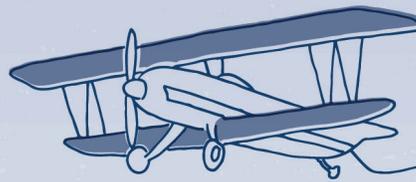




CIVIC NEBRASKA

ANNUAL REPORT



2019

ALL
RISE

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David C. Solheim and Adam Morfeld

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All. Together. Now.

Citizenship is a lifelong affair.

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Your support makes our work possible.

THE WHY OF OUR WORK

We believe all means all. We believe that we're all in it together. We believe democracy is not a spectator sport. We believe that building an engaged and informed society takes hard work – and so we do that work. And we believe that when one of us rises, we **all** rise. Civic Nebraska stands for these beliefs in our streets, our schools, our neighborhoods, and in the halls of government. With your support, Civic Nebraska creates a more modern and robust democracy for all Nebraskans.

CivicNebraska.org/allrise

Civic Nebraska is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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- David C. Solheim, J.D., Attorney, Solheim Law – Chair
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- Laine Norton, MBA, Assistant Dean for Advancement, Syracuse University
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- Tim Hruza, J.D., Attorney
- Eric Gerrard, J.D., Attorney/Lobbyist, Eric Gerrard LLC (non-voting)

The Board of Directors expanded by five in 2019 – Carol A. Subiabre, Drew Davies, Elizabeth Everett, Cesar Garcia, and Yohance Christie – in concert with our strategic plan to expand and diversify leadership and governance.

BOARD OF ADVISERS

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- Scott Eastman, Associate Professor, Creighton University
- Charles Coley, The Cloudburst Group

Dear Friend,

When we remember 2019, we will remember it as a year of growth and upward momentum for our nonpartisan, democracy-building organization. We will remember 2019 as the year that Civic Nebraska added vital programs, increased our reach and impact across the state, and brought new talent into our ranks. And, most of all, we will remember it as a year when we leveraged all of that into new civic power in Nebraska schools, neighborhoods, and communities; places it may not have existed before.

That's because at Civic Nebraska, we believe all means all. We build and sustain democratic opportunity, activity, and principles among all Nebraskans – including among populations that have traditionally been under-represented. This philosophy runs through everything we do, from building young civic leaders in our schools, to enhancing civic life in towns and cities across the state, to protecting every eligible Nebraskan's right to vote. As we rise, so do those who we serve and the ideals for which we fight. Our trajectory allows us to push more power out the door and into the hands of Nebraskans, where it belongs.

In 2019:

- We increased our investment in Greater Nebraska, resulting in the creation of new chapters of active and dedicated voting rights advocates across the state. Meanwhile, statewide expansion of our civic health initiatives – including the addition of a rural civic health program manager – has given civic leaders, elected officials, and organizations around Nebraska new tools to help keep their communities vibrant.
- Our Youth Civic Leadership programs served more students than ever, powered by new Community Learning Centers in Lincoln and new and expanded outside-of-school programs in Omaha and rural areas of the state. Civic Nebraska now engages more than 1,500 youth a day to build civic leadership, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.
- Collective Impact Lincoln, a Civic Nebraska-led initiative to organize Star City neighborhoods and create resident-led democratic change, was a driver of a new humane housing ordinance adopted by the Lincoln City Council. The ordinance gives renters, especially those in the city's older neighborhoods, new protections for adequate and affordable housing.
- For the first time, we deployed volunteer election protectors to observe a municipal election when



Lincolniters went to the polls for citywide elections. The number of Nebraskans who enlisted to volunteer as voting rights advocates soared to all-time highs this year. In 2020, we will tap into their energy and expertise to engage lawmakers and to ensure Nebraska's spring primary and fall general elections are open, fair, and accessible.

■ We challenged a state law that allowed election administrators to be unaccountable to the electorate they serve. We notified the Attorney General of the unconstitutional statute and applauded his recent Attorney General's Opinion agreeing with our position. We will continue to advocate for accountability in administration of Nebraska elections.

