VOTING WITH THE LAS VEGAS RAIDERS:

THE IMPACT OF ALLEGIANT STADIUM AS A POLLING LOCATION IN 2024

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Hanmer specialize in American politics, with an emphasis on voting rights, election administration, civic engagement, and public opinion, and political methodology. His book, *Discount Voting: Voter Registration Reforms and Their Effects* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), investigates the effects of registration laws on turnout, the composition of the electorate, and party behavior in the United States. He is a co-author of *Citizens of the World: Political Engagement and Policy Attitudes of Millennials across the Globe* (Oxford University Press, 2023), *Voting Technology: The Not-So-Simple Act of Casting a Ballot* (Brookings Institution Press, 2008). He has also published articles on the effect of ballot style on electoral outcomes, Election Day registration, voting systems, the over-reporting of voting in surveys, vote-by-mail, absentee and early voting, voter identification laws, limited dependent variable models, the use of ecological inference estimators to understand split-ticket voting, mobilization, the evaluation of political leaders in international affairs, the effects of COVID-19 on comfort with various voting methods, and youth voting. His current research investigates trust in elections, recruiting election officials, the expansion of voting rights, the intersection of sports and politics, how mobilization influences the use of new voting methods, vote over-reporting, how individuals evaluate responsiveness of political leaders, and question wording effects in surveys.

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The message "VOTE" was projected onto the side of Allegiant Stadium leading up to Election Day. (Las Vegas Raiders)

Introduction

During the 2020 general election, 48 sports facilities across the country—including those used by the NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, and MLS—were used as polling places. Our research, published in 2022, found that these stadiums and arenas provided accessible and efficient alternatives to traditional voting sites, thanks to their large-scale infrastructure, ample parking, proximity to public transportation, and experienced staff accustomed to managing large crowds. The experience drew widespread, bipartisan support from voters, election officials, and sports franchises, and the model did not disproportionately benefit any one demographic or political group.

These successful enterprises demonstrated that sports facilities are uniquely positioned to provide an enjoyable voting experience and strengthen civic engagement. Yet despite this success, very few teams repeated this community service in 2024.

The Las Vegas Raiders were a notable exception. Committed to their fans and the broader Las Vegas community in Clark County, Nevada, they went above and beyond simply opening Allegiant Stadium on Election Day. They hosted a spectacular voting experience that resulted in:

- Over 4,200 voters casting their ballots at Allegiant Stadium on Election Day.
  - Voters who cast their ballots at Allegiant were younger and more likely to be first-time voters than at other voting locations.
  - Party affiliation at Allegiant reflected the population of the jurisdiction, with a high number unaffiliated with any party.
- A joyful voting experience for families and fans of the team.
- Short lines, which helped reduce wait times in other parts of the jurisdiction, making for an overall better voting experience across the county.
- A quick, safe, easy, and efficient voting process, according to both voters and election administrators.
- The Raiders making a meaningful contribution back to Nevadans, whose tax dollars helped build the stadium.
- A stronger relationship between the Raiders and the surrounding community.

The Power of Sports and the Fan-Voter Experience

Sports bring together diverse groups of people in ways few other aspects of American life do. For any team in any given American sport, fans of different races, socioeconomic backgrounds, religions, sexual orientations, nationalities, and political persuasions can find a common bond and shared sense of purpose in supporting a team. Team loyalty can be a strong part of someone's identity, and uniquely, it cuts across political beliefs, even in times of polarization. When the home team wins, fans say, "We won last night," with the "we" meaning anyone who supports the team. Fans display their solidarity in countless ways: T-shirts, hats, mugs, and flags on houses and cars.

For many Americans, sports and team fandom bring an enormous sense of joy and camaraderie—feelings that are often in short supply these days. Sports events are one of the few places left where people gather in person and root for the same outcome. This gives sports teams a particular power to reach people, build trust, and inspire action. It also makes sports stadiums and arenas special places. We associate them with friendship, fun, and a common identity.

Scott Pioli, a former Super Bowl winner and award-winning NFL executive, has been promoting the idea of stadium voting for almost a decade. "Sports can bring us together," he told us. "And in many ways, it can bring out the best in people. It can put people in circumstances and situations when they're watching teams to think about the collective—the greater good and a greater goodness."

As we found in our report about the 2020 election, arenas and stadiums make for ideal polling locations. They are huge spaces typically located in central, accessible areas that go unused for long stretches of time—perfect for accessible, efficient voting. Our hypothesis has always been that arenas and stadiums not only improve efficiency but also are *fun* places to vote! Bringing a sense of celebration and community belonging to the voting process is just what we need in this moment, when so many Americans feel disillusioned or intimidated by traditional voting environments.

This experience is especially meaningful for lower-income fans and those unable to attend games in person, giving them an opportunity to visit a place they may care about deeply but otherwise be unable to visit. While there, they can see inside where the team plays, explore the field and facilities, view statues and other monuments dedicated to the team's history, take pictures, and engage in conversation with fellow fans. They may even spot players on the team. If the team wants to make the event more festive, they can. At Allegiant Stadium, a live DJ played outside while fans were greeted by the team mascot, cheerleaders, and former players.

This approach has the power to attract people who might not otherwise vote, especially young people and infrequent voters. For younger fans and first-time voters, it gives them more to look forward to than merely casting a ballot and turns what may be considered a boring or even nerve-racking activity into something exciting. When people know they can go somewhere and feel a sense of community, it fosters a safe and welcoming voting environment.

When the idea of stadium voting was presented to him, Nevada Secretary of State Francisco Aguilar immediately recognized the power of the Raiders to appeal to new and less frequent voters. With a background in the sports industry, he instinctively knew the Raiders brand would get people's attention. "Because when you're talking about, 'Oh, please go out and vote,' people are like, 'Yeah, whatever,'" Secretary Aguilar told us. "But if you're saying, 'Hey, the Raiders are hosting a polling location,' they tune in and they listen."

