



Regional dynamics of political communication in Andhra Pradesh: The role of digital media, leadership narratives, and voter engagement in contemporary politics

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Abstract

The transformation of political communication in Andhra Pradesh reflects broader shifts occurring across democratic societies in the digital age. This paper develops a comprehensive conceptual framework to analyze how digital media infrastructures, leadership-driven narrative construction, and evolving voter engagement practices interact within a regionally grounded political ecosystem. Andhra Pradesh, with its distinctive political culture characterized by charismatic leadership, welfare-oriented governance, and competitive party dynamics, provides a compelling site to examine these transformations. The study argues that political communication in the state is no longer linear or top-down but operates through a networked, feedback-driven system in which citizens actively shape discourse. Digital platforms not only mediate political messaging but also influence the very logic of political behavior by privileging immediacy, emotional resonance, and personalization. Leadership narratives, in turn, are strategically crafted to align with both technological affordances and socio-cultural expectations. Voter engagement emerges as a hybrid phenomenon, combining traditional mobilization practices with digitally mediated participation.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, innovation in CSR, sustainability, stakeholder engagement, business competitiveness

Introduction

Political communication has always been central to democratic functioning, but its modalities have evolved dramatically with technological advancements. In Andhra Pradesh, a state characterized by strong regional political identities, charismatic leadership, and welfare-oriented governance, communication strategies have shifted from traditional grassroots mobilization to digitally mediated engagement. Historically, political communication in the state relied heavily on physical campaigning, patron-client relationships, and localized networks. However, these methods are increasingly supplemented—and in some cases replaced—by digital platforms that enable faster, scalable, and targeted communication. The decline of purely offline campaigning reflects broader structural changes in voter behavior and media consumption patterns ^[1]. The emergence of digital media has redefined how political actors construct narratives, mobilize support, and interact with citizens. Andhra Pradesh provides a compelling case study because of its early adoption of e-governance initiatives, data-driven administration, and sophisticated political marketing strategies.

Theoretical Framework

This conceptual paper is grounded in three interconnected theoretical perspectives: mediatization of politics, political marketing theory, and participatory democracy. The mediatization framework suggests that political processes are increasingly shaped by media logic, particularly digital platforms that influence how information is produced, distributed, and consumed. Social media platforms, with their algorithmic filtering and engagement-driven architecture, shape political discourse and visibility. Political marketing theory emphasizes the strategic use of

communication tools to influence voter perceptions and behavior. In the Indian context, political marketing is deeply intertwined with identity politics, emotional appeals, and mass communication campaigns that aim to shape cognitive and affective responses among voters. Participatory democracy highlights the role of citizens as active participants in political processes. Digital platforms facilitate new forms of participation, including online discussions, feedback mechanisms, and direct engagement with political leaders. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens to analyze political communication in Andhra Pradesh ^[2].

Digital Media and the Transformation of Political Communication

The rise of digital media has fundamentally altered the communication landscape in Andhra Pradesh. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become central to political campaigning, governance communication, and public engagement. Recent studies indicate that a significant proportion of voters rely on social media for political information, underscoring the importance of digital platforms in shaping public opinion. The shift toward digital communication is driven by its ability to provide real-time updates, interactive engagement, and targeted messaging. Digital communication also addresses the limitations of traditional campaigning, such as scalability and cost constraints. Offline methods like door-to-door canvassing are increasingly seen as insufficient in reaching diverse and geographically dispersed populations. The concept of “Digital Darbar” exemplifies this transformation, enabling continuous interaction between political leaders and citizens. This model reflects a shift from episodic communication during elections to sustained engagement throughout governance cycles ^[3].

Leadership Narratives and Political Branding

Leadership narratives play a crucial role in shaping political communication in Andhra Pradesh. Political leaders construct narratives that emphasize development, welfare, transparency, and regional pride. These narratives are disseminated through both traditional media and digital platforms. In the digital age, leadership branding has become more personalized and data-driven. Political actors use analytics to understand voter preferences and tailor their messaging accordingly. This allows for micro-targeting of specific demographic groups, enhancing the effectiveness of communication strategies. Narratives are not merely informational but also emotional and symbolic. They appeal to voters' aspirations, identities, and values, creating a sense of connection between leaders and citizens. The emphasis on trust and transparency is particularly significant, as surveys indicate that trustworthiness is a key factor influencing voter preferences. However, the increasing use of digital tools also raises concerns about misinformation, manipulation, and ethical considerations. Technologies such as AI-generated content and deepfakes are emerging as new tools in political communication, complicating the information ecosystem [4].