Those are only a few highlights from our year. In the following pages, we hope you enjoy learning more about Civic Nebraska's statewide impact in 2019 and consider renewing your support for our democracy-building initiatives.

As 2019 comes to a close, we are already looking ahead to new ways to serve Nebraskans and to strengthen democracy – not only in the coming election year, but well into the future. We believe there is no greater or more urgent cause in this time and place than protecting and defending our democracy. We believe that a democracy built on equality, love, and compassion is one worth preserving. We believe an engaged, educated, informed society is our greatest defense. Finally, we believe that we're all in it together – and when one of us rises, we all rise.

David C. Solheim, J.D.
Chair, Board of Directors

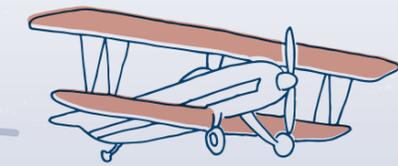


Adam Morfeld, J.D.
Executive Director and Founder



ALL. TOGETHER. NOW.

Learn more at bit.ly/CNeALLRISE



Full participation in our democracy, from grade schoolers to senior citizens, is vital for a nation and state that values equality, justice, and progress. That means introducing civic engagement early in kids' lives. It means connecting Nebraskans of all ages with one another and their institutions to enhance our state's civic health. And when it's time to cast ballots, it means fighting to make sure everyone who is eligible to vote, can vote. Here's how (and why) we put democracy front and center in all of our lives – for our whole lives.

RIISING AS ONE

Our communities are stronger when we own them together. A vibrant democratic society is built from engaged and informed citizens who take action in meaningful ways. We strengthen our state's civic fabric with Civic Health training and programming for towns, cities, neighborhoods, and individuals.

ONWARD & UPWARD FOR DEMOCRACY

Democracy for all means a year-round civic culture that creates lifelong voters. Access to the ballot is essential in this process, so we ensure our elections are modern, fair, and accessible. Whether successfully fighting and advocating for online voter registration, uniform election guides, or access to the polls, we empower voters to be the change they wish to see.

FROM THE JUMP

Normalizing civic engagement helps young people gain critical thinking, civic leadership, and civil discourse skills. We lead before- and after-school programs at school-based Community Learning Centers in Omaha and Lincoln, embedding civic learning with kids and connecting schools more closely with their communities. We also host middle school service-learning clubs, forge proficiency in STEAM and career readiness, and empower Nebraska youth to be agents of change.



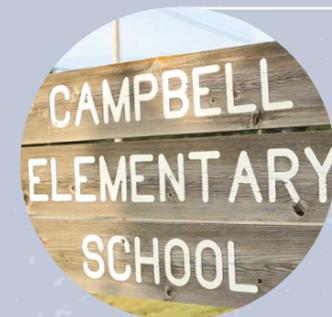
Government in Action Days show younger and newer Nebraskans their role in our political process.



Rural Initiatives create and maintain a healthy rural civic culture.



Nonpartisan election protection and observation prevent barriers to the ballot.



1,500

Community Learning Centers teach, serve, and guide 1,500 students a day.



Extended learning opportunities build strong habits of mind and help children become lifelong learners.



Collective Impact Lincoln and ONE Omaha develop resident-led investment and hyperlocal strength in our bigger cities.



Legislative initiatives promote secure and fair elections.



Circles, Street Team service learning, and 2020 Journalism clubs allow middle schoolers to serve their communities.



Litigation and voting rights education protect voting rights and encourage all eligible Nebraskans to vote.

YOUTH CIVIC LEADERSHIP



We embed civic leadership in our youth programs to inspire students to be tomorrow's community change-makers.

