

WHAT IS  
MANDERING?

WHERE IS MY  
POLLING PLACE

# BALLOT PEDIA

The Encyclopedia of American Politics

WHAT DOES  
MEDICARE  
EXPANSION  
DO  
?

WHO ARE MY  
STATE  
LEGISLATORS

## MESSAGE FROM LESLIE GRAVES, PRESIDENT AND CEO



**“Ballotpedia has a team that has earned enormous trust from our readers. Our professionally curated information passes the ‘lack of bias test’, and our readers respect and admire us for it.”**

Another banner year for Ballotpedia is under our belts. Even-numbered years are the most obviously exciting for groups working in the political realm, but the odd-numbered years are when we get the chance to really dig into the deep, complicated, and fascinating questions that make up American politics. You’ll hear more throughout this report on some of the groundwork we’ve laid in 2019 that will begin to bear fruit in 2020, but first, I want to take a moment to talk to you about our tremendously talented staff.

Ballotpedia has a team that has earned enormous trust from our readers. Our professionally curated information passes the ‘lack of bias test’, and our readers respect and admire us for it. Not only that, but because they trust our information, they don’t hesitate to share it with their friends and families.

The Ballotpedia workforce is a group of 50 (and growing) who are working every day to expand and enhance the Encyclopedia of American Politics. I’m excited to introduce you to a few of the people who are improving Ballotpedia throughout this report, some of whom have been here from the very early days. In fact, 29 people—more than half of our team—have been here for three or more years. When people come to Ballotpedia they come to stay. Not just because it’s a great place to work but also because they are believers in our mission of providing high-quality political information.

I also want to take a moment to talk about what we refer to here at Ballotpedia as the Cycle of Virtue. We take pains to provide fair and unbiased information. Because we abide by the principles of nonpartisanship, our articles are well received. Because they are well received, they are widely read. Because they are widely read, they show up at the top of internet searches. Because they show up at the top of search results, more people read them. And on and on and on.

Thanks to this Cycle of Virtue we are able to make “Big Tech” work for us. All of the big guys out there: Google, Facebook, Twitter, voice-activated-search tools, etc., want to provide their users with the information that the users are actually looking for. And since the information on Ballotpedia is so highly regarded by readers, we rise to the top of these search algorithms without doing anything extra. We just keep applying our principles to our articles, let our skilled and dedicated staff provide highly detailed and accurate information, and let the Cycle of Virtue do the rest.

With the combination of our talented, dedicated staff and the principles of nonpartisanship, Ballotpedia has been providing the public with top-notch political information for over a decade. We are excited for what will come in the future, and can’t wait to see how the Cycle of Virtue will continue to benefit us all.



## Kayla Harris | Communications

Kayla Harris is our Senior Communications Associate and has been with Ballotpedia for nearly six years. She takes full advantage of our remote working environment by traveling extensively. Kayla has lived and worked in places from Morocco to Thailand to Peru and many more! During her time here at Ballotpedia she has spearheaded our forays into the free educational webinars we offer the public.

Approximately twice a month, [Ballotpedia hosts free webinars for our users](#). These webinars are video broadcasts where staff members take listeners through a dive deep on an important topic, like the 2020 presidential race or redistricting, or where we interview an outside expert about their work in the Ballotpedia Insights series.

Ballotpedia first began hosting regular webinars in October 2016. We've covered preemption conflicts, trifectas, ballot measures, and more. We hosted our first Ballotpedia Insights call in 2018 with authors Salena Zito and Brad Todd where we discussed their book, *The Great Revolt: Inside the Populist Coalition Reshaping American Politics*. This has been one of our most popular webinars to date! In total we've run 54 webinars since kicking off the program, which have been viewed nearly 7,000 times.

