mettler and Lieberman, *Four Threats*, pp. 224-226.

⁹ This section draws on Mettler and Lieberman, *Four Threats*, pp. 92-129.

¹⁰ E.g. Lorraine Minnite, *The Myth of Voter Fraud* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); Elaine Kamarck and Christine Stenglein, "Low rates of fraud in vote-by-mail states show the benefits outweigh the risks," Brookings Institution, June 2, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/06/02/low-rates-of-fraud-in-vote-by-mail-states-show-the-benefits-outweigh-the-risks/>; Christine A. Cassidy, "AP Review Finds Far Too Little Vote Fraud to Tip 2020 Election to Trump," *PBS NewsHour*, December 14, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/ap-review-finds-far-too-little-vote-fraud-to-tip-2020-election-to-trump>;

¹¹ Lawrence R. Jacobs and Judd Choate, "Democratic Capacity: Election Administration as Bulwark and Target," *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 699 (January 2022): 22-35.

¹² MIT Election Data and Science Lab, "Voter Confidence," <https://electionlab.mit.edu/research/voter-confidence>; Pew Research Center, "Trust in America: Do Americans Trust Their Elections?" January 5, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/2022/01/05/trust-in-america-do-americans-trust-their-elections/>