"We, the people" includes our youngest Americans, too. Nowhere has Civic Nebraska's momentum been more apparent than in our Youth Civic Leadership programs, which expanded to serve more than 1,500 students a day in 2019. In addition to our four existing **Community Learning Centers** in Lincoln and Omaha, we became the lead agency at three brand-new CLCs in Lincoln – Randolph Elementary, Lincoln High, and Lincoln Northeast High. Meanwhile, we added capacity at our existing CLCs including summer activities, and launched a third service-learning club to build media literacy and communication abilities for middle schoolers.

We do this because introducing youth to civic engagement allows them to more easily develop critical thinking, civic leadership, and civil discourse skills. Engaged, informed citizens must be able to evaluate situations and then take action for positive change. Students who can think critically about, and make meaning of, societal issues are better able to navigate their individual environments – and succeed in them.

Such skills have immense transformative power. They are the cornerstones of active, productive citizenship in

our democratic society. Through our growing **Youth Civic Leadership** work, Civic Nebraska empowers more and more young people to critically and creatively engage with the world. And work to improve it.

ALL IN

"Every young person in our schools should have opportunities to deeply connect with the things that excite them. The Civic Nebraska-led Community Learning Centers offer a great variety of academic, enrichment, cultural, and civic engagement opportunities that help students discover their passions, try them on for size, and envision their futures. We don't stop with the students. CLC parent and community engagement efforts are strengthened as a result of the meaningful and intentional partnership with Civic Nebraska. Civic Nebraska honors each individual student, ensuring that they have the opportunity to explore things that intrigue them and dive deeply into experiential learning."

– **Nola Derby-Bennett**, Director, Lincoln Community Learning Centers

ON THE UP & UP



7 Schools in which we run Community Learning Centers, or CLCs. In August, we launched three new CLCs in Lincoln, including serving high schools for the first time.



4 The number of THINK MAKE CREATE mobile labs in our fleet. The on-the-go makerspaces featuring extended-learning opportunities for youth were more accessible to kids, community groups, and events.



2,572 Individual students served during the 2018-19 school year through our Youth Civic Leadership programs – Community Learning Centers, outside-of-school service clubs, civic initiatives and other youth-based activities.



RISING TO THE OCCASION

EQUASHA SMITH

Site Director,
Lothrop Elementary
Community Learning Center,
Omaha

A big part of the CLC is letting children know that their voices matter. They are the future. It's our job to teach them lifelong skills so that they can be positive citizens. I like making a difference in their lives, one day at a time.

I was an at-risk youth. I was a foster kid. But here's what I've learned: You don't have to be a product of your environment. You can beat those odds, just like I did. Today I work to be that positive voice, that voice of reason for our children.

Because there is good in all things. I make it my job to find the good in all kids.

Growing up I was always told, "Be quiet." Or "Don't do this. Don't do that. Sit back." Nowadays, we have to listen to the kids. You need to let them use their voices. Kids are learning to confide in you because of the relationship (we form).

When I was young there were negative adults in my family, but there were always outside people who were positive. I'm working to be that outside person to these children today.

I've always loved 24th Street in Omaha. It's Lothrop's neighborhood. Back in the day, kids could walk up and down the street and be safe. I think it's important that we get the community back that way. Part of that is allowing them to invest in it. We say "You own this. This is your community."

Today, children can tell us how they want to learn. And we teach them lifelong skills – how to take charge of their community.

We've built a safe and welcoming place here. A place to be, to learn, and to grow.

Civic Nebraska is making a difference. And I couldn't be prouder to be a part of it.



CIVIC HEALTH PROGRAMS

In city neighborhoods, at community events, or in rural areas, we are building democracy from the ground up.



Civic health is the will and ability within a community to work together to tackle mutual problems. It's the degree to which we Nebraskans talk to our neighbors, are active in community groups, vote, talk about politics, and act to further civic interests. And it's vital to our democracy, which is why our Civic Health Programs work constantly to strengthen it – house by house, block by block, community by community.

