

# **Labor unions and the defense of American democracy**

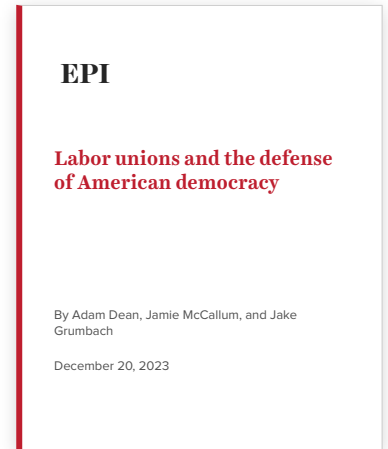
The fight over ballot drop boxes during the 2022  
midterm elections

**Report** • By [Adam Dean](#), [Jamie McCallum](#), and [Jake Grumbach](#) • December 20, 2023

## Labor unions and the defense of American democracy

The fight over ballot drop boxes during the 2022 midterm elections

**Summary:** This report analyzes the relationship between local labor union density and access to ballot drop boxes during the 2022 midterm elections. Areas with greater labor union density had considerably more ballot drop boxes per capita than areas with less density.



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### Key findings

- There were 17,935 ballot drop boxes available across 33 states during the 2022 midterm elections.
- Seventeen other states completely banned ballot drop boxes. All but one state had either a Republican governor or a Republican-controlled legislature.
- A one percentage point increase in union density was associated with a 9.8% increase in the number of ballot drop boxes per capita.
- Unified Republican control of a state government was associated with a 95% decrease in ballot drop boxes per capita.

### Why this matters

Ballot drop boxes are a highly secure way to increase voter turnout during elections. As part of a broad assault on voting rights, the Republican Party has sought to limit the use of ballot drop boxes. In the face of these efforts, labor unions, often in concert with elements of the Democratic Party, are leading a struggle to defend and expand voting rights for Americans.

### How to fix it

A resurgence of labor union power may help to increase access to ballot drop boxes. A new organizing drive that brought just 1 out of every 10 workers into a labor union, for example, could more than offset the decrease in ballot drop boxes associated with Republican control of a state government.



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However, in recent years some states have implemented reforms that reduce the “cost” of voting. States like Colorado and Washington increased voter turnout by expanding vote-by-mail systems and creating same-day voter registration and automatic voter registration. One particular innovation that makes voting more accessible—in general and during pandemics—has been the expansion of *ballot drop boxes*, public locations where voters can drop off completed ballots that they had previously received in the mail. Research has shown that accessible ballot drop boxes are a highly secure way to increase voter turnout (Eggers, Garro, and Grimmer 2021; McGuire et al. 2020).

The politics of ballot drop boxes are contentious despite their success in recent elections. The Trump presidency ended with widespread concerns about the sustainability of American democracy. Conspiracy theories and disinformation spread by the far-right undermined faith in the integrity of U.S. elections, contributing to 6 out of every 10 Republicans still believing that President Biden did not win the 2020 election. The Republican Party has used these public doubts to justify new voting restrictions, with a particular focus on the ballot drop boxes that were widely introduced to facilitate voting during the COVID-19 pandemic. Labor unions, on the other hand, have played a leading role in recent struggles to protect and expand voting rights, with a particular focus on the defense of ballot drop boxes. As AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler recently explained, “we need mail-in voting and ballot drop boxes...in every community...in every state” (Shuler 2021).

To better understand union efforts to defend voting rights, we obtained proprietary data on every drop box available during the 2022 midterm elections. We matched this data with an original measure of county-level union density and performed the first ever national study of the use of ballot drop boxes in the United States. Using multilevel modeling, we found that labor union density was positively associated with access to ballot drop boxes, even after controlling for various county-level socioeconomic factors and the partisan control of state governments. While scholars have long known that labor unions improve

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workers' wages and working conditions, our results suggest that unions may also play a vital role in defending voting rights and American democracy (Ahmed et al. 2022; Dean et al. 2022; Farber et al. 2021; Grumbach and Collier 2022).