Just being able to talk about Allegiant Stadium helped him connect to voters. Since "elections are such a stifling wedge driver among people," he thought "that if we could bring in a brand that brings people together, it allows a conversation to occur that may not be able to occur before talking about the Raiders stadium first." Talking about something that causes people to light up let him "build a trust first" and then move into talking about the importance of voting.

Scott Pioli, a former Super Bowl winner and award-winning NFL executive, has been promoting the idea of stadium voting for almost a decade. "Sports can bring us together," he told us. "And in many ways, it can bring out the best in people. It can put people in circumstances and situations when they're watching teams to think about the collective—the greater good and a greater goodness."

New data backs this up. According to a study by the organization More Common Good, committed sports fans are much more likely to be civically engaged than non-fans, and much more interested in engaging across political differences. In fact "the stronger a fan someone is, the more likely they are interested in engaging across party lines." Moreover, 73 percent of committed sports fans say democracy is "definitely" the best form of government, 20% higher than non-fans. and 87% want both parties to work together.[1]

Clark County Registrar Lorena Portillo felt similarly. "It sends the message to voters that even Allegiant Stadium, even the Raiders—the home team—cares about voting and they're opening up their doors. If they never get an opportunity to go in the stadium, this is their opportunity," she told us. Portillo, who serves as the chief elections officer in the county, has been at the registrar's office since 1998. She continued, ". . . I've had great experiences over the years, but this one really tops it . . . I've never seen anything like this in all these years, and I am so fortunate and honored to have been there and [been] a part of it."

The Raiders recognized this as well. "People have fought and died for our right to at least be able to have a voice in who we elect," Sandra Douglass Morgan, president of the Raiders, said. "So, if it encourages anyone or makes it easier for anyone to vote, because maybe they want to see the stadium, maybe they want to have this experience with a child . . . maybe they don't want to stand in line at their elementary school. But hey, you know what? Allegiant Stadium is right there."

Piper Overstreet-White, senior vice president of government and community relations for the Raiders, played a key role in leading the initiative. She emphasized the organization's commitment to demonstrating that the well-being of its community and fans extend beyond game day. "Connecting with our community in a meaningful way resonated with voters," she said.

Scott Pioli often speaks about the responsibility that comes with the platform of professional sports—a sentiment the Raiders share. "Teams have influence. People listen," Overstreet-White noted. "It's important that they use that platform to give back."

Some related research supports our hypothesis that making the voting experience more celebratory can increase turnout. Addonizio, Green, and Glaser (2007) found that introducing festival-like elements at polling sites can be significant in "low-salience elections and low-turnout precincts."[2] Green and McClellan (2017), looking at higher-salience elections, wrote that their findings "tentatively suggest that election festivals rank among the most effective and economically efficient methods of increasing voter turnout."[3] Building on this, a 2022 study on the impact of "parties at the polls," referring to festivals or events held at polling locations, similarly found that doing so can positively impact voter turnout.[4] The study looked at the effect "parties at the polls" had on voter turnout in Michigan, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania and found that living in a community with an early voting party increased the likelihood of voting for voters under the age of 35 and all voters of color.

Voting at Allegiant by the Numbers: Attracting Younger and First-Time Voters

Over 4,200 voters cast their Election Day ballot at Allegiant Stadium. Compared to other Clark County residents who voted in 2024, Allegiant Stadium voters were:

- more likely to be first-time voters
- younger
- more likely to be unaffiliated with a political party.

Specifically, 35% of Allegiant Stadium voters were first-time voters compared to 20% of those who voted elsewhere in the county. The average age of Allegiant Stadium voters was 10 years younger than that of other voters and two years younger than nonvoters.

Compared to other voters, Allegiant Stadium voters were more likely to have no party affiliation, with 36% identifying as unaffiliated. They were also less likely to be Democrats (32.7% vs. 35.5%) or Republicans (24.3% vs. 31.5%) than other voters, which is consistent with the conclusion that Allegiant Stadium voters were less partisan in general. Otherwise, the partisan distribution mirrors that of the county, where 36.3% of registered voters have no party affiliation, 31.5% are registered as Democrats, 25.2% are registered as Republicans, and the remaining 7% are registered with other parties.

Chart 1: Composition of Allegiant Stadium Voters, Other Voters, and Nonvoters by Voting History in the 2024 Clark County, Nevada, General Elections

