A TOOLKIT FOR NONPROFIT STAFF

Voter Registration

- Planning and Running a Staff Voter Registration Drive
- Sample Voter Registration Script
- FAQs When Doing Voter Registration
- Filling Out and Returning the Form
- What Nonprofit Staff Can Say about the Election – when doing voter registration
- Sample Email from CEO/ED to Staff on Registering to Vote
- Tips for Active Tabling
- Reasons to Register and Vote

Voting

- Encouraging Staff to Vote: Tactics and Strategies
- Sample Time Off to Vote Personnel Policies
- Sample Email from CEO/ED to Staff on Registering to Vote
- Staff Use of Social Media to Promote Voting
- Guidelines to Staff Election Activity: What Staff Can Do

Additional Links

- State Guides to Conducting a Voter Registration Drive - View under “Legal Guides” tab, www.nationalvoterregistrationday.org/resources/partner-toolkit/
- Your State’s Voter Registration Guidelines, Deadlines, Forms, Voter Registration Look Up Tool and Online Voter Registration Tool - www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state/
- Contact Your Local Election Clerk by Phone or Email, www.usvotefoundation.org/vote/eoddomestic.htm

Prepared by Nonprofit VOTE – August 2016 www.nonprofitvote.org
Planning and Running Your Staff and Volunteer Voter Registration Activity

Along with our voter registration drive checklist, this tool provides ideas on when, where and how to get your staff and volunteers registered to vote.

TIMING: When to do it

National Voter Registration Day takes place in advance of states’ voter registration deadlines for the fall elections. Set up a table in a central location for the duration of the week and plan a special event on National Voter Registration Day itself. Alternatively, you may prefer to do it at a time when more volunteers are around or around a major staff event.

STAFFING: Who coordinates and who does the voter registration

Every voter registration drive needs a coordinator or staff team to run the activity. It could be a program or policy staff person, or someone who ordinarily organizes staff activities. For staff and volunteers doing voter registration, it helps to have someone who is naturally outgoing and is passionate about voting.

Larger nonprofits may want to make department heads responsible to make sure staff gets registered, like issuing a reminder during a weekly staff meeting.

KICK OFF: Inform staff about the drive and encourage them to participate.

A drive should start with an email to staff from the CEO/Executive Director or senior staff two to three weeks before the drive begins. Or it can be an announcement at an all staff meeting. All staff need to know this is an important commitment of the organization.

The toolkit has an email outline and a sample email.

SUGGESTED TACTICS: Ideas to get started

Door knock — or “cube knock” — your office

Door knocking is a campaign staple. Try it in your office. Have a few volunteers divide and conquer, or have one person do it. Find someone who is passionate about voting and to whom you just can’t say “no” or “I don’t have time” to take it on.
A staff member with ACCESS social services in Dearborn, MI takes his cube-knocking duties seriously and makes the rounds every election cycle. When he comes knocking, he’s either asking people to register to vote or to donate to the organization’s scholarship fund. He reports it’s much easier to get to yes for voter registration.

**A Table or booth**
Set up a table or booth for week during hours and in an area convenient for staff and volunteers. While one or two people may primarily staff the table, consider rotating in other staff for short shifts. Make the booth festive and appealing. Use red, white and blue balloons, bunting or other inexpensive decorations. Provide treats or giveaways to make the booth more inviting. Use our “Active Tabling” resource to learn more about effective tabling.

**Staff meetings**
Some nonprofits can register staff to vote in a regular staff meeting. Be prepared with forms and information about voting in your state. Make sure to ask staff who say they’re registered if they’ve moved recently or changed their name, and may need to update their registration.

**Join the party**
Join the party! We won’t say which political party but we will give you pizza and cake to make it inviting to register. At a “civic engagement” party no one attending has to register but it’s a good time to offer it.

_Partnership Health Center in Missoula, MT hosted a National Voter Registration Day VRD party to celebrate the holiday for democracy, complete with an American flag shaped cake for their staff and volunteers._

**Department competition**
Create a little competition between departments. Who can get to 100% of eligible staff registered first or the most total registrations turned in.

