

# **2025** YEAR IN REVIEW

represent **Us**



Dear Friend,

2025 began full of challenges. I end it full of hope.

This year tested the basic idea at the heart of America’s democratic experiment: that government should work for all the people, not just the powerful. We saw power grabs, capitulation, and complicity. But we also saw something else break through: people.

Across the country, Americans showed up — at town halls, in courtrooms, through phone banks and in the streets — to say no. No to corruption. No to intimidation. No to government captured by a few at the expense of the many.



And crucially, we are seeing what we said from the start we would see: when Americans come together around shared values, we make change possible.

Poll after poll shows that most Americans still share core commitments to the rule of law, real checks on power, and accountability. As Americans of all stripes made themselves heard, cracks began to appear in what started out as a rubber-stamp Congress, and we began to see more people within the system stand up for accountability and against corruption.

That is why RepresentUs exists: to expose corruption, mobilize people across lines of difference, and make accountability unavoidable.

In 2025, we met the moment:

- Nearly **60 million views** of our content helped large diverse audiences understand what was happening and what was at stake.
- We convened more than **500 leaders** across ideologies and all corners of the pro-democracy movement at our American Democracy Summit.
- Our volunteer network generated over **700,000 actions** pressing Congress and supporting reforms at critical moments.
- We launched our **Congressional Courage Campaign** and are poised to expand from 16 to **21 Local Action Teams** in key congressional districts.
- We helped block dangerous provisions on AI and the judiciary in the *Big Beautiful Bill Act*, supported the successful extension of Seattle’s Democracy Voucher program, and helped move a bipartisan ban on congressional stock trading closer to reality.

As you go through our year-in-review report, I hope you are proud of the powerful platform you helped build and the focused, strategic work underway at this pivotal moment.

Our job in 2026 is to widen the cracks in the armor, build out our movement, and harness that energy not only to call out corruption and defend democratic norms in the short term, but also to generate momentum around building a democracy that lives up to our highest ideals.

Thank you for standing with us in a year that demanded clarity, courage, and resolve. Together, we shifted the ground. Next year, I am committed to building on those gains — with urgency, optimism, and an unshakable belief in people’s power to hold the powerful to account and build a system that works for all of us.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Maria McFarland", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Maria McFarland Sánchez-Moreno

CEO, RepresentUs

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our team at RepresentUs knew from the start that this was a year to adapt — quickly and effectively — to the reality in front of us.

At the highest levels of government, we saw blatant corruption and concentrated power harden into a governing strategy. Power being used not to serve the national interest, but to reward allies, punish critics, and entrench control. Fear becoming a tool. The rules bent for the well-connected.

We moved swiftly to respond.

## First, we helped people see what was happening.

We invested heavily in education — breaking down power grabs, conflicts of interest, and self-dealing in plain language and reaching millions of Americans through widely shared videos, rapid-response explainers, and trusted messengers breaking through a noisy media environment.

## Second, we bridged divides — between defensive and reform-focused work, and across ideological lines.

This moment demands both defense of democratic norms *and* a shared path forward that recognizes that the status quo as of January 2025 was failing too many Americans.

At our American Democracy Summit, we brought together more than 500 leaders, experts and activists from across the pro-democracy and anti-corruption space — from state-level reformers to national litigators, from Republican state legislators to Democratic attorneys general — to strategize, connect, and build together.

And throughout our communications and in our advocacy, we worked to connect immediate defense of the rule of law and checks and balances with a longer-term vision of a government that works *for* the people — and to do so across ideological lines. Because corruption is not a left issue or a right issue. **It is a people issue.**

## Third, we filled a critical gap in the accountability ecosystem.

With a lot of attention focused on courts, protests, or party politics, RepresentUs launched a campaign to put targeted pressure on Congress. After all, Congress is the branch of government that is supposed to hold the executive to account, built to be responsive to the people, and, if it chooses to do so, best placed to enact national reform.

