



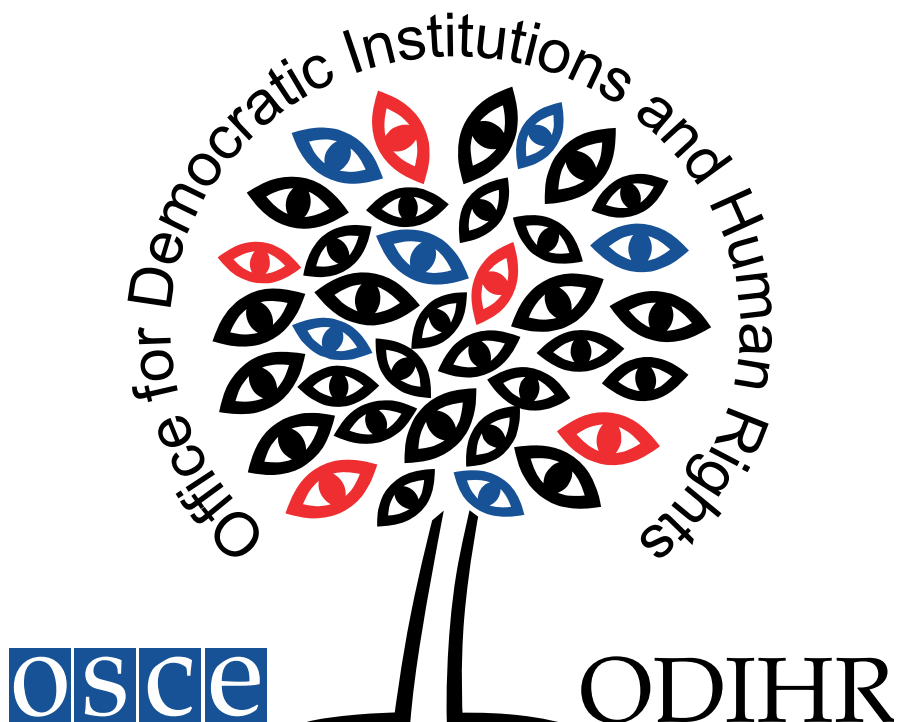
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

GENERAL ELECTIONS

5 November 2024

ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission
Final Report



Warsaw
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following an invitation from the United States (U.S.) government to observe the 5 November 2024 general elections, and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established a Limited Election Observation Mission (LEOM) on 30 September. The ODIHR LEOM assessed the compliance of the election process with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, as well as with domestic legislation. For election day, the ODIHR LEOM joined efforts with a delegation from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM).

In its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued on 6 November, the IEOM concluded that the elections “demonstrated the resilience of the country’s democratic institutions, with a well-run process in a highly polarized environment, candidates campaigning freely across the country, and voters engaging actively. The campaign was marked by disinformation and instances of violence, including harsh and intolerant language against women and immigrants by one candidate. Repeated unfounded claims about election fraud negatively impacted the public trust. Substantial efforts were undertaken to ensure election integrity and security, and election officials conducted their duties professionally despite numerous threats against them. Women remain significantly under-represented as candidates and in high elected office. Certain segments of the U.S. citizenry remain disenfranchised despite prior ODIHR recommendations, and voter registration and identification remain politically charged issues. Record-high spending in these elections amplified concerns over unregulated financial contributions and a disproportionate advantage for candidates with extensive funding. Media coverage was extensive and vibrant but largely paralleled the partisan political divide, which, along with instances of hostile rhetoric toward journalists, eroded trust in the media. Election day was well managed, and polling took place in a peaceful and orderly atmosphere where observed.”

The Constitution and its amendments establish a broad and sound framework for federal elections, with additional federal laws regulating certain aspects of the electoral process. Detailed aspects of the electoral legal framework are established by state laws and regulations, which vary across states. In addition, federal and state court decisions interpreting laws form an integral part of the legal framework, with the ability to change important aspects of the electoral process, including in the days leading up to the elections. The 2022 amendments to the Electoral Count Reform and Presidential Transition Improvement Act aimed at increasing clarity on counting Electoral College votes. There were no other legislative changes at the federal level since the last elections, leaving the majority of previous ODIHR recommendations unaddressed. Numerous laws have been enacted on the state level, with some further facilitating and others having a restrictive impact on the exercise of voting rights. Some of those changes were challenged in courts with legal rulings effectively changing the rules, including close to the elections, contributing to legal uncertainty, contrary to international good practice.

The election administration is highly decentralized, with the states and over 8,000 local jurisdictions managing elections. While ODIHR LEOM interlocutors generally expressed trust in the work of election administrators, the fact that chief election administrators are themselves politically affiliated is at odds with international standards and possibly creates conflicts of interest and room for politically biased decisions. The increased number of threats, harassment, and violence against election administrators ahead of the elections raised significant concerns and posed challenges in recruiting

election workers and necessitated additional security measures to protect both election sites and personnel. Nationwide concerns about election security, including the safety of workers, infrastructure, and the potential for post-election turbulence, adversely affected the electoral environment and resulted in reduced transparency in some areas by limiting access to observers. Some local election officials expressed concerns to the ODIHR LEOM about insufficient funds, exposing them to operational challenges, especially amid physical and cybersecurity threats. Positively, observers noted extensive voter information efforts, including in easy-to-read and minority languages.

Elections heavily depend on technology for voter registration, ballot casting, and vote counting. There was a strong emphasis on enhancing cybersecurity following previous breaches of election campaigns and the discovery of potential vulnerabilities in voting systems, but ultimately, there was no indication that the votes or election results were altered. Generally, these elections had no critical malfunction of voting and counting equipment, but system malfunctions, particularly of ageing systems and where no specialized IT staff was at hand, continued to be a concern. To mitigate the evolving risks across electoral processes, federal agencies provided a range of tools, training, and advisories to state and county election officials, which strengthened election security. Nonetheless, concerns about security and the persistence of discourse from both foreign and domestic sources that sought to sow doubt and delegitimize the electoral process through false or misleading narratives continue to impact public trust.

Alternative voting methods, such as early in-person and absentee voting, offer voters several ways to cast their ballots, an important tool for enhancing voter inclusion while at the same time facilitating the work of the election officials. Early voting is available in 47 states, though the timeframes differ widely, while absentee voting is permitted in all states, with varying eligibility requirements. For these elections, there was an increased public confidence in absentee voting, with most contestants encouraging their supporters to use any available method to cast a vote. In the run-up to the elections, most states amended absentee and postal voting laws, with some easing and others restricting access. Special provisions were adopted for most states affected by hurricanes, including provisions for voters who lost their identification cards. Some Native Americans in remote communities faced additional hurdles with absentee voting due to a lack of mailing addresses or access to post offices.

Voting rights are constitutionally guaranteed but subject to numerous restrictions, some of which are contrary to OSCE commitments and international obligations and standards for universal and equal suffrage. Approximately 4.1 million residents of Washington, D.C., and U.S. territories lack full congressional representation due to constitutional limits on statehood. Most states, along with D.C. and Puerto Rico, restrict voting rights for inmates, and many formerly incarcerated individuals remain disenfranchised or face barriers to voting. Additionally, voters with intellectual disabilities remain disenfranchised in all but ten states.

Voter registration is active and implemented at the state level, and an estimated 244 million voters were eligible to vote. There is no nationwide mechanism for comprehensive voter registration data sharing. Identification requirements varied, with 35 states requiring an identification card to vote, while the remaining 15 states and the District of Columbia (D.C.) accepted non-documentary proof of identity. In some states, voter identifications were not equally accessible to all eligible citizens, often as the result of an absence of state-wide ID laws, with students, Native Americans, some ethnic, racial and sexual minorities and economically disadvantaged communities disproportionately affected. Criminal penalties associated with certain activities by voter assistance groups have hindered the recruitment for registration drives in some states, and several groups halted voter registration efforts to avoid the risk of prosecution. In response to recent hurricanes, some states implemented special provisions for voters who lost their identification cards.

Four presidential candidates were registered nationwide, with Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump being the leading candidates. In total, 2,710 candidates (263 women, or only

9.7 per cent) ran for the House and 69 (21 women, or 30 per cent) for the Senate. In some states, burdensome requirements for registration, including a high number of supporting signatures, disproportionately limited the opportunities for smaller parties and independent candidates to run, which is at odds with OSCE commitments and international standards. In 37 congressional districts, only one major party candidate contested elections, limiting competitiveness in these races.

Women remain under-represented, holding 28 per cent of all congressional seats and 32 per cent in state legislatures. Following the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision to remove federal protections for abortion rights, women's political activism has increased and featured prominently in these elections. Women were well represented as election administrators on the local level, and 21 of the 51 chief election officers at the state level, including D.C., were women. The U.S. has signed but not ratified the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

The campaign, including online, unfolded in a competitive and highly polarized environment, and fundamental rights, including civil and political rights, were upheld. The entire campaign was marked by harsh, confrontational rhetoric, including personal attacks, inflammatory language, and mutual accusations between Ms. Harris and Mr. Trump, deepening existing divides. Several incidents of election violence took place in some locations, and there were two assassination attempts on Mr. Trump. Ms. Harris framed the election as a fight to preserve freedoms and democracy, while Mr. Trump campaigned to reverse President Biden's policies and strengthen immigration controls. Mr. Trump initially pledged to accept the election results despite the outcome but later refused to confirm this commitment, fueling doubts about peaceful post-election transitions in case he lost the election. Mr. Trump frequently made misogynistic remarks, employed racist stereotypes, and questioned Ms. Harris' racial and ethnic identity. Elon Musk's ownership of one of the most influential social network platforms, alongside his active role in campaigning for Mr. Trump, sparked concerns by several interlocutors that the platform was being used to amplify both his own voice and that of the Republican presidential candidate, including by promoting misinformation and previously debunked rumours and conspiracy theories.

Campaign finance is regulated by federal laws and court rulings, comprising detailed regulations on the funding of electoral contestants, but the possibility of unconstrained spending gives a disproportionate advantage to well-established parties and candidates. Furthermore, gaps remain in contribution limits and some reporting requirements, leaving room for campaign funds that are not subject to transparency rules, potentially influencing public opinion without accountability. The rise of Super Political Action Committees has exacerbated these issues by enabling unlimited spending, further entrenching the power of candidates with significant financial resources. The bipartisan Federal Election Commission delayed addressing multiple complaints received during the campaign period to after the elections, raising concerns about its effectiveness and ability to make unified decisions.

The vibrant and extensive media environment operates through a multitude of platforms that increasingly tailor content to partisan audiences, contributing to political polarization. While freedom of expression was respected, the number of cases of intimidation and harassment targeting journalists, including violence, online harassment, legal challenges, and attacks by police, were of concern. In addition, ownership of media has become increasingly concentrated in a handful of corporations, challenging the sustainability of local media. The ODIHR LEOM media monitoring noted that the majority of media outlets tailored their coverage to partisan audiences, amplifying political messaging and contributing to political polarization. While the partisan divide in the media impacted broadcast news reporting and contributed to a generally low public trust in the media, some provided extensive analytical coverage.

Many lawsuits were filed against new electoral legislation and implementing regulations, primarily driven by the two main parties or their affiliate organizations, with at least 295 election-related lawsuits

filed with state and federal courts, and there were at least 394 consequential court orders related to election issues, including voting rights. While some courts issued rulings effective after the elections, others applied their decisions immediately, undermining effective implementation on key issues, including voter identification and registration, voting and counting procedures. In general, courts have decided cases in favour of expanding and protecting voter rights and overall enjoyed stakeholders' trust, but concerns persisted among many ODIHR LEOM interlocutors regarding the politicization of the Supreme Court, largely stemming from some of its recent decisions, structural makeup, and appointment process.

Election observation is regulated by state legislation, with a significant variation of rules regulating different types of observers and their access to the electoral process. Partisan and non-partisan observers were present in great numbers, contributing to the transparency and quality of the electoral process. There is a legal prohibition of international election observation in 17 states and, in practice, in many other jurisdictions, contrary to the OSCE commitments. Several state election officials refused or ignored requests to meet with the ODIHR LEOM observers, often due to perceived concerns over foreign interference.

Election day was managed professionally where observed. The atmosphere at the polling stations visited was calm, peaceful, and orderly. Significant voter interest and queuing were noted in some places, especially in the morning. Polling stations were generally accessible and well-staffed, with precautions in place to ensure voter and staff safety. While some technical and procedural challenges were reported in the limited number of polling stations observed, such as ballot scanning errors and voter ID mismatches, they were addressed promptly. The presence of partisan and civil society poll watchers ensured transparency throughout the process. Almost all polling stations visited were accessible for voters with physical disabilities. Counting was efficient, with media outlets announcing preliminary results as they were made available. Following the elections, the turnout was estimated to be almost 157 million voters or 64 per cent of the voting-eligible population.

Claims of potential electoral fraud made by some candidates during the 2024 campaign were unsubstantiated, and all candidates accepted the results. The Republican Party gained majority control of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The certification of election results, conducted at the local and state levels in accordance with state laws, was completed within legal deadlines.

This report offers a detailed overview of the ODIHR LEOM's findings and conclusions and a number of recommendations to support efforts to bring elections further in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. Priority recommendations include strengthening voting rights protections by addressing discriminatory legal changes, ensuring neutral and impartial election administration appointments, enhancing risk management tools and voter registration accuracy, extending full congressional representation and presidential voting rights to U.S. territories, regulating campaign financing with transparent disclosure requirements, and safeguarding media freedom through decriminalizing defamation and protecting journalists from undue surveillance. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Following an invitation from the United States (U.S.) Government to observe the 5 November 2024 general elections, and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established a Limited Election Observation Mission (LEOM) on 30 September. The mission, led by Tamás Meszerics, consisted of a 15-member core team based in Washington, D.C. and 64 long-term observers (LTOs) deployed throughout the country. Mission

members came from 25 OSCE participating States. The ODIHR LEOM remained in the country until 11 November.

Around election day, an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) was formed as a common endeavour of the ODIHR LEOM and a delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA). Pia Kauma was appointed by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator. The OSCE PA delegation was led by Pere Joan Pons. Both institutions involved in the IEOM have endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.¹ On election day, 250 observers from 45 OSCE participating States were deployed, including 86 observers deployed by ODIHR and a 164-member delegation from the OSCE PA; 36 per cent of members of the IEOM were women.

The ODIHR LEOM assessed the compliance of the election processes with OSCE commitments and other obligations and standards for democratic elections, as well as domestic legislation. This final report follows a Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, which was released on 6 November 2024.²

The ODIHR LEOM wishes to thank the U.S. Government for the invitation to observe the elections and for its assistance. It also expresses its appreciation to other federal and state institutions, political parties, media and civil society organizations, international community representatives, and other interlocutors for sharing their views and for their co-operation.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

On 5 November, federal elections were held for the president, the vice president, 34 of the 100 Senate seats, and all 435 in the House of Representatives (HoR).³ The last presidential election was held in 2020 when Democrat Joe Biden defeated Republican Donald Trump. The last congressional elections were held in 2022, resulting in a Senate majority for the Democrats with 47 seats, along with four Independents caucusing with them, while the Republicans held 49 seats. The outgoing House comprised 220 Republicans, 211 Democrats, and four vacant seats.⁴ Despite recent gains, women only held 28 per cent of all congressional seats and 32 per cent in state legislatures.⁵ Minorities and Native Americans were also underrepresented.⁶

In March 2024, President Biden secured the Democratic Party nomination but withdrew on 21 July, endorsing Vice President Kamala Harris, who was officially nominated on 5 August at the Democratic National Convention (DNC).⁷ Former President Donald Trump was nominated as the Republican candidate for a third time at the Republican National Convention held in July. Since 2023, Mr. Trump has been facing multiple legal challenges, including a felony conviction, federal charges tied to the 2020 elections, and two other criminal charges. He maintained that these indictments were politically motivated and, in the run-up to elections, vowed to initiate criminal investigations into President Biden, his family, and several government officials, journalists, and political adversaries whom he accused of corruption or misconduct.

¹ See the [Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers](#).

² See previous ODIHR election observation [reports](#) on the United States.

³ Thirty-three Senate seats were contested in regular elections and one in a special election in Nebraska, to fill in a vacant seat following a resignation.

⁴ The 4 vacant seats were due to one resignation in Wisconsin and 3 deaths, one in Texas and two in New Jersey, where 1 seat was won in the 18 September 2024 special election by the Democratic Party candidate.

⁵ See also the January 2023 Pew Research Center [report](#).

⁶ See the Congressional Research Service [overview](#) of the composition of the outgoing Congress.

⁷ Following pressure within the party, President Biden withdrew his candidacy stating it was in the best interest of the party and the country to focus on fulfilling his duties for the remainder of his term.

These elections took place in a highly polarized political environment, with immigration, women’s reproductive rights, trust in the government, the economy, and climate change dominating the public discourse. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza, along with the escalation of tensions in the Middle East, heightened debates about foreign policy and the global role of the U.S. These developments highlighted the tension between promoting democratic values abroad while avoiding escalation, balancing domestic priorities and managing international alliances, all while navigating the complexities of military and humanitarian aid. Additionally, the impact of two recent hurricanes in the south-eastern U.S. reshaped campaign messaging regarding the government’s emergency response. Concerns over foreign interference through cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and potential incitement of political violence threatened public trust in the democratic process.⁸ Two assassination attempts on Mr. Trump further aggravated the political environment (see also *Campaign Environment*). Mr. Trump’s repeated claims of widespread electoral fraud in the 2020 presidential election further undermined trust in the electoral process among some voters, particularly within the Republican Party.⁹

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution and its amendments establish a broad framework for federal elections, with additional federal laws regulating certain aspects of the electoral process. They also regulate the voting rights of racial and linguistic minorities, basic voter registration, voting by military and overseas voters, campaign finance and minimum standards for the use of voting technologies, including by persons with disabilities.¹⁰ Detailed aspects of the electoral legal framework are established by state laws and regulations, which vary across states. In addition, federal and state court decisions interpreting laws form an integral part of the regulatory structure, with the ability to change important aspects of the electoral process, including in the days leading up to the elections.

The legal framework at the federal and state levels establishes the basis for holding democratic elections; however, the majority of priority ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed. These include reconsidering the system of the Electoral College with respect to vote equality, excluding partisan considerations from the redistricting process, providing full representation rights to all U.S. citizens residing in the U.S. territories, reviewing restrictions on voting rights for persons with criminal convictions, further measures to reduce the number of unregistered voters, harmonizing federal standards for voter identification, and allowing unimpeded access to international and citizen observers.¹¹

The U.S. is a party to international and regional instruments related to democratic elections.¹² The U.S. has signed but not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

⁸ See for example, reports on foreign disinformation attempts from [Department of Justice](#) and [Microsoft](#).

