

January 27, 2026

# LOBBY CALL

## 136th General Assembly 119th US Congress

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# HOUSEKEEPING

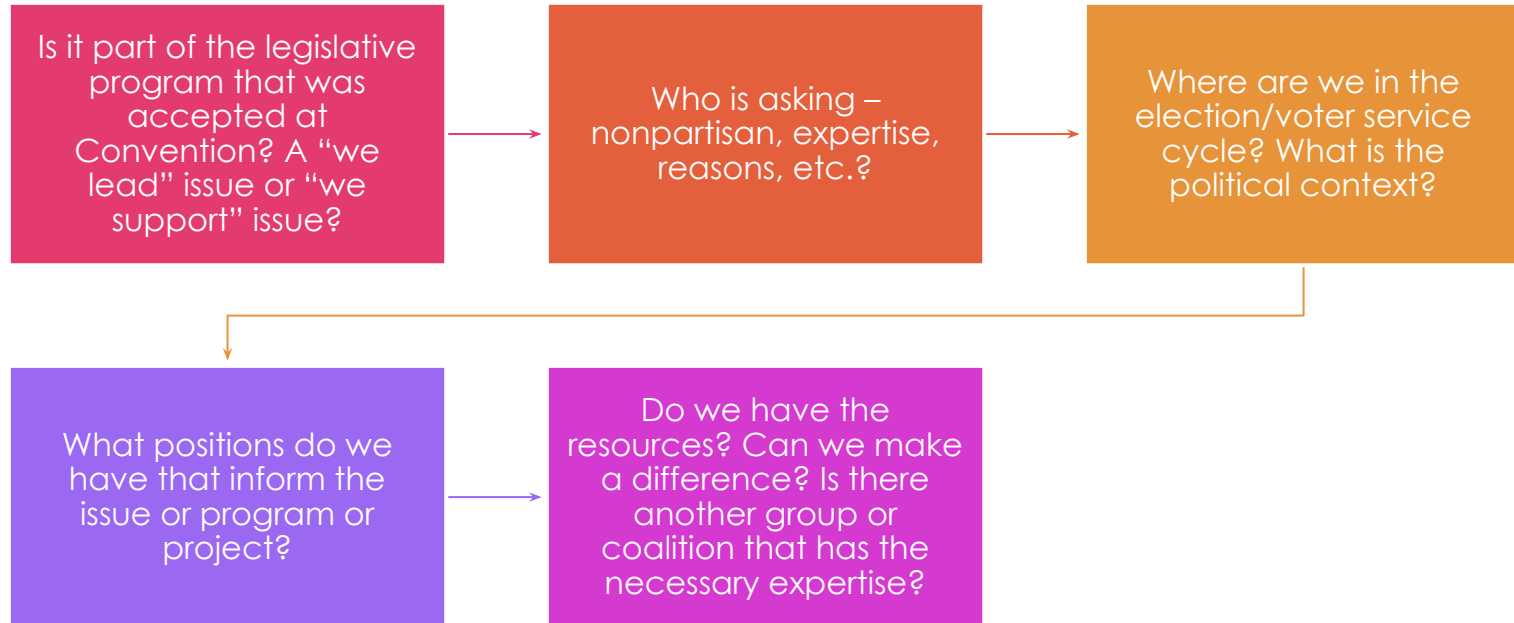
- **Be present**
- **Be respectful**
- **Assume good intent**
- **Recognize that the materials, statements, and opinions are private to the organization and should not be shared without specific consent from the League or the speaker**
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# Advocacy Decision Making

HOW WE RESPOND TO ISSUES AND REQUESTS

# Base Questions We Ask





# Program Planning

**June 25-28, 2026 Columbus, Ohio**

## **Program Planning 2026-2028**

This is your one-stop shop for materials and resources related to the 2026-2028 Program and program planning process.

### **LWVUS Program Planning Glossary**

Glossary of terms that are unique to Program Planning, the grassroots process for choosing League program.

### **Program Planning Guidance for Virtual Meetings**

This guidance is intended for those Leagues who will be conducting their member meeting as a virtual event. This guide covers overall guidance for program, setting up pre-meetings, tips for planning...

### **Leaders Guide to LWVUS Program 2026 – 2028**

This guidance includes a timeline, background, and additional resources for League leaders on LWVUS program planning for 2026-2028.