Our Congressional Courage Campaign launched in early November, at the perfect time to begin taking advantage of cracks in what was once an impregnable congressional majority, rubber stamping the executive branch's actions. Just in the last few weeks, we've seen Congress step up in ways that would have seemed unthinkable earlier this year: bipartisan votes to rescind presidential tariffs; near-unanimous pressure on the Epstein files; and steps toward investigations by the House and Senate Armed Services Committees into deadly boat strikes. These actions didn't happen in a vacuum; they followed public pressure and clear, repeated polling indicating that most Americans don't agree with executive branch abuse and overreach.



## And finally, we kept building for the long term.

Today's corruption and abuse are rooted in longstanding cynicism and frustration with a system that hasn't been delivering for ordinary Americans.

So even as we confronted the current crisis, we continued pushing durable reforms that change incentives, not just headlines. This year, that included supporting a winning campaign to continue Seattle's successful experiment in democracy vouchers, conducting strategic research and partner outreach on anti-gerrymandering efforts, and keeping the pressure on to ban stock trading by members of Congress. And our Congressional Courage Campaign is harnessing growing public outrage, to build a movement that will not only respond to today's problems, but also build long-term pressure on Congress for national reform.

Because the goal is not just to survive this moment — it's to emerge from it with a stronger, more accountable democratic system.

# BREAKING DOWN CORRUPTION AND FUELING COURAGE

RepresentUs has long been a leading national voice reaching out to Americans across ideological lines with easy-to-understand content explaining the corruption and dysfunction in our political system. This year's challenges demanded that we double down on that educational role, breaking down the news in ways people could understand.

We found a huge appetite for our content, from our initial rapid-response video explaining [Elon Musk's takeover of the Treasury Department](#), to our analyses of lessons [learned from global autocracies](#), inspiring content showing [ordinary Americans speaking out and taking action](#), and sharing [public officials speaking out on core democratic ideals](#).

Across all of our social media platforms, **our organic content was viewed 41 million times** and our paid content was viewed **18 million times** through November 2025.

At the same time, we experimented with new ways of reaching and engaging different audiences, learning crucial lessons we're excited to take into next year.



## REACHING AUDIENCES ACROSS IDEOLOGICAL LINES

We know that making change will require reaching beyond the choir. A vast majority of Americans on the left and the right want a democratic, accountable government.

A generous donation allowed us to invest significantly in a new Michael Douglas video explaining how corruption is working now. Michael has consistently tested as trustworthy across all our audiences, and across ideological lines. We had the resources to experiment placing the video as an ad across multiple platforms and websites visited by audiences of all political persuasions. The video drove 5.5 million views and 3.4 million video completions — meaning that the video was watched all the way through **3.4 million times**. And most encouragingly, right-of-center audiences watched the video through to completion at the same high rate (34-35% in skippable environments) as left-leaning ones, showing that this messaging on corruption is able to catch and hold attention across partisan lines.



## SPOTLIGHTING EVERYDAY COURAGE

Social media tends to amplify anger, but that often ends in either cynicism, fatigue and inaction, or in escalating mistrust and, at worst, violence. But there is another way: as Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Maria Ressa has noted, the only thing that works as well as anger is inspiration. And we're seeing that on our own channels.

Our top performing content this year was a simple viral video about Samuel García's statement before the Texas state legislature, which since August has been viewed 8.8 million times across all our social channels. These views are organic, without paid ads, and they underscore how hungry Americans are for authentic stories of courage. Other similar videos had high engagement rates too.



**This is a key lesson we're taking into 2026, as we invest in additional storytelling about everyday Americans standing up for what is right.**



# WORKING WITH TRUSTED MESSENGERS

In today's fragmented social media environment, it can be hard to break through. That's why, in addition to our engaging social media content and paid ads targeting key audiences, we also invested in collaborations with trusted messengers who themselves have substantial reach.

In one example, we collaborated with social media influencer Aaron Parnas on the launch of our Congressional Courage Campaign. [His video](#) highlighted how fear and retaliation are keeping elected officials from doing their jobs: representing their constituents. His video was seen 1.23 million times.



Meanwhile, our CEO, Maria McFarland Sánchez-Moreno, launched [Of, By, and For the People](#) on Substack providing analysis and commentary on the current moment, grounded in her decades-long experience countering corruption and working for democracy. Her thought leadership was also featured across major national and international outlets including [MSNBC](#), [The Jim Acosta Show](#), [The Guardian](#), [The Christian Science Monitor](#), and [CNN en Español](#).