**For your volunteers**
Voter registration is a perfect activity to integrate into volunteer orientation to show your organization’s commitment to civic participation and active citizenship. Or include volunteers in any of the above activities.

_Send us your ideas here._

**PROMOTION: Create visibility for the drive**
- Provide email and social media reminders.
- Place promotional posters in high-traffic areas, such as the main lobby, elevators and employee break rooms.
- Place a reminder in paycheck envelopes that are distributed just before the week of the drive.
- Take pictures and post them in your internal communications.

**RECOGNITION: Give props to those who led the effort.**
Hand out awards or give recognition to coordinators and registrars in a staff meeting or newsletter. A personal note of thanks is always welcome!

_The YWCA USA learned in 2014 that local affiliates are motivated by opportunities for recognition across their network. They made sure the actions of their participating local affiliates were publicly recognized._

This is a sample script to help guide your interactions with constituents. Make sure to keep these things in mind: 1) keep in positive 2) be interactive – get up from behind the table 3) make it personal

Face-to-face interactions with individuals at your nonprofit present an excellent opportunity to talk about registering to vote. Below is a sample script to help guide your conversation about voter registration. Be sure to tailor it to your specific constituents and community members.

Intro:  Hi, how are you? My name is (your name). It’s important for us at (insert group name) to make sure everyone we serve are active and engaged members of the community. That’s why we are helping people register or update their voter registration. Can I help you update your voter registration today?

If “yes”: That’s great! Here is the form, and please let me know if you have any questions. (Register the person to vote and move to Closing)

If “already registered” That’s great! Can I ask if you’ve moved recently?

“No, I haven’t moved” (Move to Pledge to Vote script below)

“Yes I moved” I can help you update your registration so you can vote. This will only take a few minutes. (Register the person to vote and move to Closing)

If “no, not interested” (See Common Responses below)
(or too busy, not eligible, etc.)

Closing: Thank you for (registering to vote or updating your voter registration information) with me, I’ll submit this right away to our local elections division and you should be all set for the upcoming election!

Please ask the voter for his or her phone number if not provided.

Before the voter leaves, please look over the form and ensure all required fields are completed completely and legibly.
Common Responses

1. “I don’t have time.”

I understand you are really busy. Filling out this form only takes a couple minutes and I can make sure it gets turned in for you. You can save time by registering with me today.

2. “I’m not interested” or “I don’t vote.”

I understand. There are a lot of challenges out there. We want to register everyone in our community because it’s important that the voices in our community are heard. It also helps us here at (name of organization) to show our community is voting. Just to let you know, I will be here on (insert dates you are tabling) if you change your mind about registering to vote. Thanks so much for stopping by!

3. “I can’t register to vote. I’m not eligible.”

May I ask why not? I have training on registering people to vote and may be able to answer questions.

- Not a citizen: I understand. You can make a difference by making sure friends and family members are registered.
- Have a felony conviction: In many states you can vote as soon as you leave prison or finish your sentence. Look up your state’s rules at www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-as-an-ex-offender/
- Not old enough: Will you be 18 by Election Day? If so, I can register you today.

4. “I don’t have time today. I am just here for (health care/services).”

I hear you. Our ability to provide our services can depend on the support of elected officials, and it makes a difference when they know our community members are registered to vote.

Would you consider updating your registration right now? It will only take a couple of minutes.

5. “Why are you asking me that?”

In addition to providing our services and helping our clients have access the things they need, we think it is important our organization is helping you register to vote. Your vote really can make a difference in your community. I’d be glad to help you register to vote or update your registration right now. It will only take a couple of minutes.
6. “I don’t know any of the candidates.”
I understand! We’re nonpartisan and can’t recommend candidates, but you may want to get this information from a friend or family member. Or provide the person a sample ballot or nonpartisan voter guide if available.

7. “Who should I vote for?”
We are a nonpartisan organization and we don’t endorse candidates. We suggest talking to a friend or family member that might be able to help.

8. “I don’t want to list my phone number.”
It’s not a required field, but it’s really helpful to list your phone number in case the local board of elections has a problem with your registration and needs to contact you.

________________________________________________________________________

Pledge to Vote Card Script

If person is registered:    Would you be willing to sign a pledge to vote card for this upcoming election. (Give Pledge to Vote Card to voter to fill out).