This year saw acceleration in our engagement in Greater Nebraska, including expansion of the **Rural Civic Action Program** into new towns and cities. We also entered into new partnerships in places like Diller, Potter, and McCook to build rural civic health. Meanwhile, in our larger cities, our **ONE Omaha** and **Collective Impact Lincoln** initiatives empowered neighborhood-led positive change, including Lincoln's new humane housing ordinance in May. Finally, our increasingly popular **Government In Action Days** – daylong, hands-on experiences with elected state and local leaders – forged dynamic connections between hundreds of Nebraskans and their institutions.

As 2020 dawns, our Civic Health Programs continue to give Nebraskans new pathways to express their values, add their

voices to the public discourse, be active neighborhood and community stakeholders, and engage meaningfully with their government. Because democratic power is found in shared civic responsibility, and we all rise if we work together.

ALL IN

"As a farm kid from western Nebraska now living in Omaha, I appreciate Civic Nebraska's focus on strengthening the social fabric of our many diverse communities, whether it's in rural counties, our small towns, or the neighborhoods of Lincoln and Omaha. By empowering people at the most local level, Civic Nebraska helps each place bolster its own civic life and address its own challenges. That's the best way to create a lasting impact that each community can own and be proud of. I'm proud to support Civic Nebraska's efforts to strengthen the civic health of our state and empower our communities, and to create a more just and civil world."

– Brady Jones

ON THE UP & UP



The amount in mini-grants Collective Impact Lincoln has awarded to eight groups and individuals for improvement projects in the city's six core neighborhoods – from tree plantings to litter cleanups to new Little Free Libraries.



550 Number of Nebraskans who took part in one or more versions of our Government in Action Days – Capitol Experience Days, County-City Government Day, and Law Day – in the 2018-19 school year, including 77 from Greater Nebraska and 129 English-language learners.



21 Counties served through October 2019 by our Civic Health Program staff via workshops, trainings, and consultations.

11 Writers from across Nebraska who, in February, became the Civic Nebraska Writers Group, a diverse collection of essayists writing about civics, democracy, and statewide issues. Writers Group columns run in newspapers across the state. Read their work at CivicNebraska.org/writers-group.

RIISING TO THE OCCASION



BRIDGET CLABORN

Civic Health Program Manager

Our Civic Health efforts are expansive. We work with schools, neighborhoods and

entire communities across the state. My focus is on building up civic education and engagement in all of these areas. Pretty quickly, we move past the nuts and bolts of how government works, and get into why everyone should participate in our democracy. Then we show people how they can do that.

Our democratic systems are designed to hear all voices and bring everybody to the table. And they work best when they do. But, the reality is our democracy doesn't always create pathways that really do include everybody.

At Civic Nebraska we create those pathways. Pathways that instill that sense of agency and self-determination so that everybody has a voice – and the desire, the knowledge, and the confidence to use it.

Civic health plays an important role in the landscape of our democracy. It is that sense of "Who are you in your civic life?" And "Can you bring your full self to whatever that means to you?" It's not just about going to your polling place and casting your ballot. It's bringing your full self to your community and contributing the skills and talents that you have, together with those around you, to build a sustainable community that works for all.

We have a political climate today with a lack of empathy and people feel they can't talk to each other. Our work is in bridging that difference between people from all walks of life – from our coffee shops to our neighborhoods, right up to the floor of our Legislature.

I know I make a difference when I see that light bulb go off. When I'm leading a Capitol Experience Day, and the students go from "Do I really want to be here?" to "Whoa, this is awesome. I could see myself in this role."

We're not only enriching the learning that's going on in the classroom. We're inspiring young civic leaders and encouraging our people to be involved community members. Because we're all in it together. It's important work, and we do it well.



VOTING RIGHTS INITIATIVES



Voting is our most cherished democratic right. Without it, there is no prospect for change, no method to hold our leaders accountable, no real way for our values and vision to be represented in our institutions. Further, this most basic right is never guaranteed – so it must be championed, defended, and exercised to the fullest. At Civic Nebraska, we fight for elections to be fair, modern, and accessible; we work to defeat bad policies that threaten the right to vote; and we advocate for measures that protect our rights.

