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Press contact: Al Vanderklipp, avanderklipp@electionreformers.org

There remains a crisis of confidence in US elections, despite their successful administration in 2022. Many Americans harbor mistaken beliefs about the outcome of the 2020 elections and the way elections are run, and foreign and domestic bad actors are all too happy to take advantage of that. This problem is exacerbated by widespread polarization, which is threatening to paralyze citizens and public officials from finding ways to address these issues. It’s time for some new ideas.

In a new report from the Alliance for Securing Democracy at the German Marshall Fund and Election Reformers Network, we explore an often overlooked source of ideas to help the United States counter polarization and election mis- and disinformation: other democracies.

Pulling lessons from six countries, including Canada, Sweden, and South Korea, Rachael Dean Wilson, Kevin Johnson, and David Levine recommend several solutions the US can implement to ensure free and fair elections. These include:

- Incentivizing accountability through ranked choice voting
- Increasing trust through impartial election administration
- Providing good information through pre- and debunking

“Virulent polarization and the trust-destroying propagation of election related mis- and disinformation remain acute threats to American democracy,” said report author Rachael Dean Wilson, managing director of ASD at GMF. “Successfully tackling these threats hinges on whether we deploy the best ideas to combat them. No country, including the US has a monopoly on good ideas, and we should consider how strategies that helped improve trust in other democracies could be applied in the United States to bolster confidence.”

“Freedom is a universal human aspiration, and so too is a well-functioning democracy on which freedom depends,” said report author Kevin Johnson, executive director of ERN. “Let’s leverage the best ideas available to make our democracy function as well as it possibly can.”