# ENGAGING THE MOVEMENT ON TODAY'S CHALLENGES & TOMORROW'S OPPORTUNITIES

## National Digital Organizing and Local Action Teams

The beating heart of RepresentUs is our nimble mobilization and organizing infrastructure, which includes:

- A national digital network of volunteers, supported and trained by RepresentUs staff, who host and manage phone and text banks, creating surges of support and pressure for national, state, and local initiatives. The national movement **includes over 1,300 highly engaged grassroots activists and more than 50 dedicated leaders** who help shape the programming.
- Our network of 16 Local Action Teams, led by volunteer leaders supported and trained by RepresentUs staff. These are dedicated activists who, in addition to participating in our national efforts, can bring in-person, focused energy to their towns, states, and congressional districts.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

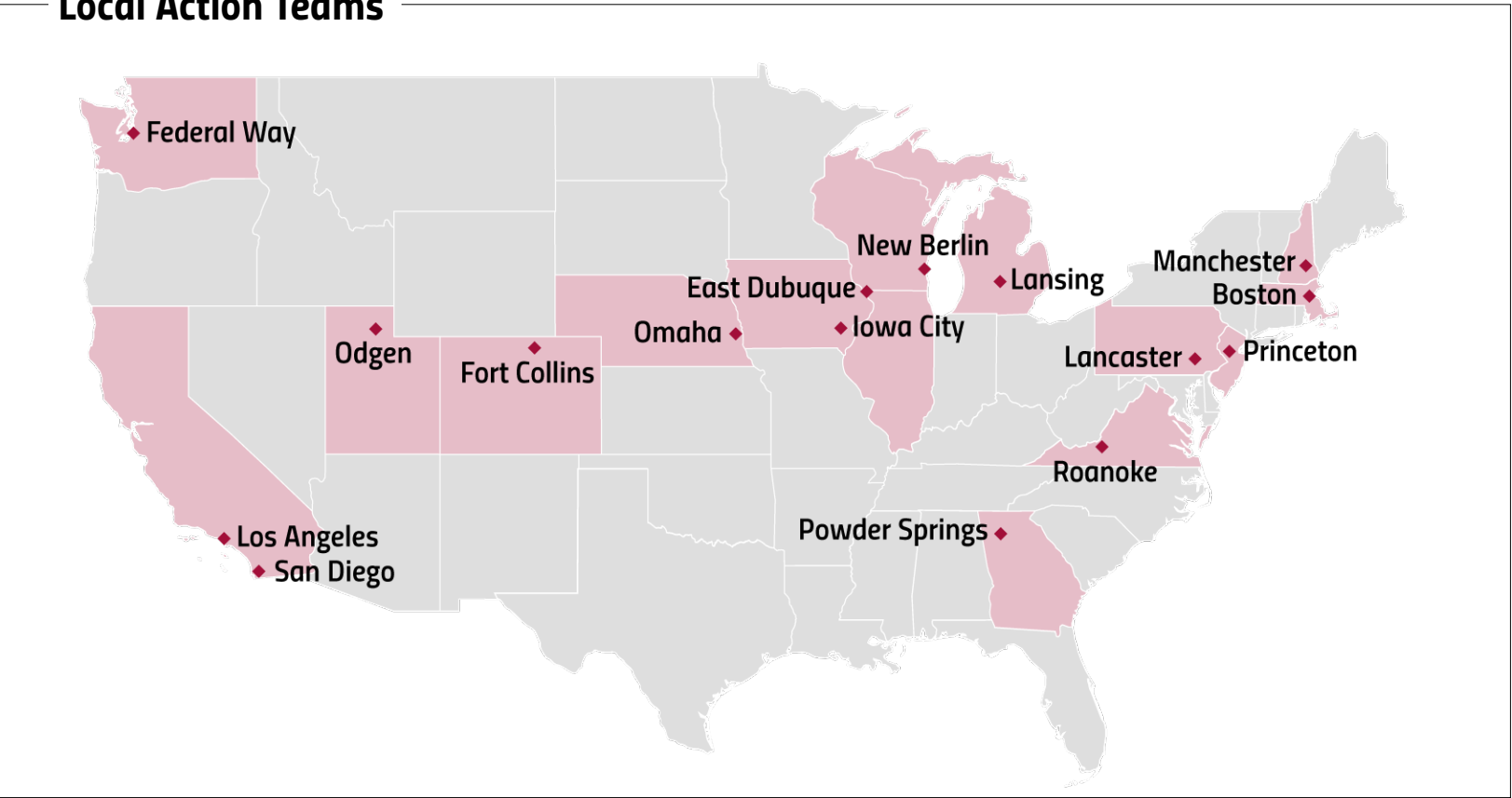
"Five years ago, I joined RepresentUs with a simple hope: **just to make a difference.** I had never been involved in political groups before, but it seemed like the right time to get involved and I really appreciated the nonpartisan focus of RepresentUs. Back then, I NEVER could have imagined that I'd be leading phonebanks, organizing volunteers, and working alongside so many dedicated individuals who shared the same concerns about our political system that I have."