This is a great way to help our organization because it shows our communities are voting. If you fill out this Pledge to Vote Card, we’ll let you know how to get information you will need on Election Day.

If no, not sure, etc.:  See Reasons to Pledge below

Reasons to Pledge:
• This is a way to help our organization! This is a public way to show our community is voting and paying attention.
• We have a goal of collecting [xx] pledges from voters in our community. We’d love to have you join us in our efforts to show elected officials our community votes.
• To ensure support for our services, it’s really important we show elected officials people in our community vote.
• We know voting may not always be convenient. That’s why we want to make it easier for you. We can send you all the information you need to be set on Election Day.
• The election is coming up and every vote will count. It’s important we get everybody engaged in time for Election Day.

Second Ask: Can you take a moment to pledge to vote today?

Closing: Thank you for being a voter!
How can I check my voter registration?
Most every state has a voter registration look-up tool online. It generally requires you to provide your birth date or other identifying information. Find your state’s look-up tool using Nonprofit VOTE’s Voting-in-Your-State guide at www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state. Or call your local election office.

Can people with a past felony conviction register and vote?
The answer is both “yes” and “it depends”. Every state is different. Maine and Vermont have no restrictions. 14 states restore your right to vote immediately upon release from jail or prison. Many others only restore the right after have serving a “full sentence” – including probation and parole. See www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-as-an-ex-offender

How do homeless people register and vote?
We recommend using the address of a shelter or other nonprofit for their registration and mailing address. In most states, a person can also mark a cross street on the form to indicate the place where they usually sleep. See www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-and-homelessness

Can a survivor of domestic violence keep their current address private?
In most states, yes. Address Confidentiality Programs and Confidential Voter Listings are programs administered by the state that enable survivors of domestic violence to register while maintaining the confidentiality of their address. The National Network to End Domestic Violence provides a list of currently available programs. See www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-and-domestic-violence.

How do I know if my registration was accepted?
You will receive a registration acknowledgment card in the mail from your local election officials. In most states, you can also check your registration status online at your state’s statewide voter registration portal. Use our Voting-in-Your-State guide to find yours: www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state

What ID do I need to vote?
About 30 states have voter ID laws of which half require a photo ID. The majority of photo ID states allow voters without the right ID to vote a provisional ballot or sign an affidavit and vote a regular ballot. Remember, most every state asks for some form of ID from first time voters who vote on Election Day at the polls. Use our Voting-in-Your-State guide to find your state’s current voter ID law: www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state

How do I find my polling place or information about early, absentee or mail voting?
Most states have polling place look up tools. In some states you have to contact your local election office. Use our Voting-in-Your-State guide to find your polling place look up, information about early voting, absentee voting and vote by mail: www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state
Filling Out the Form *(legibility counts!)*

State voter registration forms vary. The following fields are mandatory. Make sure to go over the form with the voter when finished to be sure nothing is left out.

- **Citizenship and Age Requirements:** Be sure to check both of these boxes. In order to register to vote you must be a U.S. citizen and be 18 years old or older by the date of the next election.\(^1\)
- **Name and Residence Address:** You must give a street address. P.O. Boxes or work addresses may not be used. You can use a P.O. Box for your *mailing address*.
- **Identification:** States ask for driver’s license number or the last four digits (or full) Social Security number. If you don’t have either, write “none.” A number will be assigned to you. Not providing an ID could put your registration under scrutiny.
- **Date of Birth, Signature and Date:** Surprisingly, registrants frequently forget one of these.
- **Other Common Fields:** Change of Address or Change of Name; Party Affiliation

Returning Registration Forms

- **Encourage voters to let you turn in their cards.** This will ensure that their registration gets to the right place in time. Assure them that you are turning in many people’s cards and can make sure that theirs gets to the office in time.
- **Return completed forms to the registrant’s local election office:** You may return the forms in person or by mail, but in person is preferable. Visit our Voting in Your State tool - [www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state](http://www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state) to find your local election office.
- **Turn in forms promptly:** Some states require forms collected in a registration drive to be turned in within a certain period of time after the form is signed and dated. Check with your state about their turn-in policy for voter registration drives.