⁹ A September 2024 [poll by Gallup](#) found that most Democrats and independents continued to trust the voting process (84 per cent), whereas Republican confidence has declined to 28 per cent, or a “56-percentage-point partisan gap”.

¹⁰ Federal legislation includes the 1965 Voting Rights Act ([VRA](#)), the 1986 Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act ([UOCAVA](#)), the 2009 Military and Overseas Voting Empowerment Act ([MOVE](#)), [the 1984 Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act](#), the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act ([ADA](#)), the 1993 National Voter Registration Act ([NVRA](#)), [the 1971 Federal Electoral Campaign Act](#), [the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act](#), and the 2002 Help America Vote Act ([HAVA](#)).

¹¹ See the [ODIHR’s recommendation database](#) for more information.

¹² The [1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR) was ratified in 1992, however, with a number of [reservations and declarations](#). The U.S. is a member of the Council of Europe’s Group of States against Corruption and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission). The U.S. has signed, but not ratified the American Convention on Human Rights.

Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).¹³

In line with OSCE commitments, consideration should be given to ratifying the Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to further protect and promote their civil, political and electoral rights.

In 2022, the Electoral Count Reform and Presidential Transition Improvement Act was passed at the federal level in order to increase the legal certainty of counting the Electoral College votes by limiting grounds and raising the threshold for objections, defining state certification deadlines, establishing the sole authority for certifying state electors and clarifying that the role of the Vice President is solely to oversee the process procedurally. There have been no other changes to federal election-related legislation since the last elections.

At the state level, several hundred election-related amendments have been enacted, including those related to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the campaign, election security and voting technologies, alternative voting methods, and modifying voter registration and identification requirements.¹⁴ Many of these changes have been challenged in courts, some in the days leading up to the elections.¹⁵ In some cases, the late changes caused legal uncertainty and led to procedural confusion. Introducing changes to election rules close to elections is contrary to international good practice.¹⁶ Numerous election administrators and civil society organizations made efforts to inform voters of the scope of these changes, although their resources and time were limited. The volume, timing, and nature of these changes may have restricted the exercise of voting rights in some states.¹⁷

As previously recommended, to avoid uncertainties and provide for the consistent and stable application of electoral law, the basic electoral procedures should be regulated at the federal level, including the time limits for voter registration, early voting deadlines and procedures, timeline and rules for tabulation and certification of results, rights of observers and deadlines for the adjudication of pre- and post-election lawsuits.

Under the Voting Rights Act (VRA), the Department of Justice (DoJ) monitors the implementation of federal legislation by the states, and it can initiate lawsuits in cases of non-compliance. A legislative gap remains, as Congress has yet to enact a new formula for determining which jurisdictions should

¹³ The UN Human Rights Council (HRC) has [previously recommended](#) that the U.S. ratify both treaties. The 2021 [UN Universal Periodic Review](#) on the U.S. notes that the “reasons for not ratifying all treaties varied from treaty to treaty [...] as in respect of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, United States domestic protections were even stronger than those of international treaties. The United States was committed to the effective implementation of its human rights obligations and welcomed continued input on how to improve it”. On 4 February 2025, President Trump issued an [executive order](#) to withdraw the U.S. from the UN HRC. Within the same order, President Trump directed the Secretary of State, in consultation with the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, to review all international organizations, treaties, and conventions involving U.S. participation within 180 days to determine whether they conflict with U.S. interests and warrant withdrawal or if they can be reformed.

¹⁴ See the overview of the changes in [2023](#) and [2024](#) by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

¹⁵ Examples include challenges in Georgia over the vote counting method and result certification; in Pennsylvania regarding counting provisional mail ballots and identification requirements for overseas voters, and in Mississippi over counting mail-in ballots arriving after election day.

¹⁶ Section II.2.b. of the Venice Commission’s 2002 [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) recommends that “the fundamental elements of electoral law [...] should not be open to amendment less than one year before an election.”. Paragraph 63 of the [Explanatory Report to the Code of Good Practice](#) states that “[s]tability of the law is crucial to credibility of the electoral process, which is itself vital to consolidating democracy”.

¹⁷ For example, reducing the timeframe and period for requesting and receiving mail ballots in Georgia and North Carolina, stricter voter identification rules in Arkansas, Idaho and Ohio, and more stringent registration requirements in Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, New Hampshire, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

undergo pre-clearance before changing election laws and procedures.¹⁸ The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act was reintroduced in Congress in 2023 but did not garner sufficient support.¹⁹ If adopted, the proposed Act would reinstate federal oversight for election-related changes in the states and lower jurisdictions by introducing a modernized pre-clearance coverage formula.

To ensure timely and effective safeguards against legal changes that may have discriminatory intent or impact against racial and linguistic minorities, Congress should adopt a new formula for determining jurisdictions required to undergo federal pre-clearance for changes to election laws, in line with the Voting Rights Act.

V. ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The president and vice president are elected for a four-year term through an indirect election conducted by an Electoral College of 538 electors, with 270 votes required to win the election.²⁰ By voting for a presidential candidate, voters in 50 states and the District of Columbia (D.C.) select the slate of electors representing that candidate in the state. In 48 states, the candidate with the most popular votes wins all electoral college votes for that state.²¹ Some ODIHR LEOM interlocutors criticized the system for potentially undermining the equality of the vote, given that it is possible to win the presidency without winning the popular vote.²²

As previously recommended, in line with the principle of equality of the vote, U.S. authorities should reassess the Electoral College system for electing the president and vice president.

Senators and House Representatives are directly elected, primarily through first-past-the-post contests. Senators serve six-year terms, with approximately one-third of Senate seats contested every two years. Elections for all 435 congressional seats are held every two years. Senators represent entire states, while Representatives are elected from single-member districts. All states have at least one Representative, and all other seats are allocated to states in proportion to their population, with a number of districts per state and district boundaries reviewed every decade following a census.²³ Congressional district maps in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, New York, and North Carolina, which had been delineated before the 2022 mid-term elections, were redrawn ahead of these elections following court decisions. The U.S. Supreme Court reaffirmed on multiple occasions that using race as the primary factor in redistricting decisions, resulting in racial gerrymandering, violates the VRA and may be unconstitutional.²⁴ On the other side, it also ruled repeatedly that challenges to maps drawn for partisan purposes should not be considered in federal courts; they should be brought before state courts.²⁵ Several ODIHR LEOM

¹⁸ Section 5 of the VRA requires jurisdictions with a history of discrimination to obtain federal pre-clearance for electoral law changes. In *Shelby County v. Holder (2013)*, the U.S. Supreme Court called for Congress to establish a new test for determining which jurisdictions should undergo pre-clearance, thereby effectively suspending the measure.

¹⁹ In 2021, the Act was passed in the HoR, but was not passed by the Senate. The act was reintroduced in the HoR in 2023 and again in the Senate in February 2024 but is yet to be adopted.

²⁰ The number of electoral college members per state corresponds to the number of its delegates in Congress. In addition, the District of Columbia (D.C.) has three delegates.

²¹ Electoral college votes in Maine (total of 4 electors) and Nebraska (5 electors) may be split, with two votes allocated to the winner of the state-wide popular vote and one vote allocated to the winner of each congressional district.

²² This has occurred five times in the [history](#) of U.S. presidential election, most recently in 2000 and 2016.

²³ Following the [2020 Census](#), Texas gained two seats. Colorado, Florida, Montana, North Carolina and Oregon each gained one seat, while California, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia all lost one seat.

²⁴ The Fourteenth Amendment, *inter alia*, prohibits certain forms of racial gerrymandering in drawing electoral districts. See also *Shaw v. Reno* (1993). The DoJ has issued a [guidance](#) on Section 2 of the VRA related to redistricting and methods for electing government bodies.

²⁵ See *Rucho v. Common Cause* (2019) and *Moore v. Harper* (2023).

interlocutors criticized these rulings for limiting federal judicial control over the issue of partisan bias in redistricting.

VI. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The administration of elections is highly decentralized, with states managing the process and over 8,000 local jurisdictions responsible for implementing elections. Women are well represented as election administrators on the local level, and 21 of the 51 chief election officers at the state level, including in D.C., are women. At the federal level, the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), a four-member bipartisan advisory body, provides guidance on meeting the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) requirements by the states, develops guidelines for testing and certifying election technology, and serves as an information centre for election administrators. The EAC distributed USD 55 million allocated by the Congress for these elections.²⁶ Some local election officials expressed concerns to the ODIHR LEOM about the decline and unreliability of federal funds, particularly in light of evolving cybersecurity threats, the need to protect and upgrade the election infrastructure, and increasing threats against election workers.²⁷ Certain local election administrations, mainly in rural areas, filled funding gaps with private donations, while some states imposed a total ban on private funding following controversies in previous years.²⁸ In general, the federal and some state governments struggled to provide sufficient funds to meet the administrative and operational needs of the election bodies across the country.

The Federal and State governments should ensure sufficient funds to meet the administrative and operational needs of the election management bodies.

In 40 states, elections are managed by elected or appointed secretaries of state or lieutenant governors as chief election officers, while bipartisan election boards oversee elections in nine states. Four incumbent state secretaries were up for election in 2024, at the same time as organizing federal and other state-level contests. At the county level, many election offices have partisan appointees from the governing party. While there is a general trust in the work of election administration, the one-sided party affiliation of the chief election administrators is at odds with international standards as it may result in a conflict of interest and create a potential for politically biased decision-making.²⁹

Notably, in Georgia, the State Election Board introduced changes to several election rules and procedures related to voting and counting procedures shortly before election day.³⁰ The majority voted in favour of these changes, which contributed to uncertainty and confusion among election workers and voters.³¹ In another case, two Republican members of the three-person Waynesboro County Board of Elections in Virginia filed a lawsuit questioning the accuracy of the county's voting machines.³² They argued that without being permitted to hand-count the ballots, they would not certify the election results.

²⁶ At the time of elections, USD 1 was approximately EUR 0.92.

²⁷ See a [report by Stateline](#) on the difficulties in reaching a bipartisan agreement in Congress to appropriate the funds. See also [the table](#) illustrating funds allotted in previous elections.

²⁸ A grant [programme](#) by the Center for Tech and Civil Life's donated up to USD 2.5 million to local election offices in smaller jurisdictions to help them modernize voting equipment, improve voting access and enhance election security.

²⁹ Paragraph 20 of the [1996 UNHRC General Comment 25 to Article 25 or the ICCPR](#) states that "an independent electoral authority should be established to supervise the electoral process". See also Section II.3.1. of the Venice Commission's 2002 [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#).

³⁰ See the [notice of proposed rulemaking](#).

³¹ The board consisted of five members, including three Republicans, a Democrat, and a nonpartisan chair.

³² See [an article](#) related to a judicial order to election official in Waynesboro to certify election results.

To meet international standards and safeguard the impartiality of the election administration, election officials' appointments should aim to achieve political neutrality through a balanced political representation. Election administrators should not oversee elections in which they are competing.

Most ODIHR LEOM interlocutors noted that recruiting election workers was a major challenge, primarily due to threats and harassment, with many reporting fear of an increasing number of such incidents closer to election day.³³ This and other factors, such as the increased complexity of the work and an aging workforce, resulted in an increased turnover among the election workers in the past years, as well as a third of the chief election officials managing or overseeing federal elections for the first time.³⁴ A joint task force by the DoJ and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was reactivated to investigate such threats and prosecute the perpetrators.³⁵ In addition, several states passed laws to enhance security for voters, election officials, and election infrastructure.³⁶ The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) also conducted training for election workers on cyber and physical security, de-escalation techniques, and communication techniques when dealing with disinformation. However, despite the safety of election workers, infrastructure, and post-election developments being of primary concern in many jurisdictions, several incidents and the perception of a volatile atmosphere before election day negatively impacted the overall electoral environment and the transparency of the process by limiting access to observers.³⁷

Election administrations took various steps to counteract disinformation targeting voters or intended to discourage turnout, including through organizing community meetings and media announcements, including over social networks, to inform the electorate about the electoral process. They also took proactive steps in countering disinformation related to the elections, which, in some cases, was attributed to foreign actors.³⁸ To a considerable extent, these efforts were supported by federal and local authorities, civil society associations, and traditional and social media companies.³⁹

Most election websites featured accessible, easy-to-read text for individuals with visual impairments, in line with the ADA guarantees for equal opportunities and HAVA requirements that include online platforms.⁴⁰ Additionally, complying with the VRA's minority language assistance requirements, 30 states provided multilingual ballots, voter registration and voter information.⁴¹

Hurricanes Helene and Milton significantly disrupted the election preparations in some counties in Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina, and to a lesser extent, in South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Special provisions were adopted for the most affected counties, including relocating early voting and election-day polling locations, facilitating absentee voting, adjusting rules for poll worker recruitment,

³³ For example, [packages containing white powder](#) were mailed to election officials in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Wyoming. In Nebraska, election officials received threatening letters. Numerous threats were also reported by election officials to the ODIHR LEOM observers in Maryland, Missouri, and Wyoming. See also the Brennan Center's [annual survey](#) outlining the rise in the reports of threats, harassment, or abuse since 2023.

³⁴ See an October 2024 [survey](#) by the Bipartisan Policy Center.

³⁵ As of October 2024, the [Task Force](#) published information on 20 ongoing criminal cases, mostly related to previous elections. The Task Force was established in 2022.

³⁶ Including in Alabama, D.C., Indiana, New Mexico, Virginia and Washington.

³⁷ Notably, absentee ballot drop boxes were set on fire in Arizona, Oregon and Washington, with hundreds of ballots destroyed or damaged.

³⁸ See for example the initiative in [Pennsylvania](#) and [Georgia](#).

³⁹ This includes [CISA# Protect 2024](#), [EAC Video Guide for Voters](#) and [When we All Vote](#).

⁴⁰ In April 2024, the DOJ [updated its regulations](#), specifying that state and local government websites must conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA, thus providing clear technical standards for web accessibility. Due to non-compliance, the DOJ [warned](#) Alaska in June 2024 that its state election websites were not fully accessible to all voters and urged corrective measures.

⁴¹ Most notably, Los Angeles County has the most extensive language support, providing ballots and election materials in 20 languages.

and modifying voter identification requirements.⁴² Positively, such efforts undertaken by the state authorities in the affected jurisdictions generally enabled voter participation.

VII. ELECTION TECHNOLOGIES AND CYBERSECURITY

While all stages of the electoral process depend heavily on the use of technology, there were no technical malfunctions or malicious cyber activity identified that would have impacted the election results.⁴³ In the run-up to the elections, election stakeholders raised cybersecurity concerns due to past vulnerabilities in some voting machines and technology supply chains, as well as threats to election infrastructure by domestic and foreign actors seeking to undermine the public trust in the elections.⁴⁴ Additionally, system malfunctions, particularly in ageing systems without dedicated specialized IT staff, continued to be a concern throughout the election process. In response to the evolving threats, ranging from physical security to disinformation and cyber-attacks, federal agencies and state and local election administrators adopted a comprehensive approach to managing risks and protecting processes and assets related to elections. The CISA offered a range of tools, video and in-person training, and advisories as well as expert advisers.⁴⁵ The ODIHR LEOM observers noted that election administrators in some jurisdictions lacked the skills and tools necessary to mitigate the dynamic, hybrid threats.

To support election officials and contestants in countering disinformation and protecting election infrastructure, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), in co-operation with other federal agencies, could develop additional training and methodological materials and deliver training aimed at mitigating election management risks.

Voting equipment is certified by laboratories accredited by the EAC or the states. The EAC maintains the voluntary voting system guidelines (VVSG) which detail the EAC certification requirements.⁴⁶ However, the certification follows a HAVA definition of voting systems in its scope, which does not include wider election technologies, for example, those used for voter registration.⁴⁷ Election organizers generally voiced confidence in technology, commonly citing the existing practices in testing and certification of equipment as the main confidence-building measure. The ODIHR LEOM long-term

⁴² See the 3 October [Florida Emergency Order](#) and the 7 October [North Carolina Emergency Resolution](#) and 10 October [North Carolina Legislation](#). In 13 Florida counties, the requirement for a signed request to send mail ballots to a different address was waived for the affected areas.

⁴³ According to the 6 November 2024 [CISA post-election assessment](#), the “election infrastructure has never been more secure and the election community never better prepared to deliver safe, secure, free, and fair elections [... with] no evidence of any malicious activity that had a material impact on the security or integrity of our election infrastructure”.

⁴⁴ The most frequently cited cybersecurity threats include ransomware, distributed denial of service attacks, and malicious files, particularly in processes that rely on opening email attachments from unfamiliar addresses, such as those related to voter registration applications. Breaches of campaigns and candidates - most recently breach of a Trump advisor’s email account, attributed to Iranian hackers- further heightened concerns about overall election security, particularly in relation to election campaigns.

⁴⁵ Following the designation of election infrastructure as critical by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2017, the CISA focused mainly on improving cybersecurity. CISA has expanded to “all hazards” approach to mirror the existing threats landscape, which includes addressing, among others, AI, digital communications and physical threats.

⁴⁶ The [Voluntary Voting System Guidelines 2.0](#) were adopted in 2021.

⁴⁷ At the time of designation as critical infrastructure, CISA defined election infrastructure as “storage facilities, polling places, and centralized vote tabulations locations used to support the election process, and information and communications technology to include voter registration databases, voting machines, and other systems to manage the election process and report and display results on behalf of state and local governments.” HAVA and VVSG use the [definition](#) “combination of mechanical, electromechanical, or electronic equipment (including the software, firmware, and documentation required to program, control, and support the equipment), that is used to define ballots; cast and count votes; report or display election results; and maintain and produce any audit trail information”.

observers assessed the process of testing voting machines as generally clear, transparent, and well-documented. However, some election administrators believed that the functional testing and certification provided sufficiently strong and comprehensive security guarantees, which is not always the case, especially if facing sufficiently resourced adversaries.⁴⁸ In addition, not all components facilitating elections are certified and tested as election infrastructure, which also led to some legal challenges.⁴⁹ The observers also highlighted the reliance on state and local government systems, processes, networks, and IT service providers, along with their respective security tools and practices.⁵⁰ While there are standard off-the-shelf products available to protect against the most often cited cybersecurity threats, election managers did not often know how to require or request their deployment.⁵¹ Similarly, there was confusion about how to interpret legal election requirements as technology requirements, particularly distinguishing between functional and non-functional requirements.⁵² The ODIHR LEOM interlocutors emphasized additional specialists and sustainable operational funding as key to technology management.