Our Voting Rights Initiatives team championed several pro-voter policies in 2019, including \$11.3 million for new election equipment in the 2019-20 state budget. After the Legislature adjourned, we began fortifying and expanding our statewide network of Voting Rights Advocacy chapters, including new chapters in Hastings and Grand Island. As the election season begins in earnest, many of our 1,300 dedicated volunteers will mobilize across the state on behalf of open, fair, and modern elections. In September, we applauded an opinion by Attorney General Doug Peterson confirming our contention that the appointment of election commissioners in several of Nebraska's largest counties was unconstitutional. Also, Civic Nebraska helped

form and lead Nebraska Counts, a border-to-border education and awareness campaign about the importance of the U.S. Census, and why it's important for Nebraska to get a full and accurate count in 2020.

In a representative democracy, YOU have the power – and we're here to make sure you always do.

ALL IN

"Civic Nebraska is impressive in the wide number of roles they play in protecting – and advancing – voting rights. Nothing is so powerful and, at the same time, so fragile as our right to vote. This is something that Civic Nebraska clearly understands, and they work accordingly to protect voters on different fronts. It's why we are pleased to partner with them on a wide variety of their initiatives to strengthen voting rights, whether it be voter education, election protection, or advocacy work on behalf of all Nebraskans."

– Krystal Fox, League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha

ON THE UP & UP 

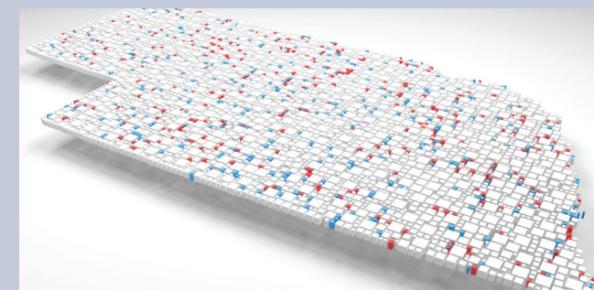


Number of Voting Rights Chapters launched across the state in 2019, representing volunteers and advocates who will act on behalf of fair, transparent, and accessible elections in 2020.

4 Number of correctional institutions visited this year as part of our educational push to prepare returning citizens to become voters once they successfully complete their sentences.



25 Election Protection Program volunteers who were trained and deployed for a municipal-level election – Lincoln's May 7, 2019, citywide vote – for the first time in our history.



200 Election Protection Program volunteers we project to train and deploy across Nebraska during the 2020 primary and general elections.



RISING TO THE OCCASION

BRAD CHRISTIAN-SALLIS

Voting Rights Field Director

I work directly with

Nebraskans to make sure they know how to engage with their ballot. That they are confident they are casting intelligent votes. And, once they're ready to cast it, that they have the right to do just that.

I suppose we could just drag people to the polls, but that wouldn't be a very sustainable way of building democracy. Instead, we educate citizens on the process of democracy so they know why they should be voting. That's what keeps them coming back each Election Day. They're involved in the process of making things better.

Right now, there's a lot of playing defense because voting rights are under attack. The Voting Rights Act was damaged in 2013 (following the Shelby County v. Holder ruling). Today we're at a place we haven't been in a while: fighting to get back rights we already had.

The people are democracy. The more they participate, the more modern and robust it will be. That's why we help Nebraskans connect with the State Capitol to see their senators, to testify, to learn how the policies for which they advocate get put into law. Those policies impact the way they live their lives, especially when they go to a polling place.

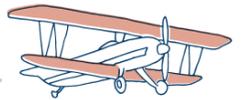
Without our Voting Rights program, it would be a lot harder to vote. You look at things like online voter registration – that's something Civic Nebraska worked really hard to achieve. During our Election Protection Program trainings, I'll hear, "I was at this polling place, it wasn't the correct one, and I didn't know how to find the right polling place. Civic Nebraska is what got me there." Those people wouldn't have voted without the program. We make a difference.