**Jen Jackson - Oregon**

Recipient of this year's *Power Up the Movement Award*



## Local Action Teams



**This year, we harnessed the power of these volunteers to support local and national reforms, even as we launched our Congressional Courage Campaign to meet the national moment.**



# OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR,

RepresentUs put our digital organizing network to work on a variety of actions from the national to the local.

Our volunteers made more than 100,000 phone calls and sent more than 600,000 text messages, impacting our democracy with their voices, and keeping them engaged and motivated for future actions.

## SEATTLE DEMOCRACY VOUCHER PROGRAM

In partnership with the Yes on Prop 1 campaign, RepresentUs helped pass a renewal of Seattle’s historic Democracy Voucher program. As one of the campaign’s top 12 funders, RepresentUs helped fund mailers sent to more than 35,000 Seattle voters, mobilized voters and volunteers via SMS and phonebank outreach, and sent handwritten postcards urging more than 2,000 voters to vote who were relatively less likely to vote in odd-year elections.



## LIMITING EXECUTIVE BRANCH OVERREACH

RepresentUs strategically used our digital organizing network to put pressure on Congress to stand up to the worst excesses of the administration. Working with partners, we engaged in extensive outreach to representatives to draw attention to DOGE abuses, eliminate anti-accountability provisions (on AI and the courts) from the Big Beautiful Bill Act, investigate the influence of AI firms in the White House, and take back Congress’s authority over trade and war.



## CONGRESSIONAL BAN ON STOCK TRADING

RepresentUs volunteers have been working to move the ETHICS Act and Restore Trust in Congress Act forward. These bipartisan bills would ban stock trading by members of Congress, require new members to divest their stocks and impose penalties for non-compliance.

Volunteers have made tens of thousands of calls and texts to connect constituents to their congressional representatives. **About 40,000 RepresentUs supporters have made a contact on this campaign over the last 2 years.**





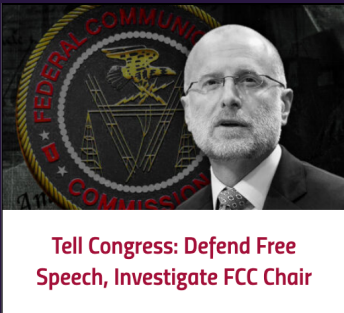
# CONGRESSIONAL COURAGE CAMPAIGN

In November, we launched our [Congressional Courage Campaign](#) — a nationwide, nonpartisan campaign bringing ordinary people together to put sustained, targeted pressure on key members of Congress to do their jobs, hold the executive branch to account, and stand up for their constituents.

## Videos



## Digital Tools



## OUR DEMANDS OF CONGRESS:

- **Uphold and defend the Constitution**, including by asserting their authority over trade, emergency powers, and troop deployments.
- **Exert real oversight of the executive branch** Including by holding more officials to account in hearings (e.g., the Judiciary Committee should ask tough questions of Attorney General Bondi on the weaponization of the Department of Justice).
- **Effectively represent their constituents**, including by reforming the system (e.g., start with the bipartisan ban on congressional stock trading).