## Unions and voting rights

The American labor movement has historically had a complicated relationship to democracy and voting rights. Whereas organized labor played a central role in democratic revolutions in some European, Latin American, and Asian countries in the 19th and 20th centuries, the American Revolution lacked a labor connection. American labor unions in the 19th and early 20th centuries, such as the American Federation of Labor (AFL), were closed to workers of color and often opposed civil and voting rights for Black Americans and new immigrant groups. W.E.B. Du Bois famously lamented that white workers preferred to align with the wealthy rather than with freedmen during and after Reconstruction (Du Bois [1935] 2014). Although the Knights of Labor (KOL), a rival 19th century labor federation, was relatively more open to Black workers, it was vehemently xenophobic and played a leading role in the violent expulsion of Chinese workers from Seattle in 1886 (Kessler 1952; Karlin 1948).

But by the 1930s, both majority white unions and Black labor movements were making connections between the causes of economic justice and civil rights. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) pressured the Democratic Party in the 1930s and 1940s to become more aggressive on both labor and civil rights (Schickler 2016). The Alabama Sharecroppers' Union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and other Black labor organizations fought for what they saw as the linked struggles for economic and racial justice (Kelley 2015).

Labor unions were central in the push for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Frymer and Grumbach 2021; Griffith 1988; Lichtenstein 2013). The United Auto Workers (UAW) under Walter Reuther helped to finance bail for Martin Luther King Jr., and civil rights marchers in Birmingham, Alabama. King himself was assassinated in 1968 while working with striking sanitation workers organized under the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

The partnership between labor unions and civil rights groups continued to grow, and today's increasingly diverse labor movement regularly supports ethnic, racial, and gender diversity as well as immigrant rights and voting rights (Fine and Tichenor 2009). It is important to note that many unions, often in craft and public safety sectors, have been found in lawsuits to have discriminated against women, workers of color, and immigrant workers—even in recent years (Frymer 2008). Still, the trend is clear: The American labor movement has increasingly recognized that workers are more powerful when they are not divided by racial, ethnic, gender, religious, or national backgrounds. Today, Black workers in the U.S. are the most likely to be unionized, Hispanics and Asians are the fastest growing sets of union members, and research shows that union membership reduces wage inequality across race and gender.

Along with the growing importance of racial solidarity, unions believe voting is a fundamental right that allows workers to have a say in decisions affecting their lives and their workplaces. Following in the tradition of their support for the federal Voting Rights Act, virtually all major unions have endorsed recent voting rights proposals from the U.S. House, such as the For the People Act (HR1) and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. While these pieces of legislation stalled in the U.S. Senate, state governments continued to pass new policies that affected the accessibility of voting—and labor unions have been involved. Labor unions endorsed state-level policies that make it easier for workers to vote, such as expanded access to early voting, mail-in voting, and same-day and automatic voter registration, and came out in opposition to voter suppression policies that increased wait times for in-person voting, shut down ballot drop box locations, or otherwise made voting more difficult.

Recent research by the Economic Policy Institute, for example, demonstrates that states with higher union density were less likely to pass voter suppression laws during the Obama and Trump administrations (Banerjee et al. 2021). Another new paper using a difference-in-differences design shows that the wave of state-level right-to-work laws since 2000 reduced the quality of democratic institutions in the states (Frymer, Grumbach, and Hill 2023). The analysis presented below furthers our understanding of the relationship between labor unions and democracy by exploring a local policy that varies across the country's more than 3,000 counties, thus enabling us to control for obvious confounding variables such as partisanship, economic development, and racial demographics.

