

A Voter Participation Starter Kit

for Nonprofits and
Social Service Agencies

Immigration

Community

Human Services

Hunger

Advocacy

Housing

Child care

Education

Literacy

Citizenship

Neighborhoods

Healthcare

Disabilities

Arts

Jobs

Families

Training

Youth

Environment



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Founded in 2005, the **Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network** partners with America's nonprofits to help the people they serve participate and vote. We are the leading source of nonpartisan resources to help nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services.

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for Nonprofits and Social Service Agencies

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Welcome to your Nonprofit Voter Participation Starter Kit!

This toolkit is intended to help your agency get started in planning and carrying out simple, effective nonpartisan voter engagement activities. Along the way, the Starter Kit will explain why nonpartisan voter engagement work is safe, important and easy for 501(c)(3)s to do.

For more resources, our website — www.nonprofitvote.org— provides a wealth of tools and materials on voter engagement tactics and strategies, from basic activities such as obtaining a poster for your agency's lobby to advanced activities such as hosting a candidate forum. These tools and materials are designed to be flexible according to your nonprofit's needs and interest areas.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@nonprofitvote.org.

Thank you!

Why Voting? Why Nonprofits?



Active voter participation builds healthier communities. People who vote are more likely to volunteer, advocate or be active locally in other civic ways. Elected officials are more likely to respond to the needs and concerns of those neighborhoods that turn out on Election Day. They are also more responsive to those agencies and organizations that promote voting.

Democracy is something we can't take for granted. It needs our help. Our communities are more likely to thrive when we participate at higher rates. Voting is a way of connecting to and caring about our neighborhoods, our government and the direction of public policy.

New voters need our help finding their poll, a number to call for help, learning their voting options and understanding what's on the ballot or the impact of this election on the issues they care about. Moving forward, nonprofits have a key role to play in promoting voting as a safe and easy activity: one that is vital to the future of those we serve as well as our own place at the table of democracy.



Our Size and Reach

Our sector is expansive. There are over one million community-based nonprofit organizations and sites located in areas with a past history of lower participation. We employ more than 14 million people, engaging more than 50 million volunteers annually and serving millions every day.

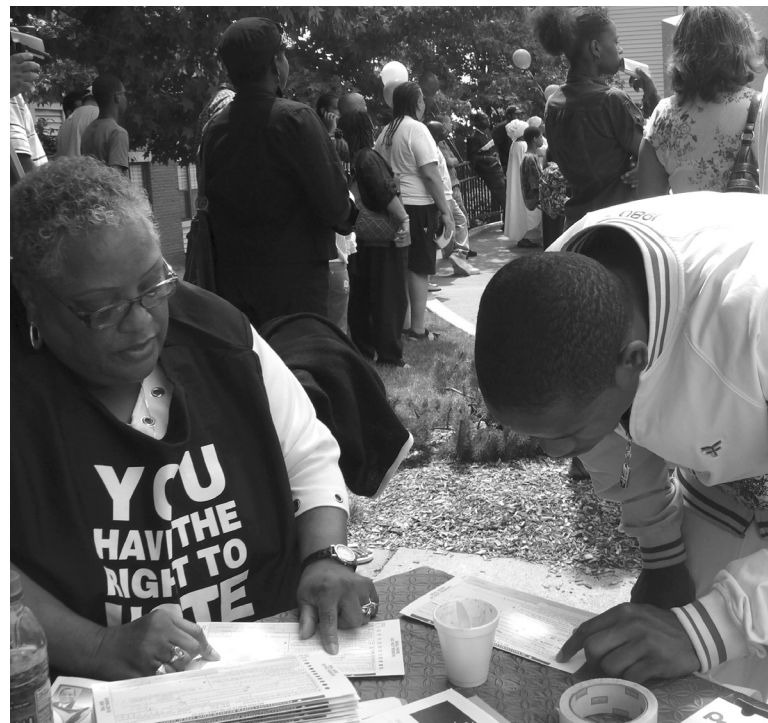
Our Access and Trust

Our nonprofits are among America's most trusted community institutions. As trusted service providers and advocates, we have personal relationships with communities that have been traditionally underrepresented in elections and public policy. Our day to day contacts at points of service present valuable opportunities for an integrated approach to voter engagement. Whether reminding people to vote at intake, hosting a candidate forum or providing information about an upcoming election, we use our position to become a powerful voice for voter participation and the issues that matter to our communities.

Our Nonpartisan Approach and Social Missions

Nonprofits and social service agencies have a nonpartisan approach to voter participation. New voters like and respond to nonpartisan appeals that emphasize the importance of being represented and heard in the political process. Further, our social missions give us an inherent interest in sound public policies that support the communities we serve. As a result, it is a natural fit for nonprofits to provide information and resources for our constituents to become active, engaged voters.