- **Know the deadlines:** Find your registration deadlines on your state election website or by contacting your local election office. [www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state](http://www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state). Forms generally must be delivered or postmarked by 5:00 pm on the day of the deadline.

**ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION (OVR)**

The process is the same to register to vote online. Generally the voter must have a current state issued ID like a driver’s license to use a state online voter registration tool.

**CHOOSING PARTY AFFILIATION**

More than half the states ask registrants to choose a party affiliation or list themselves as “unaffiliated” or “unenrolled.” It is nonpartisan to explain the difference. Choosing a party allows you to participate in that party’s caucuses and conventions. Many states have “closed primaries” where only those registered in the party can vote.

**SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

For special circumstances such as homeless, victim of domestic violence, ex-offender see – Frequently Asked Questions when doing voter registration at [www.nonprofitvote.org/voter-registration-2/](http://www.nonprofitvote.org/voter-registration-2/)

### Sample Form - Voter Registration Application - Sample Form

Review your state form and state specific instructions.

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<th>1</th>
<th>Mr.</th>
<th>Mrs.</th>
<th>Ms.</th>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Middle Name(s)</th>
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<th>3</th>
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<th>9</th>
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<td>Are you a citizen of the United States of America?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Will you be 18 years old on or before election day?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>If you checked &quot;No&quot; in response to either of these questions, do not complete form. (Please see state-specific instructions for rules regarding eligibility to register prior to age 18.)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Address Where You Get Your Mail If Different From Above</td>
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<td>State</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Date of Birth</td>
<td>Telephone Number (optional)</td>
<td>ID Number - (Usually State ID # or last 4 digits of your SSN)</td>
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<td>I have reviewed my state’s instructions and I swear/affirm that:</td>
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<td>I am a United States citizen</td>
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<td>I meet the eligibility requirements of my state and subscribe to any oath required.</td>
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<td>The information I have provided is true to the best of my knowledge under penalty of perjury. If I have provided false information, I may be fined, imprisoned, or (if not a U.S. citizen) deported from or refused entry to the United States.</td>
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**Don't Forget Highlighted Fields**

- Please sign full name (or put mark)
- Date: Month Day Year

**If you are registering to vote for the first time:** please refer to the application instructions for information on submitting copies of valid identification documents with this form.

**Please fill out the sections below if they apply to you.**

- **A** If this application is for a change of name, what was your name before you changed it?
  - Mr. Miss Mrs. Ms.
  - Last Name First Name Middle Name(s)

- **B** If you were registered before but this is the first time you are registering from the address in Box 2, what was your address where you were registered before?
  - Street (or route and box number) Apt. or Lot # City/Town/County State Zip Code

- **C** If you live in a rural area but do not have a street number, or if you have no address, please show on the map where you live.
  - Write in the names of the crossroads (or streets) nearest to where you live.
  - Use a dot to show any schools, churches, stores, or other landmarks near where you live, and write the name of the landmark.
  - Example: Grocery Store Woodchuck Road

- **D** If the applicant is unable to sign, who helped the applicant fill out this application? Give name, address and phone number (phone number optional).

**Mail this application to the address provided for your State.**
Staff working for 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations should be nonpartisan when representing their nonprofit on site, at events or doing voter engagement activities. You cannot suggest which candidate to vote for or political party to support.

**What is ok to talk about on a nonpartisan basis?**

It’s fine to provide information about the voting process like dates and deadlines, early voting hours, getting a mail ballot, or help registering to vote. You can let people know about a candidate forum or debate.

**What if someone asks me who I support or who they should vote for?**

Remind them that as a health center employee, you must be nonpartisan. Your options are:

- Encourage the person to talk to a friend or family member they trust and share values with.
- Direct the person to a sample ballot or nonpartisan voter guide if available.
- Closer to the election, you can link them to online tools that let voters know what’s on their ballot. Google “What’s on (my state) ballot? Or use Nonprofit VOTE’s Voting In Your State: 50 State Guide.

**Can I say anything about specific candidates?**

You can only answer simple facts like what party they are in, if they’re an incumbent or challenger or where they live. Don’t state your preferences.