Beyond the fight for voting rights and ballot drop boxes, unions perform a series of other functions that increase workers' political participation. Numerous studies find that unions increase their members' political knowledge and shape their policy preferences (Iversen and Soskice 2015; Macdonald 2021; Ahlquist and Levi 2013; Kim and Margalit 2017). These union efforts lead their members to support expanded welfare-state policies that decrease economic inequality (Mosimann and Pontusson 2017). Similarly, union members vote at higher rates than their non-union counterparts (Leighly and Nagler 2007; Rosenfeld 2014), and are more likely to volunteer in political campaigns (Asher et al. 2001).

In addition to mobilizing their own members to vote, unions also increase election turnout by encouraging political parties to appeal to lower-income voters (Lamare 2010; Radcliff and Davis 2000). Unions develop the individual capacities of their members to run for local office (Sojourner 2013) and to become the kinds of candidates who support policies favorable to working-class voters (Carnes 2013). In general, these studies all highlight the continued political importance of labor unions, despite the precipitous decline in union density over the last half century (Hacker and Pierson 2011; Milkman 2013; Rosenfeld 2014; Ahlquist and Levi 2013; Ahlquist, Clayton, and Levi 2014).

## Ballot drop boxes

In the months before the 2022 elections, the Department of Homeland Security concluded that ballot drop boxes were “a secure and convenient means for voters to return their mail

ballot” and sent local governments advice on how to administer the upcoming election (CISA 2022). Recent research shows that access to ballot drop boxes increases voting, especially for low-income and minority Americans who have difficulty taking time off from work to vote in person on election day (Collingwood et al. 2018; Collingwood and O’Brien 2021; Greenberger and Roberts 2022; McGuire et al. 2020). In short, ballot drop boxes represent a crucial piece of the United States’ election infrastructure that helps to increase voting access and equity.

But the lead up to the 2022 midterm elections witnessed deep partisan divides over the use of ballot drop boxes. The Republican Party argued for the restriction of ballot drop boxes, and at times, implemented total prohibitions. These efforts gained momentum in 2020 when President Trump tweeted that “the Democrats are using Mail Drop Boxes, which are a voter security disaster...a big fraud!” State-level Republican officials quickly responded with new restrictions. Texas Governor Greg Abbott, for example, ordered all counties to have only one ballot drop box during the 2020 elections; by 2022, Abbott prohibited ballot drop boxes throughout the state. Of the 17 states that prohibited ballot drop boxes in 2022, 13 had Republican governors, and 3 more had Republican-controlled legislatures. These Republican efforts to ban ballot drop boxes were consistent with the party’s broader recent legacy of restricting voting access and reducing the democratic performance of states that they control (Grumbach 2022).

The Democratic Party, in contrast, supported the widespread use of ballot boxes and accused Republicans of seeking to reduce voting. As President Biden explained in January 2022, “Dropping your ballots off to secure drop boxes—it’s safe, it’s convenient, and you get more people to vote. So they’re [the GOP] limiting the number of drop boxes and the hours you can use them” (Biden 2022). According to Majority Leader Schumer (D-N.Y.), “have they [the GOP] shown that using drop-off ballot boxes creates more fraud than others? No, these are angled at suppressing certain types of people from voting. Not everybody” (Senate Democrats 2022). Of the 14 states with unified Democratic control, 13 made ballot drop boxes available during the 2022 midterm elections—all except for Delaware, whose Supreme Court ruled that “no-excuse” mail-in ballots were a violation of the state’s constitution.

Although state-level governors, legislatures, and courts have tremendous influence over state election policies, the final number and location of ballot drop boxes is often determined by municipal- and county-level elected officials. This means that local access to ballot drop boxes may also be influenced by the demands of local groups that seek to influence voting access (Percival, Johnson, and Neiman 2008). Perhaps the most important of these groups are labor unions, which have historically demanded government policies that make voting easier, especially for low-income and minority Americans (Frymer 2007; Hertel-Fernandez 2018; Nussbaum 2019; Greenhouse 2022; Moore 2021). Continuing this legacy, labor unions have played a leading role in recent national, state, and local struggles to defend voting rights, with a particular focus on the defense of ballot drop boxes.

