



BALLOT PEDIA

The Encyclopedia of American Politics

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM LESLIE GRAVES, OUR PRESIDENT AND CEO

The Industrial Age is long over. The internet has changed the way we interact with the world in major ways—we are in the heyday of the Information Age.

Google search, long the dominant way that people have navigated the internet (and the primary way that nearly one-quarter of all American midterm voters found Ballotpedia before election day), finally has a competitor: **voice search**. Amazon’s Alexa, Apple’s Siri, and Microsoft’s Cortana are all on the field with Google Assistant. Alexa’s share of the market—over 13 percent—is particularly striking given that it only became available in 2017.

The voice search service is a way for Amazon to compete head-to-head with Google in a space that is currently completely dominated by Google. This is the space that Google owns for people when they just want a simple answer to a question such as “Who is my state senator?” or “How high is Mount Everest?” or “What are the bed and breakfasts in Peoria?” For years now, when you’ve had a question like that, you would go to Google search.

As Amazon continues to grab market share in this space, instead of pulling up your Google search bar, you will just **say**, “Alexa, who is my state senator?” and the voice enabled device installed in your car, refrigerator, television, computer, washing machine (you get the picture) will answer you.

Why does this matter for Ballotpedia? It matters because we have partnered with Amazon to be the source of the answers that Alexa gives for political questions. When you ask, “Alexa, what does a ‘no’ vote on ballot measure three mean?” or “Alexa, who is my state treasurer?” or “Alexa, what is the partisan breakdown of my state legislature?” you will receive an answer sourced from Ballotpedia. Bill Barton, Amazon’s vice president of Alexa Information, said in an [interview](#) that Ballotpedia was selected because it was among the “most credible, neutral sources” Amazon could find.

We’ve worked hard to earn the descriptors “credible” and “neutral,” and we’re thrilled that our reputation earned us a partnership with Amazon. We’re even more thrilled to have had a partnership not only with Amazon, but with Facebook and Twitter as well!

Our Big Tech partnerships alone would have made 2018 an outstanding year, but 2018 saw a number of other big successes and milestones for Ballotpedia. One milestone we’re incredibly proud of is reaching our one *billionth* page view. That means that Ballotpedia has been viewed over one billion times since we started in 2006. As if that wasn’t enough, in 2018 we also added over 300,000 subscribers to our email lists, had more than 25 million people visit our Sample Ballot Lookup Tool just ahead of casting their votes for the midterms, and provided election information for nearly *one-quarter* of the people who voted in November.



WE ARE IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF HOW PEOPLE WILL BE GETTING THEIR INFORMATION ABOUT POLITICS IN THE FUTURE.

Our accomplishments in 2018 show that we are in on the ground floor of how people will be getting their information about politics in the future. We already dominate political information searches on Google, and when coupled with Big Tech partnerships, we are poised to be the dominant resource for political information long into the future.

1 IN 4 VOTERS VISITED BALLOTPEDIA BEFORE VISITING THE ELECTION BOOTH IN 2018

Yes, you read that correctly: of the 114 million people who voted in the 2018 midterm elections, 25.3 million of them or 22.4 percent—nearly 1 in 4—visited Ballotpedia before casting their vote on November 6th.

We have long believed that people are hungry for the kind of straightforward, accurate, and unbiased information that Ballotpedia provides, and the numbers bear that out.

FACTS NOT FILTERS

Ballotpedia's readers come to us because they are tired of getting news from organizations they believe to be biased. The people who read, subscribe to, and support Ballotpedia want political coverage that is free of bias and partisanship. They come to Ballotpedia because they want **facts**, not filters.

The fact that voters are looking for the unvarnished truth when it comes to political information is borne out in our traffic. Ballotpedia was one of the top 100 most visited websites in the United States for more than two weeks of election coverage, beating out such sites as the Wall Street Journal, Politico, and NPR, among many others.

Our reputation as a neutral, unbiased source of information is important to us and has been an integral part of our growing success over the past 12 years. That reputation will no doubt continue to set us apart from other news outlets and will be our key to success in the future.

