Ep. 2 Cleveland (VOTES) Rocks w Erika Anthony of Cleveland...

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SPEAKERS
Erika Anthony, Travis Morin, Debi Lombardi, James Hill

Debi Lombardi  00:00
This is a production of National Voter Registration Day. The views and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the holiday and its partners

James Hill  00:08
I think we should avoid ... well, I guess it doesn't really matter. I was just about to say like, should we avoid marking this is like "this is episode two!" I guess it doesn't really matter, right? Because people listen to things asynchronously. And so, but whatever nevermind, forget, I said it. Forget I said it,

Debi Lombardi  00:23
Bet you didn't think we'd make another episode!

Travis Morin  00:26
Bet you thought we'd forget all about this.

James Hill  00:28
It turns out this was not a whim, and we're actually gonna do it.

Travis Morin  00:52
And welcome, welcome, welcome to 1 Reg at a Time. That's one "redge" at a time, the official podcast of National Voter Registration Day. We are back here for episode two! It's a thing now; it's not just a flight; it's not just a whim; it's not just a project that we put out and forget about. We're all here, and we are your hosts! I'm Travis Morin.

James Hill 01:14
I'm James Hill.

Debi Lombardi 01:15
And I'm Debi Lombardi.

Travis Morin 01:16
And we're here with our first, like, real kind of structured episode. The last one was kind of just just getting it out there letting you guys know that we're in the feed, and we've got some plans this time, we've got some big plans. But first off, let's just like check in, like how's everybody's ... month been since we all got together?

James Hill 01:32
I know it's been so long since I've seen your faces. It's been great. I don't know if I mentioned this. I went on a trip most recently. Have I regailed do with my stuff about a trip that I went someplace?

Travis Morin 01:43
Where did you go, James?

James Hill 01:44
OH! I'm so glad that you asked, Travis. I went to Puerto Rico. And it was well, I don't want to bog you down with details.

Travis Morin 01:53
Oh, you don't? That sounds odd.

Debi Lombardi 01:55
So you definitely didn't make a whole photo book about it or anything like that?
So you definitely didn't make a whole photo book about it or anything like that?

Travis Morin 02:01
A legit photo book you 90s it.

James Hill 02:04
No, no, no thank you, I did not. It is all on the internet like a grown up. No, I did. I had a great time. And just for people listening, we had planned to have a whole retreat the whole organization could go. Didn't work out, but some of us did go and I was one of the lucky few.

Travis Morin 02:21
Some of us did go. Yeah, some of us did.

James Hill 02:23
It was great. It was great. What about you guys? How was your last month?

Debi Lombardi 02:27
Much colder than yours.

Travis Morin 02:30
Yeah a little brisk. Yeah, the last time we recorded, this particular, at the last episode, we were talking about Omicron and going home for holidays. And I went home for the holidays and I got Omicron. So that was cool combined both of them.

James Hill 02:44
Oh.

Debi Lombardi 02:45
Oh, nooo.

Travis Morin 02:47
It was okay. A couple days were not fun. But I pretty much just stayed home and watched a lot of TV and read some books.
of TV and read some books.

James Hill 02:52
There is something I did. I did want to talk about, like things that I can't get out of my head. And I don't know if you guys have some of these ...

Travis Morin 02:58
That reminds me of a new segment I want to introduce on this show.

James Hill 03:02
Oh, yeah!

Travis Morin 03:03
Funny, you should say that. So we're gonna introduce every episode with a little game that I like to call, "Got My Vote." It will be us bringing to the table, something that we're obsessed with from the past month. It could be election-related, might not be election-related, could be anything related. Something you can't get out of your head and you know, it's got "your vote." So James, I will pose the first question to you: what's got your vote?

James Hill 03:25
Okay, so I'm gonna answer your question by not answering your question. Okay.

Travis Morin 03:28
Cool. Great start. Great start.

James Hill 03:31
Two things that do not have my vote, but we're competing for my vote. Number one, I have discovered that there is a professional pillow fighting league.