# Labor unions and ballot drop boxes

When Republicans began to propose bills that would ban ballot drop boxes and limit voting access, labor unions were quick to mobilize workers against these new voting restrictions. At the national level, union leaders supported the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (VRAA) of 2021, which would create federal protections against numerous state-level voting restrictions, including those related to ballot drop boxes. The AFL-CIO announced its commitment to “reverse state voter suppression laws passed in the wake of attempts to undermine the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election, because every American should have access to the ballot box” (AFL-CIO 2022)

U.S. labor unions have also helped to organize and lead protests against new state-level voting restrictions. On August 28, 2021, for example, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) joined civil rights groups and other “Americans who believe in the power of democracy” in a “March On for Voting Rights” (March On 2021). The event simultaneously mobilized protesters in Atlanta; Washington, D.C.; Miami; Phoenix; and Houston to demand an end to voter disenfranchisement laws sweeping Republican-led states (March On 2021). According to the event planners, “the most brazen of these bills—some already passed into law—would suppress high-turnout voting methods by banning ballot drop boxes” (March On 2021). The SEIU explained that “from banning ballot drop boxes and mail-in voting to reducing early voting, these bills limit our rights by making it more difficult for marginalized communities to vote.” The union promised to “continue fighting back against any racist legislation that threatens our democracy” (SEIU Local 73 2021).

On occasion, labor unions have even mobilized local protests against county-level restrictions on ballot drop boxes. In Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, for instance, a member of the county council proposed a ban on the use of ballot drop boxes in the 2022 midterms. In response, the Service Employees International Union and other progressive organizations launched a rally outside the county courthouse in Wilkes-Barre. As one rally organizer explained, “We need to get people to the county council meeting...Maybe the people need to show up and tell them that they’re unhappy with their job performance” (Mocarsky 2022).

## County clerks and local election policy

The U.S. has a highly decentralized election administration system, and elections are usually administered at the county level. Although authority over elections varies from state to state, most states delegate decisions over the number and location of ballot drop boxes to county-level elected clerks. States that permit ballot drop boxes often establish county-level minimums but then allow election officials to maintain additional drop boxes at their discretion. For example, Colorado law requires that county election officials must locate the drop boxes “in a manner that provides the greatest convenience to electors,” and must provide at least one drop box for every 30,000 registered voters (NCSL 2022).

Given labor unions’ national, state, and local support for ballot drop boxes, we expect

county clerks and other local elected officials charged with administering elections to be responsive to local labor power. In other words, we expect clerks in counties with stronger labor unions to maintain additional ballot drop boxes. This expectation is consistent with cutting-edge research in political science that demonstrates how local demands are translated into local policy outcomes. As Warshaw explains, “local policies in the modern era tend to largely reflect the...composition of their electorates” (Warshaw 2019). In fact, the low turnout in most local elections may especially empower groups like labor unions, which can pressure elected officials and mobilize voters to the polls (Anzia 2013, 2021; Berry and Gersen 2010).

Labor union leaders, for their part, appear confident in their ability to influence local election policy. As Damon Silvers, Policy Director and Special Counsel for the AFL-CIO, explained “where the labor movement is powerful, elected officials are far less likely to be in the business of voter suppression...They just can’t get away with it.”<sup>1</sup> Especially since the 2000 elections, the AFL-CIO has pushed its central labor councils to work closely with affiliated unions, civil rights groups, and voting rights groups to monitor and assess local election regulations. These local coalitions, working at the county level, study the number and location of ballot boxes and voting machines and make sure that election infrastructure is sufficient to guarantee voting access and to avoid long lines. When voting access is deemed inadequate, Silvers said, unions “speak to their local political officials and get it fixed. They [are] embedded in the political process.”<sup>2</sup> And when talking with officials fails, the AFL-CIO often turns to litigation: “When push comes to shove, we have the lawyers and we have the apparatus for a real fight...if they’re bent on doing it wrong, sue them.”<sup>3</sup>

In short, labor unions have a long history of fighting for voting rights and have played an active role in demanding access to ballot drop boxes before the 2022 midterm elections.