Voting is a right. It's in the Constitution. Over the years, people have fought and died for the right to vote. It's not a privilege – it's an honor, but it's also a right.

There is nothing more beautiful than people having their voices heard. I get to help Nebraskans do that. It's a blessing, and I can't ask for much more.

ON THE HORIZON

WHAT'S NEXT FOR CIVIC NEBRASKA



Civic Nebraska's culture of innovation and ownership emerges in monthly Leadership Academy days as well as regular staff brainstorming sessions (below).

Maintaining upward momentum requires constant effort, commitment to excellence, and consistent execution. It also takes clear vision and the ability to embrace change. In 2020 our youth, civic health, and voting rights programs all will enter into new stages by adding capacity and programming for Nebraskans of all ages, backgrounds, and beliefs.

We will engage and empower more youth than ever. With deep data in hand, we will help chart Nebraska's civic health future. And, in this pivotal election and census year, we will stand guard over the ballot box and ensure all Nebraskans are counted.

That much is certain – and we know we will rise to even greater heights by meeting all other challenges head-on. No matter how steep the climb, nothing will keep us from our goal of creating a more modern and robust democracy for everyone.

Our mission is clear. Let's all rise together.



IN 2020

Our Youth Civic Leadership programs will:

Launch **CIVIC U.**, an innovative and immersive service-learning summer academy for middle schoolers.

Add more **THINK MAKE CREATE** mobile makerspace programming to engage even more young minds.

Expand youth civic leadership opportunities in Greater Nebraska.

Our Civic Health Programs will:

Publish and share the **2020 Nebraska Civic Health Index**, a statewide, data-rich report examining Nebraska ranks in key indicators such as volunteerism, voting, social connectivity, and civic activity.

Begin regularly offering civil discourse and media literacy programs, workshops, and trainings to the public.

Host the **2020 Civic Health Summit** in April with key stakeholders to form a five-year strategy for the state.

Continue building capacity, engaging community leaders, and creating new civic strength in core urban neighborhoods through the **Collective Impact Lincoln** and **ONE Omaha** initiatives.

Expand rural initiatives such as the **Rural Civic Action Program** and several new community development programs.

Our Voting Rights Initiatives team will:

Train and deploy hundreds of nonpartisan election observers to monitor polling places on Election Day, both during the May primaries and the November general election.

Help lead the statewide **Nebraska Counts** coalition to ensure that the census is conducted efficiently and completely in Nebraska, particularly in hard-to-count areas of the state.

Conduct regular voter education trainings and get-out-the-vote activities in advance of the May and November elections.

Advocate for pro-voter legislation in the Nebraska Legislature and work to defeat bills that would increase barriers to the ballot, such as voter ID.

ADMINISTRATION

Adam Morfeld, Executive Director & Founder
 Amanda Barker, Deputy Executive Director
 Julie Ward, Assistant to the Executive Director
 Liz Potter, Director of Development
 Westin Miller, Director of Public Policy
 Steve Smith, Director of Communications
 Mary Boland Steier, Director of Finance
 Jan Benitez, Evaluation & Program Development Manager
 Nicholette Seigfreid, Human Resources Manager
 Christa Lemmer, Staff Accountant
 Sarah Cohen, Grants Associate

YOUTH CIVIC LEADERSHIP

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 Charity Iromuanya, Youth Leadership Programs Manager
 Shari Kimble, Youth Leadership Programs Manager
 Rebecca Nichol, Site Director, Sherman Elementary CLC
 Tracy White, Site Director, Lewis & Clark Middle CLC
 Equasha Smith, Site Director, Lothrop Elementary CLC
 Emily Koopmann, Site Director, Campbell Elementary CLC
 Chandler Dulin, Site Director, Randolph Elementary CLC
 Erin Voichoski, Site Director, Lincoln Northeast High CLC
 Chelsea Egenberger, Site Director, Lincoln High CLC
 Chris McCurdy, THINK MAKE CREATE coordinator