Debi Lombardi 03:40
What?
James Hill 03:41
On TikTok, I will share the video with you later. Maybe we will put in the notes. This is a professional pillow fighting league. And I'm like I ... but that's not what I'm here to talk about. I'm also not here to talk about my 82% score on Wordle, which is a cult that I think everybody has joined and I just joined it in the last 48 hours and have been obsessed, but I'm not here to talk about that either. What I'm here to talk about, in all seriousness, is our good friends at Independent Sector did a study in December in which they found, they did a survey, and quote "seven in ten voters think it is a good idea for nonprofits to offer voter supporter services" like voter registration, election day, transportation and the others. And I, you know, it's really easy for us here because we, this is what we do all day every day, and even though we do work with tons of organizations who do this, we know there are tons of organizations who don't do it. And we know some of their concerns are, you know, keeping their 501C3 [tax status] and being nonpartisan and all that is very valid. But at the end of the day, the public, the very communities that these organizations serve want them to do it by an overwhelming majority. And so that's just been sort of, like, in the back of my brain whenever we're, whenever I'm at work, or we're talking about this stuff, I just think about the fact that it's not that people don't want to do it or not that people don't want to have it done. There's just that little disconnect to get from point A to point B, which is, you know, primarily why we're here. So I just found it encouraging. So that's actually what has my vote.

Debi Lombardi 05:21
That's awesome. And I'm wondering if another organization that we're associated with is maybe like talking about this statistic anytime soon?

James Hill 05:29
Mmmm. Who could it be?

Debi Lombardi 05:33
It's Nonprofit VOTE, the managing partner of National Voter Registration Day. In case you didn't know, just gonna throw that out there.

James Hill 05:42
What about you, Debi, what do you have?

Debi Lombardi 05:45
Mine is not voting-related. I've gone off the rails for this one, in case our audience doesn't know a few of us are nerds on this podcast, and really like science fiction. So what has my vote right now is "The Fifth Season," which is a novel by N.K. Jemisin, who is a black woman sci fi author
who has done some really incredible work. And "The Fifth Season" starts with the end, the world ending *again* and follows the relationship of like, a woman with like herself and her daughter, and it's very, very good

James Hill 06:23
"The Fifth Season."

Debi Lombardi 06:25
Mm hmm.

James Hill 06:25
Sounds good. I do know the author, but have not read that book. So I'm excited.

Debi Lombardi 06:29
And it's a whole series. So you have plenty to fill your time while it's still getting dark outside early.

J James Hill 06:35
I love it.

Debi Lombardi 06:37
Travis, what are you thinking? What are you voting for right now?

Travis Morin 06:40
It's funny cuz like you kind of lead into mine with the with the end of the world stuff. So I, listeners out there, I'm a I'm a lowkey conspiracy theory fan. I don't, you know, I don't believe in them, but they're fun. They're like little, like, romance novels that I can read just get a little thrill out of and I stumbled upon one this week that I cannot get out of my brain. Are you guys familiar with the Large Hadron Collider in ... I think it's in Sweden, or Norway?

J James Hill 07:02
Is that the one responsible for like a portal to hell? Is that the ...
Yeah, yeah you've heard that!?

I've heard that.

Yeah. So apparently the Internet has a deep cavern of conspiracy theories about this particle accelerator, too many for this podcast. But there's one in particular that got my attention and the theory is back in 2012, they tore through some kind of like hole in the space time continuum and that's why everything has been so strange since then. The theory is 2012 was when the world quote unquote, "ended." And we've been living in the alternate world since then which, I think, explains a lot. You know, you got Burger King selling hot dogs, all of a sudden. You've got, you know, COVID and all the craziness from that.

Right.

You know, "The Masked Singer" -- where'd that come from? You know, just it's just been a very strange couple years. So like, again, I don't believe this because I am a rational, sane human, but like, kind of fun to think about.

Yeah. Real quick pop quiz, just to see where you are: moon landing on a scale of like, one "it definitely happened" to five "didn't happen." Where, where do you land on ...

Of course it happened. That's where we signed the treaty with the aliens. Like obviously.

Bingo. Okay, just testing. All right, we're good.
So glad to have you working on our democracy.

Oh, it's a pleasure to serve. So I guess we'll, we'll move to things that are more grounded in reality. James, you were busy this week, in addition to being fresh off your trip to some island in the Caribbean? I forget what it is.

I can't remember.

I can't remember. Um, you, you had an interview this week? How'd that go?

Yeah, great. Actually, I spoke to Erika Anthony, who's a co-founder of Cleveland VOTES. She, you know, we've talked to her about a myriad of different things, you know, primarily not primarily, but obviously one of them, National Voter Registration Day, see how their event went. But we also talked about the importance of engaging black communities, which is obviously very relevant this month, this Black History Month. Well, we talked about a bunch of things, and I really don't want to, like give it all away, because you're about to listen to it. But you know, stay tuned. It's a great interview, and anybody who's again, in an organization looking to do this work and, and trying to either convince, you know, higher ups to do it, or show the value of doing voter engagement work, I think this interview is gonna be really good for you.

I can't wait to hear it!

Here. It is.

