Pilot Introducing '1 Reg at a Time' (with Tappan Vickery fro...

SUMMARY KEYWORDS
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SPEAKERS
Tappan Vickery, 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
What about you, Debi? What are you hoping for?

Debi Lombardi 00:10
Hmm, that I will get to have cheesecake for dessert, but apparently there's a national cream cheese shortage. So I may not be having cheese cake.

Travis Morin 00:20
James, you haven't heard about this?

James Hill 00:21
No!

Travis Morin 00:21
Apparently there is a massive cream cheese shortage. And because of that Philadelphia cream...
Apparently there is a massive cream cheese shortage. And because of that Philadelphia cream cheese is giving people checks, like paying people not to make cheesecake for the holidays.

James Hill 00:30
Wow. How does one acquire such a check? Like do I just call them up and be like, "Look, I've got a hankering for some cake."

Travis Morin 00:38
I have some ANGRY people at this house right now.

James Hill 00:42
Right what's the offer buddy?

Travis Morin 01:08
Well, this is something new. Welcome to the National Voter Registration Days podcast "1 Reg at a Time." This is a a new venture we're undertaking to meet your audience in audio form. Well after the holiday, not necessarily in email form or written form, but audio form. You can all listen to us! I'm sure you'll have lots of questions and I think the best way to answer those is go around and do some introductions. So, James, let's start with you. Who are you?

James Hill 01:34
I thanks for asking. I'm James Hill. I am the director of communications for national voter registration day. I believe we've met because we work together on social media on email, the website that everybody loves. So if you've, if you've interacted with the brand in any of those ways, I and Travis have something to do with that. What about you, Debi?

Debi Lombardi 01:59
Yeah, hi, everyone. I'm Debi Lombardi. I'm the Program Director for National Voter Registration Day, which means that my sole purpose in this organization is to make sure National Voter Registration Day happens and that all of you have the information and tools that you need to be able to do your events. So just a little background if any of you are new to us National Voter Registration Day was founded in 2012 to help every American get registered to vote, and we have registered almost 4.7 million people. Since we started in 2012. We're about to celebrate our 10th anniversary which we're super excited about. And we bring in community partners local state, national and premier partners every year to help support the holiday register people in their communities. You may have seen them in mid to late September with red, white and blue signs and our logo and we're excited to celebrate democracy so that's some that background but Travis you kind of introduced us but haven't introduced yourself yet.
Travis Morin 03:04

I was just being polite no you’re right. My name is Travis Morin. I am the Communications Coordinator with a with a big focus on National Voter Registration Day. If you follow us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and Instagramm get our emails and check our website out, a lot of that content is coming from me. You know I have a multiple personality disorder wherein I am National Voter Registration Day and National Voter Registration Day is me, depending on my mood. And as the mentioned we are having a 10 year anniversary, it’s coming up and that's the tin and or aluminum anniversary so, you know, if you have gifts for us like tinfoil apparel, tinfoil hats are more than welcome. But yeah, that's that's kind of my role, help communicate what we do and help spread the word and help make sure people you know, know about the the big celebration of democracy we run every year in the latter half of September this year coming up on September 20, which I'm very excited about. But you know, Debi, the elephant or donkey here in the room (we’re nonpartisan) is that National Voter Registration Day is here embodied by the three of us and it's not the run up to the latter half of September as it usually is. So what are we doing here? What? What is this?

Debi Lombardi 04:16

Yeah, so Travis, as you said, September 20 2022 is the next national voter registration day. You'll probably hear us say it at least four more times throughout this episode, just so you don't forget, if you put it on your calendar, that's even better. But we decided that starting up in the middle of the summer and doing this big push to September was important and incredible and we registered so many people but in order to make a bigger impact to better lift up the partners that we work with, and to make sure that we were giving everyone the tools they needed to register people not just on national voter registration day, but year round and make sure people have the information they need to register to vote if they're not out there registering people we decided. To do something a little more 365, we want to keep the brand going throughout the year, we want to make sure that people are getting information from us. And so you'll see things like this podcast that we're recording now, which will, you know, only go up from here, we're great, but we're gonna have some awesome guest speakers in the next few episodes, and things like that, that are going to help us make sure that we're approaching our partners and connecting with all of you year round.