Consideration could be given to developing clear tools, training and guidelines for specifying requirements for election technologies that are developed, purchased and managed by the state- and county-level election officials. It is also recommended to expand the scope of the Election Assistance Commission's certification and guidelines to align with the definition of election infrastructure used by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, supported by the provision of appropriate resources.

Approximately 70 per cent of voters resided in jurisdictions that use hand-marked paper ballots, typically scanned to record the votes. An additional 25 per cent were in jurisdictions using ballot marking devices (BMD) operating in line with the good electoral practice which provides that the printouts of BMDs are readable so that voters are able to verify their vote at the time of voting. The remaining 5 per cent were in jurisdictions with Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) systems, some of which do not produce a voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT).⁵³ While DRE machines were generally being phased out, some states still use them with the compulsory use of VVPAT.⁵⁴ The DRE machines without a VVPAT prevent voters from confirming their votes were recorded as intended and exclude the possibility of conducting recounts. In general, the HAVA funding has enabled substantial investment in equipment upgrades, but not uniformly across jurisdictions, resulting in ongoing concerns

⁴⁸ The ODIHR LEOM interlocutors noted that that election managers considered certification as providing full security guarantees.

⁴⁹ For example, see the Wisconsin cases of [McCole v. Wisconsin Elections Commission](#), where the plaintiff alleged that the state-wide voter registration and ballot request portal lacks cybersecurity, in particular that it does not have sufficient identity checks.

⁵⁰ See recommendation 11 of the 2022 Council of Europe's [CM\(2022\)10 Committee of Ministers' Guidelines on the use of information and communication technology \(ICT\) in electoral processes](#) which notes that "[w]hen organizing elections, the member State has the ultimate responsibility for the proper implementation and conduct of the electoral process. This is also the case when third parties (including private parties) support the member State in conducting the electoral process, or when parts of the electoral process are outsourced and/or subcontracted to third parties. Third parties must respect and fulfil the same standards and expectations as member States. Corresponding provisions should be included in the contractual arrangements."

⁵¹ These include network monitoring and protection against malicious code, DDoS protection, intrusion detection and intrusion prevention systems.

⁵² Functional requirements lay out what the system is to do, for example record an absentee ballot request or help cast a vote. Non-functional requirements specify how a system is supposed to work, including pertaining to security, data privacy, usability, and accessibility.

⁵³ See [an interactive map](#) showing voting equipment used in which jurisdiction.

⁵⁴ Such requirements for VVPAT are in place, for example, in Indiana, Mississippi and Tennessee.

about operational funding, managing election technology requirements and replacing aging equipment.⁵⁵

Consideration could be given to ensuring that state and federal funding covers both investment and operational expenses throughout the election technology life cycle, including end-of-life management and major updates. To facilitate dealing with ageing equipment, federal agencies could also develop tools and guidelines specific to end-of-life election technology.

The ODIHR LEOM observed well-defined roles and effective co-operation among institutions responsible for protecting elections.⁵⁶ Election stakeholders were generally aware of incident reporting mechanisms and collaborated with federal partners as well as law enforcement and cybersecurity providers, including vendors. The Election Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EI-ISAC) provided a security operations centre and technical tools to its members with a focus on network and operational security.⁵⁷ Risk-limiting audits were commonly used to detect possible errors in the vote count and tabulation and increase confidence in the results, but are not universally mandated across jurisdictions. Many ODIHR LEOM interlocutors considered that these elections involved the most extensive efforts to date to safeguard election technology. However, they also expressed concerns about the broader discourse that sought to delegitimize election processes, coupled with conspiracy theories about the use of technology to steal votes.⁵⁸

VIII. ALTERNATIVE VOTING METHODS

Alternative voting methods include early in-person and absentee voting, including by post or electronically. These methods were viewed by most ODIHR LEOM interlocutors as an important tool for enhancing voter inclusion while at the same time facilitating the work of the election officials. Generally, there was increased public confidence, including among key contestants, as most contestants did not call into question the integrity of the absentee voting process but, instead, called their supporters to use any means available to cast a vote.

Early voting by mail or in person is available in 43 states and D.C., with voting periods ranging from 3 to 51 days, starting from 20 September. Absentee voting is available in all states, with 36 states allowing ballot requests without justification and 14 requiring it. Some states offer permanent absentee voter lists, sending ballots automatically for every election.⁵⁹ Twenty states use the postmark to determine if ballots should be accepted and counted, with election day as the deadline. In other states, ballots must

⁵⁵ For example, ODIHR LEOM observed that in one Virginia county, outdated printers, which were not upgraded due to resource constraints, produced poor quality ballots, not easily read by scanners. Similar instances with voting equipment were [reported through](#) voting causing delays or feeding into conspiracy theories. Also, several election managers using BMDs with touchscreens reported that the on-screen buttons were too small or difficult to hit, causing preferences to “flip.” The issue was fixed by using small plastic sticks in at least two jurisdictions observed by ODIHR LEOM.

⁵⁶ See, for example, [the Joint Statement on Iranian election influence efforts](#) that was followed by a CISA, and an FBI [Fact Sheet](#) on protecting against Iranian targeting of accounts associated with national political organizations. This was then followed by [joint technical advisory](#) with international partners addressing tools, techniques, protocols and mitigations. Microsoft had also pointed at the same threat actor’s cyber-enabled influence operations.

⁵⁷ The EI-ISAC, part of the Center for Internet Security, offers network monitoring, threat intelligence, real-time alerts, and incident response to election administrators. See the [EI-ISAC’s Essential Guide to Election Security](#).

⁵⁸ Some of these assertions were dismissed by courts as baseless, such as [DeKalb County Republican Party v. Raffensperger](#) (Georgia). Similarly, [Law v. Whitmer](#) (Michigan) was dismissed, and other conspiracy theories were not proven by recounts, such as in Maricopa County, Arizona in 2020. Furthermore, election technology providers have successfully sued cable news channels over false claims, such as [Smartmatic USA v. Newsmax](#) and [Dominion Voting Systems v. Fox News Network](#).

⁵⁹ Nine states and D.C. mail ballots to all registered voters, while an additional eleven states do so only for persons with disabilities. Texas mails ballots to all registered voters over the age of 65.

arrive before election day, except in Louisiana and Vermont, where they can arrive by 8 PM and 7 PM on election day, respectively. Ballot drop boxes are permitted by law in 27 states and explicitly forbidden in 11.⁶⁰ Ten states have legislation that requires video surveillance of drop boxes.⁶¹

In the run-up to the elections, most states amended laws regarding absentee and postal voting, with some restricting and others further facilitating access to such methods.⁶² Notably, the criminalization of certain forms of assistance with absentee voting negatively affected voting rights for persons with disabilities.⁶³ Forty-three states allow the processing of absentee ballots to begin before election day, whereas seven states allow processing to start only on election day. Despite concerns expressed by a number of ODIHR LEOM interlocutors about the potential delays in establishing election results in some states due to this requirement, election officials were able to promptly process the ballots, with only a few exceptions (See also *Election Day*).⁶⁴

States have varying requirements for voter identification and checking signatures accompanying returned absentee ballots.⁶⁵ Thirty-three states and D.C. allow for ballot curing, which addresses issues with absentee or mail-in ballots, by ensuring that the voters are notified of any problems and have an opportunity to correct them by a given deadline. This significantly reduced absentee ballot rejection rates for accidental errors and, therefore, improved voter inclusion.⁶⁶ In Nevada, voters were allowed to complete this verification by 12 November, which prolonged the determination of results in these jurisdictions.⁶⁷ Most ODIHR LEOM interlocutors viewed ballot curing as an essential tool for fully facilitating the absentee vote.

All states and the D.C. provided election workers with training on how to process absentee ballots, contributing to their efficient and professional handling. Despite these efforts, some delays and isolated issues were reported, including with regard to third-party ballot printing and delivery, for which election administrations were ultimately able to provide alternative solutions.⁶⁸

As required by federal law, all eligible voters abroad could request an absentee ballot. In addition to mailing, depending on the state, voters could use email, fax, or online voting, in many cases waiving their right to secrecy.⁶⁹ As reported to the ODIHR LEOM observers, some Native Americans living in remote communities had difficulties accessing absentee voting methods due to a lack of standard mailing addresses or access to post offices. Additionally, high poverty rates, housing instability, and

⁶⁰ Idaho, Kansas, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Wyoming do not have an explicit mention on drop boxes in the state laws, but some jurisdictions in those states use them.

⁶¹ Iowa, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, Utah (if unattended), Vermont, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Rhode Island.

⁶² For a detailed overview, see for example, the [2023](#) and [2024](#) Brennan Center reports. New measures facilitating voting through absentee and mail ballots were challenged in Alabama, Louisiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

⁶³ Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Kansas, Mississippi and South Dakota States enacted restrictive laws in this respect, typically restricting that the assistance in completing or submitting the completed absentee ballots can be typically provided by immediate family members or caregivers, but not by third party individuals or organizations, such as disability organizations.

⁶⁴ Pennsylvania does not allow processing absentee or mail ballots until 7 AM on election day. The election administrators in certain counties reported that they introduced changes to speed up the processing of mail ballots and allow for quicker completion of the vote count shortly after the polls close, which in some cases included purchasing new equipment.

⁶⁵ These include verification of the voter's signature in 31 states; 30 confirm there is a signature on the return envelope, 7 require the signature of a witness, 3 require that the voter's signature is notarized, 1 requires a disclosing a copy of the voter's ID, and 3 require disclosing an ID number.

⁶⁶ Notably, in Nevada, nearly 15,000 ballots were cured before election day, while over 13,000 mail-in voters still needed to be verified for identities in order to have their ballots cured. See the 2020 [Absentee Ballot Rejection Rates](#) by State according to the Elections Performance Index (EPI).

⁶⁷ Approximately 13,000 ballots in Nevada, many cast by young voters, [required](#) curing.

⁶⁸ See, for example, information about late delivery of absentee ballots in [Georgia](#) and [Pennsylvania](#).

⁶⁹ See an [overview](#) per state on electronic ballot returns maintained by the NCSL. Eleven states provide for online voting for some voters, typically those residing abroad or those with disabilities.

lack of stable internet access further complicated their ability to register, receive, and complete postal ballots.⁷⁰

In order to fully facilitate the absentee vote, the practice of ballot ‘curing’ could be considered in all states, with a view to decreasing the number of invalid absentee and provisional votes.

Approximately three million U.S. citizens residing abroad are eligible to vote by absentee ballot. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), administered by the Department of Defense, supports state and county-level election authorities in facilitating overseas voter registration and absentee voting. This includes managing ballot requests, providing voter information, and delivering training for election officials. While all states permit overseas voter registration, not all states allow electronic receipt of absentee ballots, which in some cases delayed processing of votes due to reliance on mail delivery. However, thirty-one states and D.C. allow the electronic submission of completed absentee ballots.⁷¹ In several swing states, legal challenges filed by the Republican National Committee (RNC) sought to question the state residency requirements for overseas voters.⁷² While courts have largely dismissed these lawsuits, many ODIHR LEOM interlocutors saw the litigations as unfounded efforts to undermine public confidence in the electoral process.

IX. VOTING RIGHTS, VOTER REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

The 26th Amendment of the Constitution provides that citizens who are at least 18 years old on election day and are registered residents of a state have the right to vote. This is further protected by the Fifteenth Amendment and the VRA, which grant equal voting rights to citizens without regard to race and colour. Some 4.1 million citizens residing in D.C. and the U.S. territories do not have full representation in Congress, and residents of the U.S. territories, due to constitutional limits on statehood, cannot vote in a presidential election. The VRA explicitly permits each state to enact laws to deny the right to vote to individuals “by reason of criminal conviction or mental incapacity”, and most states impose one or both restrictions. These restrictions contravene the principles of universal and equal suffrage, enshrined in the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document and other international standards.⁷³ The UN Human Rights Committee previously called on the U.S. to “ensure that all states reinstate voting rights to felons who have fully served their sentences; [...] review the automatic denial of the vote to any imprisoned felon, regardless of the nature of the offence [and] [...] provide for the full voting rights of residents of [the District of Columbia].”⁷⁴

⁷⁰ See the report on [Vote by Mail by Native American Communities](#) maintained by the Native American Rights Fund.

⁷¹ Some of the largest concentrations of U.S. military members and their eligible family members whose voting rights are protected under UOCAVA were in Pierce and King Counties, Washington, where the overwhelming majority (99 per cent) prefer to return their ballots by mail. While online voting solutions were available in Pierce County in 2019-2022, they have been discontinued citing security concerns. Additionally, there is an increasing number of jurisdictions moving towards or exploring remote electronic (online) voting options, offering e-mail or server-based ways to upload their filled ballot also to other demographics, such as tribal communities.

⁷² Eligibility criteria for citizens residing abroad varies from state to state.

⁷³ Paragraphs 7.3 and 24 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) state that participating States will “guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens,” and that “...any restriction on rights and freedoms must, in a democratic society, relate to one of the objectives of the applicable law and be strictly proportionate to the aim of that law”. Paragraph 14 of the [1996 UNHRC General Comment 25](#) states that grounds for deprivation of voting rights should be “objective and reasonable.” While the U.S. has not ratified the CRPD and is therefore not legally bound by it, deprivation of the right to vote on the basis of intellectual incapacity is inconsistent with Articles 12 and 29 of the [CRPD](#). Paragraph 48 of the 2022 [General Comment No 1](#) to Article 12 of the CRPD states that “a person’s decision-making ability cannot be a justification for any exclusion of persons with disabilities from exercising [...] the right to vote [and] the right to stand for election”.

⁷⁴ See the 2014 UN Human Rights Committee [Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of the United States of America](#) and 2023 [Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United States of America](#).

In line with the principle of equal suffrage, citizens resident in the District of Columbia and U.S. territories should be provided with full representation rights in Congress. In addition, the right to vote in the presidential election should be extended to citizens resident in the U.S. territories.

In Maine, Vermont, and D.C., felons can exercise their full voting rights. In the remaining 48 states, citizens with current or prior criminal convictions forfeit this right, disenfranchising an estimated four million citizens, many of whom have already served their sentences. Racial minorities are disproportionately affected by felony disenfranchisement; it is estimated that 4.5 per cent of the adult African American population is unable to vote.⁷⁵ While several states enacted legislation to restore voting rights to former felons, some ODIHR LEOM interlocutors remarked that, in practice, many voters face challenges in regaining their rights due to lack of awareness, the limited time between court rulings and registration deadlines or outstanding conviction-related fees.⁷⁶

Restrictions on voting rights based on criminal convictions should be reviewed to ensure that all limitations are proportionate, all rights are automatically restored upon completion of sentences, and that limitations are not applied to persons in pre-trial detentions. All affected citizens should be provided with the possibility to vote and be informed about their voting rights and ways to exercise them.

Only ten states have laws that ensure individuals are not restricted from voting or registering to vote based on guardianship status or mental capacity requirements.⁷⁷ In the remaining states, laws may impose limitations on these individuals' voting rights.⁷⁸ Restrictions based on intellectual disability or guardianship are extensive, potentially affecting an estimated 1.3 million adult citizens.⁷⁹ The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits states from broadly disqualifying individuals with disabilities from voting solely based on disability status.

In line with international standards, the restrictions on electoral rights based on intellectual or psychosocial disability should be removed.

An estimated 244 million voters were eligible to vote in these elections. In all states except North Dakota, eligible citizens must register to become voters. They can do so in person in the jurisdiction where they reside, at a department for motor vehicles, county election offices, state agencies, online, or through third parties. Online voter registration is available in 42 states. Requests for extensions to voter registration deadlines were made in three states affected by the hurricanes. While in Florida and Georgia requests were denied, South Carolina granted a 10-day extension.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ See the 10 October 2024 [report](#) from the Sentencing Project.

⁷⁶ The states that reinstated felons' voting rights since last elections include Alabama, Colorado, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Wyoming. Notably, the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled to reinstate voting rights to former felons on 16 October, but the deadline for online voter registration was 18 October, and 25 October for in-person registration.

⁷⁷ These are Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. [General Comment No. 1](#) to Article 12 of the CPRD on equal recognition before the law states that legal capacity is the key to accessing full and effective participation in society and in decision-making processes and should be guaranteed to all persons with disabilities, including persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with autism and persons with actual or perceived psychosocial impairment.

⁷⁸ See, [the Americans with Disabilities Act and Other Federal Laws Protecting the Rights of Voters with Disabilities](#), from the DoJ, Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section. In *Doe v. Rowe* (2001), 156 F. Supp.2d 35 (D. Me. 2001), a federal district court ruled that Maine's prohibition on voting by people under guardianship by reason of mental illness violated the ADA and the U.S. Constitution by categorically disenfranchising these individuals regardless of whether they met the essential eligibility requirements for voting.

⁷⁹ For more information, see for example a [letter](#) by the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging.

⁸⁰ In total, 67 counties in Florida have declared a state of emergency due to the hurricanes. The last days of voter registration on 7 October coincided with new evacuation orders for more than 10 million residents in 15 counties.

The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) and HAVA set minimum registration standards. Currently, 23 states and D.C. offer election-day registration, while 23 states have automatic registration during driver's license applications or renewals, with opt-out options. D.C. and 24 states participate in the interstate, non-governmental data-sharing Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), which helps maintain the accuracy of voter lists. In 2023, nine states withdrew from ERIC due to political pressures and diverging views on voter registration.⁸¹ The absence of a comprehensive nationwide tool for cross-checking voter lists further increased the uncertainty among some stakeholders about voter register accuracy.

State authorities should enhance inter-state co-ordination efforts to improve the cross-matching of voter registration data in order to avoid potential inaccuracies in the voter lists, including outdated entries and multiple registrations of the same persons.

Depending on the state, voter registration eligibility can be challenged by other voters, party observers, or election officials. Court cases challenging attempts to remove recently naturalized voters from the voter list were of concern.⁸² The NVRA prohibits states from routinely removing voters deemed ineligible from the rolls during the 90-day period before election day due to an increased chance of errors. Nevertheless, in Virginia, some 1,600 voters were reportedly removed from the voter list within this period, potentially disenfranchising eligible voters.⁸³ In addition, South Carolina mistakenly denied registration of over 17,000 citizens who turned 18 by election day but who were not yet 18 when they registered.⁸⁴ Most of the lawsuits related to proof of citizenship were overturned by the courts. However, they were still perceived as attempts to disenfranchise eligible voters.

State authorities should uphold the federal legal requirement and refrain from modifying the voter register close to the election.