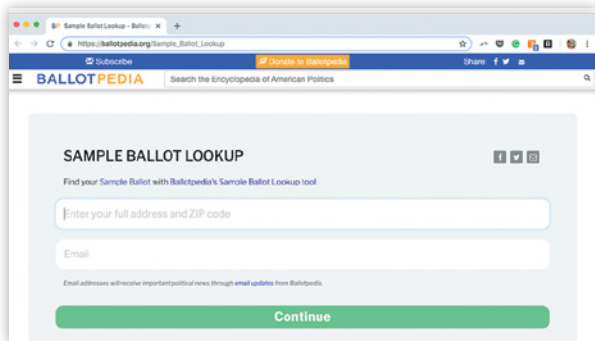


KIND WORDS WE'VE RECEIVED FROM SOCIAL MEDIA:

- ▶ **The best nonpartisan resource I've found is ballotpedia.org. Click on the menu (3 horizontal lines in the top left) and select Elections and Overview. Then Click for Your Sample Ballot. Enter your residential address you used to register to vote. Entering your email is optional. When you click Continue, the system will list all the items that will be on your ballot. Click on an item for more information.**
- ▶ **Use this website. It's fantastic. =>>> ballotpedia.org**
- ▶ **Thank you for the excellent public service that Ballotpedia is providing!**

SPOTLIGHT: SAMPLE BALLOT

At Ballotpedia we believe that all voters deserve up-to-date, accurate facts about the people and issues that appear on their ballots, so we decided to create an easy-to-use tool that gives them just that—our [Sample Ballot Lookup Tool](#).



While the Sample Ballot Lookup Tool itself is very easy to use, building and powering it is no simple matter. **We dedicate many, many staff hours to ensuring that the information returned in a Sample Ballot Lookup is accurate and comprehensive.**

Why do we do all of this? After all, a voter can always just get election information from their city or county clerk, right? Well, as it turns out, no. The amount of information that a voting district is required to provide varies *widely* depending on where a voter lives. Some districts will send a comprehensive list of elections right to your home! Some districts post comprehensive information online! And some districts do **none** of this. Not to mention that almost *no* districts give you any information about the candidates in an election beyond their party. What a mess!

To use Ballotpedia's Sample Ballot Lookup Tool, a voter simply enters his or her address in our tool and gets a list of the races on his or her personal ballot, from the president of the United States through the state auditor and all the way down to the school board—along with any statewide or local ballot measures. But what really sets the Ballotpedia Sample Ballot above any other ballot lookup tools is that we don't just provide the list of races. The user can also click on each candidate's name and receive detailed information about them. There is no other source offering this level of information.

With Ballotpedia's Sample Ballot Lookup Tool, more voters have access to unbiased information about who and what will be on their ballots before they enter the voting booth—and we think that's a very good thing.

DO VOTERS FIND THIS TOOL USEFUL? WE THINK THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES:

In 2018, 4.01 million people used Ballotpedia's Sample Ballot Tool. That's more than double the number who used it in 2016 (despite the lower interest and turnout typically seen in midterm elections).

Approximately 114 million people voted in the 2018 midterm election, and 22.4 percent of them—nearly 1 in 4—visited Ballotpedia between the time early voting started and the November 6 election. Many of those 25.4 million people visited Ballotpedia multiple times in that seven-week period to research their voting choices, and many used the Sample Ballot as a starting point for their search. This indicates that Ballotpedia is a critical resource for thoughtful Americans who want to weigh their options before heading to the polls.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

From national news outlets to niche political websites, media across the board loves to reference Ballotpedia. Here is a very small sampling of the **12,000+ mentions** that Ballotpedia received in 2018:

TECHCRUNCH

[2018 Midterms: 4 resources every voter should know about](#)

“1. Fill out a sample ballot for your state. If you’re not voting absentee or by mail, it’s helpful to have an idea of everything that’s on the ballot before you head into vote in person. Before you head to the polls, you can fill out a sample ballot through When We All Vote or an even more comprehensive one on Ballotpedia representing your state and local races online. Best yet, you can print, email or screenshot that and take it in with you to have a reference for your IRL voting experience so that you don’t get overwhelmed.”