Travis Morin 05:26

Love it. Love it. Snaps. all the snaps. James, you are the Communications Director of Nonprofit VOTE -some may say you were my boss and by "some" I mean an organizational chart- and that's National Voter Registration Day's managing partner, one of the many partners that we all value and we all love the supportive of. One can make the case of Nonprofit VOTE itself *is* the 24/7 brand. In fact, all of us previously made that case. But why are we shifting gears? You know, why do we, and I say "we" in the sense of our shared democracy, you know what do we - I'll give it some more gravitas- stand to gain by National Voter Registration Day ditching it's traditional hibernation?

James Hill 06:04
James Hill 06:04
Well, I'm glad you asked this. Now, the truth of the matter is, is that, you know, historically, as Debi mentioned, like we national voter registration day, tends to go dark after the election. And then we sort of like dust off the keyboards come like May June, right, and we start to push for that September date. But when we look at our own messaging from nonprofit vote, and just sort of really the the mantra that we have, is that fostering a more representative and inclusive democracy is an everyday job, right? Like you you don't the fruits of the labor that we saw in 2020, we saw that one of the biggest turnout in American history that didn't that work to do that didn't start in 2020. It started the year before and maybe even the year before that. And so it seemed that after a while we can't be telling people that democracy and fostering democracy is a 24/7 365 job if we're turning off, essentially the brand for a stretch of months. So we said, hey, you know, let's, let's, let's listen to our best our own best advice. And, and keep it going. So yes, things like this podcast are what you're going to hear and see. But not to mention, you know, all of our partners and potential partners, their needs don't stop and start between November and June. So we, you know, we have to be there for them as well, bringing them updated resources, information, and hopefully, inspiration, you know, and also, look, you get more memes, right? Like, will that meme train, it's just going to keep driving. So I figured that's the real benefit here.

Travis Morin 07:40
Yeah, yeah. That mean train it I am the conductor. I am the ticket taker. I'm shoveling coal in like a good, old timey Dickensian character. Yeah, I do appreciate the extra content. And that always helps uplift the holiday. Speaking of the holiday, you know, a big feature of it, is to say something we've never done before with National Voter Registration Day is Twitter Spaces. It'a something that you, James, recently discovered and kind of brought to the table as something that would be cool to try out. For anybody who doesn't know, can you explain what exactly a Twitter Space is? And what we're hoping to do with it here?

James Hill 08:11
Yeah, I like the way that you put that, that I discovered it, because I did. Like no one knew what Twitter spaces was and I went to Twitter, and I was like "Hey, we thought of this" - "James, hey thanks for that idea and now I'm a billionaire. But no, Twitter spaces is for some, if you haven't seen it, it's new on Twitter on your mobile app. But effectively, it is an audio chat format. So you know, it's essentially kind of like a little mini podcast, so you can enjoy while you're on the go. And you don't have to sort of be standing, you know, or sitting and looking at your phone. And, you know, we love it. We think it could be a really nice way to capture interviews with partners, you know, talk to interesting people in the sector to talk about, you know, everything from voter registration to redistricting, all things that are related to, you know, the vote and being vote ready. And, you know, as a matter of fact, we did our inaugural one, Debi, you were there you were, you know, sort of at the helm for the last one. We did it back in September.

Debi Lombardi 09:13
Yeah, that was super exciting. I had to do some exercises beforehand so I wasn't nervous going live on Twitter spaces. And thank you to our friends at Twitter who helped us figure out how to use it and make that work. We, last September, we used it for the first time on National Voter
Registration Day to talk with one of our partners because I think I failed to mention at the beginning we have partners across the country that are a part of all different types of sectors. So we have business and corporate partners, nonprofit partners, military officers, and veteran association partners and so much more. And we had the opportunity to talk with our partner HeadCount, who does a lot of great work in the voting space and also brings a little celebrity to the voting space, which is always so much fun. I had a conversation with Tappan that I think we’re going to include in this kickoff. And so we’re excited for you to listen to that and get a little flashback at what national voter registration looked like for us in 2021. And yeah!