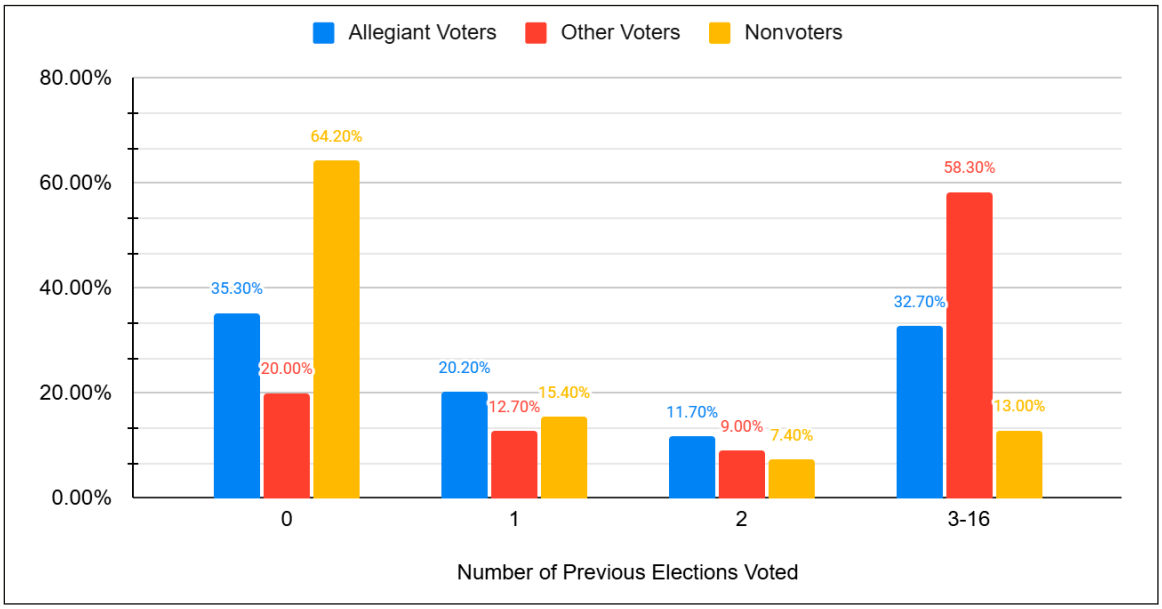


Table 1: Comparison of Allegiant Stadium Voters, Other Voters, and Nonvoters by Voting History

Number of Previous Elections Voted	Allegiant Voters	Other Voters	Nonvoters
0	35.3%	20%	64.2%
1	20.2%	12.7%	15.4%
2	11.7%	9%	7.4%
3 to 16	32.7%	58.3%	13%

Chart 2: Composition of Allegiant Stadium Voters, Other Voters, and Nonvoters by Age in the 2024 Clark County, Nevada, General Elections

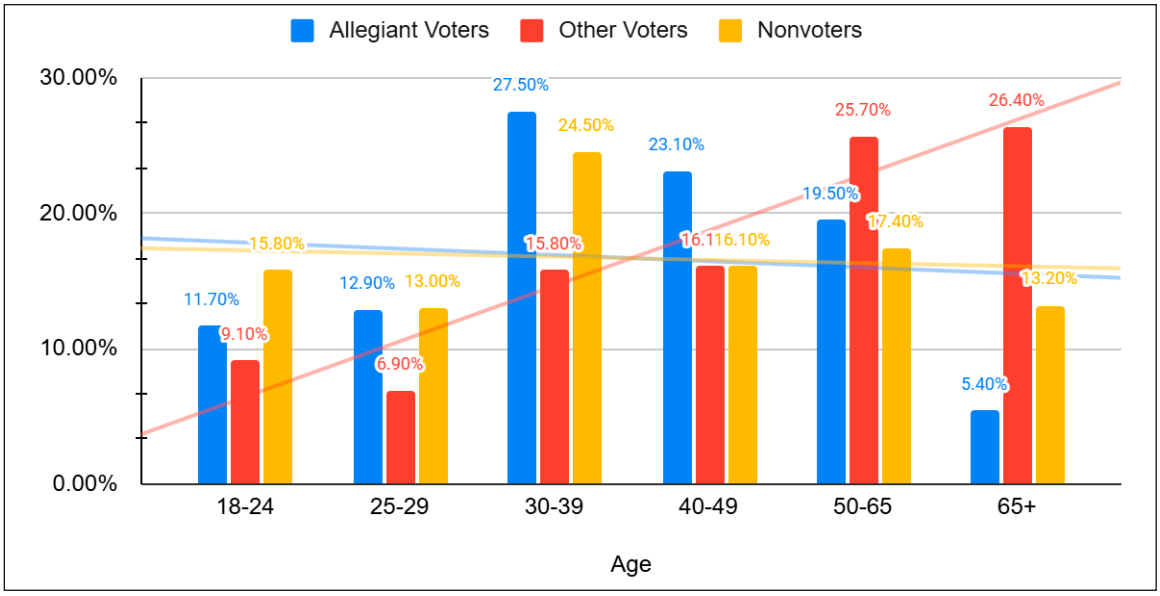


Table 2: Comparison of Allegiant Stadium Voters, Other Voters, and Nonvoters by Age

Age	Allegiant Voters	Other Voters	Nonvoters
18–24	11.70%	9.10%	15.80%
25–29	12.90%	6.90%	13.00%
30–39	27.50%	15.80%	24.50%
40–49	23.10%	16.10%	16.10%
50–65	19.50%	25.70%	17.40%
65+	5.40%	26.40%	13.20%
Average Age	40.4	50.6	42

Chart 3: Composition of Allegiant Stadium Voters, Other Voters, and Nonvoters by Party Registration in the 2024 Clark County, Nevada, General Elections

