**AHEAD OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, FIRING LINE SPECIAL EXAMINING U.S. VOTING SYSTEMS TO PREMIERE ON PBS**

***Margaret Hoover will Examine how we Count the Vote – along with Efforts to Increase Voter Confidence***

***One-Hour Special to Premiere Tuesday, August 27***

**PASADENA, CA; July 15, 2024** – PBS announced today a new, one-hour special from Margaret Hoover focusing on how voting works in America. She will explore how Americans cast their ballots, examine the reliability of voting systems around the country, and voter confidence in light of recent efforts to question the integrity of systems that vary from state to state and often town to town.

**COUNTING THE VOTE: A FIRING LINE SPECIAL WITH MARGARET HOOVER** will premiere on PBS on Tuesday, August 27 at 9:30 p.m. ET (check local listings) and stream on [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org/) and the [PBS App](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/).

“Voting is foundational to our democracy,” Margaret Hoover, the host of FIRING LINE said. “But our democracy is compromised, as is the very act of voting, if voters doubt the integrity of voting systems. In this special, I set out to uncover why we vote the way we do, and what practices can genuinely help to restore trust in how we cast and count our ballots.”

“PBS is proud to present this program as part of our commitment to extensive, thoughtful, and all-encompassing looks at the 2024 election,” said Margaret Ebrahim, Executive in Charge for PBS. “This powerful film carries on the PBS tradition of thoughtful storytelling, in this case looking closer at the core civic function of voting. We are excited to share this with audiences as viewers are actively thinking about elections in their local communities and the national stage.”

In this one-hour special, Hoover embarks on a journey to explore voting systems across the United States. She examines methods to increase voter confidence and sheds light on states that face challenges in their vote count processes as the 2024 election approaches.

Throughout the documentary, she speaks to some of the country’s leading experts on voting, including **David Becker**, the Executive Director and Founder of the nonpartisan Center for Election Innovation & Research, **Jocelyn Benson**, the Democratic Michigan Secretary of State who has run elections there since 2019, **Ben Ginsberg**, Republican election lawyer for President George W. Bush in 2000, and who later testified before the Jan. 6committee against fraud claims, and Republican Georgia Secretary of State **Brad Raffensperger.** In addition to the experts, personal stories of local election officials and voters shed new light on the most powerful tool in our democracy.

**COUNTING THE VOTE** looks back at two of the more closely contested elections in American history – 2000 and 2020 – and examines subsequent efforts to make the casting and counting of ballots more efficient and inclusive. Several pivotal swing states have taken steps to improve confidence in elections since 2020, including Georgia and Michigan, but other potential tipping points in a close presidential contest, like Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, could be careening toward a crisis.

Through archival footage and interviews, Hoover examines how questions about the accuracy of the counting process in Florida in 2000, the contentious nature of the situation, and the ultimate involvement of the Supreme Court eroded public trust in the electoral system. She also speaks to former Governor Jeb Bush about the bipartisan reforms that followed the election and the state’s evolution from being an object of national ridicule to setting the gold standard for election administration.

The show then jumps ahead to 2020 and another pivotal presidential election. Amid a global pandemic, election administrators across the country were tested by a surge of mail-in voting and a steady stream of disinformation. Experts refute conspiracy theories spread by election deniers, and they break down the “red mirage” – the phenomenon where the initial in-person vote count on Election Day in key swing states favored Donald Trump, but absentee ballots counted later delivered a victory for Joe Biden. Why did some states count faster than others? How do inefficient processes fuel doubts? What can be done to improve outdated voting systems in states that could become election tipping points?

Against the backdrop of severe unevenness in the vote counting process, Hoover turns to the challenges anticipated in the 2024 election. She talks to current and former officials in Arizona who have pushed back against conspiracy theorists trying to undermine the vote, as well as election experts in Michigan and Georgia. She also examines the political obstacles preventing Wisconsin and Pennsylvania from implementing reforms to speed up their vote counts before November and investigates whether new restrictions imposed by the legislature in North Carolina will slow down the count there.

**COUNTING THE VOTE** also returns to Florida, where Republicans led by Governor Ron DeSantis have begun rolling back some post-2000 reforms. Finally, as partisans preemptively cast doubt on the 2024 vote count, she asks whether American democracy as we know it can prevail when the most powerful tool of that democracy – voting – is thrown into question.

COUNTING THE VOTE: A FIRING LINE SPECIAL WITH MARGARET HOOVER is produced by The Documentary Group. Margaret Hoover, Alyssa Litoff, and Tom Yellin serve as executive producers. Margaret Ebrahim is the executive in charge for PBS.

COUNTING THE VOTE: A FIRING LINE SPECIAL WITH MARGARET HOOVER was made possible by Robert Granieri, The WNET Group’s Preserving Democracy initiative, and PBS viewers.

**About Margaret Hoover**Margaret Hoover is the host of PBS' ***Firing Line with Margaret Hoover***, a refreshing revival of the television series hosted by William F. Buckley Jr. for 33 years. Hoover is a bestselling author, strategist and political commentator whose experience includes serving on the White House staff of President George W. Bush, on Capitol Hill and on two presidential campaigns. In 2013, Hoover co-founded American Unity Fund, a political organization focused on achieving full freedom and equality for LGBT Americans by working with conservatives.

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**MEDIA CONTACT:** Jason Phelps, [jbphelps@pbs.org](mailto:jbphelps@pbs.org)

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