**What do I say when asked about the difference between Republicans and Democrats?**

There is no good answer or any accurate source that doesn’t have a bias outside of the party websites. You could mention the names of the current nominees for president and their party, but go no further. Do the same as you would do with candidates and tell them to ask a friend or go to the political party official websites.

**What if I’m asked about a ballot measure?**

Ballot measures are about laws not candidates. You may discuss the pros and cons of a ballot measure unless it is health center policy not to. You can also tell them that the health center doesn’t have an official position on ballot questions.

**Can I support candidates in my personal time?**

Yes. You may support candidates when not “on the clock” working for your nonprofit.

**Can I use social media to post or share information about the candidates?**

Not if you’re using the nonprofit account. It’s ok to say what you want on your personal accounts. (Nonprofit CEOs/EDs who personify their nonprofit may wish to be more careful.)

**What about talking to other staff about the elections?**

It’s normal and acceptable to exchange views on candidates and the election with other staff around the “water cooler” or on breaks. But don’t conduct political activities during work hours with staff like handing out literature or signing up other staff to support a candidate.

**Resources**

Engaging Your Staff in Elections, www.nonprofitvote.org/engaging-your-staff-2/
Subject Line: Registering to Vote

Dear -

We at [ORG NAME] are asking all our staff and volunteers who are 18 and over and citizens to register to vote. If you’re already registered, now is the time to make sure you are registered at your current address. Our goal is 100% of all staff registered by National Voter Registration Day, Tuesday, September [this year’s date].

When [ORG NAME] asks elected officials to support our issues and funding for services like ours, having our staff, board and volunteers be registered voters makes our voice that much stronger. [Or highlight the importance of the upcoming election, fulfilling civic duty, etc.]

[DESCRIBE REGISTRATION ACTIVITY HERE – for example] Around National Voter Registration Day September, [EMPLOYEE NAME] will be coming around the office with registration forms asking you if you need to register or update your registration. They can help you fill it out and return it or complete your registration online.

We appreciate your service to (ORG NAME). Thank you for being a registered voter!
Tips for “Active” Tabling:  
Voter Engagement in a Lobby or at an Event

Staffing a table in your lobby or at an event is an effective strategy for engaging your clients and constituents in voter registration, pledge-to-vote, and other voter outreach activities. For tabling to be effective, staff and volunteers need to be positive, assertive, confident, and pro-active. Don’t sit behind the table waiting for people to approach you. The tips below should help get you started.

TIPS FOR ACTIVE TABLING

☐ Be pro-active! Engage people and encourage them to approach the table. Stand up, get out from behind the table, and greet people. Use our “Making the Ask” factsheet for tips.

☐ Use large signage to attract attention. Banners, posters, balloons and other decorations can make your table inviting.

☐ Use snacks, or other freebies to encourage people to approach the table and talk to you.

☐ When you’re talking to somebody, start to put the pen and clipboard in their hand. You’ll be surprised at how many people will automatically start filling it out.

☐ Table in the weeks leading up to the registration deadline, early voting period, or Election Day. For a November election, the best time to table is between August and October.

IN THE COMMUNITY

☐ Find highly trafficked areas (transit stops, supermarkets, etc.) or events that draw local crowds eligible to vote in your area – like an event you or a partner sponsors.

☐ If it’s an event, equip staff with clipboards and encourage them to canvass the crowd.

AT YOUR OFFICE

☐ Make sure the entire staff knows about your tabling activities. Everyone on staff should join in to encourage people to stop by the table.

☐ Table during the hours that foot traffic is heaviest. During peak hours, canvassers should be averaging 1 to 4 completed voter registrations per hour and 3 to 5 voter pledges per hour.

☐ Move around the office and common areas with a clipboard. Don’t stay in just one place.
There are as many reasons to vote as there are voters. When speaking to your clients and constituents about the reasons for voting, try a variety of different approaches. Many people vote because they are for or against an issue or candidate. For others, voting is about ensuring high voter turnout in the community, which results in greater access to elected officials and more of a say in decisions affecting the community. Review these and other reasons to register and vote below.

