250 DEMOCRACY WORKS

POWERED BY DEMOCRACY FORWARD

Reimagining a Government That Works for All

Democracy Works 250 is new, innovative, and collaborative effort to reimagine and build a people-centered government and democracy – unlike anything the United States has seen. We are not just reimagining what a people-centered government that truly serves all people can look like, but also doing the work so that a reimagined democracy can be achieved in the future. This multi-year initiative from Democracy Forward's Civil Service Strong program is building the foundations of American democracy by transforming how government serves people — and how public servants are empowered to serve.

Our Challenge

For decades, the federal civil service — the backbone of our democratic infrastructure — has struggled under outdated personnel systems, inefficient structures, and weakened protections. These challenges impede innovation, stifle talent, and distance government from the needs of people in America. Policies and team structures governing the non-partisan civil service haven't been meaningfully updated in nearly 50 years, even as societal and technological complexity has surged. Now, the challenges have escalated. The Trump-Vance administration has caused wide-spread exits across the government, resulting in 3.7 million years of service lost with no plans to capture that institutional knowledge.

Our Mission

Democracy Works 250 exists to design a government that delivers for the American people — a government that is modern, efficient, people-centered, and capable of meeting the demands of the 21st century. We do this by investing in the nation's greatest assets: **the voices of the American people and the civil servants who power government.**

*"Every function of government—from running programs that enable Americans to get the health care they need to ensuring safe air travel—**depends on the people who do the work**. We are committed to using the crisis that the Trump-Vance administration has created in the federal workforce as a catalyst for change with Democracy Works 250. Through this initiative, we will support reimagining a government that attracts the best and the brightest into public service, leverages innovation that occurs in both government and private sectors, and reflects the needs and experiences of all Americans in the twenty-first century,"*

Skye Perryman, President and CEO of Democracy Forward

We've launched a national fellowship for former federal workers—bringing together a cohort of experts and leaders who have seen what works and what does not to lead applied research and build reform proposals. These fellows are the connective tissue of Democracy Works 250. They bring lived experience, organize their networks, and translate insights into public narratives and actionable ideas.

How We're Building Change

Together, we're turning defense into design—to ensure that a future government can work for the people it represents. We are doing this work through three interconnected projects:

Listening to the American People and Those Who Serve Them

We need to start with the basics: listening. We're building a national infrastructure to capture the voices of public servants and the communities they serve—so that future reforms are grounded in lived experience, not assumptions.

Through large-scale interviews and public listening campaigns, we're collecting the real stories of how government works—and where it doesn't. This evidence will inform our reform design across this full initiative.

Designing the Teams Government Needs to Deliver

Even the best policies can't succeed if the people implementing them don't have the tools, skills, or team they need. We're redesigning what government teams look like—reimagining roles, structures, and staffing models to reflect how the very best organizations operate today.

By mapping current challenges and building new team models in key operational areas—like Human Resources, procurement, community engagement, and regulation—we're creating a modern template for how government should work. And we're finding the real people who can succeed in those roles.

Reimagined Personnel Policy

The government cannot deliver on its mission if its internal operating systems are broken. Right now, the frameworks for hiring, performance, flexibility, pay, and advancement hold back creativity and innovation, and act as barriers to bringing Americans from every segment of our society into government.

We're leading a collective effort to modernize these systems. Through coalition-led design cycles and collaborative policy sprints, we are surfacing bold new ideas and practical reforms rooted in lived experience—creating a clear path forward for modernizing public workforce policy.

Why It Matters

Every aspect of American life — from clean air and safe travel to education and health care — depends on the people inside our government. When those people are empowered, supported, and connected to the public they serve, democracy delivers. But when systems fail them, the public loses faith in government's capacity to solve real problems. And when government can't deliver on its promises, the trust in government, and democracy itself, crumbles.

Democracy Works 250 is about restoring that capacity, modernizing how government works, and ensuring public servants are equipped to make government work for everyone.

> *"Public service is the quiet engine of democracy. When we invest in the people who dedicate their lives to serving others, we strengthen the rule of law, restore trust in our institutions, and keep government working for everyone—no matter who sits in power."*
>
> *Rob Shriver, Managing Director of the Civil Service Strong and Good Government Initiatives*

Join the Movement

Sign up for updates and get involved at democracyworks250.org