**Travis Morin 10:14**
Well, that sounds like the perfect way to kick off this series. And I emphasize the “series” because we plan to do a lot more of these, and stick around after the interview with Tappan to find out more about how you can be a part of the magic. But without further ado, what do you say we roll to that interview? I'm asking my co hosts that question.

**James Hill 10:30**
Oh! Oh!

**Debi Lombardi 10:32**
Let's do it! I was like, are we waiting for it to cut now? Can we like have a gap here?

**Travis Morin 10:38**
So let's all hop in the Wayback Machine we'll get in the time machine with Sherman and Mr. Peabody and we will go back to September 2021, when nobody even knew the term "omicron" except for some nerds who love Greek history. So let's have that for that interview and we will see you in a bit.

**Debi Lombardi 10:59**
Hi, everyone, this is Debi Lombardi. And today I'm joined by one of our friends from HeadCount, Tapan Vickery, who is the director of engagement there, for our very first Twitter spaces. Tappan, how's it going today?

**Tappan Vickery 11:13**
It's great. You know, I'm actually in New York in our office for the first time and 18 months. Normally, I work remotely, but I come up for NVRD, and we haven't, you know, we didn't get to do it last year and it was really weird. So I'm so excited to be here and to actually be going out into the field today to engage voters.
Debi Lombardi 11:32
That's so exciting. Yeah, we are in the office for the first time in a while too. It's me and James Hill and Travis Morin, who are both part of our comms team who are fantastic and great. And I'm like drinking coffee, seeing all the great Tweets and social media that people are putting out. And we even decorated the conference room we're in a little bit to make it more celebratory.

Tappan Vickery 11:52
I love that. I'm so excited. I you got to put some pictures up on social media of you all together.

Debi Lombardi 11:58
Well, we'll try. One of us is drinking coffee and a Red Bull at the same time, which I'm not gonna call anyone out. But we're really we're really amped up for the day and making sure that we're ready. So, you know, to get started, I'd love to hear how HeadCount is celebrating the holiday today.

Tappan Vickery 12:18
Yes. So HeadCount, we'll be doing our traditional influencer based campaign on social media. You know, we started that in 2012, when it was just people posting pictures on Facebook. And now it's a completely different market. But a lot of our core artists will be doing a big social media push, engaging voters, we're working with some of our best supporters, including Ariana Grande and Little Dickie and others who really bring National Voter Registration Day to a different audience and bring a cultural element to it. So we're very excited about that. And then, as I mentioned, I'm here in New York, I'll be out in Washington Square Park, outside of NYU today, talking to young voters about the upcoming local elections in New York and working with our partners, Tony struggle only, who will be supporting our work with that free chocolate. So that's gonna be really fun,

Debi Lombardi 13:12
Free chocolate. That's a great way to celebrate!

Tappan Vickery 13:16
I know, right? Tony's has been one of our best partners really, for the past couple of years, and they give us the best product, I think that we all have gotten really blessed and a little bit addicted to having chocolate around to make it through the pandemic.
Debi Lombardi 13:31
Well, that's super exciting. You know, you mentioned a couple of the celebrities that you're engaging today. Are there any, you know, influences that we should expect to see posts from or things that we should be looking out for from you all today?

Tappan Vickery 13:43
Well, as I mentioned, I know that Arianna is going to do a great push for us. And that's really exciting. I think that we have connected with over about 150 artists, and I don't want to throw out anybody's names specifically, because it's always up to them if they post or not. And so I'm a little hesitant, but I do think that if you follow national voter registration day and head count org, you'll find some good, good content along the way. I actually, because I'm not usually on our Twitter. I noticed today that there's already been a lot that's gone up.