Since 2020, seven states have enacted laws restricting third-party voter registration initiatives.⁸⁵ Some ODIHR LEOM interlocutors linked these laws to the risk of increased criminal liability for individuals receiving compensation for assisting voters as part of registration drives. According to some interlocutors, this restriction discouraged civil society representatives and students who traditionally participated in voter registration efforts from doing so due to fear of prosecution. As a result, some organizers have stopped voter registration efforts altogether.⁸⁶ These restrictions disproportionately affected voters who relied on registration assistance, hence undermining the VRA, which explicitly protects the right of voters with disabilities to receive assistance throughout the voting process from individuals of their choice.⁸⁷

Authorities should ensure that voters who require assistance are allowed to receive help from an individual of their choice, as provided under the Voting Rights Act. Unnecessary restrictions that impose criminal penalties on those assisting voters should be removed.

⁸¹ Alabama, Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Missouri, Ohio, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia withdrew in 2023.

⁸² Lawsuits on voter registration purges were filed and dismissed in Alabama, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina and Virginia. The case in Virginia was further appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, where an emergency injunction application to stop the purge was declined on 30 October.

⁸³ See an NPR [report](#) on the alleged purge.

⁸⁴ In total, 18 states permit pre-registration beginning at age of 16, 3 states permit pre-registration beginning at age 17, 22 states do not specify age and instead allow an individual to register if they will turn 18 by the next election.

⁸⁵ Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Texas and Tennessee.

⁸⁶ See the [ruling](#) by the U.S. District Court of Texas San Antonio Division.

⁸⁷ [Section 208 of the VRA](#) entitles voters who require assistance to vote because of visual impairment, disability, or inability to read or write, to "assistance by a person of the voter's choice," so long as the assistant is not "the voter's employer or agent of that employer or officer or agent of the voter's union".

Identification requirements vary, with 35 states requiring an identification card (ID) to vote, while the remaining 15 states and D.C. accept non-documentary proof of identity, such as signing an affidavit against a penalty of perjury or providing personal information for multiple-factor identification. Voter ID remained a politically contentious issue, with supporters of stricter voter ID laws suggesting they prevent fraud and opponents arguing that stricter rules suppress voters who struggle to obtain an appropriate ID and may lead to their disenfranchisement. In the run-up to the elections, some states tightened their ID laws, particularly affecting students and absentee voters.⁸⁸ Also, such requirements, combined with the absence of state-wide ID laws in some states, disproportionately affected Native Americans, persons with disabilities, the homeless, economically disadvantaged populations, racial and ethnic minorities, as well as transgender voters.⁸⁹

As previously recommended, state authorities should make further efforts to ensure that voter identification documents, where required, are equally available to all voters.

In response to recent hurricanes, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee implemented special provisions for voters who lost their IDs, such as offering photo ID exemption forms or expediting the process of obtaining a new ID free of charge.

X. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Candidates for president and vice-president must be natural-born U.S. citizens, at least 35 years old, and U.S. residents for a minimum of 14 years. No person can be elected as president for more than two terms. In order to run for the Senate, candidates must be at least 30 years old and have been citizens for at least 9 years. Candidates for the House must be at least 25 years old and have been citizens for at least seven years. Congressional candidates, upon election, must be residents of the state in which they are elected.

All prospective candidates were required to file a statement of candidacy with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) within 15 days of receiving any financial contributions that exceeded USD 5,000. All states allow recognized political parties to nominate candidates, though the definition of a ‘recognized party’ varies by state and is based on the number of registered voters affiliated with the party or the votes received by the party in previous federal elections. While the Democratic and Republican parties are recognized in all states, other parties have recognition and, therefore, direct ballot access only in some states.⁹⁰

Several states require that federal candidates submit supporting signatures of one per cent or more, either of registered voters in the respective district or of total votes cast in previous elections. A total of 6 states require signatures of more than 1 per cent for Senate elections, and 16 states require signatures of more than 1 per cent for House elections. For the presidential election, this support must be from 1 to 20 per cent of the electorate, depending on the state. The practice of allowing write-in candidates in

⁸⁸ Indiana, Nebraska, Wyoming adopted more restrictive identification requirements for absentee voting. Idaho removed student ID as a form of a valid identification and added a proof of residency requirements in certain cases. North Dakota required voters with IDs that are not driver's licenses to also show proof of citizenship. The student IDs of some Wisconsin universities are considered not to meet the legal requirements.

⁸⁹ According to a September 2024 [study](#) by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, there were an estimated 210,800 voting-eligible transgender citizens without IDs that reflect their correct name and/or gender and 172,800 of them lived in states with strict voter ID laws.

⁹⁰ According to a Ballotpedia [article](#), as of June 2024, there were at least 53 distinct ballot-qualified political parties. The Libertarian party is recognized in 38, Green Party in 23, and Constitution Party in 12 states.

some states offers voters an additional choice.⁹¹ However, these candidates have historically had limited success in federal elections. Ballot access regulations at the state level often disproportionately impact ballot access for smaller parties or independent candidates, thereby reducing opportunities for meaningful participation in elections, contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards.⁹²

The number of supporting signatures for candidate nomination should be revised so as not to exceed one per cent of registered voters or of those who voted in previous elections, in line with international good practice.

Four presidential candidates have been registered in a sufficient number of states to be elected, two of whom were women.⁹³ Former presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. filed lawsuits related to ballot access and also sought to be removed from the ballot in certain states after he withdrew.⁹⁴ Independent presidential candidate Cornel West lost an emergency injunction application to the Supreme Court seeking to be added to the ballot in Pennsylvania.⁹⁵ Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein filed lawsuits seeking to be added to the ballot in several states.⁹⁶

In total, 2,710 candidates (263 women, or only 9.7 per cent) ran for the House and 69 (21 women, or 30 per cent) for the Senate. While the number of women has been gradually increasing in recent elections, women remain underrepresented in Congress, with 130 women (29 per cent) elected to the HoR in 2024, and 25 women serving in the Senate.⁹⁷

Authorities could consider further measures to incentivize the inclusion and visibility of women in party structures as candidates and leaders.

⁹¹ Arkansas, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota do not allow ‘write-in’ candidates, while several other states required them to submit a declaration of intent to be considered as write-in candidates. See also the April 2024 EAC explanatory note on [Write-in Voting](#).

⁹² Paragraph 7.5 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) commits the participating states to “respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination”. Furthermore, paragraph 7.6 points that states will “respect the right of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties or other political organizations and provide such political parties and organizations with the necessary legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law and by the authorities”. See also Section 1.3.ii of the Venice Commission [Code of Good Practice](#), which states that “The law should not require collection of the signatures of more than 1 per cent of voters in the constituency concerned”, as well as paragraph 17 of [1996 UNHCR General Comment No. 25](#), which states that the minimum number of supporters for a nomination “should be reasonable and not act as a barrier for candidacy”.

⁹³ Kamala Harris, Chase Oliver, Jill Stein and Donald Trump. A total of 127 individuals have registered as candidates for president with the FEC, including 21 women.

⁹⁴ Robert F. Kennedy Jr. filed to be removed from the Arizona ballot on 22 August and suspended his campaign for president on 23 August. Kennedy filed lawsuits to have his name removed from the ballot in at least ten states including Georgia, North Carolina, Arizona and Nevada. In [Michigan](#) and [Wisconsin](#), the Supreme Court denied Kennedy’s emergency injunction applications and decided he would remain on the ballot.

⁹⁵ See the further [information](#) about the case.

⁹⁶ Jill Stein’s application for an emergency injunction to the Supreme Court about ballot access in Nevada was [denied](#) on 20 September in an unsigned shadow docket order (without a detailed opinion explaining the denial). Although Jill Stein was on the ballot in many states, her lawsuit to have ballots cast for her be counted in [Ohio](#) was denied.

⁹⁷ Paragraph 3 of the [OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 7/09](#) calls on participating States to “encourage all political actors to promote equal participation of women and men in political parties, with a view to achieving better gender balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making”. See also Article 32 of the 1997 CEDAW [General Recommendation 23](#), which encourages political parties “to adopt effective measures, including the provision of information, financial and other resources, to overcome obstacles to women’s full participation and representation and ensure that women have an equal opportunity in practice to serve as party officials and to be nominated as candidates for election”.

In 37 congressional districts, only one major party candidate contested the race.⁹⁸ Uncompetitive congressional elections limit the voter's choice in these races.

XI. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The First Amendment of the Constitution strongly protects fundamental freedoms, including those of expression and assembly. The campaign, including online, unfolded in a competitive and highly polarized environment, and fundamental rights, including civil and political rights, were upheld. Candidates campaigned through a combination of traditional activities, including rallies, and innovative digital strategies, including engaging with social media influencers and appearing on popular podcasts.⁹⁹ Social networks were widely utilized by all contestants, with X, Facebook, and Instagram being the most popular, while TikTok was used to a lesser extent.¹⁰⁰ The tone of social network posts frequently leaned negative, featuring a considerable amount of harsh rhetoric from both sides of the political spectrum, reflecting the tone of the offline campaign.¹⁰¹

In general, the campaign was marked by aggressive and confrontational rhetoric and inflammatory language.¹⁰² The mutual accusations between the two leading presidential candidates further exacerbated the existing polarization.¹⁰³ Mr. Trump frequently questioned Ms. Harris' racial and ethnic identity and employed racist stereotypes regarding black individuals in his remarks about her.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, there were reports of incidents of election-related violence. Former President Trump survived two assassination attempts during his campaign events.¹⁰⁵ Instances of threats of violent or aggressive behavior aimed at voters, including minorities, election administrators, officials, campaigners, and media representatives, were reported to the ODIHR LEOM.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁸ The U.S. states with one or more uncontested House races in 2024 include Alabama, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Texas.

⁹⁹ Among others, Ms. Harris participated in "[All The smoke](#)" podcast on 30 September and "[Call Her Daddy](#)" podcast on 6 October, and Mr. Trump on [Shawn Ryan Show](#) on 26 August, the [Lex Fridman](#) show on 3 September, and in the [Joe Rogan Experience](#) podcast on 25 October.

¹⁰⁰ The ODIHR LEOM followed the campaign activities of contestants and main political actors on the social networks X and Facebook as well as Mr. Trump's Truth Social account.

¹⁰¹ Mr. Trump often [called](#) Ms. Harris "lying Kamala Harris", while Ms. Harris denounced her opponent for "having incited an [attack](#) on our nation's democracy" and [for being](#) "exhausted, unstable, and unfit to be President of the United States."

¹⁰² Mr. Trump referred to Ms. Harris as "[mentally impaired](#)" on 29 September and turned to more [profane](#) language on 19 October. Ms. Harris [referred](#) to Mr. Trump as "weak" and a "disgrace" during the 10 September presidential debate. On 31 October, Mr. Trump verbally [attacked](#) his most vocal Republican critic, Elizabeth Cheney, noting that one should aim "barrels shooting at her...when the guns are trained on her face", further intensifying the violent rhetoric.

¹⁰³ Mr. Trump described the vice president as "[radical, left lunatic](#)" on 24 July and his political opponents as "[enemy from within](#)" on 14 October. In response, Ms. Harris called former President Trump "[unstable](#)" and "[unhinged](#)" on the same day. Following Mr. Trump's former chief of staff, John Kelly's 22 October [New York Times interview](#), in which he linked Mr. Trump to fascism and recounted his comments praising Hitler and his loyal Nazi generals, Ms. Harris on 23 October, called the reports "[deeply troubling](#)" adding that the former president is "unhinged, unstable, and given a second term, there would be no one to stop him from pursuing his worst impulses",

¹⁰⁴ Mr. Trump repeatedly [questioned](#) Ms. Harris' ethnicity. Also see [reports](#) of Mr. Trump's use of language for racial [stereotypes](#). On 27 October, during the rally in New York City, speakers, supported by him, used derogatory racial rhetoric against Ms. Harris as well as immigrants.

¹⁰⁵ This includes assassination attempts on 13 July in Butler, Pennsylvania and on 15 September in West Palm Beach, Florida, and another security incident on 12 October in Coachella, California. On 8 November, the DOJ announced federal charges in connection with a disrupted Iranian plot to assassinate Mr. Trump before the presidential election. It was also [reported](#) that the Democratic campaign office in Tempe, Arizona, had closed down after being shot at three times in three weeks.

¹⁰⁶ For example, Latino canvassers in Arizona were [intimidated](#) and accused of registering undocumented people; North Carolina activists [accused](#) the Election Integrity Team of intimidating Latino voters with Spanish "warning" signs.

Key issues in the campaign included foreign policy, economy, immigration, reproductive rights, and LGBTI rights. A conservative governing agenda, Project 2025 was a major and controversial topic in the campaign.¹⁰⁷ It focuses on key policy issues such as enhancing border security, strengthening the economy, promoting energy independence, advancing government accountability, and protecting the Constitution. It also emphasizes regulatory reform, strengthens law enforcement, and addresses critical national security concerns. While Mr. Trump publicly distanced himself from it, Democrats consistently linked his agenda to the project.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the effects of the hurricanes that struck the south-eastern U.S., including critical battleground states, overshadowed campaign messaging in late September and most of October. President Biden and Vice President Harris strongly criticized Mr. Trump's assertions regarding the government's emergency response to the hurricanes, labelling them as false.¹⁰⁹

The most prominent foreign policy issues included the war in Gaza and the escalation of hostilities in the Middle East, as well as the war in Ukraine. While focusing on the closely contested states, presidential candidates sought the support of Latino, Native American, and Muslim and Arab American voters. The Democrats, facing criticism for insufficient border control during their administration, emphasized the importance of security with a commitment to human rights and economic growth, while Mr. Trump addressed immigration through negative rhetoric, linking it to the legitimacy of the elections with repeated claims about undocumented immigrants being included on the voter lists.¹¹⁰ In addition, Ms. Harris framed the election as a fight to preserve freedoms, while Mr. Trump denounced alleged fraud in the 2020 presidential election, arguing, without presenting evidence that the extensive use of absentee and mail-in voting jeopardized election integrity.¹¹¹ After previously pledging peaceful post-electoral transitions following the 2024 election, on 15 October, Mr. Trump declined to confirm his commitment.¹¹² Such statements, especially following the 6 January 2021 violent events during the certification of the 2020 presidential election by the Congress, further eroded the credibility and trust in the electoral process and democratic institutions.¹¹³ Many ODIHR LEOM interlocutors raised concerns

¹⁰⁷ The [Project 2025 website](#), an initiative led by the Heritage Foundation, offers a conservative blueprint for reshaping government policies and operations, to align with conservative values.

¹⁰⁸ Mr. Trump [disavowed](#) Project 2025, which Ms. Harris' campaign [tied](#) to the former president with a [series](#) of [ads](#).
¹⁰⁹ On 4 October, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) set up a "[Hurricane Rumor Response](#)" page to counter misinformation and conspiracies surrounding hurricanes and the federal government's response. On 8 October, in an [opinion piece](#), the Republican vice presidential candidate, James David Vance, denounced the "administration's incompetence" and alleged that FEMA funds were diverted to immigration issues; on 21 October, Mr. Trump [reiterated](#) the same claim. Florida Governor [Ron DeSantis](#) ordered an investigation following [reports](#) of bypassing the homes of Mr. Trump's supporters when identifying residents who could qualify for an aid, and in response [FEMA](#) fired an employee.

¹¹⁰ State and federal courts, as well as the U.S. Supreme Court, repeatedly rejected claims of widespread fraud or procedural misconduct in the 2020 elections. Mr. Trump [used negative rhetoric](#) about immigrants during the presidential debate, making false statements that were largely regarded as preposterous. On 11 October, during a rally in Aurora, Colorado, he intensified his [anti-immigration rhetoric](#), describing immigrants as "animals," "barbaric thugs", and "sadistic monsters". On 27 October, during Mr. Trump's rally in New York City, a campaign guest speaker referred to Puerto Rico as a "[floating island of garbage](#)". In response, among other, Ms. Harris [criticized](#) what she described as Mr. Trump's failed policies on Puerto Rico during his presidency related to humanitarian crises.

¹¹¹ At the 10 September [presidential debate](#) and on 3 October at a rally in [Michigan](#), Mr. Trump claimed that he won the 2020 elections. During the 1 October [vice presidential debate](#), when asked whether former President Trump had lost the 2020 elections, Vice Presidential Republican candidate James David Vance replied that he was "focused on the future". In April 2024, Mr. Trump [posted](#) on Truth Social that the absentee ballots were also a good option to use.

¹¹² On 3 November Mr. Trump stated that he "[shouldn't have left White House](#)" and on 15 October he [declined](#) to confirm his commitment to a peaceful post-election transition.

¹¹³ According to a January 2024 [research](#), by the States United Democracy Center, almost a third of Congress consists of 'election deniers', 180 of whom were on the [ballot](#), and 137 of whom were elected in the HoR and 20 serving in the Senate.

about the potential for political violence stemming from doubts about election integrity, paving the way for post-election litigation.¹¹⁴

Political parties and candidates should avoid using inflammatory and divisive rhetoric in the campaign, refrain from knowingly spreading false information and from calling into question election integrity without a clear basis or evidence.

Third-party presidential candidates were generally less visible and were seen by the two main political parties as either positively or negatively impacting main contests in the battleground states. In the final week of the campaign, the Democrats targeted independent presidential candidate Cornel West and Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein in an effort to prevent them from diverting votes and, therefore, affecting the results.¹¹⁵ Meanwhile, a Republican-tied super PAC targeted voters in favour of Ms. Stein, promoting her over Ms. Harris through radio ads and robocalls.¹¹⁶

The ODIHR LEOM interlocutors noted the intensified use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) during the campaign. Cybersecurity threats, along with disinformation campaigns by domestic and foreign actors identified by the fact-checkers, aimed to undermine candidates, their policies, and election integrity overall, including on election day.¹¹⁷ While the usage of AI-generated content in political advertising is not regulated at the federal level, at least 17 states have introduced requirements for AI disclosures or have banned AI-generated content that could damage the reputation of a candidate.¹¹⁸ Meta and Google established disclaimer requirements for third-party AI-generated political ads and automated checks for flagging content, while X largely relied on its Community Notes for fact-checking.¹¹⁹ However, except for the obvious violations, the use of AI was often difficult to detect, and the enforcement of these policies was often unsuccessful. Following the termination of the work of the Election Integrity Partnership after the 2022 election cycle and the layoffs of content moderation and public policy staff, social platforms have faced challenges in moderating while their transparency efforts remain

¹¹⁴ See also the 10 October study by the [Pew Research Center](#) raising widespread concerns about political violence.

