






# ATD FOURTH WORLD


## Voting: Right & Effort #PovertyTruths

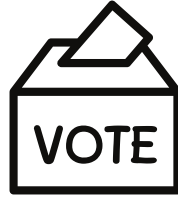
FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER

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 **ATD FOURTH WORLD**



Dear Friends,

We are entering October and starting to feel some excitement around local and state elections all over the country. Election season is a time to be heard, to take responsibilities, and to exercise one of our most important rights as citizens.

Yet, despite transformational progress over many decades – the right to vote for women in 1920, the Voting Rights Act in 1965, etc.,- voters’ rights are still a high stakes issue for our democracy. Many state legislatures have pushed back on voting rights in ways that exclude people living in poverty from the power of being heard through the vote. The right to vote remains nevertheless one of the foundations of our democracy. And we know that we are far from having equal access to voting, as you will see in this newsletter.

Our Poverty Myths [1] report published four years ago tried to bring some elements of clarification to this topic from the perspective of people in poverty, who, statistically, vote proportionately less than people with more secure lives. Looking at the barriers to voting, our readers could understand better why some people do not participate in a system that too often seems unsupportive or useless. When schools are underfunded, decent housing impossible to find, and voting feels disconnected from one’s immediate needs and aspirations, etc., voting might not be the priority. And that’s understandable.

But that is just part of the story. A key point is missing: **the effort that people in poverty make so they can vote**, knowing that it could be a way to recover some power over their life for themselves and their communities.

There are many people who decide to put energy into overcoming the barriers to voting, despite the challenges they face and the fights they need to win everyday to make ends meet and raise their families. For some, like Patrick, this means becoming a citizen in order to express themselves in elections that will have direct consequences on their lives. For others, like Emma, this means becoming a poll worker. And many others organize people in their community to understand the ballot and make it to the polls.

Democracy is a political system. At ATD Fourth World, we know that democracy has little meaning if it is not rooted in the realities of life. Democracy starts when people from very different views and backgrounds make the effort to understand one another. The way ATD Fourth World builds community supports this effort, contributing to the development of a culture where exclusion itself is banned.

Thank you for your efforts and support.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Guillaume".

Guillaume Charvon  
National Director



The 2018 ATD Fourth World “Poverty Myths” article about voting, who does and does not vote in the United States, also reported voter suppression laws that impact people in poverty especially. The use of state election legislation to interfere with and restrict voter access has increased since then. Here is an update:

## WHO IS VOTING?

### 66.8% OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS CAST A BALLOT

in the 2020 presidential election, the highest turnout in 20 years.

**NOTE THAT VOTER TURNOUT WENT UP AS EDUCATION AND INCOME WENT UP**



55.5% of high school graduates voted

&  
77.9% of college graduates voted

63.6% of people with income between \$30,000-\$40,000 voted

&  
81% of people with income between \$100,000-\$150,000 voted

[2]

## LAWS MAKING VOTING **HARDER**, ESPECIALLY FOR PEOPLE IN POVERTY:

In the last two years, there have been many state laws passed that make voting more difficult. This trend continues with more laws currently proposed.

Many of these laws hit harder for people in poverty who:



deal with frequent moves and address changes



have limited access to updated identification documents



are not able to take time off work to wait in long voting lines



and have limited transportation to ballot drop off sites.

Studies show that there are voters of color who are more impacted by these suppression laws than white voters. We can see here evidence of the connections between racism and poverty in the United States.

As examples of what these new laws do:

- **Make registering to vote more difficult**, including by shortening the deadline and removing election day voter registration completely
- Require a state ID or Social Security number to be listed on mail-in ballots, and other efforts that make **mail-in and early voting more difficult**
- **Create shorter in person voting hours on election day**
- **Implement new or stricter rules for identification documents**
- **Ban the distribution of water or snacks** to voters waiting in line
- Change individuals' voting status to “inactive” after missing **just one election**

[3]  
[4]  
[5]

#### RESOURCES

[1] Poverty Myths, ATD Fourth World USA, 2018

[2] 2020 Presidential Election Voting and Registration Tables Now Available, United States Census Bureau, April 29, 2021

[3] 5 Egregious Voter Suppression Laws from 2021, Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law, January 31, 2022

[4] Voting Laws Roundup: May 2022, Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law, May 26, 2022

[5] The Impact of Voter Suppression on Communities of Color, Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law, January 10, 2022

[6] The Freedom to Vote Act Ensures Every American Has a Voice and a Vote in Our Democracy, Freedom to Vote Act, February, 2022



## EFFORTS MAKING VOTING MORE ACCESSIBLE:

There are also state and federal election laws in the works that are aimed at expanding voting rights.

The Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act is proposed **federal legislation** that would restore and strengthen parts of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The bill expands access to the ballot by removing barriers to registration and voting, promotes election integrity and ensures security, enhances oversight over campaign finance, and protects voters' rights. Versions of the bill passed in the House of Representatives but failed twice in the Senate.

[6]

Changes that have been both enacted and proposed on the **state level** include:

- Increased access to mail and absentee voting
- Easier voter registration
- Expanding voting access for voters with disabilities
- Restoring voting rights for people who have been convicted of a felony

[4]



## WE EACH HAVE OUR OWN WAY TO RELATE TO VOTING. HERE'S **EMMA'S**:

Emma Speaks lives in North Carolina and drives buses for the city of Cary. She has been an ATD Fourth World Activist and community organizer since 1993. She has been involved in ATD Fourth World's own governance, serving on the Board of Directors since 2011 and serving as part of the discernment process to name the International Leadership Team in 2015. She has been a poll worker for decades, first in New York and now in North Carolina.

*I became a poll worker at first out of curiosity on how the system runs itself, because I wanted to know a little bit about what governs us and where these rules come down from. And I wanted to know the process of what governs us. The more I worked, the more my curiosity got spiked.*

*A lot that influenced my wanting to stay involved in voting was the many Black people that died just so that we could have the privilege to vote, and just so that we could have so many different privileges. Who am I to look at it like it was trivial when people actually got killed and actually got turned away from voting? I feel like it's an obligation to carry this forth, because we're not having to die for it like so many of our ancestors.*

*I think more kids who just got old enough to vote come out in New York than out here [in North Carolina]. So far in the two elections that I've worked out here, actually only one or two [kids] I saw. Periodically you see a few come in, but **they need to be continuously encouraged**. And I think the best way to be encouraged is - if you don't let your voice be heard by voting, then you shouldn't complain about what's going on. ... Personally, don't even complain to me if you don't want to go out and try to be heard.*