*Which webinar is your personal favorite?*

**"It's hard to pick one because I have learned so much this year by attending our webinars, but I really enjoyed our April 2019 Ballotpedia Insights with campaign managers Jeff Roe and Jeff Hewitt."**



## Dave Beaudoin | News

You will recognize the name Dave Beaudoin if you are a subscriber to The Daily Brew. Dave is Ballotpedia's News Editor and this year he anchored the work to develop our video efforts and our political news aggregator site, [news.ballotpedia.org](https://news.ballotpedia.org).

Ballotpedia has become such an amazing resource over its history—on elections, politics, and policy—with more than 300,000 written articles onsite. But there are large numbers of readers and potential readers who like to consume content in other ways, such as videos and news aggregators.

A news aggregator is a site which takes news feeds from various online sites and combines them into a single list. This enables readers to see news stories from a variety of sources in one place without having to visit each site individually. When Ballotpedia stories are available on aggregators, they can be seen by folks who might not even be looking for us. When readers click on one of our stories because the subject or topic interests them, they are introduced to our engaging information and the quality of what we do.

The Ballotpedia News site was developed by our tech team in the fourth quarter of 2018. Starting in January 2019, we began adding all news stories written by Ballotpedia staff members to Ballotpedia News. In less than one year, we received over 100,000 pageviews!

For the users who prefer video, our "[Beyond the Headlines](#)" series enables us to engage with them. Someone who watches one of these videos may be introduced to Ballotpedia for the very first time or they may watch a video to understand a topic better and walk away grateful for what they've learned from us.

*Which video do you like best?*

**"I may be biased, but my favorite video was recorded by fellow News team staffer Elisabeth Moore on recalls. Our "Recall Overview" page has it right at the very top and it offers a great introduction to the subject in under three minutes. It's concise, it's informative, it's engaging, and I also think it personalizes our organization to anyone who watches it!"**

## Tom Reitz | Tech

Tom Reitz is Ballotpedia's tech master. He joined our staff in 2013 and has worked to improve, refine, and streamline the background systems that make Ballotpedia work ever since. Two key improvements that Tom led include the move to a database, which improves efficiency and reduces errors, and building Ballotpedia's Application Programming Interface (API), which allows us to better partner with other organizations.

The first form of the database and API came about in 2015, when Ballotpedia decided to build a [Sample Ballot Lookup Tool](#). We had lots of information about candidates on Ballotpedia, but it was spread across thousands of pages—there was no easy way to pull it all together. So we created a database which was filled with the information from Ballotpedia pages. From there we were able to develop our API, which is how we can easily deliver our information to partners throughout the political-information realm.

Inputting data into Ballotpedia's database is much faster for our staff compared to editing individual pages on our website. Using the database has—at a minimum—doubled the speed with which our staff are able to update election results. In addition, with the database, we are able to enforce quality rules that prevent data entry errors. We are able to quickly and easily search for inconsistencies in our data. All of this helps to ensure the highest possible quality of Ballotpedia's data.

*What tech innovation are you most excited about?*

**"A database is important as a single source of truth for an information-oriented organization like Ballotpedia. An API is valuable as a means to deliver our data to partners and customers. Many online companies provide data APIs nowadays, including Facebook, Twitter, Google, ESPN, and many more. In the last few years, Ballotpedia has provided data and API access to several dozen groups, including some of the largest companies in the world. I'm very excited to see what innovations our API and database of political information facilitate in the future!"**



# LOOKING AHEAD

## Introducing new coverage area: **Partisanship of State Supreme Courts**

There are 344 State Supreme Court justices across the country. These justices are elected in both partisan and nonpartisan elections, selected by legislatures, or appointed by governors.

It's not too difficult to determine how the 19 percent of state supreme court justices chosen in partisan elections are apt to approach their work: They typically discuss this in their campaigns. But how do we do that for the remaining 81 percent? We have plans to find out.

Thanks to a generous supporter, Ballotpedia has started assembling the information that will provide citizens with key information about their top state judges. We will begin publishing this research in 2020.

We will then apply our research into judges' judicial approaches with a review of governing court majorities. Understanding that views may shift over time, this research will help determine if any current voting bloc behavior exists and on what issues.