¹¹⁵ On 29 October, the [DNC](#) launched a series of digital ads on Instagram and YouTube in [Arizona and Pennsylvania](#) and in [Michigan, North Carolina, and Wisconsin](#).

¹¹⁶ On 4 November, it was reported that a Republican-tied super PAC had started airing radio [ads](#) and using [robocalls](#) in Wisconsin accusing Ms. Harris of “blindly supporting Israel” and quoting, out of context, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying “we will turn them into rubble” and “we will destroy them”.

¹¹⁷ For example, the Democratic Party's vice presidential nominee was falsely [accused](#) of sexually molesting [students](#). An AI generated [video](#) alleging to show one victim has garnered over 5 million views on X. The same propaganda group falsely [claimed](#) Ms. Harris' involvement in a 2011 hit-and-run [accident](#). Mr. Trump [shared](#) an AI image depicting Ms. Harris addressing a group dressed in communist-style uniforms. Earlier, a fake AI-generated [robocall](#), impersonating President Joe Biden, urged New Hampshire voters to skip voting in first-in-the-nation Democratic primary. Also, in August, [email accounts](#) of Mr. Trump campaign aides and others had been targeted and compromised by Iranian hackers. In October, Chinese hackers [targeted](#) phones of Mr. Trump and Mr. Vance. On 5 November, the FBI issued a [press release](#), noting that “bomb threats to polling locations in several states, many of which appear to originate from Russian email domains”, were not credible. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Director also [stated](#) the attribution by state officials to Russia was not yet definitive. [Misleading Facebook ads](#) about Ms. Harris' policy positions, including instituting a mandatory gun-buyback programme and giving benefits to undocumented immigrants, were promoted by [Progress 2028](#), an initiative falsely presenting itself as the Democrats' answer to Project 2025, while being run by the [Building America's Future](#) network, which was [reportedly](#) receiving significant funding from Elon Musk.

¹¹⁸ In July 2024, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) [proposed](#) rules for disclosing AI-generated content in broadcast ads, but they were not adopted before election day.

¹¹⁹ A Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) [research](#) and a separate data [analysis](#) by The Washington Post suggest that the “Community Notes” feature “falls short on misleading election claims” and fails “to provide a meaningful check on misinformation.” On 5 November, [Meta](#) extended its ban on new political ads until after election day. In January 2025, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg [announced](#) a significant shift in the company's content moderation strategy for Facebook, Instagram, and Threads and plans to discontinue its third-party fact-checking programme and implement a ‘Community Notes’ system, similar to the model used by X.

limited.¹²⁰ Additionally, Elon Musk’s ownership of one of the most influential social network platforms, alongside his active role in campaigning for Mr. Trump, sparked concerns that the platform was being repurposed to amplify both his own voice and that of the Republican presidential candidate, including by promoting misinformation and previously debunked rumours and conspiracy theories.¹²¹ Concerns also emerged about the equitable access to online platforms for political speech and campaigning, the lack of clarity on how algorithms influence the dissemination of partisan political content, as well as the broader impact of these networks on users.¹²² This unprecedented blend of media power and political advocacy could alter the political course by shaping the policies and leaders that gain prominence in public discourse.

As previously recommended, the legal framework that governs campaigning on social networks could be strengthened in order to protect a vibrant, safe and transparent digital public domain. Social media companies could strengthen and consistently enforce their internal policies and make reporting and content moderation policies and decisions in response to violations of these policies more timely and transparent while also addressing the influence of owners on content policy.

Following the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court ruling removing federal protections for abortion rights, women’s political activism has increased and featured prominently in these elections, however women remained underrepresented in the campaign, as did minorities and Native Americans.¹²³ Rallies observed by the ODIHR LEOM featured messages such as abortion, reproductive rights, and affordable childcare.¹²⁴ In some cases, gender issues and transgender people were addressed negatively during the campaign and in rallies.¹²⁵ Mr. Trump’s pledge to be a “protector” for female voters appealed to culturally conservative voters who support traditional gender roles and family structures.¹²⁶ Ms. Harris prioritized women’s reproductive rights in her electoral platform and committed to restoring these rights for women. The venues of the campaign activities observed by the ODIHR LEOM were generally accessible for persons with disabilities; however, promoting and facilitating their access to public office was not highlighted in the campaign messaging.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ The Election Integrity Partnership (EIP) was a coalition of research organizations and experts that investigated and analyzed issues related to election integrity, particularly focusing on disinformation and efforts to undermine public confidence. Bipartisan legislations, including the [AI Transparency in Elections Act of 2024](#), the [Generative AI Copyright Disclosure Act of 2024](#), the [REAL Political Advertisements Act](#), the [NO FAKES Act of 2024](#), and the [AI Ads Act](#), were introduced at the Senate and at House in 2023 and in 2024 to address deepfakes, to improve the transparency and accountability of online political advertising and the use of AI, however, as of January 2025, none of this bills have been adopted.

¹²¹ An October Washington Post [analysis](#) found that “Republicans saw huge spikes in follower counts and their X posts tent to go viral more compared to the Democrats.” Mr. Musk was accused of spreading unverified or previously debunked [rumors](#), misleading [information](#), and occasionally conspiracy theories, both through his own posts and by sharing or replying to other users. On 5 November, after [boosting](#) claims that Google algorithms were providing users with information on how to vote for Ms. Harris but not her rival (in an X post later deleted), Mr. Musk [thanked](#) Google for [addressing](#) the issue.

¹²² On 29 October, the Wall Street Journal [reported](#) that new users on X were being inundated with political content, primarily featuring posts that favoured Mr. Trump. Similarly, 2023 [studies](#) showed “how Facebook’s algorithm shaped conservative and liberal bubbles”.

¹²³ See the Congressional Research Service [overview](#) of the composition of the outgoing Congress and the [January](#) and [September](#) 2023 Pew Research Center reports.

¹²⁴ In Arizona, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

¹²⁵ In Mr. Trump’s campaign activities and in rallies observed by ODIHR LEOM in Arizona, Colorado, and Wisconsin. The Republican Party [ran](#) anti-transgender political [ads](#). A transgender congressional candidate in Louisiana reported encountering hateful responses during voter outreach efforts.

¹²⁶ On 31 October, Mr. Trump received criticism after [saying](#) that he was going to protect women “whether the women like it or not.”

¹²⁷ The ODIHR LEOM observed 88 campaign events, of which 69 featured women speakers. In total, 83 of these events were accessible to persons with disabilities, and 3 included sign-language interpretation.

XII. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

The legal framework governing campaign finance is shaped primarily by the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) and the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, which regulate the sources and limits of donations as well as the disclosure requirements.¹²⁸ These are amended by case law, including most notably *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976), which removed the limits on campaign expenditures, and *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010), which gave corporations the right to independent campaigning, and in which the U.S. Supreme Court equated spending with freedom of speech. Generally, campaign finance is well-regulated, but the possibility of unconstrained spending gives a disproportionate advantage to the well-established parties and candidates. Furthermore, gaps remain in contribution limits and some reporting requirements, leaving room for the influence of considerable funds that are not subject to transparency rules and can be used to sway public opinion without accountability.¹²⁹ The rise of Super Political Action Committees (Super PACs) has exacerbated these issues by enabling unlimited spending, further entrenching the political power of those with significant financial resources.

Campaign contributions can be received through designated campaign committees, which must register with the FEC. There are limits on individual contributions to USD 3,300 per candidate and USD 5,000 per PAC, with disclosure requirements for contributions exceeding USD 200. Anonymous and cash contributions are limited to USD 50 and USD 100, respectively; in-kind contributions are treated as monetary donations. Foreign donations are prohibited; however, the FEC has determined that foreign nationals can contribute to ballot measure campaigns, and the law does not restrict their participation in advocacy campaigns, i.e., campaigning on political issues.¹³⁰

The integrity of electoral campaign financing should be strengthened by implementing stricter regulations on contributions and expenditures from foreign nationals, particularly by banning foreign nationals from expenditures regarding advocacy campaigns and ballot measures on the state level.

During these elections, the use of contributions in cryptocurrencies added further complexity. PACs must report initial cryptocurrency contributions as in-kind donations and are permitted to use the value of these assets only after converting them into USD. However, disclosure of cryptocurrency origins is not required.

Consideration could be given to disclosing the origin of cryptocurrencies reported as in-kind donations.

PACs and Super PACs provide a mechanism for interest groups to contribute to candidates and also to spend unlimited funds on independent expenditures. Consequently, candidates benefiting from such expenditures have no reporting obligations.¹³¹ Super PACs can raise unlimited funds from corporations, unions, associations, and individuals, which they then use to openly support or oppose political candidates through their spending. Unlike traditional PACs, however, super PACs are not permitted to give money directly to candidates, and their expenditures must remain entirely independent of the

¹²⁸ The federal campaign finance legislation is supplemented by the [FEC regulations](#).

¹²⁹ According to paragraph 19 of the 1996 UNHRC [General Comment 25](#) “reasonable limitations on campaign expenditure may be justified where this is necessary to ensure that the free choice of voters is not undermined or the democratic process distorted by the disproportionate expenditure on behalf of any candidate or party.” See also paragraph 263 of the 2020 [ODIHR and the Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#), which explains that the fulfilment of the transparency requirement means that reports need to contain enough details to be useful and understandable for the general public.

¹³⁰ In [Bluman v. FEC](#), a district court ruled that the constitutionality of the foreign nationals prohibition is tied to candidate advocacy but did not ban foreign nationals from engaging in advocacy on issues.

¹³¹ Article 14 of the [Recommendation Rec\(2003\)4 of the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers](#) advises that “[t]he independent monitoring should include supervision over the accounts of political parties and the expenses involved in election campaigns as well as their presentation and publication.”

candidates they aim to assist. While the U.S. Supreme Court emphasized the importance of transparency for informed electoral decisions, donations to non-profit organizations and corporations are not held to the same disclosure standards as those to the PACs, which allows for circumvention of the transparency principle.¹³² Non-profit organizations and corporations can also accept foreign donations. Therefore, foreign funds can be channelled into Super PACs through non-profit organizations, effectively circumventing the restrictions. Certain non-profit organizations are not required to disclose donor information publicly but must keep donor names and addresses available for tax inspection by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).¹³³ In such cases, the Super PAC receiving the funds can list the nonprofit organization as a donor, a practice that falls short of international transparency standards for campaign finance.¹³⁴ In addition, payments to influencers are not considered “public communications” and are not subject to disclosure requirements. Such undisclosed contributions raise concerns over the undue influence of interest groups over candidates, as well as undermine the transparency of the process and limit the voters’ informed choice.¹³⁵

As previously recommended, contribution limits and disclosure for all types of campaign committees should be regulated. Independent groups and non-profit organizations that engage in campaign activities or donate to campaign committees should be legally required to disclose their sources of funding within a timeframe that allows for transparency of campaign financing.

The oversight of campaign finance is vested with the FEC, a bipartisan campaign finance oversight body. It is composed of six commissioners appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, with no more than three commissioners representing one party.¹³⁶ The FECA requires at least four votes for the FEC to approve official actions, thus necessitating bipartisan decision-making. The FEC established a rule on internet communication disclaimers and the definition of public communication to enhance transparency for online political ads. However, this regulation does not address the growing role of paid social media influencers in creating political content, a trend that was particularly notable in this electoral campaign.

The FEC is also mandated to review complaints pertaining to violations of campaign finance rules. While the FEC was in full composition and has made steps to improve the effectiveness of its decision-making, its capacity for decisive action remains somewhat constrained in case of a split vote due to its partisan composition.¹³⁷ These constraints have contributed to delays in addressing multiple complaints received by the FEC during this campaign period, raising concerns about its effectiveness and ability to

¹³² In *Citizens United v. FEC*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that corporations have the right to campaign independently because spending constitutes freedom of speech, hence overruling its earlier decision in *Austin v. Michigan State Chamber of Commerce*, in which it ruled that a state law prohibiting independent expenditures was constitutional.

¹³³ See the [report](#) on tax-exempt organizations by the Congressional Research Service, updated 3 January 2025.

¹³⁴ According to Article 7.3 of the [UN Convention Against Corruption](#), “Each State Party shall consider taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures [...] to enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office and, where applicable, the funding of political parties.” Article 12b of the [Recommendation Rec\(2003\)4 of the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers](#) on Common Rules against Corruption in the Funding of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns provides that provides that in case of donations over a certain value, donors should be identified in the records..

¹³⁵ Paragraph 247 of the 2020 [Joint ODIHR and the Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Legislation](#) states that “[t]ransparency in party and campaign finance, [...] is important to protect the rights of voters, prevent corruption and keep the wider public informed. Voters must have relevant information as to the financial support given to political parties, as this influences decision-making and is a means of holding parties accountable.” Paragraph 256 further stipulates that third parties that are involved in the campaign “should be subjected to similar rules on donations and spending as political parties to avoid situations where third parties can be used to circumvent campaign finance regulations”.

¹³⁶ On 31 January, President Donald Trump sent a [letter](#) to the FEC Chairperson Ellen Weintraub stating her immediate dismissal. Ms. Weintraub challenged the legality of this action, asserting that the legal procedures for removing an FEC commissioner were not followed, and continued to maintain her position as of February 2025.

¹³⁷ Out the 451 cases that were considered by the FEC within the [Executive Session](#) from April 2019 until May 2023, 64 cases (14 per cent) had a split vote.

make decisions.¹³⁸ When deciding on complaints, the FEC can use prosecutorial discretion to dismiss them; however, a complaint thus dismissed cannot be subject to judicial review as determined by the case law.¹³⁹ A lack of possibility of legal review by any decision of an administrative body is at odds with the OSCE commitments.¹⁴⁰

The right to appeal the dismissal of complaints by the Federal Election Commission on the basis of prosecutorial discretion should be ensured by law.

In March 2024, the FEC issued an advisory allowing Super PACs and other outside groups to coordinate with election campaigns on voter turnout strategies, making a shift in regulatory interpretation, especially given the evolving political landscape and the growing dependence by the contestants on Super PACs for campaign financing.¹⁴¹ During this campaign, several Super PACs launched various popular initiatives that may potentially influence the election outcome. Notably, a Super PAC supported by the businessman Elon Musk, who endorsed Mr. Trump, awarded USD 1 million daily from 19 October until election day to registered voters in select states who backed petitions in support of the First and Second Amendments.¹⁴² This initiative sparked a debate about its compliance with federal laws.¹⁴³ On 22 October, a complaint was filed by Mr. Trump's campaign against the Labour Party of the United Kingdom and Ms. Harris' campaign for allegedly making and accepting illegal foreign contributions.¹⁴⁴

In an election year, all campaign committees must report to the FEC on a quarterly basis and submit pre- and post-election reports. The pre-election reports were due 12 days before election day, and post-election reports within 30 days after election day. All reports were published timely on the FEC website, where they can be searched by a committee.¹⁴⁵ Information on donations and expenditures per candidate and contributor is also available, contributing to transparency in campaign financing.

Approximately USD 6.1 billion was fundraised by the candidates in these elections. This included USD 2.7 billion for the presidential election, USD 1.9 billion for the House, and USD 1.5 billion for the Senate. In addition, super PACs raised USD 4.2 billion and spent USD 2.7 billion.¹⁴⁶ The total expenditure for these elections reached USD 15.9 billion, with about USD 5.5 billion spent on the presidential race and over USD 10 billion on congressional races, making it the most expensive election

¹³⁸ Complaints include the Trump campaign's allegations about the transfer of President Biden's campaign funds to Ms. Harris' campaign the DNC claim about illegal ballot access scheme, [a complaint](#) filed by End Citizens United Files against the Trump campaign and X.com over allegedly illegal corporate contribution.

¹³⁹ In [Heckler v. Chaney \(1985\)](#), the U.S. Supreme Court held that agency decisions not to take enforcement actions are "presumptively unreviewable" under section 701 of the Administrative Procedure Act.

¹⁴⁰ Paragraph 5.10 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document states that "everyone will have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions, so as to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and ensure legal integrity".

¹⁴¹ See the 20 March 2024 FEC [Advisory Opinion](#).

¹⁴² Earlier in October 2024, the same Super PAC (*America PAC*) circulated a petition in which voters pledged their support for the First and Second Amendments and offered USD 100 upon signature and an additional USD 47 to those identifying subsequent registered voter who would sign up the petition. According to media reports on donation filings, another Super PAC funded ads in key states like Michigan and Wisconsin, while a different Super PAC focused on spending in Georgia, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin. According to various [reports](#), Elon Musk contributed USD 239 million to *America PAC*. Another super PAC directed half of its USD 450 million budget toward digital advertising, prioritizing platforms like YouTube to reach non-political, younger, and diverse audiences critical for Ms. Harris's votes.

¹⁴³ Reportedly, the DoJ sent a [letter](#) to Elon Musk indicating that this action may constitute a violation of federal law. See also [DOJ Election Crimes Manual](#), page 44. In addition, on 28 October, the Philadelphia District Attorney [filed a civil legal action](#) under Pennsylvania law against Elon Musk and his Super PAC. On 4 November, the county court in Philadelphia [denied](#) an [application](#) to stop his USD 1 million giveaway.

¹⁴⁴ See [the complaint](#) submitted to the FEC. The FEC did not consider it before election day.

¹⁴⁵ See the [FEC's filings and reports repository](#).

¹⁴⁶ As of 11 November, super PACs [have reported](#) total independent expenditures of USD 2.7 billion.

campaign in the history of federal elections.¹⁴⁷ Pro-crypto Super PACs have invested over USD 133 million in this election cycle, making cryptocurrency regulation a key issue for policy discussions post-election.¹⁴⁸

To promote more accountable and transparent campaign spending, federal campaign finance legislation and oversight should be updated to reflect the modern political funding landscape, including regulations on the use of new financial instruments such as cryptocurrencies, as well as other tools and digital assets that may be considered in-kind donations.

XIII. MEDIA

A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The vibrant and extensive media environment operates through a multitude of platforms that increasingly tailor content to partisan audiences. It is dominated by five corporations that control over 90 per cent of television stations and over half of daily newspapers.¹⁴⁹ The major private media outlets often become instrumentalized by main political parties, at times employing retired politicians as programme hosts or publicly endorsing candidates, thus contributing to the widespread bipartisan polarization.¹⁵⁰ While major media outlets have successfully expanded into the digital market, smaller local media outlets have struggled to survive, leading to significant layoffs and closures. Consequently, more than half of the American counties are served by only one or no media outlets.¹⁵¹

Two decentralized public networks, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR), partially fill the local coverage gap, operating as umbrella networks for 357 public television and 1,207 radio stations, respectively, while maintaining editorial independence. They are mainly funded through individual and corporate donations, while up to a third of their funding, USD 535 million, comes from the federal government through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).¹⁵² In 2024, the House Appropriations Committee recommended cutting federal funding for the public media in fiscal year 2027, while two bills that would prohibit any federal funding for the CPB were introduced in the House and the Senate.¹⁵³ If approved by Congress, the elimination of federal funding for public media could significantly undermine their financial sustainability.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ See the [cost of elections](#) maintained by OpenSecrets.org.