## Material and methods

We obtained proprietary data from Democracy Works, a non-profit organization focused on voting access, on the location of all ballot drop boxes available during the 2022 midterm elections. We then aggregated this data to create a count measure of ballot drop boxes per county.

For labor union density, we created a first-of-its kind county-level measure of the percentage of workers who are members of a labor union using the MRI-Simmons LOCAL consumer survey (MRI-Simmons 2023).<sup>4</sup> MRI-Simmons released county-level estimates of union density for every year from 2013 to 2021, and we used the mean value over this time period in order to reduce measurement error.

We then used the state-level union density estimates reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in order to scale our county-level measures within each state. For example, this meant scaling up our measure of union density for all counties in Illinois and scaling down our measure for all counties in Louisiana.<sup>5</sup> Our new county-level measure of union density is available for 3,111 U.S. counties. The only alternative measure of county-level



union density from the Bureau of Labor Statistics is available for just 279 of the country's largest counties. The correlation between our new measure and the BLS measure is 0.82, suggesting that our use of the MRI-Simmons survey accurately captures union density throughout the United States.

To examine the association between ballot drop boxes and labor union density, we estimated cross-sectional, multilevel negative binomial regression models (using log population as an exposure term). Our main model controls for the county-level median income (logged), unemployment rate, percentage of Black residents, land area, and the percentage of voters who voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election. We also included state-level measures of whether each state government was divided, had Republican-unified control, or had Democratic-unified control. Finally, we included state fixed effects to adjust for state-specific characteristics and election policies.

## Results

We identified 17,935 ballot drop boxes across 33 states. The following 17 states each had zero ballot drop boxes available in 2022: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Of the states with drop boxes, the state with the most was New York (5,359), and the state with the fewest was Wyoming (5). In counties where labor union density was below the mean (8%), there were 9.1 ballot drop boxes per 100,000 residents. In counties where labor union density was above the mean, there were 11.8 ballot drop boxes per 100,000 residents. In states with unified Democratic control, the average county had 22.5 drop boxes per 100,000 residents. In states with unified Republican control, the average county had 3.8 drop boxes per 100,000 residents. **Figure A** and **Figure B** display geographical variation in ballot drop boxes and labor union density, respectively, across the continental United States.

Our adjusted multilevel negative binomial regression analyses found a positive association between unions and ballot drop boxes during the 2022 midterm elections. A one percentage point increase in union density was associated with a 9.8% increase in the number of ballot drop boxes per capita. We also found that partisan control of state government was associated with large differences in ballot drop boxes. Compared with divided government, Republican control was associated with a 93% decrease in drop boxes, while Democratic control was associated with an 8-fold increase in drop boxes. Beyond labor union density and partisan control of state government, we found that ballot drop boxes were negatively associated with county-level median income and land area and positively associated with Trump's 2016 vote share.

