



Why NED Matters: Democracy Support That Delivers

In a world where democracy is under siege, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) stands as a strategic, nonpartisan, and cost-effective pillar of American leadership.

NED was founded in 1983 as a private, bipartisan, nonprofit institution inspired by President Ronald Reagan's Westminister Address and championed by Congressman Dante Fascell. With a mandate from Congress, NED helps build the "infrastructure of democracy" around the world. We are grounded in the quintessentially American belief that freedom and fundamental rights belong to everyone.

With a mission rooted in bipartisan vision and long-term partnerships, NED provides flexible, principled support to frontline democratic movements in more than 90 countries—often in the world's most repressive societies, where other funders cannot go.

Today, NED remains a unique institution: publicly funded by Congress, but not a U.S. government agency—governed independently and focused solely on advancing democratic values, countering authoritarian influence, and standing with those striving for freedom.

WHY NED MATTERS NOW

A Strategic Counterweight to Authoritarian Threats

NED is on the frontlines of the global struggle against autocratic aggression. China, Russia, Iran, and their proxies are forging alliances to undermine democratic institutions, manipulate information ecosystems, and reshape global norms. NED helps counter these coordinated threats by supporting independent voices, investigative journalists, civil society, and democratic reformers in repressive environments.

A Smart Investment in Global Stability and U.S. Security

Violence, terrorism, migration crises, and economic instability disproportionately stem from autocratic countries. NED helps address the root causes of instability by supporting local actors building democratic institutions. This work helps mitigate national security threats and protect U.S. interests.

Bipartisan and Trusted

NED's Board of Directors includes leaders from both political parties, business, and labor—united in their commitment to advancing freedom. NED does not engage in domestic political activity, nor does it promote ideological agendas. Its singular mission is to support freedom and democracy abroad.

WHAT NED DELIVERS

Fast, Flexible Support for Democratic Movements

NED is often first in and last out. It provides timely support to local organizations in repressive settings like Afghanistan, Venezuela, and Cuba—where U.S. government assistance cannot always operate.

Resilience in Fragile Democracies

NED fortifies vulnerable democracies by supporting free elections, independent media, anti-corruption reforms, and the rule of law. These strategic investments build democratic resilience and close off avenues for authoritarian backsliding and foreign interference.

A Networked Response to Networked Authoritarians

From Hong Kong to Caracas, NED fosters democratic solidarity by connecting democracy activists across borders. This transnational network resists the influence of autocratic alliances and builds democratic momentum from the ground up.

Protection for Independent Information and Free Expression

In China, Tibet, Iran, North Korea, Russia, and beyond, NED grantees bypass firewalls, document human rights violations, and expand access to uncensored information. These efforts challenge propaganda and defend freedom of speech.

WHAT SETS NED APART

A Singular Mission, Powered by a Venture Mindset

NED brings a venture approach to advancing freedom—backing bold ideas early, taking smart risks, and moving quickly when opportunities or crises arise. With a sole focus on supporting democracy abroad—not domestic policy—NED invests in local leaders working to build civic infrastructure from the ground up.

Purpose-Built Structure

NED's core institutes—IRI, NDI, CIPE, and the Solidarity Center—support a full ecosystem of democratic development: political parties, free markets, labor rights, and civic participation.

Deep Local Expertise

NED's staff speak more than 45 languages and maintain long-standing relationships with trusted partners in closed societies. This sustained, discreet support helps democratic actors survive and lead when transitions come.

High Standards and Oversight

NED is accountable to Congress, audited annually, subject to FOIA, and rigorously monitors every grant. Its commitment to transparency and nonviolence is unwavering. It does not fund groups that promote violence, and grantee identities are protected.