



Harnessing the Power of the Nonprofit Vote

Encouraging Staff and Volunteers to Vote: Tactics and Strategies



Encouraging staff to vote isn't a traditional get-out-the-vote campaign. While you could 'door knock' or 'phone bank' your office, it's much more about using existing communications and activities to promote voting. To remind, inform and motivate.

Use your normal internal communications (email, staff mail boxes, etc.), as well as staff meetings or events. Your plan should be simple enough to carry out every year in state, national or important local elections¹.

To get started, check out our factsheet on what motivates voting - *Seven Tips on Getting Out the Vote*. The most important factor in voter turnout is personal contact from someone you know. That's you. The second and third biggest turnout factors are discussed below – getting timely information about voting and motivation to do so.

1. Timing

Focus your efforts on the last 3 weeks before the election. Increase efforts in the final week and day before Election Day. If your state uses all vote-by-mail, start intensifying your efforts a little earlier.

2. Content that Informs

One of the biggest reasons people don't vote is because they don't have all of the information they need about when, where and how to vote.

- Provide information that helps staff vote. Suggestions include: the date of the election; when the polls open and close; a link to an online polling place finder; early voting options; how to get an absentee ballot; and your state's voter hotline and voter information website. For help getting this information, use our Voting in Your State tool.
- If your state has Election Day registration, remind staff it's not too late to register or update their registration. Let them know whether they can do this at the poll or need to go to their local election board.
- Provide information about the candidates and ballot measures. More and more states are providing easily accessible sample ballots through their online tools. Check your state election website here. Or link to a nonpartisan guide, if available.
- Highlight what's important. If you give too much voter information, it can start to seem complicated. The voter will find additional voting information from friends, family or other sources.

¹ We recommend focusing on the General Election. Unless the primary or preliminary election is the one that will decide the eventual winner or is competitive and of strong interest to your community.



A nonpartisan, national campaign to encourage every eligible nonprofit staff and volunteer to register and vote.

A project of Independent Sector, National Council of Nonprofits, Nonprofit VOTE and the United Way Worldwide

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3. Content that Motivates

To keep your messages short, use different messages and approaches in different communications.

• *What's at stake*

Highlight a contentious issues or ballot measures that could help...or hurt your community.

- “The future of [our issue] depends on who turns out to vote November X.”
- “Vote yes/no on a ballot measure X.” With a brief rationale about why it's important to the community or your nonprofit, e.g. “Stop cuts in funding for women's health. Question X will mean...”
- “Vote for those who can't vote [children, immigrants]”

• *The impact on your nonprofit.*

- “Our nonprofit depends on support from the city or state to maintain our funding and services.”
- “When we talk to elected officials we want to be able to say 100% of our (eligible) staff and volunteers vote.”

• *The value of having your voice heard*

- Encourage staff to express their opinion. Raise their voice.
- “Please vote - don't let others decide for you who's elected and what issues matter.”
- “When you vote, you aren't voting alone. You're voting with your family, friends, and neighbors.”

4. Providing Time Off to Vote

Make sure that your staff knows that your organization provides times off to vote. It a signal that you value voting. Many states require it. (Check here) for more information on what state law requires.)

5. Messages to Avoid

Avoid negative messages (true or not) like “If don't vote you can't complain.” The best messages are more motivating, bring urgency and highlight something that might be lost or gained.

6. Creating Visibility

- Use signage, posters or electronic message boards.
- Make Election Day an important day on your calendar. Use your communications or create visibility in the lobby or where staff gathers.
- Talk about the election at a staff meeting. A good question to ask is “When do you plan to vote?” or “Are you going before work or after?” If people are prompted to visualize voting they're far more likely to turn out.

7. Voter Education Activities

Beyond communications and visibility, nonprofits can do voter education whether for their staff or local community. For example, co-sponsor a candidate forum, invite candidates to attend an event, or do a candidate questionnaire or voter guide.

8. Other Resources

- [10 Things To Do Between Now and Election Day](#), Nonprofit VOTE
- [Checklist on Nonpartisan Guidelines for 501\(c\)\(3\) Organizations](#), Nonprofit VOTE, [Eng](#) and [Sp](#)
- [Be a Poll Worker](#), Nonprofit VOTE, [Eng](#) and [Sp](#)
- [50 State Guide to Voting In Your State](#)
- [Long Distance Voter's 50 State Guide to Early and Absentee Voting](#)



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