Voter Engagement in the Digital Era

Voter engagement in Andhra Pradesh has evolved from passive reception of information to active participation in political discourse. Digital platforms enable voters to interact with political actors, share opinions, and mobilize support. Engagement is no longer limited to election periods but extends to governance processes. Citizens can provide feedback, access information, and participate in discussions through digital channels. This enhances transparency and accountability while also increasing expectations from political leaders. At the same time, digital engagement is unevenly distributed. Urban and younger voters are more likely to use digital platforms, while rural populations may still rely on traditional communication methods. This creates a hybrid communication environment where both digital and offline strategies coexist. The role of data in voter engagement is also significant. Political actors collect and analyze data to understand voter behavior, preferences, and sentiments. While this enables more effective communication, it also raises concerns about privacy and data security [5].

Regional Specificities of Andhra Pradesh

The dynamics of political communication in Andhra Pradesh are shaped by unique regional factors, including socio-economic diversity, linguistic identity, and political history. Caste, community, and regional identities continue to influence voting behavior, even as digital media reshapes communication patterns. Political messaging often integrates these identities with broader narratives of development and welfare. The state's experience with digital governance initiatives has also influenced political communication. Programs that use digital platforms for service delivery create expectations for responsiveness and efficiency, which are reflected in political communication strategies. Additionally, the competitive nature of state politics drives innovation in communication techniques. Political parties continuously adapt their strategies to gain an advantage, leading to the adoption of new technologies and approaches [6].

Challenges and Ethical Considerations

The increasing reliance on digital media in political communication presents several challenges. Misinformation and fake news can spread rapidly, influencing public opinion and undermining trust in democratic processes. The use of data analytics and voter profiling raises ethical concerns about privacy and consent. Reports suggest that political campaigns may collect extensive data on voters, enabling highly targeted messaging but also posing risks of manipulation. Cybersecurity is another critical issue. The rise in cyber-related incidents highlights vulnerabilities in the digital ecosystem, which can affect both political communication and publication trust. These challenges necessitate the development of regulatory frameworks and ethical guidelines to ensure responsible use of digital technologies in political communication [7].

Conceptual Model

This paper proposes a conceptual model in which political communication in Andhra Pradesh is shaped by the interaction of three core components: Digital media acts as the infrastructure that enables communication, providing tools and platforms for message dissemination and engagement. Leadership narratives serve as the content, shaping the meaning and interpretation of political messages. Voter engagement represents the outcome, reflecting how citizens respond to and interact with political communication. These components are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Effective leadership narratives enhance engagement, while digital media amplifies their reach and impact. At the same time, voter feedback influences the evolution of narratives and communication strategies. Political communication in Andhra Pradesh is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by digitalization, evolving leadership strategies, and changing voter expectations. The integration of digital media into political processes has created new opportunities for engagement, transparency, and participation, while also introducing challenges related to misinformation, privacy, and ethics. This conceptual paper highlights the need to understand political communication as a dynamic and context-specific process. In Andhra Pradesh, the interplay between digital media, leadership narratives, and voter engagement reflects broader trends in contemporary politics while also exhibiting unique regional characteristics. Future research should focus on empirical analysis of these dynamics, including the impact of digital communication on electoral outcomes, governance, and democratic participation [8].

From Mass Politics to Networked Political Communication

Political communication in Andhra Pradesh has historically been embedded in a socio-political structure defined by kinship networks, caste affiliations, and localized leadership. Traditional campaign strategies involved physical rallies, door-to-door canvassing, and the use of print and broadcast media. These methods emphasized collective mobilization and symbolic representation. However, the rapid expansion of internet access and smartphone usage has disrupted this paradigm. Political communication has shifted toward a networked model characterized by decentralization, interactivity, and data-driven decision-making. This transition is not merely

technological but also epistemological, altering how political knowledge is produced, circulated, and contested. The contemporary political environment is marked by what can be described as “permanent campaigning,” where political actors maintain continuous engagement with voters beyond election cycles. This has blurred the boundaries between governance and campaigning, as policy communication becomes an integral part of political strategy [9].