VOTING RIGHTS INITIATIVES

John Cartier, Director of Voting Rights
 Brad Christian-Sallis, Voting Rights Field Director
 Margaret Marsh, Voting Rights Field Organizer
 Mike Forsythe, Voting Rights Field Organizer

CIVIC HEALTH PROGRAMS

Amanda Barker, Director of Civic Health Programs
 Bridget Claborn, Civic Health Program Manager
 Daniel Bennett, Civic Health Program Manager
 Nancy Petitto, Program Manager, Collective Impact Lincoln
 Jose Lemus, Community Organizer, Collective Impact Lincoln
 Alexis Bromley, Program Manager, ONE Omaha
 Mike McGuire, LEAD Program Manager, ONE Omaha

And over 80 dedicated part-time employees in our schools, in our streets, and in our neighborhoods.

FINANCIALS

2018-19 FISCAL YEAR



TOTAL BUDGET

\$2,276,296

DEFENDING DEMOCRACY WITH PLANNED GIVING

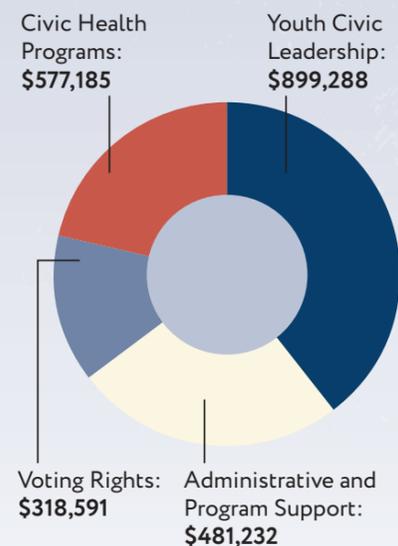
Planned giving means long-term sustainability of our work. Any contribution, large or small, serves to protect democracy in our state for years to come. To learn more about planned giving with Civic Nebraska, contact Director of Development Liz Potter at 402.904.5191 or liz.potter@civicnebraska.org, or visit CivicNebraska.org/plannedgiving.

BUILDING CIVIC POWER

We believe our supporters' investments should be immediately utilized in our schools, neighborhoods, and communities. That's why we directly leverage every donation to benefit our Youth Civic Leadership, Civic Health, and Voting Rights Initiatives. In addition, every Civic Nebraska staff member regardless of position directly supports at least one of these programs. As our capacity has grown, so has our ability to lift up our fellow Nebraskans and create a stronger democracy for everyone.

IMPACTS

Funding Allocations, Fiscal Year 2018-19



Note: Allocations vary from program to program based on grant cycles. Fiscal year figures do not always align with some individual grant cycles.

RISE WITH US YOU'RE UP



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Join us. Civic Nebraska has volunteer opportunities that fit many schedules, interests, and lifestyles. Call 402.904.5191 or email info@civicnebraska.org for other volunteer opportunities.

Share our story. The more people who know about our mission and our impact, the more supporters of a modern, robust democracy there will be in Nebraska. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and share our work with your friends and family.

Donate. To build democracy, we count on our donors' generous support. We immediately put those funds to work in our communities. Support us online at bitly.com/CivNebGive.

Civic Nebraska's strength and momentum comes from supporters like you. Your time, energy, and financial support have delivered civic education and service-learning opportunities to thousands of Nebraska students. You have strengthened civic life in communities across our state. And you have advanced the most precious of American rights – to vote. Our work to create a more modern and robust democracy for all Nebraskans wouldn't be possible without you.



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**Creating a more modern and robust
democracy for *all* Nebraskans.**

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Lincoln, NE 68508

402.904.5191

CivicNebraska.org

Donate Online at bit.ly/CivNebGive