ENGADGET

[Amazon prepares Alexa for the midterm elections](#)

“It has teamed up with nonprofit digital encyclopedia Ballotpedia to equip Alexa with answers first-time voters will find especially helpful. You can ask the assistant when the polls will open and what’s on your ballot. Alexa can even answer what it means to vote yes or no for a certain ballot measure and can list nominees running for a specific position.”

NATIONAL REVIEW

[How Close Is the Battle for the House? This Close.](#)

“Let’s begin with Ballotpedia’s big list of competitive districts. Better to begin by looking at too many districts than too few — and they selected 80 seats.”

BALLOTPEDIA HITS 1 BILLION PAGE VIEWS

On September 13, 2018, Ballotpedia.org received its **one billionth page view**—a major milestone. That day also happened to be the day of the final statewide primary election in 2018. Receiving our one billionth page view on the final primary day of 2018 seemed fitting for our site and what we aspire to do. It was also a great way to close out a primary season that saw exponential growth in readership of our over 280,000 encyclopedic articles.

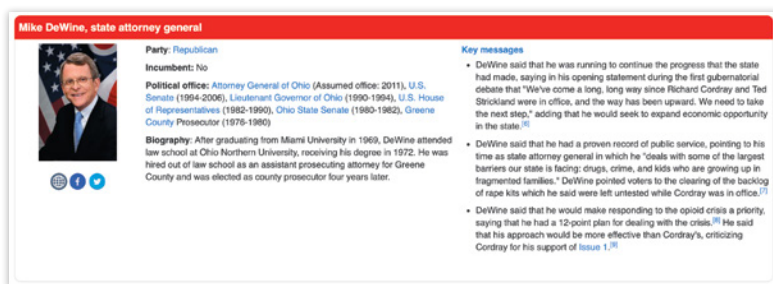
One billion page views doesn’t happen without a lot of work. Ballotpedia’s Editor in Chief Geoff Pallay attributes this achievement to “many hours of staff conversations, research, writing, and editing, but also of thousands of emails, phone calls, and social media exchanges with readers. This milestone was as much our readers’ accomplishment as it was ours. We are honored when readers choose Ballotpedia.”

Geoff also explains how Ballotpedia’s emphasis on primary election coverage and exploring creative new ways to serve readers added to this achievement, “Ballotpedia has always made it a priority to provide voters with information they might struggle to find elsewhere. In 2018, we knew our readers needed more and better information about primaries, and their enthusiastic reception of our coverage continues to be extremely gratifying.”

While reaching one billion page views was an exciting milestone for us, it wasn’t the only one in 2018. Ballotpedia’s articles were viewed more than 285 million times in 2018 alone. That number surpasses 2017’s total page views by more than 60 percent. In a non-presidential election year, Ballotpedia.org saw 69 percent more traffic than in 2016, which is staggering.

HIGHLIGHT: CANDIDATE CARDS

Ballotpedia’s number one goal is to provide our readers with the best information possible about who and what will appear on their ballots. In 2018, we took two very big steps toward that goal. The first big step was re-launching our Sample Ballot Lookup Tool, and the second was debuting our Candidate Card feature.



The [Candidate Card](#) feature allows Ballotpedia to review and summarize the key statements that a campaign—no matter its size—has made about why its candidate deserves your vote.