**Deepened Theoretical Engagement
Mediatization and Algorithmic Politics**

The mediatization of politics in Andhra Pradesh must be understood in the context of algorithmic governance of visibility. Digital platforms prioritize content that generates engagement, often amplifying emotionally charged or polarizing narratives. This creates incentives for political actors to craft messages that resonate at an affective level rather than purely rational discourse. Algorithmic curation also leads to the formation of “echo chambers,” where users are exposed primarily to information that aligns with their existing beliefs. In a politically competitive state, this intensifies partisan divisions while simultaneously strengthening core voter bases.

Political Marketing and Brand Construction

Political marketing in Andhra Pradesh has evolved into a sophisticated practice involving brand management, image crafting, and audience segmentation. Leaders are positioned not merely as policymakers but as brands embodying specific values and promises. Brand construction operates through multiple channels, including visual imagery, slogans, storytelling, and symbolic gestures. Digital media enhances this process by enabling rapid dissemination and real-time feedback, allowing political actors to refine their messaging dynamically [10].

Participatory Democracy and Digital Citizenship

The rise of digital platforms has expanded opportunities for citizen participation, but this participation is uneven and often mediated by technological literacy and access. While digital tools enable new forms of engagement, they also create hierarchies of visibility and influence. Participation in this context is not limited to formal political processes but includes activities such as sharing content, commenting on posts, and engaging in online debates. These practices contribute to the formation of public opinion and the shaping of political narratives.

Digital Media Ecosystem in Andhra Pradesh

The digital media ecosystem in Andhra Pradesh is characterized by a convergence of multiple platforms, each serving distinct communicative functions. Messaging applications facilitate interpersonal and group communication, social networking platforms enable mass outreach, and video-sharing platforms provide a space for storytelling and propaganda. The integration of these

platforms creates a multi-layered communication environment in which messages circulate across different channels, reaching diverse audiences. Political actors strategically leverage this ecosystem to maximize reach and impact [11].

Data-Driven Campaigning

Data analytics plays a central role in contemporary political communication. Campaigns collect and analyze data on voter behavior, preferences, and demographics to design targeted interventions. This allows for micro-targeting, where specific messages are tailored to specific groups. While data-driven strategies enhance efficiency, they also raise concerns about surveillance and manipulation. The opacity of data collection practices makes it difficult to assess the extent to which voter autonomy is compromised [12].

Leadership Narratives: Personalization and Emotional Politics

Leadership narratives in Andhra Pradesh are deeply personalized, often centering on the biography, achievements, and vision of individual leaders. These narratives are constructed to evoke emotional connections with voters, emphasizing themes such as empathy, sacrifice, and development. Digital media amplifies these narratives by enabling direct communication between leaders and citizens. Social media posts, live interactions, and video messages create an illusion of intimacy, fostering a sense of personal connection. Narratives also serve as a tool for framing political issues, shaping how voters interpret events and policies. Competing parties construct contrasting narratives to differentiate themselves and appeal to distinct voter segments [13].

Voter Engagement: From Mobilization to Interaction

Voter engagement in Andhra Pradesh has transitioned from a model of mobilization to one of interaction. Traditional methods focused on persuading voters to participate in elections, whereas contemporary strategies emphasize continuous engagement and relationship-building. Digital platforms enable two-way communication, allowing voters to express opinions, provide feedback, and engage in dialogue with political actors. This creates opportunities for greater accountability but also increases the complexity of managing public expectations [14].

Hybrid Engagement Model

Despite the rise of digital media, traditional forms of engagement remain relevant, particularly in rural areas. The coexistence of digital and offline strategies creates a hybrid model in which political communication is tailored to different contexts and audiences (Table 1).