Here it is!
Hey, everybody. Thanks for coming. This is James Hill, I'm the Communications Director at Nonprofit VOTE and we are joined today, thankfully, by Erica Anthony, who's the co-founder and advisor for Cleveland VOTES. Erika, welcome. Thank you to 1 Reg at a Time, we appreciate it.

Thank you so much for having me.

So for those out there who are maybe unfamiliar with your organization, can you tell us a little bit about Cleveland VOTES and the communities you serve in the voting space?

Most certainly. Thank you so much for the question, James. So Cleveland VOTES we are a nonpartisan democracy building and mobilization entity that aims to strengthen civic muscle and power to ensure that we have a more informed, participatory, and cohesive community. We co-founded this organization, myself and Crystal Bryant co-founded this organization back, actually, in 2013. Her and I, in our respective full time work that time, we're working with individuals that have been impacted by the criminal legal system, specifically as related to those that were returning to Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, from either state or local prison. So our origins, really, were centered around the returning citizen population, and or those, again, that had involvement with the criminal legal system. Through that work, it became clear to us pretty early on that returning citizens were one of many historically marginalized and disenfranchised members of our community that lacked equitable access to the ballot. So our work evolved to go beyond working with, exclusively, at that time, in the early years with returning citizens and really thinking about how we could engage other members of our community. It was important for us to see that nonprofits working on different issues in our community, whether it was for issues around homelessness, or environmental justice, or other social, social, and societal issues, that there was a foundation to really understanding the importance of voting, voting rights, and how constituents could really think about engaging to activate themselves in the community. I think over the years, we continue to pride ourselves on being thoroughly engaged in supporting nonprofits that are most proximate to those populations, again, that are most disenfranchised and marginalized in our community. So for us, we primarily work in the city of Cleveland, but we've really developed a multicultural and multiracial coalition of partners that are working together to ensure, again, that folks have equitable access to the ballot and also access to really engaging in their community and activating.

God, it sounds like you guys have like a wide range of, of potential clients that you're, you're
God, it sounds like you guys have like a wide range of potential clients that you're dealing with. Well, one subset of that is well, you know, we're, it's February is Black History Month and I, you know, we know that you do a lot of on the ground voter outreach with communities of color. You know, we're we're in 2022 now, but the effects of 2020, when the racial awakening are still sort of rippling, you know, through all of our communities. How would you describe the state of democracy work in black America this year, 2022, sort of in relationship to the last couple of years and what's been happening?

Erika Anthony 12:48

For sure, thank you for the question. So I think in many ways, we could maybe agree that the state of democracy is broken at large, but particularly as it relates to persons of color, black, Latinx, AAPI members of our community -- we are really suffering. We've been fighting for equitable voting access and rights for essentially the founding of this country. I often say in talking with community members or different stakeholders, you know, there was a time in our, in our, in our country's history, where I didn't have that right. Not just as a woman, but as a black woman in America. I did not have that right. And I think it's important to understand that with each step of progress, we continue to witness harmful policies and tactics that continue to suppress and make voting accessible for members of our community. I can think back actually to the election in November of 2020, specifically here in Cuyahoga County. It's hard to describe if you don't live in the city and know exactly what I'm talking about, but during the early voting period, it was the first weekend, we had early voting in our county, and we only have one location that serves the entire county, for individuals to cast their ballot early. And there is just adjacent to our board of election, a highway ramp, just a few not, you know, just a few 100 feet away from the entrance of the board of election. And there were a number of images captured that day, because there were voters all the way down this ramp. And to contextualize you know, this is middle of October, we're in Ohio, we can start to get some pretty bad weather in October in Ohio. And on this particular day, it was pretty cold and there was precipitation, a mixture of snow and sleet and rain that day, and it was really disturbing. And I remember talking actually with my mom, who is now 77 years old and recalling images from the 50s and 60s where you saw these really, really long lines of folks waiting to vote. And I know we're not unique, there are many images of folks waiting to vote across the country. But it was a really sobering moment for us to understand where we are in the state of democracy, I think we have to acknowledge that democracy goes beyond the election, we typically, you know, on an average year cast our ballot, you know, one or two times, depending on the election year. So we have to really think and orient ourselves to, what else are we doing on the other 363 days of the year to activate for change. Last year, just as one example, we partnered with a local think tank Policy Matters and a national research firm Hit Strategies to conduct some research to better understand the civic and civic behavior and motivation of Cleveland voters. And one of the things that our findings demonstrated is that voters are not apathetic, and I think that's a narrative that we have to really shift for our community. We do have have had, unfortunately, lower voter turnout in the city of Cleveland, but what the research demonstrated to us is that folks are not apathetic, but are saying that they lack information on how to connect to these issues and/or how to obtain information as relates to candidates and issues that may be on their ballot. They also expressed to us in this study, that they have deep concern about what's happening in their communities, but also lack of trust, as it relates to government and elected officials and their ability to actually affect change for the things that are most importance to them. So all of that is part of, you know, really thinking about the state of democracy or the state of democracy of black America. City of Cleveland is a majority black city that is facing a lot of challenges as it relates to housing insecurity, lack of access, you know, to career
pathways, we have huge issues around infant mortality. And these are the issues that we hope to engage in conversation with when we're seeking to have conversations with voters. We can't just simply ask them to cast their ballot, we have to be really intentional and making sure that we're honoring who they are as an individual, and how does the issue and/or issues that they are facing, connect to the ballot so that they can see themselves and that they understand the value of why it is so important for them to cast their ballot.