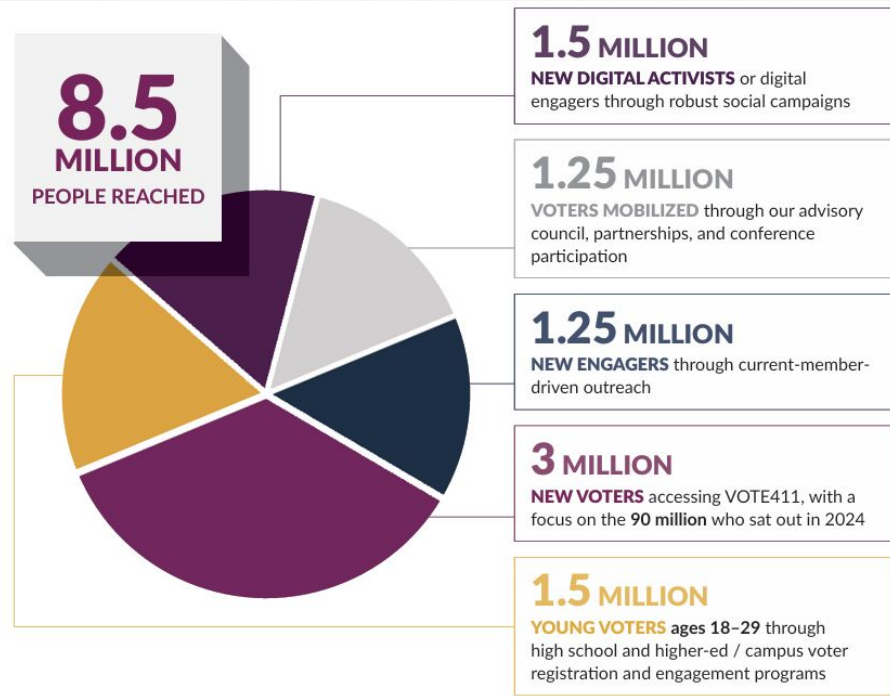
## Program Planning 2026-2028

- **Current LWVUS Positions** can be found in *Impact on Issues*
- **Join the Program Planning Groups.IO discussion group** to learn more about Program Planning and Women Defend Democracy: *Democracy Under Siege*, as well as consider proposals from state and local Leagues.
- **Hold an All-Member or Board Member** meeting to reach consensus on on survey questions
- **Submit Survey By March 9, 2026:** Actual Survey | PDF Version for Reviewing (not Submitting)



## Power Play Book 4

- February to April 2026: [Deepening Electoral Power](#)
- Ohio Goal: 313,176 people reached
- Local League Goal: 8,948 people reached





## Power Play Book 4 February Goals

- ❑ Invite 1–3 power partners to host pop-ups at locations where you might reach new audiences, such as community colleges, transit hubs, faith communities, with friends and family, and sporting events.
- ❑ Utilize VOTE411 poster templates to create customizable voting resources for your community.
- ❑ Meet with local elections officials. Deepen your relationship with local elections officials to build an effective partnership and address difficult issues if they arise. Find ways to educate your community about potential issues.
- ❑ Promote “Make Your Voting Plan” checklists. Encourage members to help neighbors confirm their registration, know their polling place, and set reminders.

## Power Play Book 4 February Goals

- ❑ Hold virtual or in-person workshops. Teach communities the basics about how primaries work in their state and why they matter. This is a great opportunity to partner with local elections officials.
- ❑ Utilize existing Action Kits to host community conversations about relevant issues.
- ❑ Host a “Monthly Friend Bank,” engaging League members and partners to focus on the most important electoral aspects (e.g., register and/or check your registration, and/or learn early voting options and tips, and/or learn about the candidates and Election Day information).



# Around the Ohio Statehouse



**Expectation: work for 8 weeks, take off for Primary (May 5) and then go another 8 weeks before Summer Break**

### **Legislative Sessions**

- [Current Session schedule](#)
- ~~Senate Session scheduled for 1/28~~
- House resuming Session in February

### **Committee Hearings**

- ~~Senate committees scheduled for 1/27~~
- House resuming committees in February

We now have a **property tax crisis** happening in Ohio that has been perpetuated by the state's continued **underfunding of public services** (not just education), increased tax cuts over time for the wealthy and big corporations, and increased burden on homeowners / tax payers. While 4 bills that deal with inside millage have been signed by the Governor, the GA is hoping to pass some bills that now deal with outside millage.



