

## News Release

### For Immediate Release

June 16, 2025

#### **Dole and Kennedy Institutes publish landmark report on funding of election administration**

LAWRENCE, KS & BOSTON, MA – A landmark report to be released on June 18 by the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics and the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate finds that local election administrators consistently lack sustained funding, adequate staffing, and necessary technology at a time of intense public scrutiny and diminished trust in voting results.

The comprehensive anthology report created through the Kennedy and Dole Institutes' [Bolstering Elections Initiative](#) gives election administrators and policymakers the data and research necessary to bolster voting infrastructures at the state and local levels. The report, "Bolstering Funding and Practices for Resilient Elections: Sustainable Funding and Models of Success at the State and Local Level," was made possible by a grant from the Election Trust Initiative.

"Now, more than ever, the story of the election professionals who conduct our elections, often on a shoestring budget, needs our attention," said Tammy Patrick, senior advisor to the Bolstering Elections Initiative.

"Administrators in cities and in rural areas; in red states, blue states and swing states; those who were elected, appointed, or hired as a public servant; Republicans, Democrats, and unaffiliated officials; all are better able to serve their voters and communities when they are sufficiently supported with the tools and resources the American Voters deserve. Election administration should not be a partisan issue."

The Institutes will hold [a virtual event to formally launch the report](#) on Wednesday, June 18 at 12 p.m. EST/11 a.m. CST with selected contributors to the report discussing their findings. Among those participating will be University of Kansas professor Zach Mohr; Auburn University professor Mitchell Brown; Colorado Department of State deputy elections director Hilary Rudy; Commissioners Ben Hovland and Donald Palmer of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission; Bipartisan Policy Center elections project director Rachel Orey; and American Enterprise Institute senior fellow John Fortier.

"Senators Bob Dole and Ted Kennedy worked across the aisle in the Senate to identify solutions to common issues, including those that impacted voting rights and respect for the institutions and processes of American governance," said Dole Institute director Audrey Coleman. "Our institutions honor their legacies of bipartisan leadership by developing this landmark report which identifies possible paths to strengthen election administration infrastructure\* as a foundation for trusted elections."

Kennedy Institute CEO Adam Hinds added, "While our elections are trustworthy and secure, they are also underfunded. We need to ensure the foundations of our democracy are strong and there is no better place to start than strengthening our elections infrastructure."

The researchers, practitioners, and experts who contributed to this report highlight models of success and potential starting points for policymakers to make significant investments in voting infrastructure. Chief among those are the creation of more stable funding streams at all levels, allowing election administrators to

adequately staff their offices and procure modernized resources, thereby bolstering the efficiency in administering an election and improving public trust in elections systems and the accuracy of results.

Additional takeaways from the report include:

- Local governments fund approximately 85% of the costs associated with administering an election, despite surveys showing the public believes federal and state government bear a majority of the cost burden;
- Even with local governments paying a majority of the costs, election support is roughly 0.5% of a local government's total budget;
- Election administrators and offices are under-resourced, particularly in rural areas, with many facing staffing shortages and outdated infrastructure;
- Federal funding and guidelines for administering elections are episodic and crisis-driven, often reactive to the most recent election issue (e.g., 2000 Election recount in Florida, 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic), creating unsustainable funding mechanisms and undercutting more salient arguments for increased annual revenue streams; and
- States interpret and fulfill their election responsibilities in a variety of ways, with some creating innovations that show promise (e.g., Colorado's cost-based reimbursement model, Pennsylvania's Act 88) but are not widespread.

### **About the Dole Institute**

Inspired by the leadership legacies of Senators Bob and Elizabeth Dole, and the enduring civic contributions of the Greatest Generation, the Dole Institute of Politics strives to promote a new era of leadership that uses politics to bring people together through opportunities that emphasize bipartisan cooperation, public service, and civic education and engagement.

### **About the Edward M. Kennedy Institute**

The Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate is dedicated to educating the public about the important role of the Senate in our government, encouraging participatory democracy, invigorating civil discourse, and inspiring the next generation of citizens and leaders to engage in the civic life of their communities. The Institute benefits from the robust participation of national leaders on its Board of Directors, including 8 former US Senators.

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