James Hill 17:12
So you, you walked right into my follow-up question, so I'm going to ask it anyway. But I think you sort of answered it, which is, you know, you're talking about what Cleveland VOTES is doing, you know, the other 363 days of the year, which backed into the question that I the follow-up question I have, which is outside of Cleveland VOTES, if you're a nonprofit in, you know, anywhere, Georgia, Texas, Pennsylvania, and you are working with a community color or adjacent to one, what can that organization do. And sort of what it sounded like, and I don't want to cut you off, but one of the things you were saying that I hear you saying is, you know, voters are interested, you know, just because there's a lack of turnout doesn't mean they're not interested. And a way to bridge the gap is to give them the information to make sure they have that information. Does that sound right in terms of like a good step for a nonprofit?

Erika Anthony 18:03
For sure. And you know, I think it also starts with trust, right? We can't make an assumption that just because this is a this is an important issue for me and I think you should listen to what I have to say that the person on the other side of this conversation believes the same thing, which is why the proximity is so important. Cleveland VOTES is a very small, you know, staffed organization, but we're able to scale our efforts by working in partnership with organizations across the city. And we're really intentional and making sure that those organizations are proximate to the populations or the constituents that they seek and hope to connect to, right? So we have an amazing organization, Smart Development, that primarily works with Arabic speaking and Islam, Muslim, excuse me, individuals in our community You know I do not have that direct experience that is not how I identify, but it's really important to be in partnership, and have the counsel and the insight from our partner to understand what are some of the challenges that I may not be aware of as someone that is not Muslim in our community, or having representation from our Asian American members of our community? You know, some of the things are sometimes very basic translation, right? We often hear from non English speakers in our community that they feel disconnected and disenfranchised because they literally cannot read the information that's being put out, right? So we're very intentional and making sure and it's a heavy lift to try to translate information but if we're going to be authentic in our engagement, that we have to make sure that we are connecting with members of our community that can do that. Last year, as an example, we had a very significant local ballot initiative focused on police accountability on our on our November ballot, and we were so grateful that one of our partners in our AAPI community worked with that campaign to translate the charter language of that particular ballot initiative so that they could engage members of their community and help them not just understand, but hopefully, you know, cast their ballot as a related to this particular issue. So it's really important to have that
intention but it starts with trust, you know? This, this doesn't happen overnight, you have to really be intentional about how you're entering into spaces and honoring the members of the community that you seek to engage, and do that in a really authentic way.

James Hill  20:31  

And this actually sort of, again, sort of dovetails into another question. Last year, you know, we we talked with Jennifer Lumpkin, who's the civic engagement strategy manager over there [at Cleveland VOTES] and said that one thing we often hear is that the payoff or what we see in, let's say 2020, that work starts 2018, 2017. Right, that the work accumulates.

Erika Anthony  20:52  

Right.

James Hill  20:53  

But back then, there were to sort of issues that had been brought up as what, you know, what you guys were trying to combat in 2020. And I'm curious if digital redlining of voter registration tools and lack of transportation, are those things still, you know, in 2022? and beyond, are those things that are still like obstacles? Or are there other bigger ones coming for your community?