For this nonprofit, your community…or those who can’t vote

For this nonprofit
Our nonprofit depends on support from the city or state to maintain our funding and services. Elected officials respond to neighborhoods and communities where more people are registered to vote and vote.

For your community
Neighborhoods and communities that vote get more attention from candidates and office holders. They are less likely to visit and listen to communities that don’t participate in elections.

For our kids and youth
People under 18 can’t vote. Our children or youth depend on us to represent their voices too! When we vote, we are looking out for our kids, and their futures. Vote for their future as well as yours.

For neighbors not yet citizens
Many in this community are not citizens. They can’t vote. They need you/us to vote for them.

To make your voice heard on an issue or candidate (Don’t let others decide for you)

Every vote does count!
Remember: there is power in numbers. When we vote and get our family members to vote, we can impact outcomes and change the debate.

• Many elections are decided by less than 100 votes.

• You send a message by what candidate or party you vote for. Even if your candidate doesn’t win, the number of votes they do get impacts what’s decided by government.

• Just how close the vote is changes who might run and win the next time.

Don’t let others decide for you
If you don’t vote, you’re letting others decide who wins and what issues matter. Today’s non-voters actually favor government and social services (like access to health care, spending on education, income inequality or public safety) at a much higher rate than people who vote regularly.

Send a message. Register to vote for change
More people voting can send the message that we want new policies and more attention to this neighborhood.

Honor our history and the right to vote!
Voting is one of our most important right as citizens. As long as this country has existed, communities like ours have had to fight for the right to vote. There are still people today who don’t want some people to vote. It’s our turn to stand up and vote to preserve this right the honor of those who went before us.

Because of what’s at stake in the next election

An issue
Cite an issue specific to your nonprofit or community like health care access, affordable housing, school funding, etc. Who we elect can be as much about protecting a program as it is starting a new one.

A specific race
Mention an important or high profile race they might know about. Even if the election doesn’t look close, the size of the victory or loss can make a difference in what happens next.

A new candidate running
It is nonpartisan to point out interesting new
candidates, like the first time an Asian-American or Latino candidate is running for a seat up for election.

**An important ballot measure**
Nonprofits can advocate for and against ballot measures. Asking your clients and constituents to vote in support of your position is a good motivator.

**It’s easier than you think**

It’s easy
In many ways, voting has gotten easier in recent years. Once you’ve done it once, you’ll find it easier to vote again and again.

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**Even easier**
If your state has expanded early voting, no-excuse absentee or mail voting, or added language assistance, be sure to emphasize how that makes voting even easier.

**You can get help**
You can get help voting. Ask your family and friends or someone who follows politics. They’ll have good ideas about what’s important and which candidates or issues to support or oppose. (Have a handout on voting in your state and how to get help.)

**Don’t know the candidates?**
Say we’ll make sure you get information on the candidates before the next election. In the meantime, ask you friends and family. They may have some ideas.

**And finally…**
If you’re not registered, you can’t vote!

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**Resources**
The benefits of voting – for individuals, nonprofits and your health.

[www.nonprofitvote.org/benefits-voting](http://www.nonprofitvote.org/benefits-voting)
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 elections.

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.
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) Organizatbns, 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

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

www.nonprofitvotescount.org
Three Sample Time Off to Vote Personnel Policies

Background
The standard elements of a “Time Off to Vote” policy for your employee handbook or personnel policy may include:

1. **Civic context**: A statement of support for active and engaged citizenship.
2. **Hours granted**: The number of hours granted - usually two hours with pay.
3. **Conditions**: Time off granted conditioned on the employee not having time to vote before or after work on Election Day or not able to readily use or access an absentee/mail ballot.
4. **Notification**: A requirement that the employee notify their supervisor typically two to five business days before the election.

Visit the [NOLO Law for All](https://www.nolo.com) website to review the minimum standards, if any, set by state law for time off to vote in your state.

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**Sample Policy #1**

Because [Nonprofit Name] has a continuing interest in encouraging active and engaged citizenship, you are urged to vote in local, state and national elections either before or after work hours on Election Day or by early voting by mail or in-person. If you do not have sufficient time outside of working hours within which to vote, you will be allowed to take up to two hours off with pay for this purpose. Such time off should be taken at the beginning or end of your regular shift, whichever allows for more free time to vote.