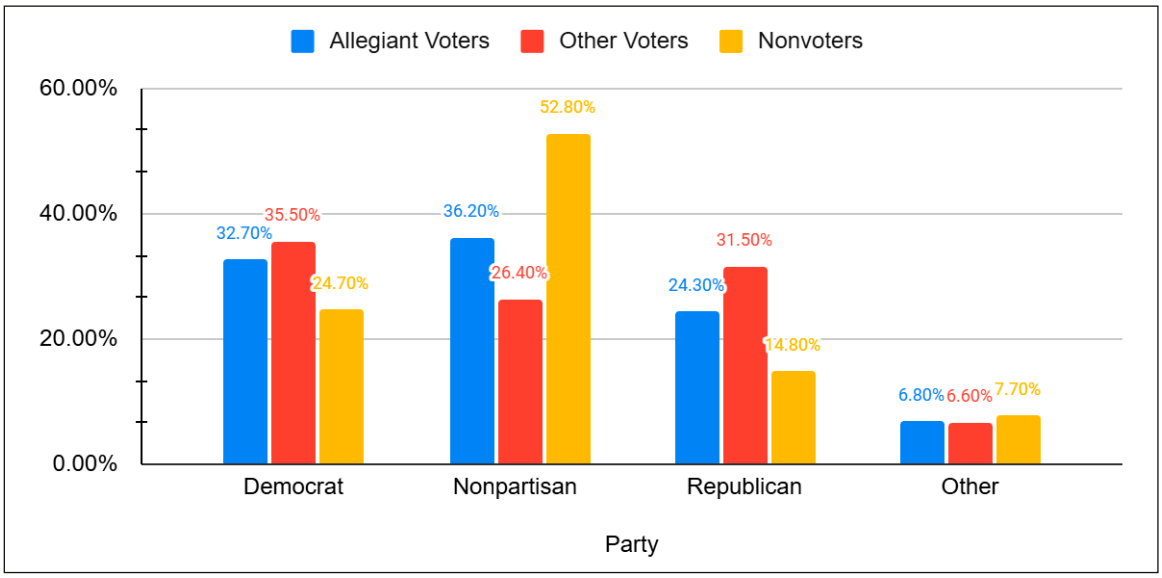


Table 3: Comparison of Allegiant Stadium Voters, Other Voters, and Nonvoters by Party Registration

Party	Allegiant Voters	Other Voters	Nonvoters
Democrat	32.70%	35.50%	24.70%
Nonpartisan	36.20%	26.40%	52.80%
Republican	24.30%	31.50%	14.80%
Other	6.80%	6.60%	7.70%

The data makes clear that stadium voting had particular appeal for younger voters and those who often don't vote at all. As we found with 2020, there was also no partisan tilt among those who voted at a stadium. For anyone focused on increasing participation among young people and those disaffected from government and politics, stadium voting offers a promising path forward.

A Unique Election Day Experience

"The great state of Nevada makes registration and voting easy and accessible. The Raiders and Allegiant Stadium are proud to do our part to encourage high turnout by providing a central location for Clark County voters to cast their ballots on Election Day."

—Mark Davis, Raiders Owner

Raiders alumnus Roy Hart, left poses with Stu Levy, his wife Annika Levy and their children Aiden, 4, and Ophelia, 2, after Stu cast his ballot at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2024. (K.M. Cannon/Las Vegas Review-Journal)

(K.M. Cannon/Las Vegas Review-Journal)

The data shows Allegiant Stadium was by far the most popular voting location in the state on Election Day—and by all accounts, it was also the most enjoyable place to vote. In an interview conducted by Alan Snel of LVSportsBiz.com, one voter said, "We were super excited to come vote at this location today. Previously, [for] elections we voted at elementary schools. But this is the type of thing that brings our communities together, brings young people out, and makes it fun." Other voters expressed similar sentiments, with another saying, ". . . this is my first time at Allegiant Stadium. . . . I watched it get built. And it's such a beautiful building. And so, the experience was really nice. It was easy inside. Everybody was very friendly. I felt safe in this environment. So, I feel like this was a cool place. We planned our day to make sure that we were going to come to Raiders stadium on Election Day."

Portillo told us, "Voters loved it." She went on to say, "I think the message was clear when I saw the voters coming in, coming in with their families, with their children. You see the children, they're like, 'Oh my gosh, this is so great.' And they're in their gear. So it was just an experience for them, not just exercising their right to vote, but . . . every single [voter] that I did see and spoke to . . . had a smile on their face." She could not emphasize enough how exciting it was to see people genuinely enjoying the voting experience—something that does not always happen.

A number of former players were also in attendance, as well as one current one. Team President Sandra Douglass Morgan was there, as were several elected officials, including Senator Jacky Rosen.

In the lead-up to Election Day, the Raiders advertised when the Raiderettes and the team mascot would be on-site. On Election Day itself, there was a festive atmosphere: voters could hold up Raiders-themed foam voting signs, take pictures at a photo booth, and even snap photos with the Raiderettes for part of the day. The mascot was there from midday through the evening, and a live DJ played for the last four hours of voting.

As Secretary Aguila told us, "There were hundreds of people there early on before the polling location even opened . . . there was just this energy from the beginning that just made it very exciting to be at Allegiant Stadium."

The Raiders-branded "I Voted" stickers were a huge hit among fans and members of the press. (KTNV Las Vegas)

It was widely agreed that the Raiders-branded "I Voted" sticker was the star of the day—even members of the press were asking for one. Secretary Aguilar recalled, "There was all this hype about the Raiders sticker that was being passed out. People were literally coming to Allegiant to vote to get the sticker."

As we found in our 2022 report on the 2020 election, part of the reason for the strong turnout was the stadium's convenient location, right on the Strip, making it easy for hotel and casino workers to go and vote before and after their shifts. Once there, having 98 voting machines and plenty of parking made the process highly efficient.

Aligning Values with Action for the Raiders

"Community building and empowerment are core values of the Raiders," said Overstreet-White. She explained using Allegiant Stadium as a voting site was a natural extension of that commitment—bringing Clark County residents together not just as fans, but as engaged citizens. It was also a way to give back to a community that has given so much to the team.

The initiative provided players, staff, and fans with an opportunity to participate in decisions that impact their lives. Overstreet-White described it as a reflection of the team's genuine investment in the community and a way to reach voters who might not otherwise participate. "If it was important enough for the Raiders to open the stadium for voting," she said, "then why not go and exercise that right?"

The team recognized how exciting it might be for voters to be able to go inside the stadium, especially those who might not ordinarily be able to afford a game ticket. As Pioli said, "The fans and citizens of Nevada have invested in the team. Voting at the stadium was a way the team could invest in the fans and community while deepening the interdependent relationship between them. That's how you build a long, strong relationship between fans, the community, and the team."