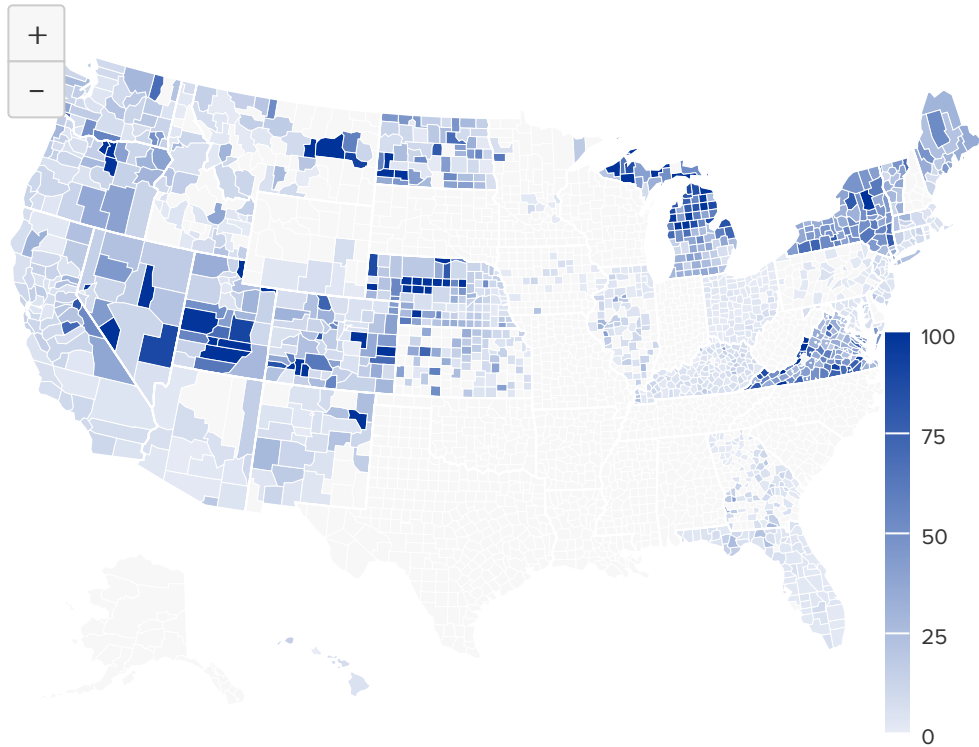
## Sensitivity analyses

Our results were robust to a series of sensitivity analyses. First, we estimated a similar model using negative binomial regression rather than multilevel modeling. We included

Figure A

## The use of ballot drop boxes varies widely across the U.S.

Ballot drop boxes per 100,000 residents



Source: Authors' analysis based on data from Democracy Works and the Census Bureau

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the same county-level covariates as our main model as well as state fixed effects, which precluded us from including state-level measures of partisan government control. In this analysis we drop data from the 17 states that prohibited the use of ballot drop boxes during the 2022 midterm elections. Our results are similar, suggesting that a one percentage point increase in union density was associated with an 8.3% increase in ballot drop boxes per capita.

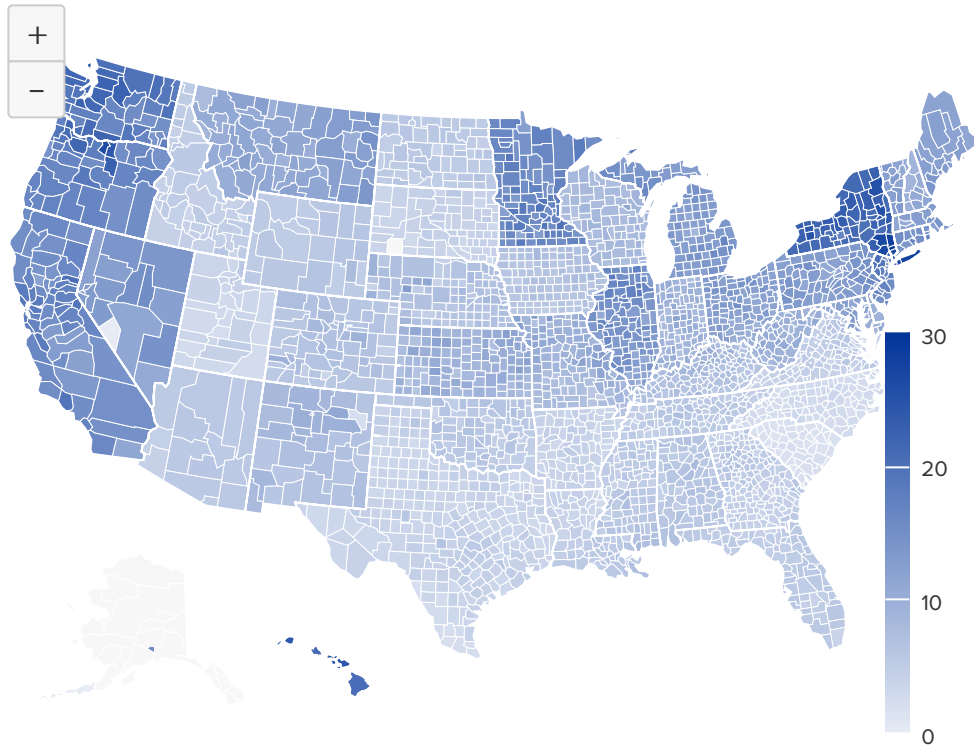
Second, we estimated our main multilevel negative binomial model using an alternative measure of county-level union density that does not re-scale our data using BLS state-level estimates of union density. Our results are similar, suggesting that a one percentage point increase in union density was associated with a 17.8% increase in ballot drop boxes per capita. We also find that Republican control of state government was associated with a 94.6% decrease in ballot drop boxes, while Democratic control was associated with an 11-fold increase in ballot drop boxes.

