

# How to Talk About Democracy in 2024

**Background:** For more than 200 years, America has been a beacon of democracy to the entire world. But right now, our democratic institutions face major challenges. Democratic candidates have committed to improving and strengthening our democracy in the midst of the undemocratic actions and rhetoric from former President Donald Trump and his allies. For instance, Democrats believe that voting is a foundational right and the job of officials is to ensure every eligible citizen has the chance to make their voice heard and their vote counted. Where this freedom is threatened, Democrats want to fix it.

Yet in 2024, Republicans from Trump to state and local candidates want to further weaken our democracy. Republicans actively work to make it harder for certain citizens – Black and Latino voters, young voters, and college students – to participate in elections. Through voter suppression efforts, attempts to forge false elector slates for the 2020 election, and defending violent insurrectionists involved in the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol, Republican initiatives damage our democracy and the freedom for all Americans to have their votes counted and respected.

Repairing our democracy is a major issue in the 2024 election for all candidates, not just those running for the White House. Through polling, conversations with NewDEAL Leaders, and advice from issue-area experts, NewDEAL Leaders developed this guide to help candidates talk about repairing democracy during the 2024 campaign.

- **What Americans Are Thinking:** A recent [NewDEAL poll](#) showed that Americans are unhappy with the state of our democracy. Only 23 percent of respondents described the state of American democracy as “excellent” or “good” while 53 percent said our democracy is weaker than after the 2020 election.
- **Top Line Message:** Candidates must communicate clearly, consistently, and forcefully that **Democrats are committed to repairing and improving our democracy**. Voters across the board think that democracy is broken. Therefore, a message of “saving” or “preserving” democracy falls flat. Following the shooting at the July 2024 Trump rally, it is even more important to choose words carefully. Focus on the concrete examples of Republicans’ anti-democratic actions, be clear about how they impact democracy, and talk about the opportunity to hold former President Trump and his allies accountable at the ballot box for their comments and actions.



## 1. Draw A Clear Contrast

**The Republican Party leadership refuses to denounce widespread efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election, which would have silenced the voices of millions of Americans who voted for President Biden.** Further, Republicans overwhelmingly support Donald Trump, a man who lies about fair elections, won’t commit to accepting the results of the 2024 election, and promises to be a dictator on day one if he is elected. **Democrats, on the other hand, will improve our democracy, fighting for the opportunity of every eligible citizen to vote and to have their vote counted.** Democrats have a plan to repair the damage done to our democratic institutions, including ideas laid out in the NewDEAL Forum’s [Democracy Playbook](#).

## 2. Tie Democracy to Freedom

At its base, a functioning democracy is the epitome of freedom. It is the freedom to vote and to have one's voice heard in our government. In asking the governor of Georgia to "find" nonexistent votes after the 2020 election, Donald Trump and his Republican enablers sought to take away the freedom of millions of residents to vote for president. **Anti-freedom rhetoric and actions permeate the Republican Party, while Democratic candidates seek to repair and improve our democratic institutions.**

- **Strategy in Action:** The NewDEAL Leaders and Congressional **New Democrat Coalition** released the [2024 Freedom Agenda](#). The agenda offers a common platform for Democrats from city councilors to state legislators to Congress to fight to protect Americans' fundamental freedoms and expand opportunities, as Republicans continue to sow chaos, extremism, and division at every level of government.

## 3. Quickly and Forcefully Correct Misinformation

Democrats are and must continue to be trusted, truthful advocates about the facts, including how, when, and where to vote. **Combat disinformation in real time and lead with the truth.** Misinformation is not new in elections, but social media, and now [generative artificial intelligence](#), can help spread lies and conspiracies further and faster than ever before. According to NewDEAL polling, most voters are unaware of the use of generative AI related to election disinformation, so **it is incumbent upon candidates to help educate voters about both potential dangers and point them to reliable information sources.**

- **Strategy in Action:** **Arizona Secretary of State Adrian Fontes** set up a rapid response unit within his office to immediately flag misleading material, including misleading AI-generated material, as soon as it is identified. His office will alert both voters and the media to the misleading information in order to increase awareness and visibility, and blunt the impact of the misinformation. Fast, aggressive responses are necessary in today's media environment, and reinforce the image that Democrats are the trusted party to protect democracy. [Click to hear more.](#)

## 4. Embrace Discussions of Election Security and Transparency

When people have a better understanding of how votes are processed and tabulated, they come away with more confidence in elections. **Candidates should address issues of election security and integrity head-on. In doing so, lead with empathy, to reach everyday people who have been misled.** Remember that reasonable people can have questions about election security and processes, and candidates should respond in ways to ease concerns. Legitimate, good-faith questions are not attacks, and should not be dismissed. Use these opportunities to talk about issues of election security and highlight the ways that voting is safe, secure, and fair. In addition, embrace transparency: **show how elections are administered, including how voting machines work, to educate the public as to how Democrats are improving our democratic institutions.**

- **Strategy in Action:** To build trust among voters and skeptics, Minnesota, like many states, [publicly tests voting machines](#) before elections to ensure their accuracy. **Secretary of State Steve Simon** actively invites media and members of the public to witness the process as a type of "pre-buttal" to disinformation, blunting its effects.

## 5. Make Democracy Personal and Concrete

On NewDEAL's podcast, *An Honorable Profession*, **Democratic communications expert Jesse Ferguson emphasized that candidates must make the abstract issue of democracy personal for voters.** "Why do they care about democracy?" he asked. "Maybe it's because their parent or grandparent fought for the country. Maybe they are a veteran and they fought for the country. Maybe they have a story of an immigrant." Ferguson added that candidates must think about where voters are coming from. "You're dealing with an electorate that fundamentally is skeptical of anything an elected official or a politician says," he added. "And puts a real premium on authenticity. And in order for that to work, **they need to know not just what you're going to do, but also why you're going to do it. And on democracy that is particularly acute.**"