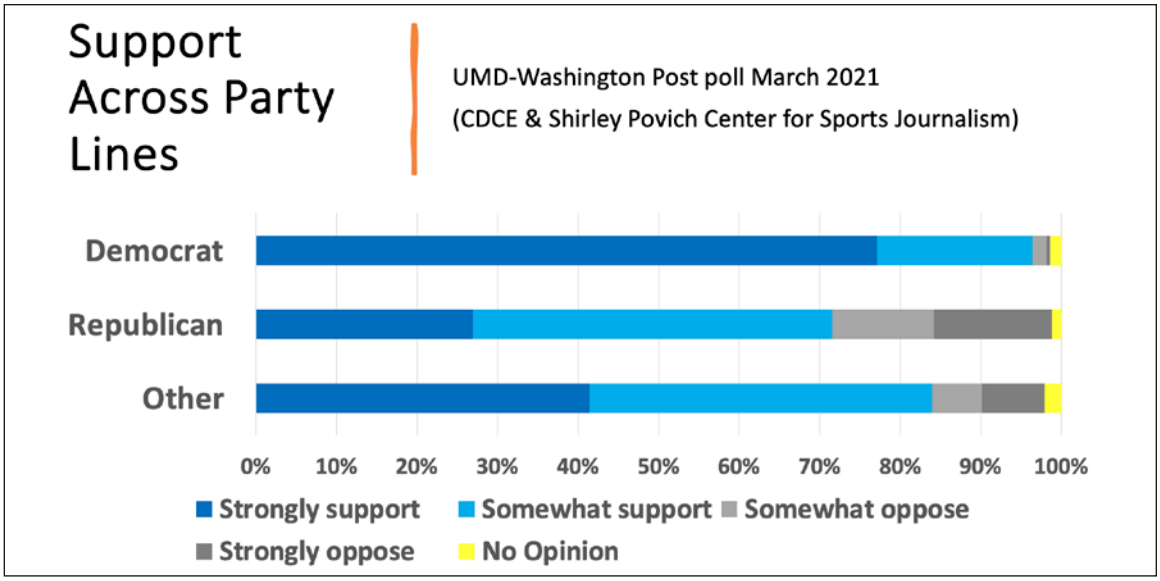
The effort started with other NFL Votes-related activities, Lilah Haye, government and community relations specialist for the Raiders, told us. NFL Votes is a league-wide initiative launched in 2020 to promote voter education, registration, and participation. As part of this project, the Raiders produced public service announcements, educated players and staff and registered them to vote, posted on social media about voting, and created a dedicated voting webpage. They also partnered with the organization RISE, which works with sports teams nationally on equity and engagement.

At the same time, in early 2024, Pioli, Secretary Aguilar, Overstreet-White, and Tova Wang (the author of this report) began to discuss hosting voting at Allegiant Stadium, another suggested activity from NFL Votes. Secretary Aguilar also raised the possibility publicly in a *Las Vegas Review Journal* article, which drew broader attention to the idea. Importantly, the secretary and the county registrar engaged in ongoing conversations with the county commission and county manager about the plan to ensure they had the support of county authorities at all times. Overstreet-White was immediately on board, backed by enthusiastic support from both the president and the owner of the Raiders. Pioli was not surprised. "Historically, the Raiders and their ownership have been very intentional in trying to run a really good business while also upholding good community values."

A Positive Public Reaction

According to our polling after the 2020 election, stadium voting had wide public support across the political spectrum.

Chart 4: 2020 Support for Stadium Voting Across Party Lines



In 2024, Douglass Morgan told us, they received similarly encouraging responses; everything she heard from the public was positive. Overstreet-White concurred, noting that the Raiders got very little negative feedback from fans or the public. People were just happy to be voting at the stadium, and they understood it was a nonpartisan event. As Pioli observed, some teams may have been hesitant to do stadium voting in 2024 because even the concept of nonpartisan voting initiatives had become unnecessarily "politicized and demonized." But given the overwhelmingly positive reception in 2020 and again with the Raiders in the last election, he believes that providing people the opportunity to vote should be seen for what it is: a patriotic, American effort.

Have mentioned a couple of negative comments on social media but said the positive feedback far outweighed it, with fans eagerly discussing their excitement about being inside the stadium for the first time or getting the Raiders-branded "I Voted" sticker. When asked if he thought teams should be worried about a negative response from the public, Secretary Aguilar said no, almost everything they heard was positive.

Another constituency that appreciated the event was poll workers. Secretary Aguilar told us, "The poll workers were also excited to be there. And that enthusiasm and that excitement just increased that voter experience because they had a happier attitude. They had a welcoming attitude. They had an excited attitude that made the voter feel excited. And so, you add that excitement to everything that's happening and the significance of what that vote meant all just added to the overall voter experience, which hopefully turns into a repeat voter."

After the election, the Nevada State Legislature honored the team with a proclamation for community impact.

Worth the Effort

"Raiders games are incredible. That's why I'm here. I'm proud to be the president of the team. But you know, there's a lot of other days. We have 10 home games a year. So, there's lots of other opportunities for people to feel connected to the stadium."

—Sandra Douglass Morgan, Raiders Team President

"Yeah, I mean, listen, we host events here basically every day, whether it's a 300-person private corporate dinner in one of our clubs to, obviously, concerts and football games. So yeah, I mean, the idea of it and the planning of it was very normal."

—Michael Cox, Director of Operations, Allegiant Stadium

It might sound like an exaggeration, but everyone told us there were no "hiccups" at all. The Raiders' and Allegiant's events teams worked closely together, but they were already used to accommodating 65,000 people on a game day—this was only 4,200!

Michael Cox, Allegiant Stadium's director of operations, acknowledged that concerns about politicization were understandable. But in their case, it was very clearly about the civic right to vote, not politics—and this was in a swing state that was the center of national attention. Indeed, it was of paramount importance to everyone involved that the Election Day event be completely nonpartisan. While there were initial concerns, stakeholders discussed them ahead of time, and the team and staff agreed to move forward with a nonpartisan approach that fully allayed any apprehensions election officials may have had.