Erika Anthony  21:18  

For sure. I would say unfortunately, those are two issues that we're still mitigating here in our community. I'll start with digital redlining. So for us, many people may know the terminology of redlining, which speaks to the ways in which communities were literally redlined back in the early 1900s. And creating these structures where there was a prioritization, you know, coding certain parts of a community in a very negative way. And obviously having some ramifications as related to housing access. We have evolved as a nation, of course, and still see remnants of housing, redlining and fencelining happening in our community. But I would say in the last 20 years or so, with the evolution of connectivity, digital connectivity, we also are experiencing digital redlining and that essentially is saying that there are parts of our community that lack broadband access, therefore, they're unable to connect to the internet, or readily connect to the internet, right? So while we're grateful and appreciative that we had legislation passed a couple years ago, where folks are now able to, not just update their voter registration online, they could actually do a new voter registration online, that's great if you have digital access to do that. In 2020, as an example, when we were all faced with the COVID pandemic, our primary in 2020, was slated for March 17. And this is, you know, about a week after our state essentially shut down as a result of COVID. And our election was changed to be an all vote by mail application, which meant that we had to make sure that folks had the vote by mail applications. The majority of voters in our region, do not cast their ballot absentee, they vote early, or they, you know, vote in-person at their local precinct. So it was a huge burden for us not only to communicate this, this information, this change in what the election was going to be that year, but literally print out applications or obtain applications from our local board of election, and
then strategically get those to different parts of our community that we knew that did not have the digital access. The last example related to this is we had a partner last year in 2021, who was specifically doing some voter registration and outreach efforts in one of our largest public housing units in the city of Cleveland and they ended up reaching out to us because while they did have mobile phones, which they had tended to use to check the residents' voter registration status, there was no connectivity, there was no tower essentially over there, so they could not connect to the internet to even check if that person was or was not registered to vote. And they essentially reached out to us to see if we could, you know, provide some capacity support around providing mobile hotspots for that team of volunteers that were trying to register the residents to vote. So that continues to be a problem. I think a lot of strategies or a lot of organizations were prompted, rightfully so, to think about digital strategies when the pandemic hit. And we've continued to be really consistent in making sure that we're doing both and that, you know, while we may not be as close in physical proximation and still mitigating that, of course in 2022, that if we have information to share that we're leveraging non-digital tools to get that information out. And then for transportation, you know, I think this this is a challenge at large for Cuyahoga County and for Cleveland, but particularly as it relates to access to voting. So for instance, I mentioned earlier that we only have one location in our entire county where individuals can either drop off their ballot if they're doing that early, or cast their ballot or cast their ballot before Election Day. And we don't have the most amazing transportation system in Cuyahoga County and Cleveland. So it can be a true burden for individuals to, you know, either get public transportation or try to get, you know, car or other access in order to bring that information, you know, downtown if they're not already in that area. So we have done different rideshare programs, we've done a number of rideshare programs over the years with our state partner, Ohio Votes. Last year, we piloted a program with the national organization Rideshare to Vote, and we're already in conversation with them again, to see if we could implement another rideshare program this year.

James Hill 26:05

Very smart. Yeah, that's thank you for outlining all that. That's great. So just to jump the fence a little bit, we are obviously a podcast for National Voter Registration Day and we would be remiss if we didn't talk about the holiday. But let us know from your perspective, how how did your most recent National Voter Registration Day go? Any highlights, great pics, sort of like give us a picture?

Erika Anthony 26:28

Yeah, definitely. So we've been essentially organizing in partnership with our Board of Election around this civic holiday, since it started back in 2012. And each year, we just continue to be even more impressed with the partners in our community in the ways in which they show up. And I think particularly in the last two years, as everyone continues to manage, and safely seek ways to engage members of our community in light of COVID. But this year, in partnership with our, as I mentioned, our state partner Ohio Votes and Board of Election, we had here in Cleveland specifically, 47 partners that we engage, and of all the partners that were engaged through those organizations, we connected with just over 19,000 individuals. So really proud of our collective efforts. You know, we try to be really intentional and making sure that organizations have all the basic needs of how to maintain and you know, sort of host an effective event. Some events or in person safely distance and we're a virtual, but we provide
each organization what we call our "swag bag." It’s really our token of appreciation for them hosting an event on National Voter Registration Day, just you know, some of the basic mechanics that they may need for hosting an event. So voter registration cards, voter information, vote by mail applications, and then a couple of fun things like little squeezy balls, and you know, different fun, you know, sort of tchotchke type items again, just to keep them energized and excited. This year, I would say, you know, all the partners and all the events were fantastic, but I’ll highlight to one in early 2021, the Cleveland VOTES team started to engage Metro Health, which is our county's primary hospital in our region. And they were looking at different ways to engage they have multiple locations throughout the city of Cleveland and, but they had three particular locations that align with parts of our city that have lower voter turnout. So they were looking for, you know, our support and helping them think through a strategy to engage those particular clinics in those specific neighborhoods. So they did a couple things throughout the year, but specifically on National Voter Registration Day, they partnered with another Cleveland VOTES grantee, Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates, to activate members of, or not members, but individuals that were coming to those specific health clinics and they were able to get like a couple 100 both voter registrations as well as vote by mail applications and as something that was new for their institution. So that was amazing. We also partnered with Cleveland Metropolitan School District, there's one particular instructor educator who manages their civics class or civics program, and they signed up to be a partner for National Voter Registration Day and they had, excuse me, 16 schools throughout the city that were participating in hosting events for National Voter Registration Day, so able to bring in that youth element as well which was great.