**“By examining the behavior of judges over time and then comparing that data with information about the justices’ approaches to the law as they joined the court, we will be able to identify shifts and provide our readers with a treasure trove of information about this vital, but often overlooked, element of their state judiciary.”**

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We are so happy and excited to be sharing this critical information with the public!

## Understanding the people running for office: **Candidate Connections**

Not only is Ballotpedia the place to go for a voter researching their elections...

... it's also the place that candidates come to make sure voters know about them. When candidates want to get their biographical information, political platform, and core beliefs in front of as many people as possible, they are realizing that they need to make sure to get that information on Ballotpedia.

We've done the necessary preliminary work in 2019 to make it as easy as possible for candidates to share basic information with us. In 2020, this will substantially increase the number of candidates bringing their information directly to us. The outcome of all this buildup is our new feature [Candidate Connections](#). This is a survey hub for the people running for office and the people

running initiative campaigns to get on the ballot. Campaigns can upload photos and share why they think they should earn a vote. We even make it easy for someone to upload a video to share with voters!

Why are we putting so much emphasis on candidates coming to us? Because it is much more cost effective for Ballotpedia to have campaigns send us their basic information than it is for us to go out searching for it. This lets our staff spend more of their time covering complexities and dynamics about candidates and elections — information candidates don't necessarily want on Ballotpedia! And perhaps more importantly to everyday voters, this model allows us to provide considerably more robust information for down-the-ballot-candidates than they would otherwise get.



Alexa, What is Joe Biden's position on immigration?

## Presidential candidate information on Amazon Alexa

The Amazon Alexa voice-operated device is part of a growing trend where consumers get their information from sources outside of websites. More than 100 million Alexa devices have been sold. Ballotpedia is partnering with Amazon's Alexa to provide political information, putting our presidential coverage right where those Alexa users will hear it. Many of them might not otherwise find our content. This means that a larger number of American voters are being exposed to Ballotpedia's neutral, encyclopedic approach to political coverage.

Every day information on the notable contenders in the presidential race is ported from Ballotpedia to Amazon's Alexa, meaning that anyone who poses a question such as "Alexa, what is Joe Biden's position on immigration?" will immediately get an up-to-date answer prefaced by the new media catchphrase: "According to Ballotpedia,..."

And, every morning following a presidential debate, from the ongoing Democratic primary debates through to the general election, you can ask your Alexa for a recap. This will give basic information such as the participants, location, TV station host, moderators, and the number of minutes that each candidate speaks. It will also include a neutral summary of each candidates' debate performance.

**"We are thrilled to be working with Amazon to make it as easy as possible for voters to find fair, accurate, and neutral facts."**

We know that there are many different ways busy people can get lost in the weeds when they are trying to do their due diligence about elections. We are thrilled to be working with Amazon to make it as easy as possible for voters to find fair, accurate, and neutral facts.

# BALLOTPEDIA BY THE NUMBERS

**35.3**  
million  
readers  
in 2019

more than  
**1.16**  
million  
sample ballots  
looked up —

The media mentioned  
**Ballotpedia's work**  
**9,467 times**

more than **489,000**  
newsletter subscribers

Learning Journey: **Open rates over 100%** and 2 of every 5 participants sign up for another one after their first

## STAFF STATS:

Average staff tenure:  
**4.1 years**

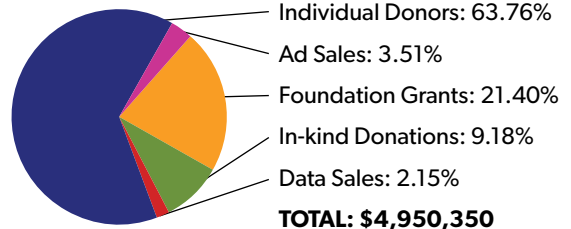
**5 new babies**  
in 2019

Pets: **22** dogs\* | **11** cats | **5** hens | **1** bunny

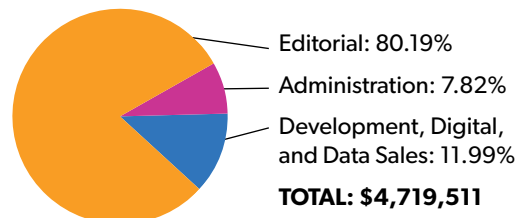
**1** bearded dragon | **1** green cheek conure parrot