# Bills Signed

What Is Now Law

## Tax Bills:

HB186

HB 335

HB 129

HB 309

HB 124

## Democracy Bill

SB 293

## Key Property Tax Bills Signed in Dec 2025:

- HB 186: Modifies property tax reductions for residential property, changes school district tax calculations, and amends the certification of tax abstracts.
- HB 335: Limits revenue increases from inside millage levies that occur due to property reappraisals or updates.
- HB 309: Permits county budget commissions to reduce property tax levies if deemed "unnecessary" or "excessive".
- HB 129: Implements a check on tax increases, specifically requiring emergency or substitute levies to be included in calculations that bring down rates.
- HB 124: Gives county auditors greater oversight and control over property valuation.
- **Details on following slides**



Together, these bills will:

- Cut expected future increases in property taxes by as much as \$3 billion. This would work by capping the automatic tax increases that result solely from rising property values. It also would retroactively cut taxes in communities where rising taxes have exceeded inflation since 2022.

These “inflation cap credits” only would apply in communities where school districts’ tax rates are at what’s called the 20-mill floor – a term that refers to the minimum tax rate schools are guaranteed under state law. About 80% of Ohio’s current communities currently are at this level. Generally speaking, communities in rural and exurban areas where voters have approved fewer property tax levies are more likely to be at the 20-mill floor.

The \$3 billion number is an estimate from the Legislative Service Commission, the nonprofit research arm of the legislature. The actual number could vary based on what property values actually do in the future, and whether voters in these communities end up approving additional tax levies before the bills are fully phased in three years from now. Some critics of the bill believe funding cuts for schools will prompt communities to seek tax increases, dampening the bills’ effects.

- Set aside \$410 million in one-time funding for schools to temporarily compensate them for any lost funding resulting from the inflation cap.
- Tweak tax law to change how the 20-mill floor is calculated. Currently, certain types of property tax levies don't count when calculating this number. The bill eliminates those exemptions, which should mean more communities will rise above the 20-mill floor, a change that's meant to reduce future automatic tax increases. Currently, Ohio has a historically large percentage of school districts on the 20-mill floor – which due to how Ohio's complex tax formula works, is a product of the recent property value hikes, and also [is a factor in why so many property owners have seen large tax spikes](#) recently.

- Hike taxes on many landlords by a total of \$300 million to help pay for an equal tax cut for property owners. One of the bills does so by expanding the "owner occupancy tax credit" for homeowners, while eliminating another exemption for landlords and other residential property holders who don't live in the homes they own. A group representing real estate investors unsuccessfully had urged DeWine to strike this language.
- Give greater authority to the county budget commission, a panel of county elected officials, to unilaterally reduce voter-approved tax levies.

# Reminder

The legislature has now officially voted to override the governor's budget veto #66. It will become law.

- **This vetoed provision:**
  - Ban key types of school renewal levies (such as emergency levies)
  - Ban replacement levies
  - Force some levies to be split into two separate votes — confusing voters and causing more levies to fail
- **NBC 4 — Ohio lawmakers enacted property tax relief, but it may raise taxes by millions**
- **Ideastream — Ohio Senate overrides veto, eliminating some kinds of tax levies**

# Bills to Watch

HB 355

HB608

HB575

SJR7

## **HB 608**

- Sponsors: Thomas, Glassburn
- Modify the law governing property taxes and other local taxes

## **SJR 7 — Blessing**

- Allow land valuation rather than improvements on land
- Was to have first hearing Jan. 27

## **HB 575**

- Sponsors: David Thomas, Bob Peterson
- Make various changes to the law governing the property taxation of farmland
- STATUS: In House Ways & Means Committee

## HB355: Increase vote threshold for local taxes subject to voter approval

- Sponsors: Angela King and Dave Thomas
- In House General Government Committee
- Changes the requirement of just a simple majority of voters to pass local levies to at least 60%

### **Study Says Ohio Could See Double Digit Income Tax Increases without Property Taxes**

If Ohio abolishes property taxes, local income tax rates would have to be increased to an average of 13 percent, according to a study by the Tax Foundation. Signal Ohio reports the study concludes that doing away with property tax may be popular, but “replacing it won’t be.”