James Hill 29:46

Well listen, really, that the holiday doesn't work without that kind of participation. So we greatly appreciate it. That's That's wonderful. And maybe later we could see some some pics or something. So just a couple last things here for Cleveland VOTES, you've done a great job evangelizing what you guys do. Is there anything else that you'd want the listeners to know that maybe I didn't bring up? Or we haven't talked about yet? Yeah, I think I touched on a fair amount of what hopefully is giving folks a sense of who we are and how we activate in our community, I think just to maybe reiterate the multi dimensional nature of this work, and that we have to continue to challenge ourselves to think beyond Election Day. And really what is happening in your community that can serve as a connective tissue to really encourage and create space for members of your community to think about how they are connected to the vote. This is an example from 2020, but I think worth noting, you know, as we all were trying to figure out the navigation of COVID, particularly in those early months, we knew that the health of our community was a priority for us, in that in some ways we felt that the local officials in our community were not addressing getting PPE to some of the disenfranchised members of our community, and particularly communities of color. So we along with about six or seven other organizations in our region, created, you know, you know, sort of back-of-the-napkin like this is how we were gonna get get mask and other PPE to the residents of our community and that formed this effort called Masks for Community. It wasn't one organization's project, it was a collective of different organizations working in different parts of the cit that said "we're going to put together, we're going to raise some money and we're going to put together kits that we're going to distribute to members of our community so they have at least a mask, some sanitizer, some information about COVID safety, information about the census, because obviously, we had that going on also in 2020, and voter registrations so that they have basic information and access to be able to cast their ballot. We had, you know, close to I think about 160 or 170 volunteers that helped us to assemble those kits. And ultimately, over the course of a couple
months, we distributed 77,000 kits, to again, the most disenfranchised members of our community. And some might say like "Well, how does that relate to Cleveland VOTES?" And it's like, well, at the end of the day, if my fellow community members are not safe, or don't have access to materials that allow them to be safe, then how can I even begin a conversation about voting? So I think, you know, when organizations are thinking about their mission and their priorities, how does that connect to the ballot, and how can you connect in conversation and relationship with members of the community that you're seeking to engage in a way that honors what is again, most pressing for them, but also creating that space to begin a conversation around mobilization for the ballot? Erica, I'm convinced that you can see my notes because you keep answering the questions that I haven't asked yet. So I was about to say, how, you know, what do you tell a nonprofit who's excited to do this work, but hasn't figured out how to do it? And you literally just simply answered that question.

Erika Anthony 33:08
Yeah. And I

James Hill 33:09
Thank you for that.

Erika Anthony 33:11
Yeah!

James Hill 33:12
Well, in that case then I'll ask you a one last question. Um, how do people get involved with Cleveland VOTES? If they're interested, they're listening to this or they see your website, what's the best way for people to get involved? For sure and if I may, I have maybe a couple more points to share about what organizations may be thinking about, as it relates to mobilizing their constituents. I think the first thing is to really understand: do do you have organizational buy-in, right? Because sometimes it starts by one individual within an organization having a passion and a commitment to this work. And you know, it's okay to go rogue sometime. But sometimes you can be more effective if you know you have that organizational buy-in, right? So I think just understanding for that individual or individuals who are looking to do this work, how do you go about doing that, and that's going to look different for different organizations, you know, everyone's organizational culture is different. I think the second thing, you know, once you obtain that buy-in is thinking about what can happen in-house even before you start to do things externally. So we always encourage partners to really think about get the house in order before you start stepping out your doors, right. So you know, are the folks within your organization's staff and clients, you know, knowledgeable, engaged, registered to vote, you know, what are ways that the organization is honoring, you know, the the spirit of civic engagement, you know? Does your organization have a policy that allows people to have Election Day off? You know, do you give space for folks to be able to volunteer, you know, in a nonpartisan way, maybe they're volunteering as a poll worker, independent, you know, from
maybe they're nonpartisan, or nonprofit status, they could, you know, volunteer on a campaign independently. But just, you know, do you have policies and encouragement to do that? And then, you know, maybe the primary audience is clear, but if it's not, you know, creating space for conversation around that. And then I think it's also really important to understand what are some of the opportunities and challenges that that the primary audience that you're seeking to engage may be considering or thinking about? If you're an organization that focuses on homeless issues in your community, right? What are some of the opportunities? What are some of the barriers or challenges that members that are experiencing homelessness may be facing? And how does that, you know, factor into how you develop a voter registration engagement plan? Next, I think it's also critically important to conduct a landscape assessment, right? You're probably not the first person in your community to say "I want to mobilize and encourage people to vote." So who else is doing that work and how can you collaborate? And then always grounding your strategies and data? So you know, do you know where to get the data? Do you have folks that have the acumen on your team to read and understand and analyze that data. And then not forgetting that with all of this, that there is joy, and there is celebration! It cannot, you know, some days, it doesn't feel that may not feel that way, but it's really important to also bring some fun, jovial elements into your civic engagement work. And then, where can people find us, in at least in the digital space? We can be found at CLEVOTES, C-L-E-V-O-T-E-S dot com is our website and then on social media, we are on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter and we're @CleVotes. And yeah, I would say, if there's direct questions, folks can send an email to info@clevotes.com. Again, that's info@clevotes.com and we really encourage folks to check out our website, we have a couple of reports and resources and toolkits that we think in many ways are transferable, you know, transferable to really any community. So we're always about educating, connecting and empowering and making sure that we're sharing as much knowledge that we have with our partners, not just in the city of Cleveland, but across the nation. Well, Erica, thank you so much for joining us on 1 Reg at a Time. Again, everybody this is Erika Anthony, co-founder and advisor for Cleveland VOTES. Follow her and then on all the platforms that she just mentioned, and keep up the great work. Thank you.