¹⁴⁸ Top 5 contributors [were](#) Fairshake, Protect Progress, and Defend American Jobs.

¹⁴⁹ For television, these are [Comcast](#), [The Walt Disney Company](#), [Warner Bros. Discovery](#), [Paramount Global](#) and [Fox Corporation](#). Most newspapers are controlled by Gannett Co., Inc., Lee Enterprises, Alden Global Capital, Ogden Newspapers, CHNI Paxton Media Group.

¹⁵⁰ Among the five cable news networks - CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, NewsMax and NewsNation - ODIHR LEOM identified over 30 former politicians or senior party officials serving as programme hosts. By election day, some 200 newspapers [endorsed](#) Ms. Harris and 16 newspapers endorsed Mr. Trump. [Los Angeles Times](#) and [Washington Post](#) editorial board decisions to endorse Ms. Harris were blocked by owners of the media outlets. The largest U.S. print media holding Gannett, which owns over 200 newspapers in the U.S., [chose](#) not to support a presidential candidate.

¹⁵¹ The 2024 “State of Local News” [report](#) by Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism found that 206 counties are without any local news outlet, and 1,561 counties served by only one, usually a weekly news source.

¹⁵² The CPB is a nonprofit organization [established](#) by the 1967 [Public Broadcasting Act](#). It is supervised by a nine-member bipartisan board appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

¹⁵³ According to the America’s Public Television Stations (APTS), in July 2024, the House Appropriations Committee [proposed](#) eliminating entire federal funding of the CPB.

¹⁵⁴ On January 30, 2025, FCC Chairperson Brendan Carr [announced](#) an investigation into NPR and PBS to determine whether their sponsorship messages violate federal regulations prohibiting non-commercial educational stations from broadcasting advertisements. Democratic-appointed FCC commissioners [criticized](#) the probe, suggesting it is politically motivated.

To safeguard editorial independence and ensure comprehensive local news coverage, particularly during election periods, consideration should be given to establishing a sustainable long-term federal funding mechanism for public media through appropriate legislative measures that would protect funding allocations from short-term political considerations.

Political polarization of media has contributed to increased incidents of intimidation and harassment of journalists, including violence, online harassment, and attacks by police.¹⁵⁵ Senior politicians have exacerbated the environment by using derogatory terms against critical journalists and questioning their professional integrity, especially during the campaign, potentially having a chilling effect on reporting.¹⁵⁶ The partisan divide in the media impacted news reporting and diminished public trust in the media.¹⁵⁷

An effective mechanism to prevent and promptly investigate all incidents of violence, threats and harassment targeting journalists should be established at the federal and state levels. Public officials and candidates should refrain from rhetoric that may incite hostility against media professionals.

B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees freedom of the press and expression, providing for a robust system of protection for media independence. Defamation and libel remain criminalized in at least 13 states, though rarely enforced. An increasing number of states have adopted laws to protect journalists and civil society against frivolous civil defamation lawsuits, but 16 states lack such protections, and this remains unregulated at the federal level.¹⁵⁸ Many ODIHR LEOM interlocutors highlighted insufficient protections for journalists' sources and from surveillance by federal institutions, pointing to the need for federal law in this respect.¹⁵⁹ Despite the Freedom of Information Act's provisions for information access, many ODIHR LEOM interlocutors noted significant delays in responses among many federal and state institutions.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ The October 2024 [report](#) by the Committee to Protect Journalists noted a 50 per cent increase in attacks on journalists since 2023. The US Press freedom tracker has reported 37 and 39 assaults targeting journalists in [2022](#) and [2023](#), respectively. In 2024, in the run-up to elections, it reported [69 assaults](#) targeting journalists, including 32 [cases](#) perpetrated by police and other law enforcement.

¹⁵⁶ Mr. Trump, in public speeches and posts on Truth Social, frequently labelled journalists and media critical of him as “fake news,” “[enemy of the people.](#)” and [called](#) for [investigation](#) of certain media for treason. Furthermore, the research conducted by Reporters without Borders [concluded](#) that between 1 September and 24 October of Mr. Trump insulted, attacked, or threatened the media at least 108 times in public speeches or remarks.

¹⁵⁷ The October 2024 Gallup [poll](#) found that 31 per cent of Americans trust the media to report news accurately and fairly, 33 per cent “not very much” confidence and 36 “no trust at all” in the media.

¹⁵⁸ The [Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation Protection Act](#) was introduced in the US Congress in September 2022, aimed to establish federal protections against strategic lawsuits designed to silence public participation and free speech. However, it failed to advance beyond the House Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties.

¹⁵⁹ In July 2021 and again in June 2023, a bill for the Protect Reporters from Exploitative State Spying Act ([PRESS Act](#)), aiming to protect journalists from revealing their confidential sources and prevent government surveillance of their communications, with exceptions for cases involving terrorism or imminent violence. The bill passed unanimously in the House on 18 January 2024 and was forwarded to the Senate's Committee of Judiciary where it remains pending, before it can advance to a full Senate vote. On 20 November, president-elect Donald Trump [posted](#) that the PRESS Act should not be supported by the Republican Party. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, in their 13 June 2024 [Regular Report to the Permanent Council](#) expressed concerns regarding the surveillance-enabling law in the U.S. known as [Section 702.](#)

¹⁶⁰ The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) [noted](#), that, in 2022, the backlog of freedom of information requests had exceeded 200,000. [According](#) to Muckrock, an American non-profit organization specializing in requesting public records, the average response time for such requests was 288 days, despite a legal threshold of just 20 days.

The legal framework for the protection of media freedom should be strengthened by decriminalizing defamation, establishing comprehensive safeguards against strategic lawsuits, and legislating further protections for journalists' sources and against surveillance without a warrant.

The broadcast media are mainly regulated through the 1934 Communications Act and the 1996 Telecommunications Act and are supervised by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), while cable television networks are largely unregulated. Broadcasters are required to operate in the public interest, convenience and necessity. However, there are no requirements to provide fair, equal, or balanced coverage of the campaign. Only the public broadcasters are prohibited from supporting or opposing any candidate for political office or airing advertisements to that effect. Private broadcasters are required to provide “reasonable access” for federal candidates and allow them to purchase paid political airtime at the lowest rate charged for a comparable commercial advertisement in the 60 days prior to elections. Broadcasters are required to provide equal opportunities for all contestants, with some exceptions for editorial freedom in the news coverage.¹⁶¹ The FCC did not conduct media monitoring, and its role in these elections was largely limited to responding to media inquiries and facilitating mediation between contestants and the media regarding paid advertisements.

C. ODIHR LEOM MEDIA MONITORING [ACCESS DETAILED INFORMATION](#)

The bipartisan polarization of the media landscape was reflected in the coverage of the campaign, with media outlets creating parallel information ecosystems that reinforced partisan interpretations of key campaign issues and amplified political messaging. Two debates between Republican and Democratic presidential candidates, and one between vice-presidential candidates, were agreed upon with major broadcasters (ABC, CBS, and CNN), departing from the tradition of debates organized by the bipartisan Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD).¹⁶² The format of these debates differed notably from those traditionally used by the CPD, featuring shorter response times for the questions, limited opportunities for interactions between candidates, microphone muting to prevent interruptions and the absence of a live audience. The debates on ABC also featured live fact-checking by the hosts, which appeared to focus on Mr. Trump’s statements.¹⁶³ The Republican and Democratic presidential and vice-presidential contestants also appeared in numerous interviews on a wide range of media outlets and social platforms, mainly choosing the interviewers who aligned with their political views.¹⁶⁴ A similar trend was observed by the ODIHR LEOM for congressional races in many states, where the incumbent candidates preferred interviews in the aligned or supportive media.

¹⁶¹ On 2 November Ms. Harris appeared for 90 seconds on a comedy show Saturday Night Live, which was broadcast through a television network affiliated with the NBC. After her appearance, Mr. Trump has requested and received two free time slots, 55 seconds each, that he has used for his promotions and aired shortly after major sport events on 3 November.

¹⁶² Dr. Stein and Mr. Kennedy filed individual complaints to the FEC on 29 May and 19 June regarding their exclusion from the presidential debate, but FEC did not decide on these complaints before election day. The [Free and Equal Elections Foundation](#) organized two presidential debates on 12 July and 23 October inviting all contestants, though only Mr. Oliver, Dr. Stein, and Mr. Terry chose to participate.

¹⁶³ During the 10 September presidential debate on ABC, moderators fact-checked Mr. Trump five times, including his claims that Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, were stealing and eating cats and dogs of local residents. Mr. Trump [accused](#) ABC of bias during the debate and [called](#) for the revocation of their broadcasting license. On 25 September, the Center for American Rights had filed complaints to the [FCC](#) and [FEC](#) alleging ABC’s favouritism, but these complaints were not resolved before election day.

¹⁶⁴ On 10 October, Mr. Trump, following his refusal to be interviewed by the CBS’s “60 Minutes”, [alleged](#) that the network had altered an interview with Ms. Harris to present her favourably and called for the [revocation](#) of their broadcasting license. The FCC Chairperson [responded](#) that the FCC does not revoke licenses simply because an electoral candidate disagrees with or dislikes content. On 16 October, the Center for American Rights filed a formal [complaint](#) with the FCC on similar grounds requesting the FCC to direct the CBS to release the complete transcript of the interview of Ms. Harris. The complaint was not resolved before election day. On 31 October, Mr. Trump has filed a [lawsuit](#) against CBS in the Texas Northern District Court seeking USD 10 billion in damages.

The ODIHR LEOM media monitoring results showed that the presidential campaign significantly overshadowed congressional elections.¹⁶⁵ Most monitored broadcast media dedicated the bulk of their politically relevant coverage to Mr. Trump (between 33 and 49 per cent) and Ms. Harris (between 24 and 41 per cent). Other parties and presidential candidates were marginalized, receiving less than two per cent of coverage across all monitored broadcasters except ABC, which dedicated four per cent of coverage to Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

The polarization was more evident in cable television, where programming was largely dominated by partisan commentary rather than balanced reporting. Fox News and Newsmax covered Ms. Harris predominantly negatively, with 50 and 79 per cent negative coverage, respectively, often employing demeaning language.¹⁶⁶ In contrast, approximately half of her coverage on CNN and MSNBC was positive towards her. The evening newscasts of public radio NPR and the three major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) covered Ms. Harris primarily in a neutral tone (between 53 and 74 per cent), with a notable portion of positive coverage (between 22 and 41 per cent). Public Television PBS provided balanced coverage, with nearly equal proportions of positive (23 per cent) and negative (20 per cent) coverage. Mr. Trump received negative coverage (ranging from 37 to 87 per cent of all coverage dedicated to him) on all monitored broadcast media, except Fox News and Newsmax, where 40 and 63 per cent of his coverage was positive.

In print media, The New York Times and The Washington Post each dedicated 40 per cent of their political coverage to Mr. Trump and 23 and 25 per cent to Ms. Harris, maintaining mainly a critical stance toward Mr. Trump and a predominantly neutral tone toward Ms. Harris. The Wall Street Journal offered a more balanced reporting on both candidates, though with higher criticism of Mr. Trump (33 per cent negative, 58 per cent neutral). The New York Post displayed clear bias, covering Mr. Trump predominantly positively (44 per cent) while portraying Ms. Harris mainly negatively.

XIV. ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Election dispute resolution encompasses both judicial and administrative channels to address election-related issues. State and federal law allow everyone to file lawsuits in both state and federal courts in relation to legal doctrines pertaining to elections and congressional districting decisions. In addition to lawsuits filed in court, complaints can be filed with county election boards, election supervisors, secretaries of state, and state attorneys general. In some states, election result challenges are permitted, while the conditions for requesting recounts vary across jurisdictions (see also *Post-election Day Developments*).¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ During the campaign, from 14 October, the ODIHR LEOM monitored evening news programmes on public PBS and NPR, and on private television networks – ABC, CBS, NBC. The monitoring included one-hour programming on cable broadcasters CNN (8 PM), Fox News (6 PM), MSNBC (6 PM) and Newsmax (7 PM) and covered political and election sections of the New York Times, New York Post, Wall Street Journal and Washington Post.

¹⁶⁶ On 27 August 2024, a Fox News host made a contentious comment suggesting that Harris would be "paralyzed in the Situation Room while the generals have their way with her" and, the next day, the same host [questioned](#) whether voters were willing to "gamble our country away on a frightened woman" and accusing Harris of lacking authenticity and being guided solely by her campaign advisors. In a high-profile interview on Fox News's "Special Report," anchor Bret Baier [engaged](#) Harris in a combative exchange, frequently interrupting her responses on topics like immigration and policy positions with a tone and approach that appeared to aim at undermining Harris's credibility. In a publication on Newsmax on 25 October, a psychotherapist [expressed](#) concerns about Harris's mental fitness, suggesting she may suffer from serious cognitive issues due to her "chronic, inappropriate episodes of laughter" and also questioned her intelligence.

¹⁶⁷ In 48 states, state law includes a recount provision. Automatic or mandatory recounts are possible in 26 states and the D.C., and requested recounts are possible in 43 states.

Under the *Purcell* principle, federal courts are generally prohibited from enjoining state election laws in the period leading up to an election; however, courts have discretion in interpreting this principle.¹⁶⁸ While, given the high number of election-related lawsuits, some courts ruled with the decision effective after the elections, some delayed decisions until after the election date, and some decisions were in force for these elections.¹⁶⁹ Decisions close to election day raised concerns about effective implementation related to lawsuits that impact key issues, including voter identification and registration, voting, and counting procedures.¹⁷⁰ Despite previous ODIHR recommendations, legislative measures to establish clear and objective criteria and timeframes for challenging and enjoining state election laws remain inadequate.

In order to ensure that court orders and decisions are rendered well in advance of election day, and to limit legal uncertainty, consideration should be given to the adoption of legislative measures to establish reasonable and sufficient time limits for the proceedings and determination of lawsuits filed at state and federal courts.

The pre-election period included a high volume of election-related litigation, primarily centred on closely contested states. The ODIHR LEOM observers noted significant legal uncertainty in some states due to high levels of pre-election litigation, particularly in closely contested states.¹⁷¹ Prior to election day, at least 295 election-related lawsuits were filed with state and federal courts, and there were at least 394 consequential court orders related to election issues, including voting rights.¹⁷² The Republicans and their affiliates filed at least 83 lawsuits and were involved in at least 123 lawsuits, while Democrats and their affiliates filed at least 17 lawsuits and were involved in at least 41 lawsuits.¹⁷³ Right-wing litigation groups were highly organized and filed many lawsuits, often with the stated aim of ensuring election integrity, which in some cases may have led to disenfranchising eligible

¹⁶⁸ In [Purcell v. Gonzalez](#) (2006), the U.S. Supreme Court established that (i) federal district courts ordinarily should not enjoin state election laws in the period close to an election, i.e., issue a court order that either prohibits a party from performing a specific act or compel a party to take a particular action; and (ii) that federal appellate courts should stay injunctions when lower federal courts contravene that principle. In [Reynolds v. Sims](#) (1964), the Supreme Court also ruled that “[i]n awarding or withholding immediate relief, a court [...] should consider the proximity of a forthcoming election and the mechanics and complexities of state election laws, and should act and rely upon general equitable principles.”

¹⁶⁹ In a notable example, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania have [declined](#) to decide until after election day on petitions from both [the RNC](#) and [voting rights organizations](#) related to absentee mail-in ballots.

¹⁷⁰ In [a case in Georgia](#), the Fulton County Superior Court Judge described the controversial rule change that was being sought as “too much, too late.” In North Carolina, the Court of Appeals granted a temporary injunction against the use of digital ID by university students based on a [lawsuit](#) filed by the RNC; however, a [motion to dismiss](#) was filed on 22 October. On 30 October, the Supreme Court [declined an application to stop](#) Virginia state to implement a program aimed at removing alleged non-citizens from its voter registration rolls. State officials argued that the initiative was designed to safeguard the integrity of voter lists.

¹⁷¹ For example, voter roll maintenance challenge in [Arizona](#), county election records access challenge in [Georgia](#), voter intimidation challenge in [Michigan](#), non-postmarked ballots challenge in [Nevada](#), overseas voter challenge in [North Carolina](#), provisional ballot voting challenge in [Pennsylvania](#), and poll watchers restriction challenge in [Wisconsin](#).

¹⁷² This total reflects the 2023-2024 election cycle. Between 1 Jan and 4 Nov at least [217 voting-related lawsuits](#) were filed. This is notable an increase from the number of cases filed during previous election cycles according to LEOM interlocutors. The total number of consequential court orders includes orders from lawsuits filed prior to the 2023-2024 election cycle. There is a very high volume of cases which have been filed, which poses challenges for data analysis. These numbers come from a combination of [Democracy Docket](#), a Democrat-affiliated online source operated by lawyer Marc Elias, as well as the RNC online database [Protect The Vote](#).

¹⁷³ A high volume of cases were filed, which poses challenges for data analysis. These numbers come from a combination of [Democracy Docket](#), a Democrat-affiliated online source operated by lawyer Marc Elias, as well as the RNC online database [Protect The Vote](#), as well as direct sources such as court records. The Republicans filed at least 83 lawsuits, of which the [RNC is listed as plaintiff](#) in at least 25 cases.

voters.¹⁷⁴ At least 158 cases seeking to restrict voting rights or to ensure election integrity were filed prior to election day.¹⁷⁵ This notably included cases regarding absentee voting.¹⁷⁶ Voter registration and voter list purges were also highly contested by Republicans, with the party and its affiliates targeting non-citizen voting, which was identified by ODIHR LEOM interlocutors as a potential voter intimidation tactic focused on immigrant voters.¹⁷⁷ In addition, a number of voter eligibility and vote processing lawsuits were submitted.¹⁷⁸ Overseas voting and voting by non-citizens were targeted by lawsuits, particularly by the Republican party.¹⁷⁹

The DoJ maintained a portal where election-related violations could be reported; these reports, however, were not shared due to the sensitivity of the information involved.¹⁸⁰ The DoJ filed at least three election-related lawsuits prior to elections, including two cases related to violations of federal prohibitions on systematic efforts to remove voters within 90 days of an election and a challenge to the failure to provide an accessible voting system for voters with disabilities.¹⁸¹

Generally, many ODIHR LEOM interlocutors indicated a highly contested electoral environment during the pre-election period but expressed confidence in the state and federal courts' capacity to manage the surge. In general, courts have decided cases and appeals in an overall trend in favour of expanding and protecting voter rights. However, concerns persisted among many ODIHR LEOM interlocutors regarding the perceived politicization of the Supreme Court as the final appeals instance, largely stemming from some of its recent decisions, structural makeup, and appointment process. These concerns were amplified by the Court's increasing involvement in high-profile political issues, leading some to question whether its decisions might be influenced more by partisan agendas than by impartial legal reasoning.