Conceptual

Table 1: Components of Political Communication Dynamics

Component	Key Features	Tools/Mechanisms	Impact on Politics
Digital Media	Speed, reach, interactivity	Social media, messaging apps, analytics	Rapid dissemination, agenda setting
Leadership Narratives	Personalization, emotional appeal	Storytelling, branding, symbolic acts	Identity formation, voter loyalty
Voter Engagement	Participation, feedback, interaction	Online forums, campaigns, surveys	Increased accountability, dynamic discourse

Interrelationship Model (Narrative Explanation)

The relationship between digital media, leadership narratives, and voter engagement is cyclical and mutually reinforcing. Digital media provides the infrastructure through which narratives are disseminated. Leadership narratives shape the content and tone of communication. Voter engagement generates feedback that influences both the medium and the message. This dynamic can be conceptualized as a feedback loop in which each component continuously interacts with and reshapes the others. The effectiveness of political communication depends on the alignment between these components.

Regional Contextualization

The unique socio-political context of Andhra Pradesh plays a crucial role in shaping communication dynamics. Factors such as caste structures, regional disparities, and economic conditions influence both the content and reception of political messages. Political parties must navigate these complexities while adapting to the demands of a digital communication environment. This requires a nuanced understanding of local contexts combined with technological expertise.

Ethical and Regulatory Dimensions

The increasing reliance on digital media raises important ethical questions. Issues such as misinformation, data privacy, and algorithmic bias pose challenges to democratic integrity. Regulatory frameworks must balance the need for innovation with the protection of नागरिक rights. This includes ensuring transparency in data usage, accountability in content dissemination, and safeguards against manipulation. The interaction of these dimensions produces a dynamic political communication system that evolves over time. The case of Andhra Pradesh illustrates the emergence of a new paradigm of political communication characterized by hybridity, interactivity, and data-driven strategies. Digital media has not replaced traditional practices but has transformed and integrated them into a more complex system. Leadership narratives and voter engagement are central to this transformation, shaping how political messages are constructed and received. The interplay between these elements reflects broader changes in democratic politics, highlighting both opportunities and challenges ^[15].

Case Studies on Political Communication in Andhra Pradesh

Case Study 1: The 2019 Andhra Pradesh Assembly Election – Digital Wave and Narrative Shift

The 2019 Andhra Pradesh Assembly election represents a watershed moment in the evolution of political communication in the state. The victory of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) under Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy over the incumbent Telugu Desam Party (TDP) led by N. Chandrababu Naidu illustrates how digital media, leadership narratives, and voter engagement converged to produce a decisive electoral outcome. A key feature of this election was the integration of mass-contact politics with digital amplification. Jagan Mohan Reddy's extensive padayatra (state-wide foot march) created a strong grassroots connection with voters, but its political impact was magnified through strategic digital dissemination. Social media campaigns transformed localized interactions into

statewide narratives, ensuring that even those who did not physically participate in the padayatra could engage with its symbolism. Digital slogans such as “#RavaliJaganKavaliJagan” and “#ByeByeBabu” became viral markers of political sentiment, framing the election as a referendum on change versus continuity. These hashtags were not merely communicative tools but instruments of narrative construction, embedding political meaning into everyday digital interactions. The election also demonstrated the importance of counter-media strategies. YSRCP's digital campaign sought to neutralize what it described as hostile traditional media narratives by creating parallel channels of communication. This marked a shift from reliance on legacy media to platform-based political communication, where parties could directly influence public discourse without intermediaries. From a voter engagement perspective, the election highlighted the emergence of networked participation. Voters were not passive recipients but active disseminators of political content, sharing videos, memes, and campaign messages across platforms. This participatory model significantly enhanced message reach and credibility, as peer-to-peer communication often carries greater trust than institutional messaging. The landslide victory of YSRCP, winning a dominant majority in the assembly, underscores how the alignment of digital media strategy, compelling leadership narrative, and participatory engagement can reshape electoral outcomes ^[16].