To receive time off for voting, you must advise your supervisor that you will need time off at least [two to five] business days before Election Day, receive approval from your supervisor, and present a voter’s receipt to your supervisor. No action will be taken against any employee in any manner for requesting or taking any time off as provided for in this policy.

**Sample Policy #2**

[Nonprofit Name] encourages its employees to fulfill their civic responsibilities by participating in elections. Generally, employees are able to find time to vote either before or after their regular work schedule or voting by mail. If employees are unable to vote in an election during non-working hours, the company will grant up to two hours paid time off so that employees may vote.
Employees should request time off to vote from their advisor at least [two to five] working days prior to the Election Day. Advance notice is required so that the necessary time off can be scheduled at the beginning or end of the work shift, whichever provides the least disruption to the normal work schedule.

**Sample Policy #3**

[In furtherance of our civic mission/support for active citizenship], [Nonprofit Name] encourages all employees who are eligible to vote to register and vote in federal, state and local elections.

Congruent with [State Name] state law, employees who are not able to vote before or after normal working hours on Election Day or in advance of the election by mail or in-person early voting may have up to two consecutive hours of leave without loss of compensation during polling hours in order to vote. Where possible time off to vote should be taken at the beginning or end of your regular working hours.

Employees who need time off to vote must make a request by e-mail or in writing at least [two to five] business days in advance. The request for leave should clearly state that the employee needs time off in order to vote.

Employees will not be disciplined for taking voting leave or for failing to vote.

**Sources**

- NOLO Law for All
- Society for Human Resource Management
Sample Vote Email Messages from CEO/Executive Director

An email from your Executive Director or CEO sends an important message to staff about how much your nonprofit values voting and civic participation. It encourages staff to vote and provides helpful election information about voting.

**Timing:** Send an initial email 2-3 weeks in advance of the Election Day. Follow it up with a reminder the day before the election.

**Content:** Typical content will include a short reason why voting is important and information that helps people vote such as a reminder of your “time off to vote” policy or information about casting your ballot on or in advance of Election Day. It could include mention of a special election related event or activity.

**Sample #1: Provides a reminder/reason to vote and helpful voting information**

Subject: Please vote Tuesday November X – helpful voting information

There is an important election Tuesday November X for [Governor, Congress, City Council, ballot measure].

[add reason – for example]
- Our nonprofit depends on elected officials to support our issues, services and funding. It makes a difference is we can say all our staff are voting.
- There are important issues at stake [*cite one or two*] We encourage you to make your voice heard.

[provide voting information – for example]
Polls are open [7AM – 8PM]
If you need help finding your poll, use our state’s poll finder here. Or call your local election office. Get information on voting by mail or absentee/mail ballot application here.

Thanks again for your service to [our nonprofit/local community] and being a voter.

Should you have a specific questions, contact [civic engagement lead].-

Signed,
Sample #2: Reminder of your policy on Time Off to Vote

Subject: Policy on time off to vote

There is an important election Tuesday November X for [Governor, Congress, City Council, ballot measure]. We encourage all staff eligible to vote.

[add reason – for example]
- Our nonprofit depends on elected officials to support our issues, services and funding. It makes a difference is we can say all our staff are voting.
- There are important issues at stake [cite one or two] We encourage you to make your voice heard.

As a reminder of our time off to vote policy, if you do not have time on Election Day to vote and can’t access a mail ballot, you are allowed to take up to two hours off without loss of pay for this purpose. Such time off should be taken at the beginning or end of your regular shift, whichever allows for more free time to vote. [see sample personnel policies here if you don’t have one]

Find out more about voting by mail and downloading and applying for a mail/absentee ballot here. Or contact your local election office for more information.

Thanks again for being a voter.