Portillo was understandably and justifiably trepidatious at first. This had never been done before, and she needed to know that it would work from both an administrative and voting rights perspective. Furthermore, she needed assurance that it would be worth the effort. She consulted with all parties involved and asked many questions, and soon enough, it became apparent that this was totally doable. Portillo needed to have conversations with the county management, county council, and county commissioners ahead of time. Once she knew the county commissioners were confident it could be done, she felt confident too.

Cox always thought it was doable from the stadium perspective but was cognizant that he didn't know all the specific rules around voting. Moreover, he knew it would require them to reconcile the stadium's rules with voting laws. As we explain below, the biggest issue in this regard was security.

Planning and executing stadium voting at Allegiant took coordination among many different people from the team, election officials, and stadium operations, but everyone enjoyed being a part of it. Haye told us it brought together parts of the Raiders organization that don't typically collaborate, which made the experience exciting for them. All parties involved were energized by how well everyone worked together and how consistently they communicated.

Given Secretary Aguilar's commitment to making the event happen and the number of people involved, the secretary of state's office ran point on coordinating the many moving parts. Cecilia Heston, the public information officer for the secretary of state, played a key role in ensuring that nothing fell through the cracks, while Secretary Aguilar attended all the meetings himself.

Even though it was hard work, people had fun. Haye described it as "a very positive reaction all throughout the building, even on the business operations and on the football side." Staff were excited to be able to vote at the stadium themselves. Portillo's team members expressed their heartfelt gratitude at being a part of such a meaningful event.

Cox also described how collaboration between the operations team and clerk's office was key to ensuring a successful voting experience. It required a number of joint site visits to plan out how the voting process would work logistically.

Secretary Aguilar told us, "[On Election Day] the work was already done, and at this point, it's a well-run machine. They [the Clark County staff] know how to run elections. The Raiders know how to get people in and out. So, at this point, it was just sitting back and then just enjoying the fruits of the labor and really seeing the excitement of the community coming to the stadium and enjoying the facility and coming to see the Raiders stadium for the first time."

Everyone involved had hoped to set up voting machines on the field. However, because they were setting up for a Billy Joel and Sting concert later that week, it wasn't possible. Concerts require a much more elaborate construction process than games, limiting field access. For the same reason, Allegiant couldn't be used for early voting as they'd hoped; it was only used on Election Day. In the future, the team and election officials hope voting will actually take place on the Raiders' field and include the early voting period as well.

According to Portillo, they set up 98 voting machines and 26 poll pads. "We've never had that volume and it went without a hitch," she said. Allegiant determined where on the premises the voting process could take place, while the registrar and her staff decided the actual layout within that space. This partnership led to a smooth flow of traffic.

To ensure a seamless voting experience, the registrar and her staff conducted three in-person walkthroughs with the events team at Allegiant Stadium to plan the setup and coordinate logistics. As she explained:

> . . . Number one, we start identifying what [to] start drawing out, where our poll pads will be, where our machines will be, the flow even of where would our break room be? Where are we going to have our workers take their breaks and have their lunch? Where are the workers versus the voters going to the restroom? They had that all available for us to view at that time. But we also went back just to make sure our parking flow, our indoor flow, our outdoor flow was exactly what we had imagined, and it would work. The signage outside [needed] to make sure the voters [understood] where they need to come in [and] where the workers need to come in . . . So, all that was talked about over and over, over and over . . . but it was worth it.

From the Raiders' perspective, Haye emphasized that it was "definitely an all-hands-on-deck kind of thing," with them planning every aspect from restrooms and line flow to Wi-Fi and water. She told us:

> . . . Me and Piper [Overstreet-White] were spearheading the initiative, but we had participation from many different departments. Legal worked on the contracts to use the stadium, our events team handled logistics, and even externally, we had to coordinate security and parking attendants. There were so many people within the organization that had to come together for this which was actually really cool because we do not get to work with so many different departments on one singular event . . . Our events team did a phenomenal job at handling the logistics since we have both a Raiders events team and an Allegiant Stadium events team. They were both working together, [asking,] "How do we make this efficient? How do we make this a seamless process for voters?" And obviously 65,000 people on game day doesn't really compare to 4,200 on Election Day, but there was still so much thought and care that went into the process . . . Every single little detail you could possibly think of was thought of . . .

The Raiders' government and community relations team developed a detailed run of show covering Sunday, November 3 through Election Day. It identified the point person for each task, any required documents (such as licenses), and an hour-by-hour schedule of what needed to happen, when, how, and where. This included restricted areas, loading times, parking lot openings and closures, portable toilets setup, and staff arrivals and departures. It also included scheduled appearances by the Raiderettes, former Raider players, and DJs. Finally, it further detailed logistical information, like power drops, temperature control, moving concession stands around, setting up the photo booth, cleaning, projecting the word "VOTE" on the outside of the stadium, and lighting.

The Raiders ran all the activities taking place outside the stadium, such as music and celebrity appearances. They intentionally chose not to partner with outside voter mobilization organizations to ensure the event remained completely nonpartisan. Their focus was on creating a positive fan-voter experience, something they knew how to deliver. Meanwhile, election officials oversaw what went on inside the stadium. Allegiant managed the parking area, but the Raiders paid for parking attendants.

This careful coordination extended to every aspect of the voting experience, but the biggest concern for everyone involved was security. Cox explained that typically, attendees are not allowed to bring firearms inside the stadium, so they go through a metal detector and have their bags checked. But that's not how voting works. Under state law, it is legal to bring a firearm to a polling place. Moreover, unlike at a game or concert, voters are not asked to give up the same degree of privacy when they go to vote. All the interviewees identified it as the most challenging issue to navigate.