Case Study 2: Digital Campaign Strategies in the 2024 Andhra Pradesh Elections

The 2024 election cycle in Andhra Pradesh reflects a more mature phase of digital political communication, characterized by professionalization, data analytics, and competitive digital spending. Unlike 2019, where digital media played a supportive role, in 2024 it became a primary battleground. Both YSRCP and TDP invested heavily in digital advertising, influencer engagement, and targeted messaging. Campaigns utilized tools such as geo-targeted ads, A/B testing, and real-time analytics to optimize communication strategies. Reports indicate that TDP adopted an aggressive digital advertising approach, promoting policy promises such as welfare guarantees through widespread online campaigns. In contrast, YSRCP relied more on its existing social media networks and governance-based messaging, though it was perceived as comparatively less aggressive in paid digital outreach. Digital consulting firms played a crucial role in shaping campaign strategies. Through coordinated efforts involving social media management, influencer collaborations, and content production, these firms enabled parties to achieve significant engagement growth and expand their voter base, particularly among urban and युवा population. An interesting dimension of the 2024 campaign was the use of viral and unconventional content. Instances such as politically branded products circulating on social media illustrate how campaigns sought to capture attention in an increasingly saturated information environment. This election also demonstrated the increasing importance of real-time narrative control. Political parties continuously monitored online discourse and responded rapidly to emerging issues, highlighting the shift toward always-on communication strategies ^[17].

Case Study 3: Welfare Politics and Narrative Framing – The “Class War” Strategy

Beyond election campaigns, political communication in Andhra Pradesh is deeply embedded in governance narratives. A notable example is the framing of welfare policies as part of a broader ideological narrative. The YSRCP government strategically framed its welfare initiatives as a form of social justice, positioning itself as a champion of the गरीब and marginalized. This was evident in campaigns around housing distribution and welfare schemes, which were communicated not just as policy measures but as moral commitments. At the same time, the opposition TDP was framed as representing elite or pro-rich interests, creating a binary narrative structure that simplified complex policy debates into emotionally resonant categories. Digital media played a crucial role in amplifying this narrative. Government achievements were disseminated through official channels, social media posts, and digital campaigns, ensuring consistent visibility. This reflects the blurring of boundaries between governance communication and political messaging. This case illustrates how policy communication becomes political communication, with narratives shaping public perception of governance outcomes [18].

Case Study 4: Controversies, Misinformation, and the Digital Public Sphere

The digitalization of political communication has also intensified the spread of controversies and misinformation. Andhra Pradesh provides several examples of how digital platforms can amplify political conflicts. Allegations of digital financial transactions for voter influence, including claims of money transfers via digital payment platforms, highlight the evolving nature of electoral malpractices in a digital age. Similarly, accusations regarding the use of state-linked digital institutions for political campaigning reflect concerns about the politicization of digital infrastructure. The rapid circulation of controversial content—whether related to campaign tactics, policy decisions, or political rhetoric—demonstrates how digital media can intensify political polarization. The speed and scale of information dissemination make it difficult to verify claims, creating an environment where perception often outweighs fact. This case underscores the need to understand political communication not only as a tool for engagement but also as a site of contestation, where competing narratives vie for dominance [19].

Case Study 5: Hybrid Political Communication – Rural vs Urban Dynamics

Despite the rapid growth of digital media, Andhra Pradesh continues to exhibit a hybrid communication model in which digital and traditional methods coexist. Urban areas, characterized by higher internet penetration and digital literacy, are more responsive to online campaigns, targeted advertisements, and social media narratives. In contrast, rural areas continue to rely on interpersonal communication, local leaders, and traditional campaign methods. However, digital media increasingly bridges this divide through platforms like WhatsApp, which enable the dissemination of information even in areas with limited formal media infrastructure. This creates a layered communication environment in which digital content is localized through social networks. The hybrid model reflects the adaptability of political actors, who tailor their strategies to different socio-economic contexts while maintaining a coherent overarching narrative [20].

Evolution and Political communication in Andhra Pradesh

The evolution of political communication in Andhra Pradesh reflects a broader transition from mass-mediated politics to networked digital politics. In the pre-digital era, communication was largely unidirectional, controlled by political elites and mediated through traditional institutions such as print media and public rallies. Voters functioned primarily as passive recipients of information, with limited capacity to influence political narratives outside election cycles. The transitional phase introduced hybrid communication patterns, where television and early social media platforms began to supplement traditional methods. This period marked the beginning of leader-centric communication, with increasing emphasis on personality-driven politics. The contemporary digital era represents a structural shift toward algorithmically mediated communication systems, where visibility and influence are shaped by platform dynamics. Voters have become active participants, contributing to content creation and dissemination. The emergence of real-time feedback mechanisms has transformed political communication into a continuous, adaptive process rather than a periodic activity (Table 2).