<https://signalohio.org/ohio-could-see-doub>

Seeing more school districts trying to move to income tax



# Bills to Watch

## New Bill — [HB 643](#)

- Bipartisan
- Limit the EdChoice expansion scholarship to families with a federal adjusted gross income of \$500,000 or less

## [SB 127](#) — Allows the state to close certain public schools

- **STATUS:** 3rd hearing in Senate Education Committee on 4/1/25
- **WHAT IT DOES:**
  - Allows the state to close certain public schools
  - Could force some public schools to “transfer control to private operators”
  - **Messages from Ohio Education Association (OEA):**
    - SB 127 would expand reliance on problematic standardized test scores for labeling schools as underperforming
    - SB 127 could lead to mandatory school closures that squander prior investments in school buildings
    - **SB 127 could transfer control of schools to external operators that have no link to the community**
    - SB 127 could lead to mass job losses for school staff, which would have a major impact on local communities

# LETTER TO LAROSE ON SB293

## LETTER URGES CORRECTIONS TO NVRA VIOLATIONS

- Sent by ACLU, ACLU Ohio, and Campaign Legal on behalf of LWVO and CAIR Ohio
- Says SB 293 violates federal law by requiring unlawful voter purges + wrongful removals of eligible voters
- Specifically: Discriminates against naturalized citizens + violates federal law prohibiting systematic voter list maintenance during the 90 day period preceding a federal election
- SOS has 20 days to take action: should he do nothing, we are ready to pursue additional measures, including litigation

Read the press release [here](#) and letter [here](#)

# Resources

Podcasts

Books for Discussion

Toolkits

The League of Women Voters-Downeast in cooperation with WERU FM produces a monthly radio program on topics in participatory democracy. It's called the Democracy Forum.

Broadcasts may be heard from 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. on the third Friday of the month at WERU Community Radio, 89.9 FM Blue Hill. Listen on the web at [WERU.org](http://WERU.org). This show can be heard in the Portland area on WMPG Community Radio from the [Democracy Forum podcast archive](#).

The Democracy Forum is a past winner of top honors from the Maine Association of Broadcasting for public affairs radio.

Democracy Forum 11/19/21: Freedom of Religion, Freedom from Religion: Politics and Religion in America. Host: Ann Luther, [League of Women Voters of Maine](#), [https://archives.weru.org/?powerpress\\_pinw=25451-podcast](https://archives.weru.org/?powerpress_pinw=25451-podcast)





- Author interview:

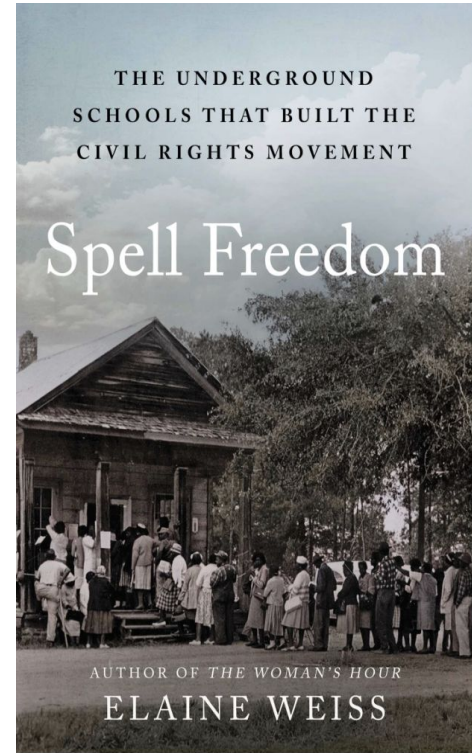
<https://www.npr.org/2025/10/07/nx-s1-5561762/dopesick-author-beth-macy-on-escaping-poverty-and-then-going-back-home>

**Paper Girl: A Memoir of Home and Family in a Fractured America** is a 2025 non-fiction book by Beth Macy that explores the social and economic decline of her hometown in Ohio, examining issues like the opioid crisis, mental health, and political polarization through her personal experiences and reporting. The memoir blends her own family's struggles with the stories of her community, using her past as a newspaper delivery girl as a central metaphor for the loss of local news and civic connection. It's a blend of memoir, reportage, and advocacy, offering a compassionate look at a community grappling with profound changes.

