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Langeloth Foundation Grants \$10 million to Support Urgent Initiatives to Get Out the Vote, Focusing on Communities of Color

NEW YORK – The Jacob and Valeria Langeloth Foundation announced today that it will be deploying an unprecedented \$10 million to support civic participation in response to the significant election challenges facing the United States in the midst of ongoing civil uprisings and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Langeloth Foundation is committed to ensuring that all eligible voters can voice their opinions through a democratic process that protects their health while still exercising their constitutional right to vote in an accessible manner. Given that people of color, particularly Black, Latinx and Indigenous communities, are disproportionately targeted by voter suppression and oppressive policing tactics, the majority of this funding goes towards initiatives that explicitly address these inequities. This commitment to civic engagement supports the foundation’s core objectives of Justice Reform and Safe & Healthy Communities and widens the foundation’s public health lens.

This new \$10 million investment is a significant portion of the Langeloth Foundation’s \$88 million endowment. The Foundation is calling on other funders to join them to help narrow the significant funding gap that exists in the civic participation and engagement space ahead of 2020. As the level of public anger and distrust increases in response to police killings and state inaction, a firm commitment by the philanthropic community to the rights of Black voters and voters of color is essential to maintaining public trust in our democracy.

“The events of the last few weeks and months are evidence of how a large part of our national community feels their voice is not heard and is losing faith in our democratic institutions. Every effort must be made to restore that faith, and promoting civic participation via voting is an important component,” said the Langeloth Foundation Board Chair Carmen Nevarez, MD, MPH. “Langeloth calls on other foundations to make meaningful investments in civic participation now, especially in this time of an uneasy economy and uncertain future. We need a strong nation that is built on the faith and participation of its citizens.”

The majority of the funding will be awarded to two funder collaboratives, the State Infrastructure Fund (SIF) and the Heartland Fund. These funds have a history of cooperation and complementary

strategies that allow for coordination across geographies and population focus areas. SIF and Heartland share a vision and strategy for the ways civic engagement can empower communities that face systemic exclusion from voting.

"With funding from the Langeloth Foundation, Heartland Fund will be able to expand our voter engagement and mobilization programs and the transition to vote by mail, especially among rural African American, Native American, and Latinx communities that are facing unique challenges due to COVID-19," said Sarah Jaynes, Project Director of the Heartland Fund. "This transformative funding enables our grantee network to increase their digital voter outreach, vote by mail advocacy and other organizing that helps underrepresented communities in small city and rural areas to cast their ballot."

"We are deeply grateful to the Langeloth Foundation having the courage to defy expectations and provide endowment funds to meet these challenging times head on," said Lisa Versaci, Director of the State Infrastructure Fund. "These generous funds will allow our grantees to think creatively and build unprecedented digital, relational, and online engagement programs in a time when voter engagement is critical and the most tried and true strategies centered on face-to-face conversations with voters are no longer possible. It will also help fund comprehensive Election Protection efforts to ensure safe and robust access to the ballot box in a time when the simple act of voting can put people's health at risk. Additional resources could not come at a better time."

The Langeloth Foundation is also taking a number of additional steps to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Foundation has created the [COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund](#) in order to support the long-term strategic needs of grantees, signed on to the Council on [Foundations Philanthropy Pledge](#) and created a new grantee communications support program to enhance grantee capacity and provide additional support and resources.

"This \$10 million investment is the single largest commitment Langeloth has ever made. It is a recognition that supporting participation in the democratic process is integral to individual and community health. We are thrilled to be supporting the State Infrastructure Fund and the Heartland Fund to provide desperately needed resources to organizations working to ensure that Black, Brown and Native American eligible voters, in particular, are able to exercise their right to vote in a safe and fair manner. We call upon other foundations to join us in giving above and beyond the minimum grant payouts and to support a healthy democracy and society," said Scott Moyer, President of the Langeloth Foundation.

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*The **Langeloth Foundation** supports justice, equity, and opportunity for all people to foster and sustain safe and healthy communities. The Foundation envisions a society free of systemic barriers to equity where each individual has the opportunity and ability to reach their full potential.*

The **State Infrastructure Fund** is a donor collaborative fund based at NEO Philanthropy, Inc. that works to increase civic participation and advance voting rights among people of color and other historically underrepresented communities. Since its inception in 2010, SIF has raised over \$80 million for organizations conducting voter engagement, dismantling barriers to voting and fighting suppression tactics that prevent people from accessing the ballot box. Their work focuses on communities of color, with 70% of SIF grantee organizations led by people of color. Grantees of SIF include ProGeorgia, Silver State Voices, Democracy North Carolina, and WISDOM.

The **Heartland Fund** connects rural leaders with national and regional funders to build permanent civic engagement and organizing infrastructure in rural areas of the United States, which due to provisions in the US Constitution may have outsized political influence relative to their population size. People in rural communities face similar health disparities and economic impacts as people of color in urban areas, however the concept of an "urban / rural divide" has kept them from joining in common cause. Heartland Fund seeks to bridge that perceived divide, and under-represented rural constituencies like Native Americans, African-Americans, young people and immigrants are a core focus of Heartland Fund's grassroots grant making. Grantees of the Heartland Fund include the Missouri Organizing and Voter Engagement (MOVE) Coalition, We the People Michigan and Rural Arizona Engagement (RAZE).