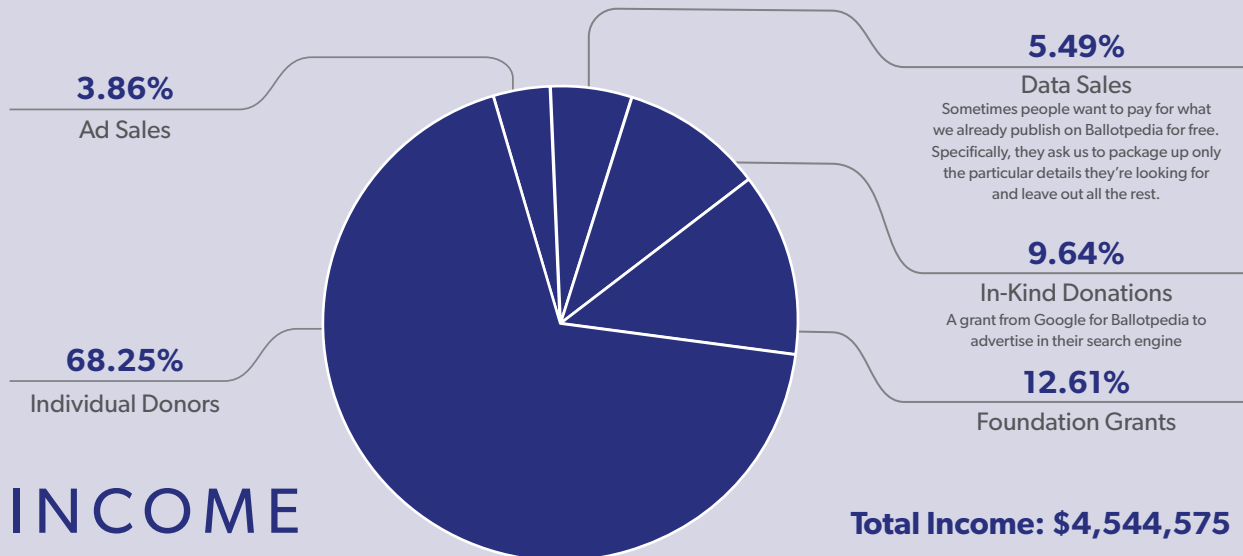
For several years, our articles on local and statewide ballot measures have included sections that give the arguments offered by the proponents and opponents as to why the electorate should

vote for or against the ballot measure. This feature has proven to be useful to our readers when making ballot measure decisions, so why not do something similar for political campaigns? After all, political campaigns are, in a sense, no different from ballot measure campaigns.

Both ballot measure campaigns and political candidate campaigns seek to use key messages that have often been focus-grouped or polled to persuade voters to vote a certain way. For ballot measures, the goal is to convince the voter to vote for or against the measure. In campaigns for political office, both candidates are giving explicit reasons about “why you should vote for me and not the other person.” And just as the truth can become hidden and hard to find through the careful messaging of ballot measure campaigns, so too can the messaging from political candidate campaigns confound voters.

At Ballotpedia we seek to offer clarity around the confusing and contradictory messaging that voters so often encounter when deciding how to vote. We’ve established a reputation as the go-to source for trustworthy ballot measure information. With the addition of our Candidate Card feature, we have no doubt that we will soon be the most reliable source for neutral and easy-to-understand candidate information.

FINANCIALS



INCOME

MEET OUR NEW COO GWEN BEATTIE

The sense that voters can't trust what they read in the mainstream media is a trend that has increased over the last few years:

- A poll of 4,000 adults released in 2018 from Axios/SurveyMonkey found that 72% of Americans believe that the traditional media outlets "report news they know to be fake, false, or purposely misleading."
- Also in 2018, Gallup released a study showing that a majority of those surveyed had lost trust in the media in recent years. Notably, more than 30% of those who identify as being on the conservative end of the spectrum said they've lost faith and they "expect that change to be permanent."
- That same Gallup study showed that Americans trust the media just slightly more than they trust Congress.