Erika Anthony 37:37
Thank you so much.

Travis Morin 37:41
And we're back. James spectacular interview. You were like a regular, uh, famous interviewer uh

James Hill 37:49
Oprah, Oprah Winfrey.

Travis Morin 37:50
James Hill 37:52
Yeah. Well, I mean, I studied at her feet, you know, it's a long story, but thank you. I thought it was a great interview and, you know, I hope that everybody listening really takes Erika's words to heart and support that organization and you know, see what they can do in their own neck of the woods. So yeah, thank you. I thought it was I thought was great.

Travis Morin 38:12
So listeners, this is the part of the show where we'll take questions from you, but because we didn't establish that last episode, there's no way you could have known so Oh, but ... but wait. Wait a minute ... I'm getting, my assistant is coming at me, I've got, I've got a question, someone sent me a letter. You know, you know, it's I know it's so strange, they just came into my apartment. I have it here, it's from a it's from an Al, Al, um, Laptop. It says "Dear 1 Reg at a Time. Longtime listener, first time writer. Big fan of the show. I'm wondering how I can support the show and get involved. Sincerely yours. PS love that Travis's voice." Thank you, listener.

James Hill 38:52
Well, if I may, Mr. Laptop, it is? Is that right?

Travis Morin 38:56
Yeah.

James Hill 38:57
Laptop©? Or I'm not sure how you

Travis Morin 38:58
Laptop©, I think they're French.

James Hill 39:01
One of the easiest things you can do, which you know, paradoxically, you already did but who knows how this work, you emailed us at podcast@nationalvoterregistrationday.org. And for anybody else not named last name, podcast or Laptop, you can email us and you know, we may read your question on air to inform other people but let us know what questions you have related to voter registration, the holiday, civic engagement, science fiction books, cheesecake, you know just let us know what you want and we can do it. But that's not the only way, Debi, there's a another way people can sort of support and/or reach us.
Debi Lombardi 39:37
Yeah, if your fingers get tired just thinking about writing out podcast@nationalvoterregistrationday.org, yes that's all one word and that email address, then you can follow us on any platform where you listen to your podcasts. There's a whole list of them on our website if you want to cite there. You can like, rate, review, subscribe - I feel like I'm an official podcaster now that I'm telling you to do all of these things - but we'd love to get you more engaged and involved in it.

Travis Morin 40:05
Something about the statement "like and subscribe" just makes you feel like an official podcaster and all of a sudden

Debi Lombardi 40:09
Yeah, fancy even if I'm not fancy. For all 10 listeners out there, I really hope you do this

James Hill 40:16
What we need now is commercials for mattresses and then we'll, I will feel like we've made it

Travis Morin 40:21
That's true.

Debi Lombardi 40:21
Where's my free Serta?

Travis Morin 40:23
That's right!

James Hill 40:23
Exactly. Right? Where is it? That's what we want to know.

Travis Morin 40:27
Yeah, Me Undies?
James Hill 40:30
Me Undies, right! Brooklinen, all those.

Debi Lombardi 40:35
Talk to National Voter Registration Day and we could be talking about you!

Travis Morin 40:41
We're just giving them away for free now.

James Hill 40:44
This is how we get in the door. We got it we got to lay the ground first they could see and then they're like "Yes, we have to."