As a result, there were numerous conversations among the stadium's security team, election officials, county commissioners and management, and legal counsel on how best to handle the situation. Although there was understandable anxiety given the environment, the group decided to defer to the paramount principle of voting rights law and policy by eliminating the usual security process for Election Day. The day proceeded entirely peacefully.

There was also the question of who would be responsible if a security concern should arise. To address this, the group went through a series of scenario-planning exercises, devising contingency plans for every type of issue they could anticipate.

With respect to the security of the voting machines, Allegiant was probably the most secure polling location in the state; election tampering would have been almost impossible.

As Haye described it:

> Load-in happened on Sunday morning, and our security was on post for 24 hours a day until after Election Day. And [for] the polling area, we essentially had to block off the stadium, wrist-banding everyone that was allowed within the polling area. The stadium has 24-hour security and a gate that wraps completely around all entries . . . it's nearly impossible to just walk into the stadium.

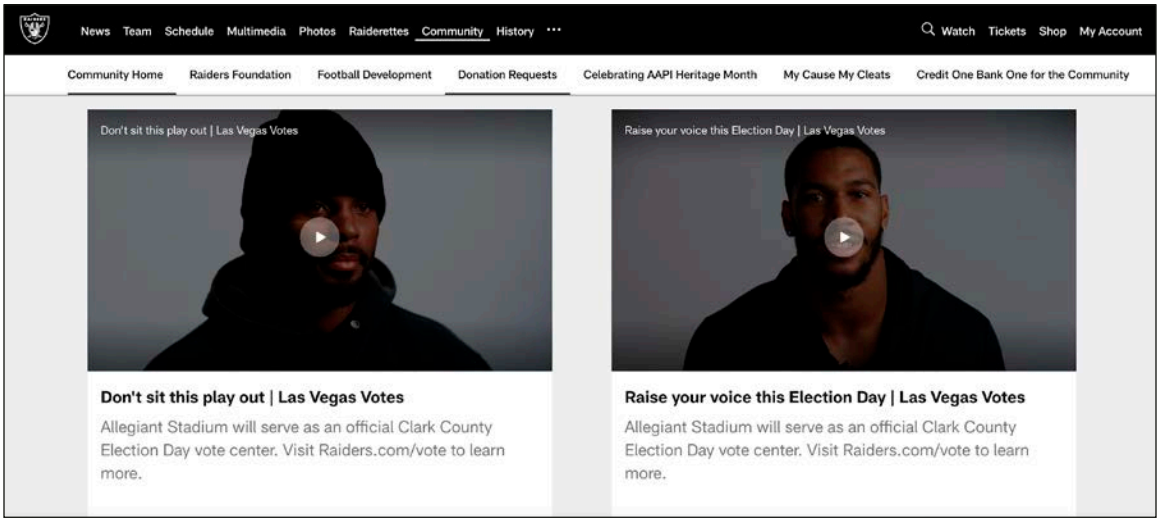
The day went extraordinarily smoothly, due in large to Allegiant Stadium's capacity to accommodate 98 voting machines, more than double the number of the next biggest site, a mall with 40 machines. With so many machines and so much space, there were no long lines.[5] In fact, word spread quickly on Election Day that there was no line at Allegiant, prompting voters to head there instead of waiting in line at other locations. In other words, voting at Allegiant helped reduce wait times at other polling sites.

Secretary Francisco Aguilar checks in on voting inside Allegiant Stadium. (Office of the Secretary of State)

Ensuring Strong Media Communications and Public Outreach

A good deal of communications work was done by the Clark County communications staff, who also ensured smooth coordination among the communication teams for the Raiders, the county, and the state. This became especially critical during the initial announcement that the stadium would be used as a polling site. It was important to election officials that the Raiders made the public announcement before sample ballots went out, as they included details about voting locations.

The Raiders put out public service announcements, including videos featuring players that explicitly promoted voting at the stadium. These were shared across the team's social media accounts.



The Raiders put out several Instagram and other social media posts.

The Raiders put out several Instagram and other social media posts. (Las Vegas Votes, Las Vegas Raiders)

In addition, the team promoted voting at the stadium during games via the stadium jumbotron and recognized poll workers on the field at one game. With support from an NFL Votes grant, they also ran paid ads on Meta and Google to spread awareness that Allegiant would be a voting site.

Furthermore, much of the public outreach ahead of the election was led by the secretary of state's office. Heston told us, "We did faith outreach, we did activations at First Friday, which was one of the bigger small business events in downtown, where we had a table just making people aware that Allegiant Stadium was a polling location. We had our youth advisory task force at every single university and state college letting people know that there was also [voting at] Allegiant Stadium taking place, but also at the same time answering questions about polling locations and how to register to vote."

Other government leaders also supported the effort. "Great community leaders, like Congressman [Steven] Horsford, Commissioner [William] McCurdy, also put it on their social media as well—that really just got this momentum behind Allegiant Stadium and excitement about voting, and definitely in a very nonpartisan way as well," Secretary Aguilar said.

It was also important that Secretary Aguilar did press about the stadium in Spanish. Rodriguez told us:

> I think leaning into that Nevada is 30% Latino—a little bit more here in Las Vegas—and the huge support that the Raiders have with the Latino community as well is definitely something that resonated through those interviews that the secretary did. I had a lot of people while we were at community events say, "Oh yeah, I saw the secretary on Telemundo or Univision" as well as like, "Oh, go Raiders!" And it became this very prideful moment for people in Las Vegas. Not only were they able to vote—a lot of them for the first time—but [they were] able to vote in a space where they root for their team, every Sunday for the Raiders, and they have their shirts say "Los Raiders" . . . So, it just became this multicultural event as well behind that.