## WHY CONGRESS?

Congress is the branch of government set up in our constitution to be responsive to the people. Congress has tremendous power, if it chooses to use it and deliver for the people, and constituent pressure can make a difference if it is focused. But the pro-democracy movement has been diffuse in its targets and, for the most part, not focused directly and in a sustained way on Congress. Right now, the majorities supporting anti-democratic actions are small, so work to erode them — particularly in swing districts — could help slow things down.

We have already seen cracks in the armor, from the bipartisan vote on tariffs a few weeks ago, to the near-unanimous vote on the Epstein files,

and recent moves toward investigating Secretary of Defense Hegseth. Our goal is to widen those cracks, generating a dynamic where Congress feels increasingly emboldened to show independence on key issues, assert its authority under the constitution, and hold the executive branch to account.

Over the longer term, we will be building up cross-partisan momentum for pro-democracy and anti-corruption reforms that address our system's longstanding dysfunction. As the political pendulum swings against executive branch overreach and corruption, we will have already planted the seeds of a national reform agenda — including to address corruption and gerrymandering and other electoral dysfunction — in Congress and in the minds of their constituents.





# BUILDING LOCAL ACTION TEAMS IN KEY DISTRICTS

In addition to national, digital organizing, RepresentUs is establishing new Local Action Teams in a handful of key, swing districts, where we believe members of Congress are most likely to be swayed by constituent pressure. Congress is so divided, motivating just a handful of representatives toward meaningful reform will have an outsized impact. We have started by piloting this work in three districts, with the goal of rapidly scaling up as we learn. With experience mobilizing in state based campaigns for over a decade, RepresentUs has the experience and infrastructure to succeed in this effort.



**Most encouraging of all**, the response from local constituents has exceeded our expectations. In just one month since the launch of the Congressional Courage Campaign, we already have enough volunteers to launch Local Action Teams in two of our initial target districts: Arizona-6 and Nebraska-2.

Engagement has been so high even in districts we were not initially targeting. It looks like we'll be able to move quickly to set up similar local action teams in swing districts in Iowa, Michigan, and New Jersey. The volunteers are on fire.

Our goal is to have five new Local Action Teams organizing their communities in swing districts by May 2026, joining the 16 we have already built over years of work in 14 states.

## Tailor Ads to Local Concerns



## Outreach Directly to Key Constituents

Through strategic targeting and highly effective list building, we have been able to reach tens of thousands of voters, including centrists and center-right voters to build awareness around the importance of pressing Congress this year towards courage.



## Involve Local Partners





# AMERICAN DEMOCRACY SUMMIT

**Bringing the Movement Together.**

American Democracy Summit is the premier, nonpartisan event uniting top minds from across the political spectrum to tackle America's biggest political challenges. In light of the country's democratic backsliding and rising corruption this year, we broadened our outreach for panelists and participants to include not only our usual partners among pro-democracy reform groups, but also litigators and other defenders of democracy working across party lines.

Subjects of panels and plenaries ranged from citizen redistricting and ranked choice voting to combating corruption and rising authoritarianism.

"The ADS conference was a diverse gathering of really smart people who enthusiastically serve the public interest in many different ways. The conversations at the gathering were supported by excellent speakers, helpful volunteers, and an excellent hotel environment."

**Jim Rough**, Director/Founder, Center for Wise Democracy



Ellen Weintraub & Trevor Potter

## BY THE NUMBERS

**550 attendees from 350  
democracy organizations**

*According to our exit survey:*

**83%** said they heard from someone from a different ideology

**77%** said they met someone from a different ideology

**94%** said ADS helped them network

**89%** said they felt more connected to the democracy movement

**91%** would recommend to a colleague

**89%** would come to a future summit



Ed Helms

## CITIZEN REDISTRICTING REFORM

We launched a major report identifying opportunities for redistricting reform in the lead up to the 2030 census.

It became clear in our research that the ballot initiative process is under serious threat across the country and that the first step would be investing in defending the process itself.

We convened our partners for a daylong series of workshops at ADS to lay the groundwork for consensus around the best way forward. Each workshop was standing room only.



Partners discussing independent redistricting





**THANK YOU**

**represent Us**