Travis Morin 40:51
Well, I think the best way to do that is this: all my favorite podcasts that I enjoy have a cool, kind of fun running game that just lightens the mood, gets you into everything. So I've come up with one of my own and I have called it "Voter Says What?" "Voter Says What?" is very simple it's kind of a hybrid of Family Feud, I'm Steve Harvey and if you make a lewd comment, I'll just make that face. You know, I'll ask a question I will say "what percent of Americans do do X habit" X strange weird habbit. You will guess what percent, the winner gets absolutely nothing but bragging rights, but those can mean a lot here ... in case you can haven't noticed our Puerto Rico conversation, people like to brag about things at this organization

James Hill 41:37

Travis Morin 41:40
And yeah, it'll be something interesting. Because here we like to think that we have more in common than we do not as Americans and this will really drive home that we all do some pretty weird stuff that we don't talk about. So ...

James Hill 41:51
Wait Travis, before we get do we, like do we ring in, or are you going to call on a separately, or
Travis Morin  41:56
So there's no, yeah, so you'll both submit an answer and the winner will be the one who gets closest to the percentage.

James Hill  42:01
Got it. Okay, I'm excited.

Debi Lombardi  42:03
We're not, like, buzzing in? We're not being like "buzz!"

Travis Morin  42:05
No, you could certainly say "buzz!" if that helps.

James Hill  42:08
Okay. It might.

Debi Lombardi  42:09
Set the mood.

James Hill  42:10
It might! It help a little bit, if I'm not gonna lie.

Travis Morin  42:11
It's like "Price is Right" rules: you can go in percent higher and still win, so just keep that in mind. All right, so Question One: What percentage of people own corn holders?

James Hill  42:21
Buzz! Buzz! Ah 33 [percent.]
Debi Lombardi 42:27
Ding! 62 [percent.]

Travis Morin 42:30
Oh, that's a big jump!

Debi Lombardi 42:32
We got the whole Midwest.

Travis Morin 42:35
Oh, that's true. Ooh. You know, what? There's a very good possibility that Debi has an advantage on this one being from the west.

Debi Lombardi 42:42
Mountain west, thank you.

Travis Morin 42:43
All right, he answer ... 50 percent of Americans own corn holders for eating corn on the cob.

James Hill 42:56
Wait, what did you guess? What did you guess, Debi?

Debi Lombardi 42:58
62. I'm a little bit closer, I think.

James Hill 43:03
Yeah, like, a little bit closer. Okay, that's fine. 50 percent. I'll take it.

Debi Lombardi 43:06
To anyone out there eating corn, you're really missing out if you don't have a corn holder.
They're great.

Travis Morin 43:15
It makes it so much easier!

James Hill 43:16
You're talking about the little the little tiny corn

Travis Morin 43:18
Yeah the little corn-shaped things that you put on, like, yeah.

Debi Lombardi 43:22
For those of you listening, we're all also making hand signals.

James Hill 43:30
These are the international hand signals for corn holders.

Debi Lombardi 43:35
And then you don't get better on your fingers.

James Hill 43:37
Yeah.

Debi Lombardi 43:38
Or like, whatever else you may be putting on them, you know?

James Hill 43:41
50 percent. Okay, I, yes I undershot that by a lot.

Travis Morin 43:45
We always had them in the drawer when I was a kid. Like why doesn't more food have a holder shaped like that food?

James Hill 43:51
Right! Even though you could say that french fries and chicken fingers, kind of, we already have them, right? Like, our fingers look like the product. This is how you eat fries, right?

Debi Lombardi 44:07
Hopefully I don't get confused, like, munch on my finger while I'm eating fries since they look so similar.

Travis Morin 44:14
It's the corn holder!

James Hill 44:15
Right, right! Okay.

Debi Lombardi 44:17
I am just as salty, so ...

Travis Morin 44:24
Awesome. Well, first round goes to Debi for "Voter Says What?" Debi, you've got bragging rights for the whole month so enjoy them.

Debi Lombardi 44:29
Yeah she's so amazing!

James Hill 44:32
I'll be back! I'll be back!
Okay, Arnold. You'll be back. Well, guys, thank you for joining us for another rousing episode of 1 Reg at a Time! We will be back next month in your podcast feeds with another interview and some more fun. So until then, as stated, like and subscribe, follow us, you can listen to us on Spotify, Apple Music, Stitcher or wherever you get your podcasts ...it's also fun saying that one too! That one sounds super official.

James Hill 44:53
Mm hmm.

Travis Morin 44:54
So we will see you guys next month.

Debi Lombardi 44:57
Bye!

James Hill 44:57
Bye, everybody!