**The acclaimed author of the “stirring, definitive, and engrossing” (NPR) *The Woman’s Hour* returns with the story of four activists whose audacious plan to restore voting rights to Black Americans laid the groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement.**

In the summer of 1954, educator Septima Clark and small businessman Esau Jenkins travelled to rural Tennessee’s Highlander Folk School, an interracial training center for social change founded by Myles Horton, a white southerner with roots in the labor movement. There, the trio united behind a shared mission: preparing Black southerners to pass the daunting Jim Crow era voter registration literacy tests that were designed to disenfranchise them.

Together with beautician-turned-teacher Bernice Robinson, they launched the underground Citizenship Schools project, which began with a single makeshift classroom hidden in the back of a rural grocery store. By the time the Voting Rights Act was signed into law in 1965, the secretive undertaking had established more than nine hundred citizenship schools across the South, preparing tens of thousands of Black citizens to read and write, demand their rights—and vote. Simultaneously, it nurtured a generation of activists—many of them women—trained in community organizing, political citizenship, and tactics of resistance and struggle who became the grassroots foundation of the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. King called Septima Clark, “Mother of the Movement.”





NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

# Giving Up Is Unforgivable

A MANUAL FOR  
KEEPING  
A DEMOCRACY

**Joyce Vance**

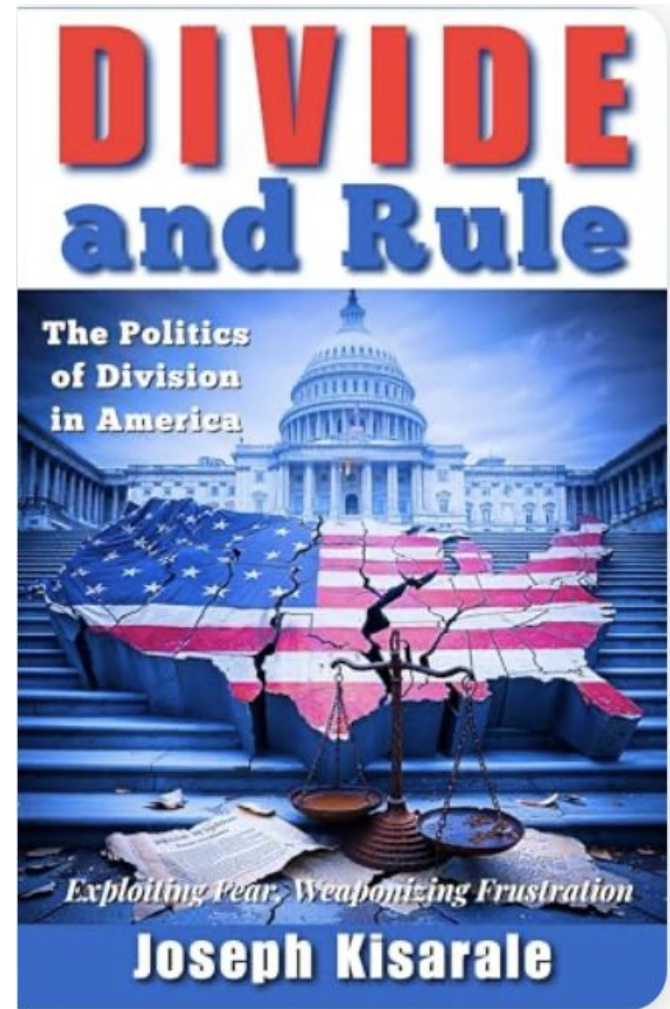
AUTHOR OF THE  
"CIVIL DISCOURSE" NEWSLETTER

For the past several years, Joyce Vance has signed off posts on her chart-topping Substack, "Civil Discourse", with these four words. In that time, she has guided readers through a continued erosion of democratic norms, the unprecedented felony conviction of an ex-president, and the constitutionally calamitous beginning to the second Trump administration. Here, Vance offers a blueprint for avoiding burnout and despair, and for strengthening our democratic muscle.

Giving Up Is Unforgivable is a clarion call to action, putting our current crisis in historical context and sketching out a vision for where we go next. Vance's message is hopeful at its heart, even as it acknowledges the daunting challenges that lie ahead. She is the constitutional law professor you never knew you needed, explaining the legal context and the political history— and why the rule of the law still matters. At the same time, she empowers the reader to do something, both as individuals and collectively.