\*Ratio of good dogs to naughty dogs—11:2

## INCOME:



## EXPENSES:



## INFORMED VOTERS OF TOMORROW

We do our best here at Ballotpedia to ensure that voters have the information that they need in order to cast an informed vote. We're also working hard on the next generation of voters!

Pictured: Staff members and their children.





## UPDATE FROM KRISTEN VONASEK

*Director of Communications*

Director of Communications Kristen Vonasek joined Ballotpedia in 2013 and since then has tremendously expanded the ways that the world can learn about our work.

In addition to improving our reach on social media, overseeing our multiple newsletter offerings, and conducting considerable journalistic outreach efforts, she came up with our newest form of voter education: [Learning Journeys](#).

Imagine if every resident of Atlanta, Georgia, said they were looking for trustworthy, reliable political information. They would have many different options for how they wanted to receive that information. Political junkies might choose a day by day breakdown of the latest federal news. Others would just want a summary of important state level actions at the end of the week. Some would want to be guided through complex topics, and provided with other ways to engage. A few would prefer someone to pop in a couple times a year with the important local information they should know.

**“My personal favorite inbox experience we’ve created for subscribers is the Learning Journey. If you’re not familiar with these yet, they are free email courses that you can start at any time. Our readers pick a topic they want to learn more about, and subscribe to that Journey.”**

At about half a million unique subscribers, Ballotpedia’s emails reach a population about the size of Atlanta, and as you can imagine, they are all looking for something a little bit different. Luckily, we’re here for everyone.

Ballotpedia offers more than a dozen email newsletters our readers can subscribe to, all for free. Don’t let the price fool you, this is premium content. Some of our newsletters are very detailed and come out about once per month. For more streamlined and frequent updates we offer a Daily Brew with three stories we think you should know each morning, or a Weekly Presidential News Briefing that boils down the week of events in the 2020 presidential election into one Friday email. These newsletters have a devoted readership and several of them have open rates (the percentage of recipients who open and read the emails) that are 75% above the industry standard.