Facilitated Press Relations

Although they hadn't planned on it, Allegiant Stadium turned out to be an ideal media backdrop on Election Day. Most of the Nevada news media parked themselves there and stayed all day long. Everyone was having fun, so election officials also stayed on-site for much of the day, using it as a central location to answer questions and provide support.

Rodriguez observed that the only complaint they heard from reporters was a good one: the lines moved so quickly that they had trouble capturing the crowds in their photographs.

Both Secretary Aguilar and Portillo told us that the setup didn't just make things more fun for the media—it became a single point of access for reporters who had questions about what was happening throughout the county and the state. The secretary described it as a valuable communications tool, which allowed them to have "a centralized location . . . [to get] the message out about other issues occurring that day" and to do so "in real time."

Good for Taxpayers

The Raiders carried most of the cost of the initiative, total approximately $50,000, on par with many of their other community outreach activities. This was done at no extra cost to the county. They also used a $5,000 grant from NFL Votes, awarded to each team, in part to make the famous Raiders-branded "I Voted" stickers.

In 2016, Allegiant Stadium was subsidized with $750 million in public funding. This level of taxpayer support is not at all unusual, and a number of teams across the country are seeking public financing for new or renovated stadiums. According to Stateline:

> Across the country, pro sports teams are gearing up to improve or build new stadiums and arenas. In Chicago, both the NFL's Bears and the MLB's White Sox are exploring moves. Baseball's Cleveland Guardians, Milwaukee Brewers, Oakland Athletics and Kansas City Royals are all working toward new or improved stadiums. So are the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers, Oklahoma City Thunder and Los Angeles Clippers. . . . In 2022, New York officials approved a record $850 million subsidy to finance a new stadium for the NFL's Buffalo Bills. Then, last April, the Tennessee Titans landed more than $1.2 billion in state and local funding for a new professional football stadium in Nashville.

As Secretary Aguilar pointed out:

> We know that the Raiders ticket is one of the most expensive in the country, and Las Vegas is a working community, and we know that not everyone has had the ability to go into the arena, to see it, to feel it, to touch it. And this was an opportunity for that individual who may not have that opportunity to have that experience . . . We saw families coming in together, kids, spouses, moms . . . all coming in together to vote. But also, too, it was an opportunity for somebody who maybe was a season ticket holder or has been to an event there to say, 'Hey, this is what it looks like.'

The Raiders understood what Nevadans had done for them, and spending time and resources to help them exercise their right to vote felt like an appropriate way to show gratitude for the support the stadium has received from the city, the state, and especially the passionate fans who have quickly expanded the Raiders' already fervent fanbase.

Conclusion

"*Sports is something that brings people together. So why not use the resources that we have in the buildings that we have to build and bring people together?*"

—Sandra Douglass Morgan, Raiders Team President

"*If you want to be part of the fabric of the community that you're based in, this is one way to . . . do that.*"

—Piper Overstreet-White, Raiders Senior Vice President of Government and Community Relations, on advice she would give other teams

The use of professional sports stadiums as polling places emerged as a significant innovation in U.S. election administration during the 2020 general election. These venues proved to be highly effective polling sites, offering logistical benefits such as accessible spaces, ample parking, and experienced staff, while also fostering strong community engagement and bipartisan public support.

The Las Vegas Raiders' particular efforts to bring the Clark County community into the voting process demonstrated something more: sports teams have the power to bring new voters—and fans—into the democratic process by making voting easy and even fun.

Other American sports teams interested in giving back to their fans and communities through stadium voting can learn from the Raiders' experience.

First, the initiative succeeded in bringing young voters to the polls, as well as voters who may otherwise be less likely to vote. The initiative successfully drew these groups while maintaining a strictly nonpartisan approach, and the turnout data reflects that commitment.

Second, the public response was overwhelmingly positive. The community embraced the initiative, and local news networks helped promote it and encouraged people to participate. This should quell two of the major concerns teams may have: that such efforts could be perceived as partisan or that the local community may not be receptive.

Third, there were few practical obstacles even when other events were happening. The biggest hurdle was assembling the necessary parties to design and execute the plan, and in some ways, even that required less effort than other events at a professional sports stadium. With commitment from both teams and election administrators, stadium voting is entirely doable.

As Pioli pointed out to us, clubs already have entire departments and operations dedicated to fan engagement. "They have these great marketing and creative fan relations departments. They can get very creative and do something special that becomes a new tentpole type of event." He pointed to the evolution of the NFL draft as an example. "That was done in New York City on phones and in hotel conference rooms for years, and now they move it around to different venues around the country in different NFL cities. The NFL and individual clubs have some of the best, most exciting and innovative marketing talent in sports. They also have a remarkable product behind them. They could be using that creative talent around voting."

Secretary Aguilar echoed these sentiments, telling us, "It just takes some dedication and really wanting to be a part of the community and really wanting to create a culture where it goes beyond what takes place on Sunday. It's about being invested in the community you live in."

Notes

1. https://moreincommonus.com/publication/fans-politics-and-the-power-of-sports/
2. Elizabeth M. Addonizio, Donald P. Green, and James M. Glaser, "Putting the party back into politics: an experiment testing whether election day festivals increase voter turnout," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40, no. 4 (2007): 721–727.
3. Donald P. Green and Oliver A. McClellan, "The Effects of Election Festivals on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment Conducted During a Presidential Election," July 9, 2017, available at SSRN 2999305.
4. "When We All Vote: Party at the Polls," June 2023, https://whenweallvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/party-at-the-polls-2022.pdf.
5. Election officials were very cognizant of concerns that opening Allegiant Stadium might lead to the closure of nearby polling locations. They recognized the importance of keeping familiar sites available and chose to keep the nearby senior center open to ensure older voters would not need to travel to the stadium to vote.