Consider this the birth of a countermovement to Project 2025, a rallying cry for citizen engagement to combat the second Trump administration and save American democracy.

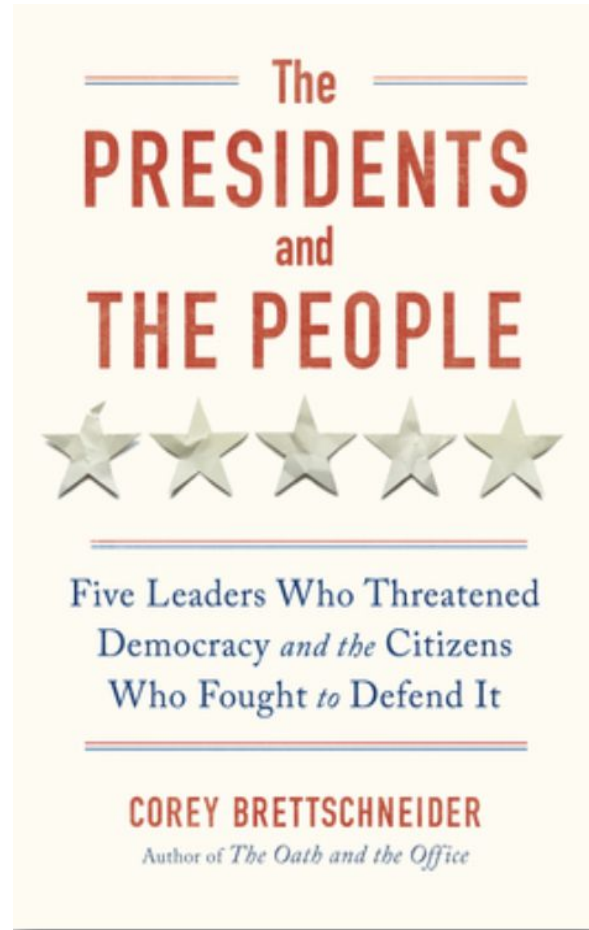
In *Divide and The Politics of Division in America*, author Joseph Kisarale delivers a deep exploration of the forces tearing America apart. He delves into America's current sociopolitical climate, shedding light on the fractures and failures that have led many to question the very foundations of democracy. The book traces the growing discontent among citizens who feel increasingly alienated by political institutions that seem out of touch with their daily struggles. It lays bare the unmet promises of representation and highlights how these failures have contributed to civic disengagement, polarization, and the rise of populist movements.

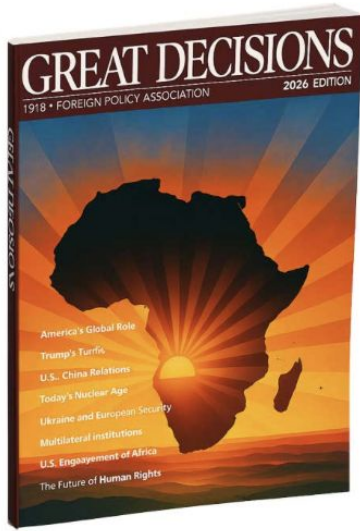


Winner of the American Bar Association's 2025 Silver Gavel Award

In this propulsive and eminently readable history, constitutional law and political science professor Corey Brettschneider provides a thoroughly researched account of assaults on democracy by not one such president but five. John Adams waged war on the national press of the early republic, overseeing numerous prosecutions of his critics. In the lead-up to the Civil War, James Buchanan colluded with the Supreme Court to deny constitutional personhood to African Americans. A decade later, Andrew Johnson urged violence against his political opponents as he sought to guarantee a white supremacist republic after the Civil War. In the 1910s, Woodrow Wilson modernized, popularized, and nationalized Jim Crow laws. In the 1970s, Richard Nixon committed criminal acts that flowed from his corrupt ideas about presidential power. Through their actions, these presidents illuminated the trip wires that can damage or even destroy our democracy.

Corey Brettschneider shows that these presidents didn't have the last word; citizen movements brought the United States back from the precipice by appealing to a democratic understanding of the Constitution.