Third, we estimated our main multilevel negative binomial model with alternative measures of partisan state control. As reported above, our main model explores differences between Republican unified control, divided government, and Democratic unified control. In these

Figure B

## Patterns of union density map closely onto use of ballot drop boxes

County-Level union density



Source: Authors' analysis based on data from MRI-Simmons and the Bureau of Labor Statistics

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robustness checks we included 1) only the partisanship of the governor, 2) only the partisanship of the state legislatures (Republican control, divided, Democratic control), and 3) both the partisanship of the governor and the state legislatures. In these three tests we find that 1) moving from a Democratic governor to a Republican governor was associated with a 93% decrease in ballot boxes per capita, 2) moving from divided state legislatures to Republican control was associated with a 98% decrease in ballot drop boxes per capita, and 3) when we included measures for the partisanship of the governor and legislatures in the same model, only Republican control of the legislature was statistically significant.

Fourth, we estimate a negative binomial model using only the 14 states that had Republican-controlled state legislatures and permitted the use of ballot drop boxes. We included the same county-level covariates as our main model as well as state fixed effects and found that one percentage point increase in union density was associated with an 11.6% increase in ballot drop boxes per capita. Importantly, these results suggest that the link between labor unions and ballot drop boxes is not driven by Democrat-controlled states placing ballot drop boxes in counties with large labor union constituencies that lean Democratic.

# Discussion

Labor unions have long fought to increase voting access for all Americans. In the lead up to the 2020 presidential election, unions mobilized at the national, state, and local levels to defend voting rights, including access to ballot drop boxes. Our negative binomial regression analysis found that county-level union density and access to ballot drop boxes are positively associated, with a one percentage-point increase in union density associated with a 9.8% increase in ballot boxes per capita. Although the causal mechanisms are difficult to disentangle, this finding underscores the connections between union strength and the health of American democracy.

Our results are not just statistically significant; they also suggest that the relationship between unions and ballot drop boxes is substantively and politically important. First, recall that the Republican party has sought to restrict access to ballot drop boxes during U.S. elections. As discussed above, unified GOP control of state-level governments is associated with a 95% decrease in ballot drop boxes per capita.

What would it take for unions to counteract this dynamic associated with unified Republican power? According to our results, it would require a 9.7 percentage point increase in union density, or roughly the difference in union density between North Carolina (2.6) and Pennsylvania (12.9) in 2021. In other words, large increases in union strength could help defend ballot drop boxes even in the face of unified Republican control of state governments.