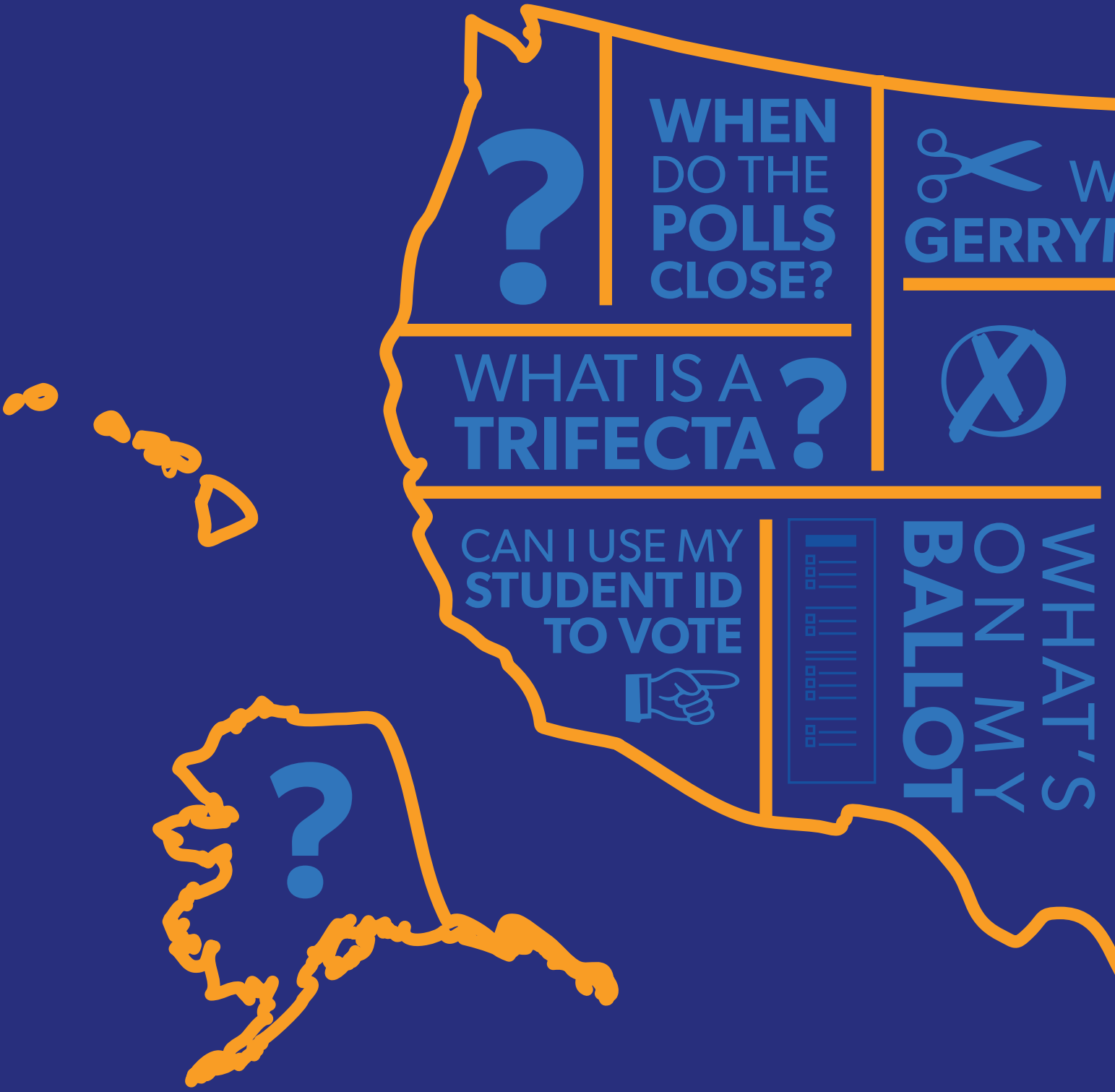
My personal favorite inbox experience we’ve created for subscribers is the Learning Journey. If you’re not familiar with these yet, they are free email courses that you can start at any time. Our readers pick a topic they want to learn more about, and subscribe to that Journey. Then they immediately get their first email.

All of our current Journeys have between three and five emails of content. The information is peppered with graphics, quotes, quizzes, and links to continue reading more on the topic. At the end of the experience, readers walk away with a much better understanding of the content, and a certificate to show they completed their Journey. We’ve produced 13 Journeys so far, with an average of 266 participants each.

My personal favorite Journey was the one we did on the Texas constitutional amendments that were on the November 2019 state ballot. I live in Houston and actually needed to vote on those, so it ended up being a wonderful way to break my research down into chunks. I felt very confident that I knew how I wanted to vote on each of these amendments when I went to the polls. This Texas Journey ended up being our most popular Learning Journey yet, collecting 1,225 participants.

January 1, 2020 will mark the sixth anniversary of our email program. Throughout the next year, we’re working to find even more ways to stay engaged with our readers and different options to personalize their experiences. We’re always seeking to help readers in their own journeys to stay informed.





WHEN  
DO THE  
POLLS  
CLOSE?



GERRYMAN

WHAT IS A  
TRIFECTA?



CAN I USE MY  
STUDENT ID  
TO VOTE?



WHAT'S  
ON MY  
BALLOT?



Ballotpedia depends on the generosity of our readers. To become a supporter, please [click here](#).

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