¹⁷⁴ Some key organizations filing lawsuits related to election integrity and restricting voting rights include [Election Integrity Network](#), [America First Legal](#), [Judicial Watch](#), and [United Sovereign Americans](#) (with 9 cases in [Maryland](#), [Pennsylvania](#), [Ohio](#), [Florida](#), [Texas](#), [North Carolina](#), [Michigan](#), [Colorado](#) and [Georgia](#)). A [statement](#) by the America First Legal outlines the goals of this election litigation organization.

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¹⁷⁶ A lawsuit filed in [Louisiana](#) challenged several recently passed laws that could disenfranchise absentee voters. In Ohio, the Supreme Court [upheld](#) a directive from the Secretary of State that effectively prohibits authorized individuals from returning an absentee ballot to a drop box on behalf of a family member with disabilities. In Alabama, a judge [partially blocked](#) a state law which had made it illegal to help voters request absentee ballots.

¹⁷⁷ A [lawsuit](#) claimed that ballots are at risk of fraud because overseas voters do not face the same ID requirements as other absentee voters. In Alabama, a federal judge [ordered](#) a pause to a program that targeted voter registrations of naturalized citizens. In Nevada, a judge [dismissed](#) a lawsuit brought by the RNC regarding voter roll maintenance. In Michigan, a judge [dismissed](#) a lawsuit filed by the RNC regarding voter roll maintenance and ordered existing voter registration practices to remain in place. In North Carolina, a federal judge [dismissed](#) a lawsuit filed by the RNC seeking to gain access to voter registration maintenance roll information for the purposes of removing voters from the list, while the DNC also filed an [amicus brief](#) in the case alleging that the RNC lawsuit was baseless.

¹⁷⁸ In Georgia, voting rights groups filed a [lawsuit](#) challenging [Senate Bill 189](#), arguing that it makes it easier to invalidate a voter's eligibility contrary to the [National Voter Registration Act](#) (NVRA). There are multiple lawsuits in Georgia regarding the ballot count. On 15 October, the county court [overturned](#) the State Election Board's decision to require county election officials to make a "reasonable inquiry" before certifying election results. On 21 October, a [lawsuit](#) in Virginia challenged [statements by the state Election Board](#) that they would refuse to certify election results based on voting machine tabulation. A Pennsylvania court [ruled](#) that counties must count provisional ballots cast by voters who mistakenly submitted mail-in ballots without including a supplementary secrecy envelope.

¹⁷⁹ On 21 October, judges in [Michigan](#) and [North Carolina](#) separately issued decisions rejecting the RNC lawsuits challenging overseas voters, including overseas military voters, based on residency verification requirements, and the North Carolina decision was [appealed](#) by the RNC on 22 October. A [lawsuit](#) from a group of Republican Members of Congress in Pennsylvania claimed that ballots are at risk of fraud because overseas voters do not face the same identification requirements.

¹⁸⁰ See the DoJ [portal](#) for reporting voting issues.

¹⁸¹ See the [United States v. Commonwealth of Virginia](#), [Virginia State Board of Elections](#), [United States v. State of Alabama](#) and [United States v. Town of Thornapple, Wisconsin](#).

XV. ELECTION OBSERVATION

Election observation is regulated by states, resulting in a significant variance of rules regulating various types of observers and their access to different stages of the electoral process. Various types of observers include domestic non-partisan domestic groups, partisan groups or poll watchers and challengers, international observers, and academic observers. Tennessee explicitly forbids international observers, while California, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, and D.C. explicitly provide for international observation.¹⁸² The remaining states have various statute language or conditions under which international observers may be permitted or banned.¹⁸³ The legal prohibitions of election observers in 17 states and, in practice, in many other jurisdictions are not in line with OSCE commitments.¹⁸⁴ Several state election officials either refused or ignored requests to meet with ODIHR LEOM observers, impeding international election observation. In several of these states, the primary reason for declining was the concerns that interacting with international observers may be perceived as exposure to potential foreign interference, despite assurances that ODIHR made to the state election authorities that its observers are strictly bound by a non-interference clause in its Code of Conduct.¹⁸⁵

In line with OSCE commitments, federal and state legislation should clearly provide for unimpeded access to international and citizen non-partisan observers to observe all stages of the electoral process.

Non-partisan groups and political parties deployed and trained a high number of poll watchers, including lawyers, to assist in cases of disputes and volunteers to help with voter access where needed. In most cases, poll watchers had to be registered voters of the state where they observed. The non-partisan groups organized many voter education initiatives, promoting balanced, non-partisan, and factual information to help voters make informed choices and, in some cases, collaborated with the election administration to hold events to counter misinformation. In addition, the Organization of American States (OAS) deployed an election observation mission with observers throughout the country to follow the election day proceedings. The Carter Center (TCC) observed and supported non-partisan election observation efforts in several states.¹⁸⁶

XVI. ELECTION DAY

Early voting commenced on 20 September, allowing voters to vote in person and by mail.¹⁸⁷ More than 85 million voters took advantage of early voting options across states and abroad. On election day, the atmosphere at the polling stations visited by the ODIHR LEOM was calm, peaceful, and orderly. Significant voter interest and queuing were noted in some places, especially in the morning. Almost all

¹⁸² Three other states, Hawaii, North Dakota, and South Dakota, have inclusive language for all observers.

¹⁸³ In 18 states, Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia and Wyoming, international observers were not allowed through regulation or by decision of the election officials; 16 states have regulations that, under certain conditions and criteria, may allow access to international observers. In 9 states, there are no specific norms applicable to international observers.

¹⁸⁴ Paragraph 8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) provides that “the participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States in which elections are taking place”. The [last resolution](#) of the National Association of Secretaries of State welcoming OSCE international election observers expired in summer 2020 and has not yet been renewed.

¹⁸⁵ See the [Code of Conduct for ODIHR Election Observers](#). Requests to meet election officials were declined or ignored in Alabama, Connecticut, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

¹⁸⁶ In states of [Georgia](#), [Montana](#) and [New Mexico](#), more than 550 TCC and their supported citizen observers were deployed to observe early voting, vote by mail, logic and accuracy testing, election day proceedings, ballot processing and tabulation, post-election audit procedures and county canvass and certification meetings.

¹⁸⁷ Start of the early voting varied per state.

polling stations visited were accessible for voters with physical disabilities, and voter information was readily available.

Election administrators undertook additional security precautions, especially in the highly contested states, by implementing visible security enhancements, including police presence. This move, aimed at protecting polling staff and voters, reflected heightened concerns in the pre-election period about election-related threats. While there were no significant security incidents reported on election day, the FBI announced that polling stations in several states received bomb threats which were determined not to be credible.¹⁸⁸ Several lawsuits were filed related to extending voting hours, some of which were in response to closures caused by the bomb threats.¹⁸⁹ The Navajo Nation also filed a complaint in Arizona to extend voting hours on election day.¹⁹⁰

Despite initial concerns regarding the recruitment of polling staff, the ODIHR LEOM observers did not witness shortages that would adversely affect the election process and further noted they performed their duties professionally. The election officials appeared well-trained and adhered to polling procedures. While issues with voting equipment were reported in a few locations, these were generally isolated and addressed quickly.¹⁹¹ Notably, Cambria and Bedford County officials in Pennsylvania experienced significant ballot scanning errors, prompting officials to extend voting hours until 10 PM to accommodate affected voters. Voters were instructed to place their provisional ballots in auxiliary bins for later counting.

There were no significant issues reported on the accuracy of voter lists during voter identification, but in some isolated cases, the ODIHR LEOM noted that addresses in voters' IDs did not match those recorded on voter lists, leading to a requirement to cast provisional ballots. In addition, voter assistance hotlines and resources were used actively to support voters facing ID or registration issues, helping voters resolve these hurdles without leaving the polling station. Partisan poll watchers were present inside and outside polling stations, enhancing transparency. Additionally, civil society observers, who monitored the process for its compliance with the voting rights laws, were noted in many locations visited by ODIHR LEOM. The DoJ also deployed monitors in 86 jurisdictions across 27 states for compliance with federal legislation.¹⁹²

The vote-counting process was largely automated, leveraging technology to ensure efficiency and accuracy. In the few polling stations where vote counting was directly observed by ODIHR LEOM, polling officials managed the process professionally.¹⁹³ Processing, counting and tabulation of results was largely concluded by the next day; however, vote counts in certain jurisdictions were ongoing for

¹⁸⁸ The FBI [reported](#) that many of these threats received in day Arizona, Georgia, Michigan and Wisconsin “appear to originate from Russian email domains.”

¹⁸⁹ Lawsuits were filed on election day related to extending voting hours in [Georgia](#), due to a late opening of the polls in [Pennsylvania](#), and on issues related to an electronic voting software malfunction in [Pennsylvania](#). A [lawsuit](#) was also filed on election day in New York’s Westchester County about counting county jail absentee ballots.

¹⁹⁰ The Navajo Nation filed a [complaint](#) to extend voting hours which was granted by a judge in Arizona. The complaint raised issues of late opening polls, machine malfunctions, lack of ballots, long lines and failure to accept adequate ID.

¹⁹¹ In North Carolina, the elections board [approved](#) an extra half hour of voting at two precincts that reportedly were temporarily unavailable due to technical issues. Malfunctioning of voting machines was also [reported](#) in Iowa’s Story County.

¹⁹² See the DoJ [press release](#). On 1 November, Texas’s Secretary of State issued a [decision](#) stating that the “Texas law is clear: Justice Department monitors are not permitted inside a polling place” and assured that Texas has robust measures for conducting elections. On 4 November, a federal judge rejected an effort by Missouri’s Republican leaders to ban DoJ monitors from entering polling sites in St. Louis County on election day.

¹⁹³ In Milwaukee, due to a [reported](#) human error 30,000 absentee ballots had to be re-counted.

a few days, largely due to several provisional ballots or the absentee ballots curing process.¹⁹⁴ In cases with discrepancies, voters were given up to five days after the election day to resolve them. The significant volume of last-minute submissions, such as the 225,118 early ballots dropped off in Maricopa County alone, extended the timeline for vote counting, tabulation and announcement of results.

The media began live announcements of preliminary results shortly after polls closed at 7:00 PM on the East Coast. The initial results were also posted online, mostly aggregated at the county level and, in some areas, by precinct. However, detailed election-day data and result protocols were not readily accessible in all jurisdictions. Following the elections, the turnout was estimated to be almost 157 million voters or 64 per cent of the voting-eligible population.¹⁹⁵

XVII. POST-ELECTION DAY DEVELOPMENTS

Following the 5 November U.S. elections, the post-election environment remained calm despite earlier concerns about potential unrest. Despite unfounded claims of possible fraud circulating during the campaign, all candidates ultimately accepted the results and the peaceful transition of power was upheld. While there were isolated protests in certain cities, reports of racist messages targeting Black voters across the country sparked outrage and highlighted ongoing racial tensions.¹⁹⁶

In the early morning of 6 November, media outlets projected that Mr. Trump had secured enough Electoral College votes to claim victory in the election. Later that day, Ms. Harris conceded and highlighted the importance of a peaceful transfer of power and ensuring that the next president would represent all Americans, and called President-elect Trump to offer her congratulations. Mr. Trump received a similar congratulatory call from President Biden, who also invited him to a meeting at the White House during the presidential transition. On 7 November, President Biden addressed the nation, emphasizing unity and a commitment to a peaceful and orderly transition, signalling a collaborative path forward despite the challenges of a divided political landscape.¹⁹⁷

In Congress, the election results saw a shift in power. The Republicans gained control of both the HoR, securing a majority of 220 seats, as well as retained control of the Senate, with 53 seats. The 119th Congress includes 150 women. In the new House, there are 125 women members (or 29 per cent), including 94 Democrats and 31 Republicans, representing a slight decrease from the previous Congress, where 128 women served in the House. Following these elections, there are 25 women Senators (9 Republicans, 15 Democrats, and 1 independent).

Despite anticipations of a contentious post-election period filled with multiple lawsuits, there was minimal litigation following election day, especially considering stated intentions of some Republican candidates and their affiliates to challenge the election results if they were unfavourable.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ For example, in Arizona, where processing of absentee ballots before election day is permitted, extensions in vote counting were necessary as many voters held onto their absentee ballots until just before or until election day, choosing to drop them off at polling stations.

¹⁹⁵ See the [2024 General Election Turnout](#) data provided by the Election Lab of the University of Florida.

¹⁹⁶ On 8 November, the [FBI confirmed reports](#) that numerous Black people had received text messages addressing them by name, with references to slavery and “being selected to pick cotton at the nearest plantation”.

¹⁹⁷ On 6 November, both [Barack and Michelle Obama](#) and [Bill and Hillary Clinton](#) issued statements on X to congratulate President-elect Trump and his Vice President-elect and wish them well. On 8 November, Mr. Walz [delivered](#) remarks in Minnesota and vowed to protect his state from President-elect Donald Trump’s agenda.

¹⁹⁸ A notable example of post-election litigation is a case in [Pennsylvania](#) filed on 7 November by Republican senatorial candidate David McCormick. Overall, the post-election period was characterized by an abrupt decrease in election-related litigation.

State-specific recount laws, which vary across the country, were also a factor in this process.¹⁹⁹ On 13 November, the Pennsylvania Department of State mandated a recount in the state's U.S. Senate race due to the margin being under the automatic trigger of 0.5 per cent.²⁰⁰ On 14 November, the RNC have filed three lawsuits in Pennsylvania to block the counting of undated or wrongly dated mail ballots even though the ballots were unlikely to affect the outcome.²⁰¹ The claim cited a Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruling prohibiting such ballots from being counted.²⁰²

Official results of congressional races were finalized throughout November, with the results of the last contest determined on 3 December.²⁰³ In line with the U.S. Constitution, Electoral College delegations convened on 17 December to cast their ballots for President and Vice President. Each delegation voted for the candidate who won the popular vote in their state, and six Certificates of the Vote were prepared for distribution by 25 December to various officials, including the President of the Senate and state election authorities. The final official tally occurred on 6 January when the U.S. House and Senate met in a joint session, presided over by the Vice President, to formally count the Electoral College votes and confirm the results of the election.

On 25 March 2025, U.S. President Trump signed an executive order titled “Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections” with several far-reaching measures related to voter eligibility and the requirement to prove citizenship, new resources for identifying cases of electoral fraud, some overarching new rules for election day processes aimed at being implemented across the country and reinforcing control against the influx of foreign money into campaign finance.²⁰⁴ By 1 April, multiple lawsuits were filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia challenging the legality of the order on a wide range of issues, arguing that it exceeds presidential authority and threatens to disenfranchise voters and that it unlawfully takes away the power from Congress and the states in regulating federal elections.²⁰⁵

XVIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations, as contained throughout the text, are offered with a view to enhance the conduct of elections in the United States and to support efforts to bring them fully in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. These

¹⁹⁹ See the detailed [overview](#) on possible recounts, envisaged by each state. In 24 states and D.C., by law, recounts are automatically triggered when results fall within a specified margin, varying from 0.5 to 1 per cent. Additionally, 41 states and D.C., allow recounts to be requested. In states without a recount process, a defeated candidate's only option is to challenge the election results in court, where a recount may be ordered by a judge.

²⁰⁰ The lawsuit came amid a closely-contested senatorial race between Republican Dave McCormick and Democrat Senator Bob Casey, with Mr. McCormick narrowly leading 48.9 per cent to 48.5 per cent, triggering a recount. The Pennsylvania Department of State stopped the recount after Casey conceded to McCormick on 21 November.

²⁰¹ A Pennsylvania judge [dismissed](#) the one lawsuit brought by the RNC and David McCormick challenging the counting of three mail-in ballots in Centre County. The Republicans withdrew its contest against two ballots, the judge dismissed the third. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and incumbent Senator Casey's campaign moved to intervene in a separate [case](#) before Pennsylvania Supreme Court, arguing that the undated and wrongly dated mail-in ballots should be counted, or else it would violate the state constitution.

²⁰² On 1 November the Pennsylvania Supreme Court [paused a ruling](#) at the RNC's request, barring Philadelphia County from counting undated or misdated mail ballots in recent elections.

²⁰³ The 13th district in California experienced an exceptionally close race, with the establishment of results delayed partly due to the legal requirement that absentee ballots postmarked by Election Day be counted if they arrive within seven days. A recount was conducted in Iowa's 1st district, where a Democrat candidate requested it after trailing the Republican incumbent by fewer than 1,000 votes, and the recount confirmed the election result.

²⁰⁴ See [Executive Order #14248](#).

²⁰⁵ Lawsuits include those [filed](#) by the Democratic National Committee (along with the Democratic Governors Association, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries), a [lawsuit](#) by the League of Women Voters Education Fund and another [lawsuit](#) by the Campaign Legal Center together with the State Democracy Defenders Fund.

recommendations should be read in conjunction with prior ODIHR recommendations which remain to be addressed.²⁰⁶ ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities of the United States to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To ensure timely and effective safeguards against legal changes that may have discriminatory intent or impact against racial and linguistic minorities, Congress should adopt a new formula for determining jurisdictions required to undergo federal pre-clearance for changes to election laws, in line with the Voting Rights Act.
2. As previously recommended, in line with the principle of equality of the vote, U.S. authorities should reassess the Electoral College system for electing the president and vice president.
3. To meet international standards and safeguard the impartiality of the election administration, election officials' appointments should aim to achieve political neutrality through a balanced political representation. Election administrators should not oversee elections in which they are competing.
4. To support election officials and contestants in countering disinformation and protecting election infrastructure, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), in cooperation with other federal agencies, could develop additional training and methodological materials and deliver training aimed at mitigating election management risks.
5. In line with the principle of equal suffrage, citizens resident in the District of Columbia and U.S. territories should be provided with full representation rights in Congress. In addition, the right to vote in the presidential election should be extended to citizens resident in the U.S. territories.
6. State authorities should enhance inter-state co-ordination efforts to improve the cross-matching of voter registration data in order to avoid potential inaccuracies in the voter lists, including outdated entries and multiple registrations of the same persons.
7. The number of supporting signatures for candidate nomination should be revised so as not to exceed one per cent of registered voters or of those who voted in previous elections, in line with international good practice.
8. Political parties and candidates should avoid using inflammatory and divisive rhetoric in the campaign, refrain from knowingly spreading false information and from calling into question election integrity without a clear basis or evidence.
9. As previously recommended, contribution limits and disclosure for all types of campaign committees should be regulated. Independent groups and non-profit organizations that engage in campaign activities or donate to campaign committees should be legally required to disclose their sources of funding within a timeframe that allows for transparency of campaign financing.