Debi Lombardi 14:18
Yay. That's so exciting. Yeah, I know, our team is actively trying to keep track of all the amazing posts that people are sharing. So thank you all who have been engaging with National Voter Registration Day this year.

Tappan Vickery 14:29
So I have a question for you, Debi. Why do you think it's so important that we do National Voter Registration Day this year and in the sort of in between federal election years?

Debi Lombardi 14:41
Yeah, I love this question. So I my first national voter registration day celebration was in 2012. The year that it started, I was a young organizer with Ford Montana Foundation, and I had been doing voter registration work on the ground in Montana throughout the year and National Voter Registration Day really gave us an opportunity to kind of, you know, not only help people register to vote, but also celebrate all the people who are voters and who are making sure their voices are heard. And I think one thing we've learned over the years is that all elections are important and local elections really do matter, around 15 to 27% of people vote in local elections every year, which, you know, is a pretty low number. But we would love to make an impact in that by helping people get registered to vote today, and make sure that they have the information they need to register and vote. Local elections have a huge impact on our daily lives, everything from the pothole down the street to, you know, what are the regulations around COVID in your city? And how are you dealing with environmental disaster relief, budgets for schools, police, things like that. So local elections really make a big impact? And yeah, I think, you know, beyond that, I think it's also important that we talk about voter engagement every year, it's something that happens, you know, we have primaries coming up in 2022 local elections this year, there are elections all the time. And when we continue to talk about voter engagement, we make a space for people to learn more about voter registration and a touch point for people to check in make sure that they're registered.
Yeah, that is so important.

Yeah. So I know head count is known for doing nonpartisan voter engagement work at concerts and other live events. And obviously, COVID has had a major impact on live events. So I'm wondering how that's impacted how HeadCount has approached this work in 2020 and 2021.

You know, it's been a tremendous shift, like everyone else, we call it the great pivot. But we found last year, similar to National Voter Registration Day, we had a record here. And it was because of the, I think, because people weren't, a lot of our artists weren't on the road. And so they were able to give us a lot of support and attention along the way. We did several digital campaigns, which we also call that ready. I know, it's also your hashtag, but it was based on a voter for verification process. And then if you weren't actually registered to vote, would enter you into a contest when you verified your status. And then if you weren't registered, you know, you could get served to register to vote online. And we got a TON ... TON of new people registered through that vote ready platform. And we also had amazing National Voter Registration Days and, and other moments that were really special. Throughout the year, we have a great new partnership with Global Citizen, and we ran a special campaign with them called "Just Vote," which gave us a lot of new artists and new communities to reach. And so you know, it's really just been a great time to build up our digital infrastructure, while we were behind the scenes. But when it comes back to being back in the field, we did slowly get back into the field this year, we have been on initially we our first tour with Dave Matthews tour, and then we've been at festivals. And we're back really in the *now* 100%, all of our teams are activated all over the country. This past weekend, we actually had eight festivals, which was, I think, the most that we have ever had. And it's been really exciting. And you know, I was here in New York at the Global Citizen Festival, and several artists on the stage thanked us for being there, you had to be, you know, have vaccination status when you came in, and thanked the crowd and the city of New York for making a safe place for them to perform again, it was the first time they'd performed in a long time. And I think when you go back to the local elections piece, when you think about your local lawmakers, creating safe places for us to get back to events, it's something that's like really important. And something to keep in mind. Because I know I have, you know, I actually have a high risk child. And this is the first time I've traveled in a long time. And for me to actually be able to come to New York, participate in our model, be back in the field and feel safe is just phenomenal. And it is because of local leadership. And that's when you really do have to think about the impact your local elections have on your daily life. It's certainly opened, our local leaders have certainly opened our world back out. Oh, thank you. I have another quick question for you and I am I know a little bit of the answer, but I'm always curious because we do so much around today: what are the next steps? What happens next on your end after NVRD?

