



## 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment Citizen Connection Center

*An Interactive Communications Hub*

### Introduction

American Promise leads the cross-partisan campaign for the 28th Amendment so that people, not money, govern America. In 2017, American Promise is launching the *28<sup>th</sup> Amendment Citizen Connection Center*. The *Citizen Connection Center* is an interactive communications hub to consolidate, curate, amplify and connect the widespread energy, information and activities that are propelling the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment cause.

The 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution replaces the Supreme Court's doctrine of political inequality, reflected in decisions such as *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, with foundational American principles of equal citizenship and representation and safeguards against systemic corruption.

Our plan to win ratification of the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment within the decade has three drivers:

- (1) Growing Congressional and State support with our *Citizen Uprising* and *Ready To Ratify* programs to organize and amplify cross-partisan local action;
- (2) **Strengthening and expanding the national cross-partisan 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment movement with our *Citizen Connection Center* and *National Citizen Leadership Conferences***; and
- (3) Building a national consensus about the specific language of the Amendment with our *Writing The 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment* Program.

This summary concerns only a component of the second driver, the *Citizen Connection Center*. Contributions to this civic program may be made to American Promise, Inc. a non-profit organization under IRC section 501(c)(3).<sup>1</sup>

### Expected Results

*The Citizen Connection Center* will:

- Create a one-stop interactive website for citizens, media, organizations, legislators and staff for education, resources, events, legislative developments, citizen story-telling,

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to our 501(c)(3) work, we also advance the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment through ballot initiatives, candidate scorecards, citizen action and more under American Promise Initiative, Inc., a non-profit organization under IRC section 501(c)(4).

news, opinion pieces and more about the background and progress of the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment

- Amplify local, state, and national “wins” to expand and sustain more
- Provide a single, visible, up-to-date tracker of legislative support for the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment, and the status of Amendment resolutions
- Improve communications and collaborations across many national, state and local organizations working for the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment
- Provide entry points for, and news about, citizen activities such as *The National Citizen Leadership Conference*, *Writing The 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment*, the *Citizens Uprising*, and *APConnect* (the American Promise member social network)

## The Opportunity

The launch of the *Citizen Connection Center* follows significant preparation. As of January 2017, 18 states and nearly 800 communities have enacted 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment resolutions. Polls and ballot initiatives continue to show super-majority support for the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment, and more Republicans are joining Democrats in becoming outspoken in calling for the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment.<sup>2</sup>

This momentum has led to a dozen different 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment bills in Congress.<sup>3</sup> These are a good start, and the next two years offer considerable opportunity to build more and deeper cross-partisan support. It will be essential to measure, track and report where support stands in Congress and in the states expected to ratify the Amendment.

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<sup>2</sup> See Statement of Fmr. Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyoming) ([http://www.americanpromise.net/alan\\_simpson\\_letter](http://www.americanpromise.net/alan_simpson_letter)); Congressman Walter Jones (R-North Carolina) (<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/election/article106380887.html>); Fmr. Congressman James Leach ([http://www.americanpromise.net/nina\\_turner\\_and\\_jim\\_leach\\_op\\_ed\\_desmoines\\_register](http://www.americanpromise.net/nina_turner_and_jim_leach_op_ed_desmoines_register))

<sup>3</sup> To enhance our ability to implement *Writing The 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment*, American Promise has refrained from endorsing any specific amendment bill, much as we applaud and facilitate continued progress in Congress. By way of example, this Amendment proposal received 54 votes in the US Senate in the last Congress, and was reintroduced in the House (167 co-sponsors) and Senate (44 co-sponsors):

Section 1. To advance democratic self-government and political equality for all, and to protect the integrity of government and the electoral process, Congress and the States may regulate and set limits on the raising and spending of money by candidates and others to influence elections.

Section 2. Congress and the States shall have power to implement this article by appropriate legislation, and may distinguish between natural persons and corporations or other artificial entities created by law, including by prohibiting such entities from spending money to influence elections.

Section 3. Nothing in this article shall be construed to grant Congress or the States the power to abridge the freedom of the press.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-joint-resolution/5/text>

For this much progress, the communications infrastructure and entry points of citizen engagement still have significant gaps. Information about the overall progress of the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment is difficult to find for someone new to the cause. Various organizations working on the Amendment have websites of varying effectiveness but the overall effect is one of fragmentation and partial information. With some exceptions, the national media continue to ignore the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment effort, and worse, perpetuate a false narrative that it is ‘partisan’ or ‘impossible’. Finally, even resounding victories are too little known and too little celebrated, creating missed opportunities for scaling and exponential growth of Amendment support.

The Wisconsin story is typical: 90 cities and towns have passed 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment resolutions. Voters in Janesville, Wisconsin, the hometown of House Speaker Paul Ryan, approved a 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment resolution by 84%-16%. On election day in November 2016, when Republicans won the State, voters in eighteen more Wisconsin communities passed 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment ballot initiatives by approvals ranging from 65% to 91%. This remarkable effort has been initiated and driven by a local, all-volunteer group, and is little known or celebrated, even among people who follow the Amendment effort.

These and other gaps and opportunities are identified in the table below (see Need Addressed).

## The Plan

The Citizen Connection Center is not only for American Promise but will serve all existing and new local, state, national organizations, and all Americans. The *Citizens Connection Center* delivers three functions that do not currently exist:

- (1) An attractive, effective, and credible clearinghouse of information for use by all;
- (2) An open-source, well-managed national and state legislative scorecard built on a “Ready To Ratify” roadmap with benchmarks; and
- (3) Creation, promotion and access to influential, national thought-leaders in support of the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

The *Citizens Connection Center* leverages existing resources and adds new capacity to create a key piece of the missing “connective tissue” in the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment movement.

Component	Features	Need addressed
<b>Clearinghouse Communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content-rich, curated Website</li> <li>• Roadmap/Civic Courage/Citizen Action Tools/AP Connect reports and portals</li> <li>• Daily clips from local state and federal sources</li> <li>• Weekly e-news letter to members and affiliated organizations</li> <li>• Interviews, opinion, video, AMAs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented, inaccessible information</li> <li>• Lack of clarity on specific action steps for Americans to take</li> <li>• Isolated, disconnected citizen action</li> <li>• Inadequate amplification of local and state successes</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Re-inventing of the wheel” for communications, actions, initiatives</li> <li>• Failure to connect and replicate best practices to enable scale</li> </ul>
<b>Legislative Clearinghouse &amp; Tracker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. Congress &amp; State scorecard</li> <li>• Ready For Ratification benchmarks for state and federal support</li> <li>• Inventory of petitions and ballot initiatives for local and state campaigns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unclear or absent roadmap</li> <li>• Disconnect b/w overwhelming support on the ground v. support from elected representative (failure to leverage wins)</li> <li>• Insufficiently coordinated and sustained national campaign</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership Communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Portal and story-telling from the <i>National Citizen Leadership Conference, Citizen Uprising, and Writing the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment</i></li> <li>• National speaker bureau</li> <li>• Op-eds and other media distribution</li> <li>• Facilitated social media nexus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented leadership, organizations, events and campaigns</li> <li>• Disregard/lack of recognition from media</li> <li>• Failure to leverage wins to move scorecard &amp; scale</li> </ul>