²⁰⁶ According to paragraph 25 of the [1999 OSCE Istanbul Document](#), OSCE participating States committed themselves "to follow up promptly the ODIHR's election assessment and recommendations". The follow-up of prior recommendations is assessed by ODIHR LEOM as follows: recommendations 15, 18, 26, 31 and 35 from the final report on the 2020 general elections are fully implemented. Recommendation 30 was mostly implemented. The recommendations 9, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 26 and 29 from the final report on the 2022 mid-term elections are partially implemented. See also the [ODIHR Electoral Recommendations Database](#).

10. To promote more accountable and transparent campaign spending, federal campaign finance legislation and oversight should be updated to reflect the modern political funding landscape, including regulations on the use of new financial instruments such as cryptocurrencies, as well as other tools and digital assets that may be considered in-kind donations.
11. The legal framework for the protection of media freedom should be strengthened by decriminalizing defamation, establishing comprehensive safeguards against strategic lawsuits, and legislating further protections for journalists' sources and against surveillance without a warrant.
12. In line with OSCE commitments, federal and state legislation should clearly provide for unimpeded access to international and citizen non-partisan observers to observe all stages of the electoral process.

B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Legal Framework

13. In line with OSCE commitments, consideration should be given to ratifying the Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to further protect and promote their civil, political and electoral rights.
14. As previously recommended, to avoid uncertainties and provide for the consistent and stable application of electoral law, the basic electoral procedures should be regulated at the federal level, including the time limits for voter registration, early voting deadlines and procedures, timeline and rules for tabulation and certification of results, rights of observers and deadlines for the adjudication of pre- and post-election lawsuits.

Election Administration

15. The Federal and State governments should ensure sufficient funds to meet the administrative and operational needs of the election management bodies.

Voting Technologies and Cybersecurity

16. Consideration could be given to developing clear tools, training and guidelines for specifying requirements for election technologies that are developed, purchased and managed by the state- and county-level election officials. It is also recommended to expand the scope of the Election Assistance Commission's certification and guidelines to align with the definition of election infrastructure used by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, supported by the provision of appropriate resources.
17. Consideration could be given to ensuring that state and federal funding covers both investment and operational expenses throughout the election technology life cycle, including end-of-life management and major updates. To facilitate dealing with ageing equipment, federal agencies could also develop tools and guidelines specific to end-of-life election technology.

Alternative Voting Methods

18. In order to fully facilitate the absentee vote, the practice of ballot 'curing' could be considered in all states, with a view to decreasing the number of invalid absentee and provisional votes.

Voting Rights, Voter Registration and Identification

19. Restrictions on voting rights based on criminal convictions should be reviewed to ensure that all limitations are proportionate, all rights are automatically restored upon completion of sentences, and that limitations are not applied to persons in pre-trial detentions. All affected citizens should be provided with the possibility to vote and be informed about their voting rights and ways to exercise them.
20. In line with international standards, the restrictions on electoral rights based on intellectual or psychosocial disability should be removed.
21. State authorities should uphold the federal legal requirement and refrain from modifying the voter register close to the election.
22. Authorities should ensure that voters who require assistance are allowed to receive help from an individual of their choice, as provided under the Voting Rights Act. Unnecessary restrictions that impose criminal penalties on those assisting voters should be removed.
23. As previously recommended, state authorities should make further efforts to ensure that voter identification documents, where required, are equally available to all voters.

Candidate Registration

24. Authorities could consider further measures to incentivize the inclusion and visibility of women in party structures as candidates and leaders.

Campaign Environment

25. As previously recommended, the legal framework that governs campaigning on social networks could be strengthened in order to protect a vibrant, safe and transparent digital public domain. Social media companies could strengthen and consistently enforce their internal policies and make reporting and content moderation policies and decisions in response to violations of these policies more timely and transparent while also addressing the influence of owners on content policy.

Campaign Finance

26. The integrity of electoral campaign financing should be strengthened by implementing stricter regulations on contributions and expenditures from foreign nationals, particularly by banning foreign nationals from expenditures regarding advocacy campaigns and ballot measures on the state level.
27. Consideration could be given to disclosing the origin of cryptocurrencies reported as in-kind donations.
28. The right to appeal the dismissal of complaints by the Federal Election Commission on the basis of prosecutorial discretion should be ensured by law.

Media

29. In order to safeguard editorial independence and ensure comprehensive local news coverage, particularly during election periods, consideration should be given to establishing a sustainable

long-term federal funding mechanism for public media through appropriate legislative measures that would protect funding allocations from short-term political considerations.

30. An effective mechanism to prevent and promptly investigate all incidents of violence, threats and harassment targeting journalists should be established at the federal and state levels. Public officials and candidates should refrain from rhetoric that may incite hostility against media professionals.

Election Dispute Resolution

31. In order to ensure that court orders and decisions are rendered well in advance of election day, and to limit legal uncertainty, consideration should be given to the adoption of legislative measures to establish reasonable and sufficient time limits for the proceedings and determination of lawsuits filed at state and federal courts.

ANNEX I: ELECTION RESULTS

Presidential election

Presidential Candidate	Vice Presidential Candidate	Political Party	Electoral College		Popular Vote	
			Votes	%	Votes	%
Donald John Trump	James David Vance	Republican	318	58	77,303,573	49.9
Kamala Devi Harris	Tim Walz	Democratic	226	42	75,019,257	48.4
Jill Stein	Butch Ware	Green	0	0	763,051	0.5
Robert Francis Kennedy Jr.	Nicole Shanahan	Independent/We the People	0	0	739,073	0.5
Chase Russell Oliver	Michael ter Maat	Libertarian	0	0	635,589	0.4
Other candidates			0	0	383,395	0.3

Elections for Senate

Political party	Up for election	Seats won	Gain/Loss	Elected to 119 th Congress
Democratic	21	15	-4	45
Republican	13	16	+4	53
Independent	2	2	=	2
	34	34		100

Elections for the House of Representatives

Political party	Elected in 2022	Gain/Loss	Elected to 119 th Congress
Democratic	213	+2	215
Republican	222	-2	220
Other	–		
	435		435

ANNEX II: LIST OF OBSERVERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Pia	Kauma	Special Coordinator	Finland
Pere Joan	Pons	Head of Delegation	Spain
Helidon	Bushati		Albania
Damian	Gjikhuri		Albania
Bojan	Goxheri		Albania
Ermonela	Valikaj		Albania
Pol	Bartolome Areny		Andorra
Nadine	Dragan		Austria
Axel	Kassegger		Austria
Gudrun	Kugler		Austria
David	Stoegmueller		Austria
Malik	Ben Achour		Belgium
Laurent	Botilde		Belgium
Valerie	De Bue		Belgium
Peter	De Roover		Belgium
Ilsa	Malfroot		Belgium
Andy	Pieters		Belgium
Ellen	Samyn		Belgium
Aaron	Verbrugghe		Belgium
Peter	Vercammen		Belgium
Albin	Muslic		Bosnia and Herzegovina
Teo	Rogic		Bosnia and Herzegovina
Mohammad Khair	Al Zaibak		Canada
Andreas	Baker		Canada
Bernadette	Clement		Canada
Heather	Mcperson		Canada
Mihael	Zmajlovic		Croatia
Nikola	Mazar		Croatia
Olgica	Tolic		Croatia
Irene	Charalambides		Cyprus
Kyriakos	Hadjiyianni		Cyprus
Christos	Senekis		Cyprus
Silvia	Andrisova		Czech Republic
Jan	Bauer		Czech Republic
Jan	Richter		Czech Republic
Peter	Juel-Jensen		Denmark
Soren	Sondergaard		Denmark
Heljo	Pikhof		Estonia
Mati	Raidma		Estonia
Vilhelm	Junnila		Finland
Ville	Kaunisto		Finland
Mika	Lintila		Finland
Ville	Skinnari		Finland

Valerie	Boyer	France
Stephane	Demilly	France
Stephanie	Koltchanov	France
Odile	Lelarge	France
Thomas	Portes	France
Nikoloz	Samkharadze	Georgia
Renata	Alt	Germany
Dagmar Camilla	Andres	Germany
Canan	Bayram	Germany
Daniela	Deridder	Germany
Thomas	Grimm	Germany
Stefan	Keuter	Germany
Freyja	Koci	Germany
Dorothee Katja Julia	Martin	Germany
Volker	Mayer-Lay	Germany
Alexander	Radwan	Germany
Thomas	Rowekamp	Germany
Robin	Wagener	Germany
Joe	Weingarten	Germany
Tobias	Winkler	Germany
Maria	Antoniou	Greece
Georgios	Champouris	Greece
Theodoros	Karaoglou	Greece
Dimitrios	Markopoulos	Greece
Georgios	Nikitiadis	Greece
Miltiadis	Zamparas	Greece
Dagbjort	Hakonardottir	Iceland
Birgir	Thorarinsson	Iceland
Shane	Cassells	Ireland
Michael	Creed	Ireland
Ben	Dunne	Ireland
Alessandro	Alfieri	Italy
Vincenzo	Amendola	Italy
Anna	Bilotti	Italy
Pia	Califano	Italy
Fabrizio	Comba	Italy
Gianluca	Cantalamessa	Italy
Giuseppe	De Cristofaro	Italy
Mauro	Del Barba	Italy
Anna	Di Domenico	Italy
Valeria	Galardini	Italy
Emanuele	Loperfido	Italy
Roberto	Montella	Italy
Federica	Onori	Italy
Catia	Polidori	Italy
Eugenio	Zoffili	Italy
Lyazzat	Rysbekova	Kazakhstan
Gilles	Baum	Luxembourg

Pia	Bisenius	Luxembourg
Emile	Eicher	Luxembourg
Gustave	Graas	Luxembourg
Claude	Haagen	Luxembourg
Alexandra	Schoos	Luxembourg
Nathalie	Amoratti-Blanc	Monaco
Corinne	Bertani	Monaco
Jevto	Erakovic	Montenegro
Jevrosima	Pejovic	Montenegro
Moneilo	Lekovic	Montenegro
Mohamed	El Bakkouri	Morocco
Abdelkrim	El Hamss	Morocco
Femmy	Bakker-De Jong	Netherlands
Boris	Dittrich	Netherlands
Farah	Karimi	Netherlands
Jeroen	Recourt	Netherlands
Robert	Van Gasteren	Netherlands
Madeleine	Van Toorenburg	Netherlands
Rian	Vogels	Netherlands
Nikola	Micevski	North Macedonia
Biljana	Ognenovska	North Macedonia
Halil	Snopche	North Macedonia
Monica	Zajkova	North Macedonia
Mona Lill	Fageras	Norway
Bard	Hoksrud	Norway
Siv	Mossleth	Norway
Jan Tore	Sanner	Norway
Radoslaw	Fogiel	Poland
Konrad	Fryszak	Poland
Kazimierz	Kleina	Poland
Marcin	Mykietynski	Poland
Urszula	Paslawska	Poland
Krzysztof	Truskolaski	Poland
Jacek	Wlosowicz	Poland
Pawel	Zalewski	Poland
Paula	Cardoso	Portugal
Ana Margarida	Isidoro	Portugal
Luis	Graca	Portugal
Radu-Mihai	Mihail	Romania
Teodora	Mitru	Romania
Sara	Conti	San Marino
Michele	Muratori	San Marino
Sherif	Abdili	Serbia
Miodrag	Panceski	Serbia
Milan	Radin	Serbia
Dimitrije	Todoric	Serbia
Zan	Mahnic	Slovenia
Ignacio	Gutierrez	Spain

Gustavo	Pallares	Spain
Artemi Vicent	Rallo	Spain
Ricardo	Tarno	Spain
Johan	Buser	Sweden
Kadir	Kasirga	Sweden
Carina	Odebrink	Sweden
Bjorn	Soder	Sweden
Fredrik	Svensson	Sweden
Linnea	Wickman	Sweden
Markus	Wiechel	Sweden
Jean-Luc	Addor	Switzerland
Manuchekhr	Salokhudinov	Tajikistan
Selami	Altinok	Türkiye
Tekin	Bingol	Türkiye
Tugce	Okumus	Türkiye
Pavlo	Frolov	Ukraine
Yevheniia	Kravchuk	Ukraine
Hanna	Lichman	Ukraine
Mykyta	Poturaiev	Ukraine
Sergii	Rakhmanin	Ukraine
Sergii	Yevtushok	Ukraine
Yaroslav	Yurchyshyn	Ukraine
Rupa	Huq	United Kingdom
Philip	Smith	United Kingdom
John	Whittingdale	United Kingdom

ODIHR LEOM Long-term Observers

Günther	Guggenberger	Austria
Markus	Pollak	Austria
Veronika	Homolová	Czech Republic
Jan	Schroth	Czech Republic
Marko	Mannila	Finland
Marie	D'Arenberg	France
Indiana	Falaise	France
Sylvain	Ollier	France
Nicolas	Teindas	France
Lela	Taliuri	Georgia
Jana	Bürgers	Germany
Thomas Michael	Froehlich	Germany
Henning	Horstmeyer	Germany
Natalie	Krieger	Germany
Josef	Lehleiter	Germany
Thomas	Leszke	Germany
Janina	Markewitsch	Germany
Hildegard	Rogler-Mochel	Germany
Eckart	Rohde	Germany
Kai	Schaefer	Germany
Claudia	Schäfer	Germany

Christoph	Wiedemann	Germany
Matthias Paul	Zeller	Germany
Daniel	Marky	Hungary
Diarmuid (Dermot)	Peavoy	Ireland
Robert	Adams	Italy
Matteo	Bezzi	Italy
Renata	Tardioli	Italy
Aibek	Zheken	Kazakhstan
Orgil	Dugersuren	Mongolia
Karoline	Foss	Norway
Hildegunn	Heinum	Norway
Dag	Hellesund	Norway
Hans Christen	Knævelsrud	Norway
Soren	Munch	Norway
Cecilie	Orestis	Norway
Eva Kristin	Pedersen	Norway
Rolf Christian	Ranheim	Norway
Arild	Stenberg	Norway
Per	Svartefoss	Norway
Claudia-Monica	Alexandru	Romania
Ivana	Krstić	Serbia
Knut Lennart	Bergknut	Sweden
Eva Christina	Bergman	Sweden
Elof	Dahmén	Sweden
Monica	Green	Sweden
Robert V	Hall	Sweden
Gabriella	Ingerstad	Sweden
Bernt Tommy	Karlsson	Sweden
Christian	Leffler	Sweden
Tina	Lundh	Sweden
Hans Birger	Nareskog	Sweden
Astrid	Nunez	Sweden
Anna	Rogalska Hedlund	Sweden
Lars	Tore Elvert Tollemark	Sweden
Erik Mattias	Wandler	Sweden
Sascha	Alderisi	Switzerland
Fabio	Baiardi	Switzerland
Shumit	Chanda	Switzerland
Michelle	Gysin	Switzerland
Martin	Minder	Switzerland
Andreas	Speiser	Switzerland
Armagan	Inci Ersoy	Türkiye
Togan	Oral	Türkiye

ODIHR LEOM Core Team

Tamás	Meszerics	Head of Mission	Hungary
Davor	Ćorluka		Bosnia and Herzegovina
Vanya	Anguelova		Bulgaria
Jessica	Thompson		Canada
Liisa	Past		Estonia
Yves-Marie	Doublet		France
Tamara	Otiashvili		Georgia
Silke	Tittel		Germany
Daniela	Bottigelli		Italy
Ahmad	Rasuli		Kyrgyz Republic
Tomasz	Jańczy		Poland
Radivoje	Grujić		Serbia
Maja	Sandić		Serbia
Ivana	Stanojev		Serbia
Farrukh	Juraqulov		Tajikistan
Egor	Tilpunov		Ukraine

ABOUT ODIHR

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is OSCE's principal institution to assist participating States "to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to abide by the rule of law, to promote principles of democracy and (...) to build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions, as well as promote tolerance throughout society" (1992 Helsinki Summit Document). This is referred to as the OSCE human dimension.

ODIHR, based in Warsaw (Poland) was created as the Office for Free Elections at the 1990 Paris Summit and started operating in May 1991. One year later, the name of the Office was changed to reflect an expanded mandate to include human rights and democratization. Today it employs over 150 staff.

ODIHR is the lead agency in Europe in the field of **election observation**. Every year, it co-ordinates and organizes the deployment of thousands of observers to assess whether elections in the OSCE region are conducted in line with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and with national legislation. Its unique methodology provides an in-depth insight into the electoral process in its entirety. Through assistance projects, ODIHR helps participating States to improve their electoral framework.

The Office's **democratization** activities include: rule of law, legislative support, democratic governance, migration and freedom of movement, and gender equality. ODIHR implements a number of targeted assistance programmes annually, seeking to develop democratic structures.

ODIHR also assists participating States' in fulfilling their obligations to promote and protect **human rights and fundamental freedoms** consistent with OSCE human dimension commitments. This is achieved by working with a variety of partners to foster collaboration, build capacity and provide expertise in thematic areas, including human rights in the fight against terrorism, enhancing the human rights protection of trafficked people, human rights education and training, human rights monitoring and reporting, and women's human rights and security.

Within the field of **tolerance and non-discrimination**, ODIHR provides support to the participating States in strengthening their response to hate crimes and incidents of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. ODIHR's activities related to tolerance and non-discrimination are focused on the following areas: legislation; law enforcement training; monitoring, reporting on, and following up on responses to hate-motivated crimes and incidents; as well as educational activities to promote tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding.

ODIHR provides advice to participating States on their policies on **Roma and Sinti**. It promotes capacity-building and networking among Roma and Sinti communities, and encourages the participation of Roma and Sinti representatives in policy-making bodies.

All ODIHR activities are carried out in close co-ordination and co-operation with OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions and field operations, as well as with other international organizations.

More information is available on the ODIHR website (www.osce.org/odihr).