Thank you so much for sharing. I know, even National Voter Registration Day last year, and this
Thank you so much for sharing, I know, even National Voter Registration Day last year, and this year looks different than it has in the past, as we've like, made space for people to engage in the holiday in a different way. In response to the pandemic, and you know, you mentioned that you use #VoteReady. I think #VoteReady is a hashtag for everyone. Not just National Voter Registration Day and a really good way to like, kind of gather all the information that helps people, you know, think about what they need to vote because it's not always as simple and fast and straightforward process. Sometimes there are barriers that make it more difficult for people to vote. So thank you for sharing all of that. Yeah, that's a really good question. And I will say, you know, as Program Director for National Voter Registration Day, has my life rotated around today for a while? Yes! But I'm super excited to be thinking about what comes after the holidays. So, you know, we mentioned #VoteReady, which kind of ties into this, this is something that we carry throughout the election season, and that we work with other civic holidays out there, National Voter Education Week is coming up October 4 through 8th, and people can engage in that. And that's a great way to share our educational information about, you know, now that you're registered, like, how are you going to vote, right, and then after that is Vote Early Day, so that'll take place on October 23. And that's a really good opportunity for people to publicize information about how people can go out and vote for states that have early voting options, or, you know, are they considering voting by mail, and then we have a Vote Ready page on our website, if people want to look for more information with some of that, and then we'll be getting ready for 2022 midterms will be coming up and it's a really big year. So that's part of what we'll be doing after we make sure that people have the information they need to share about upcoming elections.

Tappan Vickery 21:28

It, the work, does not stop it is always an election year. And it's always moving towards the next cycle. I think that, you know, I'm excited about the other Civic Holidays, I got the poster in the mail, which I thought was really cool about all the Civic Holidays this year. Yeah, I think it's just, you know, I think it's a fun time. You know, I was particularly excited to see the announcement from President Biden from the White House. And over the years, as National Voter Registration Day has been honored across the aisle by secretaries of states and others, it's become a real Civic Holiday. And we'd like to try to make it a cultural holiday too. But every single one of these moments has a chance to elevate what people need to do and bring it to public attention, which is what is what needs to happen. So people don't forget, or they don't get busy and not make sure that they are heard at the polls.

Debi Lombardi 22:18

I could not have said that better myself. That was a beautiful way to wrap that up. Thank you for that. Before, you know, I have some closing things and I'd love to give you another opportunity if there's any reminders for folks. But before we do that, I wanted to just note that we have some of our awesome premiere partners listening in right now. Thank you for listening in Lindsay Torrico, from United Way Worldwide, Todd O'Boyle from Twitter, and our friends at Nonprofit VOTE we're also listening. And thank you to all the other folks that are listening as well. But I just wanted to give some quick shout outs. Tappan, did you have anything else that you want to say?
Absolutely. Well, I just wanted to say thank you for kicking off Twitter Spaces with us. We love Twitter and this is the first time we've had a chance to use this platform and I think it's really cool. And inviting us - and I you know, there are opportunities to volunteer with HeadCount and have real, in-person interactions talking about elections and getting people Vote Ready throughout the fall. So everyone should check out headcount.org/volunteer, or you can of course register to vote there as well@headcount.org. So we're happy to be with NVRD and Nonprofit VOTE and other partners and celebrating this amazing day and continuing to see it grow. So thank you so much for having us and have a great day! I can't wait to see us all register a lot of voters!

Thank you for joining! I hope everyone stays tuned over social media or are on the ground registering people to vote. Our community partners are really the folks that make everything happen today by being out there and asking people to update their voter registration. Also use our platform to register to vote, I'm so glad there's opportunities for people to register on in so many different ways. Or you can go to Vote.gov Or CanIVote.org For more information specific to your state. Thank you everyone for joining! We're gonna conclude our Twitter Spaces conversation. Thanks again, Tappan.

Thank you

If you're interested in being a part of the podcast or having a conversation with us, contact us at info@nationalvoterregistrationday.org. That's all one word -- we know it's long. It's nationalvoterregistrationday.org with the subject line "1 Reg at a Time." We hope to hear from you!