Unfortunately, the reverse also holds: Decreases in union density could lead to further restrictions on ballot drop boxes. And union density has been in decline for decades despite recent organizing breakthroughs at Starbucks and Amazon, and an increase in public support for labor unions. From 2013 to 2021, for example, union density in the state of Wisconsin decreased 4.4 percentage points. Our main results suggest that a drop in union density of this magnitude would be associated with a decrease of 10 ballot drop boxes for every 100,000 residents. This is a substantively large reduction in ballot drop boxes that would likely decrease actual voting; among the 1,397 U.S. counties that used ballot drop boxes during the 2020 elections, the mean number of ballot drop boxes per 100,000 people was roughly 24. This means that a decline in union density similar to what has occurred in Wisconsin would be associated with the disappearance of more than 40% of ballot drop boxes in the average county.

# Conclusion

Recent assaults on voting rights are part of a broader threat to democracy in the United States. For example, the GOP has recently succeeded in limiting the use of ballot drop boxes—a simple and secure way to increase voter turnout—during American elections. In 2022, for example, all but one of the 17 states that completely banned ballot drop boxes had either a Republican governor or a Republican-controlled legislature. Overall, our analysis found that unified Republican control of a state government was associated with a

95% decrease in ballot drop boxes per capita.

In the face of these Republican efforts, labor unions, often in concert with elements of the Democratic Party, are leading a struggle to defend and even expand access to voting for Americans. When it comes to access to ballot drop boxes, the difference between states with unified Democratic control and states with unified Republican control is especially stark: Democratic-controlled states maintain *approximately 6 times* as many ballot drop boxes per capita as do Republican-controlled states.

Beyond these important partisan differences, our analysis of the 2022 midterm elections found that local labor union power is associated with greater access to ballot drop boxes. Using multilevel negative binomial regression, we found that a one percentage point increase in union density was associated with a 9.8% increase in the number of ballot drop boxes per capita. These results suggest that a resurgence of labor union power may help to increase access to ballot drop boxes as part of a larger effort to defend voting rights and democracy in America. A new organizing drive that brought just 1 out of every 10 workers into a labor union, for example, could more than offset the decrease in ballot drop boxes that is associated with Republican control of a state government.

American labor unions have played an active role in extending and defending democracy since at least the fight for the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act of the mid-1960s. With voting rights increasingly under attack from the Republican Party, it is hard not to see the decline of labor unions since the 1980s as an enabling factor in the erosion of America's democratic institutions.

Thankfully, there are growing reasons for optimism. The COVID-19 pandemic forcefully illustrated that unions can make a life-and-death difference for workers and their broader communities (Maffie 2022). In U.S. nursing homes, for example, unionized facilities had lower COVID-19 infection rates for workers as well as lower COVID-19 mortality rates for residents (Dean, Venkataramani, and Kimmel 2020). With these broad social benefits on clear display throughout the pandemic, a new AFL-CIO study found that 88% of Americans under the age of 30 currently approve of unions. In short, the horrors of the pandemic workplace may have triggered a resurgence in the American labor movement just in time to help defend our democracy (Grumbach 2022; McCallum 2022).

## About the authors

**Adam Dean** is associate professor of political science at George Washington University. Dean's research focuses on labor politics, international trade, and public health. He is the author of two books, *From Conflict to Coalition* (2016) and *Opening Up by Cracking Down* (2022), both of which examine labor unions and the political economy of globalization.

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**Jake Grumbach** is an associate professor at the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley. Grumbach studies the political economy of the United States, with interests in democratic institutions, labor, federalism, racial and economic inequality, and statistical methods. His book, *Laboratories Against Democracy* (2022), investigates the causes and consequences of the nationalization of state politics.

## Notes

1. Jamie McCallum, interview with Damon Silvers, 2023.
2. See note 1 above.
3. See note 1 above.
4. Our substantive findings are similar when using a non-scaled version of our union density measure.
5. The MRI-Simmons data were used in a Cornell ILR blog post by Russell Weaver: <https://blogs.cornell.edu/highroadpolicy/2021/09/06/a-union-member-geography/>. MRI-Simmons uses a proprietary modeling technique to produce union membership estimates for various geographies in the United States.

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