## Great Decisions Briefing Book 2026

2026 Great Decisions briefing book.  
[Read More](#)

**\$35.00**

# Discuss the most critical issues facing America today.

Great Decisions is produced by the Foreign Policy Association, which has been encouraging nonpartisan discussion on U.S. foreign policy for over 100 years. The program gives citizens the opportunity to learn about some of the most critical global issues facing America today. After the program, the FPA gathers participants' feedback to create a national opinion ballot report, which is shared with members of Congress.

# PODCASTS +

## More Perfect, from WNYC Studios- [here](#)

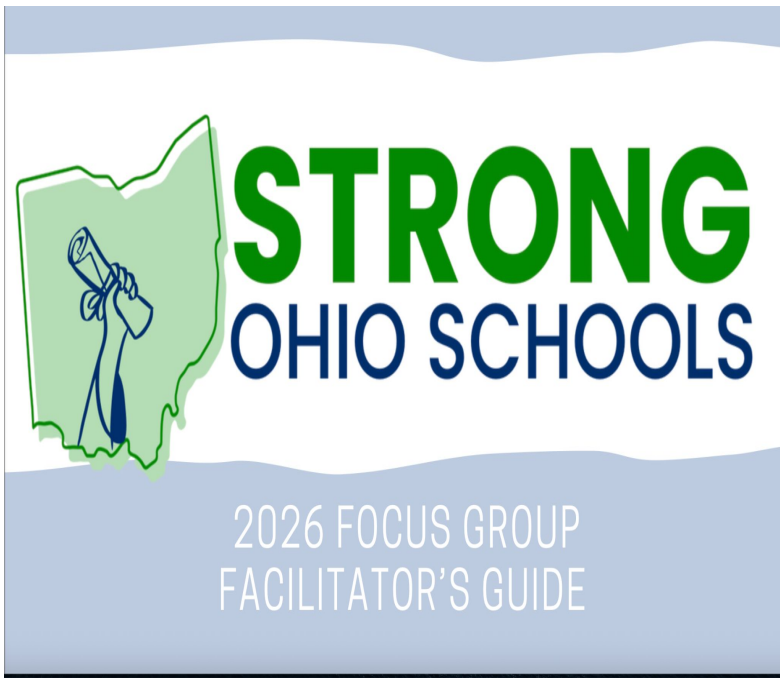
- Explains SCOTUS cases & how US Constitution applies
- Bonus: Album with songs for each of the 27 amendments (Dolly Parton does the 19th!)

## All Sides from WOSU- [here](#)

- Specifically 'Reporter Roundtable': weekly update from Ohio Statehouse reporters on Ohio government

## Civics Made Easy, from PBS- [YouTube](#); [PBS](#)

- [Books](#): What Does the Constitution Actually Say, What Does the Constitution Say- A Kids Guide | Also look for Ben Sheehan, the host/author on social media



## QUESTIONS TO GUIDE ACTION

**What are the most pressing issues facing Ohio schools today?**

**What are the purposes of public education?  
What ideas do you have for how schools could better serve students / communities?**

By Mar. 25th send responses to:  
[ccollins@honestyforohioeducation.org](mailto:ccollins@honestyforohioeducation.org)

**“Adult” Survey**  
[bit.ly/StrongOhioSurvey](https://bit.ly/StrongOhioSurvey)



**“Youth” Survey**  
[bit.ly/sosyouthsurvey](https://bit.ly/sosyouthsurvey)



**Webpage**





These LWWUS national partners may have local chapters that your league can partner with:

- National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) ([Locator](#))
- American Association of University Women (AAUW) ([Locator](#))
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated ([Locator](#) | [Toolkit](#))
- Lambda Theta Alpha (LTA) Latin Sorority Inc. ([Locator](#))
- Girl Scouts USA ([Resources](#))
- American Library Association ([Locator](#))
- The School Superintendents Association (AASA) ([Resources](#))



## Partnership Resources:

- [The Community Tool Box](#)
- [The Nonprofit Risk Management Center](#)
- [Everyday Democracy](#)

## Other Toolkits and Talking Points:

- [Election Preparation Toolkit](#)
- [Election Observation Toolkit](#)
- [Observing Your Government In Action](#)
- [Talking Points: Combating Anti-Voter State Legislature Bills](#)
- [Talking Points: Advancing Pro-Voter Reforms](#)

# Next Lobby Call

# February 10,

# 7:00 PM

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Update on Bills currently in Committee with messaging!!

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