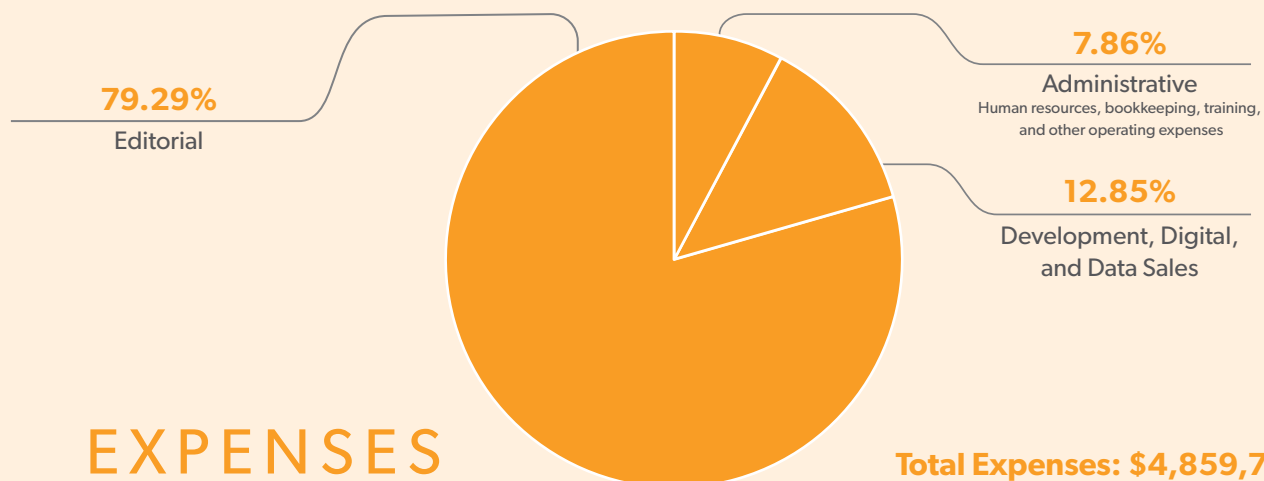
However, voters DO trust Ballotpedia. We perform monthly site-wide surveys of randomly selected readers to ask them whether they believe that Ballotpedia is trustworthy and neutral, and we consistently receive very high scores on those surveys. That's one of the main reasons people keep coming back and why they share Ballotpedia's work with their friends.

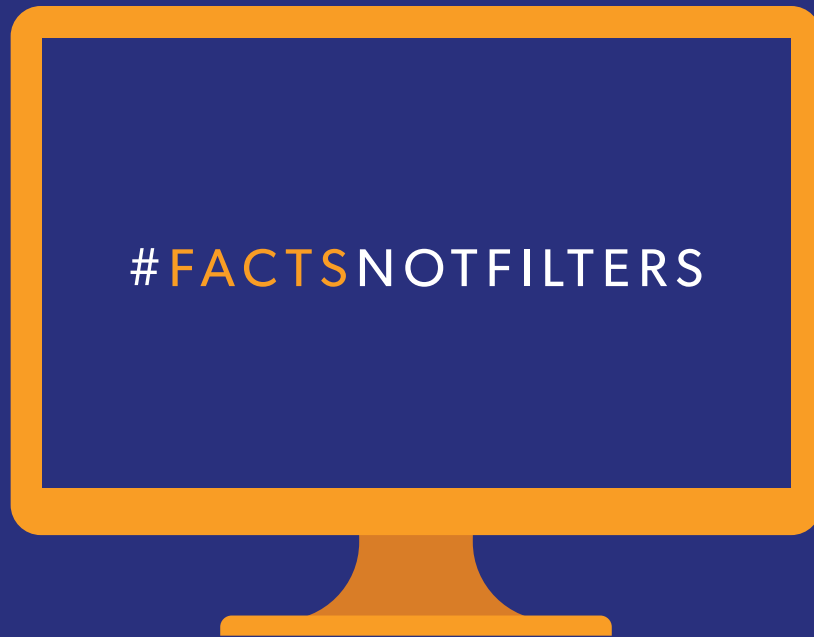
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I BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE TRULY WANT AND DESERVE UNBIASED, NONPARTISAN, FACTUAL INFORMATION ABOUT POLITICS.

That's also why I decided that Ballotpedia is the place for me. A quick introduction: My name is Gwen Beattie, and in 2018 I joined Ballotpedia as Chief Operating Officer because I believe that people truly want and deserve unbiased, nonpartisan, factual information about politics. The world of politics can be confusing (sometimes it seems deliberately so), but I firmly believe in the right and duty of citizens to participate in the way their government is shaped. But doing that without access to clear, accurate, and understandable information is a struggle. I believe that Ballotpedia is the answer to that struggle, and I am proud to be a part of our work here.

Thank you so much for your interest in and support of Ballotpedia.





BALLOTPEDIA

"MOST CREDIBLE, NEUTRAL SOURCE"
—BILL BARTON, VP AMAZON