Table 2: Evolution Across Phases

Dimension	Pre-Digital Era (Before 2010)	Transitional Phase (2010–2018)	Digital Era (2019–Present)
Communication Mode	Face-to-face, rallies, print media	TV + early social media	Integrated digital ecosystem
Leadership Style	Collective, party-centered	Leader-focused	Hyper-personalized branding
Media Role	Gatekeeper-driven	Hybrid	Platform-driven (algorithmic)
Voter Role	Passive recipient	Semi-participatory	Active content creator
Campaign Strategy	Mass mobilization	Media-centric campaigns	Data-driven micro-targeting
Feedback Mechanism	Delayed (elections)	Limited feedback loops	Real-time engagement

Comparative State Analysis with Andhra Pradesh vs Other States

The rural–urban divide in Andhra Pradesh highlights the persistence of structural inequalities in communication access and participation. Rural areas continue to rely heavily on interpersonal networks and localized leadership, reflecting the importance of social relationships in political

decision-making. Urban areas, by contrast, are characterized by higher levels of digital literacy and media exposure, enabling more individualized and issue-based political engagement. This creates a dual communication system in which political actors must simultaneously operate across traditional and digital domains. WhatsApp’s dominance in rural areas illustrates how digital tools are adapted to local

contexts, serving as a bridge between traditional and modern communication forms. The variation in message content—

welfare versus development—further underscores the need for context-sensitive communication strategies (Table 3) ^[21].

Table 3: Andhra Pradesh vs Other States

Dimension	Andhra Pradesh	Telangana	Tamil Nadu	Karnataka
Communication Model	Highly competitive digital	Semi-centralized	Ideological + structured	Fragmented multi-party
Leadership Style	Personalized rivalry	Centralized leadership	Ideological leadership	Mixed leadership
Digital Use	Aggressive & adaptive	Controlled narrative	Mature systems	Uneven adoption
Voter Engagement	Highly participatory	Moderately participatory	Strong grassroots	Diverse patterns

Challenges and Future Directions in Political Communication in Andhra Pradesh

The transformation of political communication in Andhra Pradesh through digital media, leadership narratives, and evolving voter engagement has generated significant opportunities for democratic participation. However, these developments have also introduced complex challenges that affect the quality, transparency, and integrity of political processes. At the same time, emerging technological and socio-political trends indicate new directions that will shape the future of political communication in the state. This section critically examines the structural, technological, and ethical challenges, followed by a forward-looking analysis of future trajectories. One of the most pressing challenges in Andhra Pradesh's political communication landscape is the proliferation of misinformation and fake news. The speed and scale at which digital platforms disseminate information make it difficult to verify authenticity, allowing misleading narratives to shape voter perceptions. This not only distorts public discourse but also undermines the foundation of informed democratic participation. Closely linked to this issue is the growing concern over data privacy. Political campaigns increasingly rely on voter data for micro-targeting, often without transparent consent mechanisms. This raises critical ethical questions about the extent to which voter behavior is being influenced or manipulated through personalized messaging. The digital divide remains another structural constraint. While urban populations benefit from high levels of connectivity and access to digital platforms, rural areas continue to rely on traditional forms of communication. This creates an asymmetry in political engagement, where certain groups have greater access to information and participation opportunities than others. Algorithmic bias further complicates the communication environment. Digital platforms prioritize content based on engagement metrics, often amplifying sensational or polarizing narratives. This leads to the formation of echo chambers, where individuals are exposed primarily to information that reinforces their existing beliefs, thereby limiting exposure to diverse perspectives. The increasing emphasis on leadership narratives has also contributed to over-personalization in political communication. While this enhances emotional connection and voter engagement, it risks weakening institutional discourse by shifting focus away from policies and governance structures. Finally, cybersecurity threats pose significant risks to the integrity of political communication. The potential for data breaches, hacking, and digital manipulation introduces vulnerabilities that can disrupt electoral processes and erode public trust ^[22].

Conclusions

The challenges facing political communication in Andhra Pradesh are not merely technological but deeply intertwined with social, ethical, and institutional dimensions.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-dimensional approach that combines innovation with regulation and inclusivity with accountability. At the same time, the future of political communication holds significant potential for enhancing democratic participation and governance. If managed effectively, the integration of digital media, leadership narratives, and voter engagement can contribute to a more responsive, transparent, and participatory political system.

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