Signed,

Helpful Links to use for email content

- **Voter Information in Your State** – Provided by Nonprofit VOTE
  This provides official links to your state election website on topics such as voter registration, online voter registration tool (if available), check your registration tool, polling place locator, absentee and early voting, voter ID
- **Time off to Vote” state laws** - Provided by NOLO: Law for All
- **Military and Overseas voters** - Provided by the nonpartisan Overseas Vote Foundation

**National Election Hotlines**

866-OUR-VOTE:  Provided by the Lawyers Committee on Civil Rights
888-VEY-Y-VOTA: Provided by the NALEO
1-888-API-VOTE:  Provided by APIAVote and Asian Americans Advancing Justice
Nonprofits increasingly use social media to communicate with supporters and the public, attract new members, mobilize public opinion, and promote civic engagement. The prohibition on nonprofits participating in partisan political activities is the same for social media as it is for any other type of communication. You may encourage people to register and vote on a nonpartisan basis, but you may not use social media to indicate support for, or opposition to, candidates for public office.

Can I use my personal account to support candidates?
Individuals have a right to express preferences for or against candidates. This applies to their personal social media accounts. The exception would be if that account is primarily used by the individual or others as a communication vehicle for the nonprofit.

What about the Executive Director or CEO?
The chief executive officer of the nonprofit has the same rights of free expression as any other staff member, when not officially representing the organization. However, to the extent they are seen by stakeholders and constituents as representing the nonprofit, a CEO should exercise more restraint in what they say on the internet to avoid any appearance of partisanship.

What are guidelines for tagging, sharing or retweeting?
Don't use organizational accounts to tag, re-tweet, or share posts with political campaigns or partisan organizations that have endorsed candidates.

How about sharing content posted by a 501(c)(4) advocacy organization or other non-campaign organization whose primary purpose is other than electing candidates?
You may share content if the content shared is educational in nature and clearly nonpartisan. If you're not sure, it is always safer to share content, for example, from a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, educational source or public media outlet not affiliated with a partisan political campaign.

Is my nonprofit responsible for how our posts are shared?
No. You are not responsible for how and with whom others share your posts.

What about content posted by other users to our social media platforms? (Facebook page, twitter feed, etc.)
While you can’t control what other people post to your wall or tweet at you, you can make a general disclaimer on your social media site that you’re not responsible for opinions posted by people not under your employ. Create a policy for deleting partisan content or other types of posts (like unauthorized commercial activity).

Resources
Legal Tips on Using Social Media for Advocacy, Bolder Advocacy, www.bolderadvocacy.org/resource/tips-on-using-social-media-for-advocacy

Nonprofit staff members often have questions about their personal involvement in political campaigns or work with candidates. Outside of work, nonprofit employees are free to exercise their first amendment right to volunteer for candidate campaigns or engage in other partisan political activities. However, it is important to make clear distinctions between personal and professional efforts, as all voter engagement activities on behalf of your nonprofit must remain completely nonpartisan.

When is it personal time?
Outside of normal work hours, nonprofit staff may engage in partisan political activities, like supporting a candidate for office. Staff may also take vacation or personal time for the purpose of engaging in political activity.

Can staff be identified with their nonprofit organization when supporting a candidate?
As a rule, it is safer to leave the name of the organization off of any partisan political materials. However, it is permissible to list the organization along with the staff member’s name if it is clearly noted that the organization is listed “for identification purposes only.”

Can staff be listed with their organizational affiliation as supporters of a candidate?
As a rule, it is safer to leave the name of the organization off of any partisan political materials. However, it is permissible to list the organization along with the staff member’s name if it is clearly stated that the organization is listed “for identification purposes only.”

What about board members and volunteers?
While representing the nonprofit organization, board members and volunteers should follow the same protocol outlined for staff.

What if a candidate lists the name of the Executive Director or another employee without their permission?
If a candidate lists the Executive Director of a nonprofit or any staff member along with the organization’s name on campaign material without the appropriate disclaimer (e.g. “for identification purposes only”) the organization is not at fault. Ask the campaign to remove your organization’s name from the list, and be sure to save a copy of your email or written request for your files.

Resources
Engaging Your Staff, [www.nonprofitvote.org/engaging-your-staff-2/](http://www.nonprofitvote.org/engaging-your-staff-2/)
Election Activities of Individuals Associated with 501(c)(3) Organizations, [www.bolderadvocacy.org](http://www.bolderadvocacy.org)