Through our size, reach, trust, nonpartisanship and social mission, our nonprofits and social services agencies have the potential to promote active citizenship and be a powerful vehicle for increased civic and voter participation.



NONPROFITVOTE VOTER ENGAGEMENT MODEL

NonprofitVOTE encourages voter participation work that can be integrated into a nonprofit's day to day activities. It is an agency and community based approach that —

- Reaches people nonprofits interact with every day at our sites or in our programs,
- Uses the personal contacts we already have at points of service, classes, trainings, meetings, neighborhood activities and more,
- Leverages the core strength of our nonprofit sector's civic assets — our trust, social mission, personal relationships and community base.

This integrated voter participation model differs from and complements traditional campaigns that contact voters in their homes through canvassing and phone calls. Today it is both harder and more expensive to reach most voters at home. Many populations are inevitably missed, such as new and infrequent voters or the more mobile and less resourced populations served by nonprofits.

Nonprofits and service agencies have the capacity to reach people about voting where they come to learn, engage and receive services. Through an agency-based approach, nonprofits can make a vital contribution to promoting voter and civic participation without adding a new program — by incorporating messages and activities about voting into what we already do.

Voter and Election Participation



Making a Plan

**Voter
Registration**

**Voter
Education**

**Getting Out
the Vote**



Making a Plan

Behind the Plan

Creating a clear plan for your voter engagement activities in advance can help make your efforts successful.

Read through this starter kit and determine which activities fit most naturally into your existing programs. Main components include voter registration, voter education and getting out the vote. Decide which activities are best for your organization to implement.

Get Buy In

A successful voter engagement plan depends on buy-in from your organization's leadership. Staff and volunteers are often the point people for creating and carrying out the plan; however, the activities are more likely to be carried out organization-wide with support from your leadership.

- ✓ Plan a time to discuss your voter engagement activities with your executive director.
- ✓ Bring this voter toolkit to your meeting and lay out the activities that you want your organization to undertake – make sure to specify key points of contact for engagement with your constituents.
- ✓ Highlight why this work is important for your nonprofit community. Refer to the introduction for key talking points.

Find a Point Person

Finding a staff member to spearhead and organize your voter engagement activities is key to your success. Ideally the point person should be someone who cares about voter engagement efforts. This person must have the time and the desire to boost voting and civic participation in your community and among your staff.

- ✓ Determine who on your staff is best suited to lead your voter engagement efforts. This could be a program staff person, a public policy staff person or a direct service provider.

Keep It Simple

Your first priority is the services you provide and issues you promote. By leveraging your existing points of contact with your community, voter engagement efforts can be doable for any nonprofit.

- ✓ Match your voter participation activities to your nonprofit's mission and capacity.
- ✓ Focus your efforts on higher profile national and statewide elections or those elections that will most affect your organization.

“The weeks closest to the election are the most important for voter engagement work. Planning ahead will make your election time activities more effective.”

Plan Around Election Deadlines

The two months prior to an election are the most important in any voter engagement effort. When you create your plan over the summer, keep in mind that September and October will be the time when your efforts will intensify.

- ✓ September is a time to focus on voter registration and voter education.
- ✓ October is a time to continue your voter education efforts, host an election event and encourage people to vote.

It Adds Up

The nonprofit sector is very large. If taken to scale, even the smallest measures we take to encourage people to register to vote and vote on Election Day will add up.

- ✓ Whether you help ten people vote or a hundred people vote, it adds up.

What to Plan

1. Who's Involved

Who might be involved – staff, volunteers, constituents, partner organizations?

- ☐ Front office staff who do intake or manage materials and signage in the lobby
- ☐ Volunteers or interns who can take on a voter participation activity as a special project
- ☐ Program staff who can weave voting into ongoing program activities
- ☐ Your communications team in charge of your website and communications
- ☐ Partners — will you collaborate with another agency, another branch of your agency, a coalition you're part of or your local election board?

2. Who's Your Audience

Consider your audiences for voter participation activities and communications. The activities, messages and format of communications you consider may change depending on your audience, including:

- ☐ Your service population or constituents,
- ☐ Your staff, board members and volunteers,
- ☐ Your neighborhood or local community.

3. What Are Your Communication Vehicles

Plan with the people in charge of your communications and website to include messages and announcements about voting into communications in the weeks leading up to the election. Depending on how you reach your audience some of these may be more effective than others:

- ☐ Website,
- ☐ Staff meetings,
- ☐ Printed newsletters,
- ☐ E-newsletters,
- ☐ Social media (facebook, etc.),
- ☐ Signage and posters,
- ☐ Information in your agency's lobby.



4. Which Activities and Services Will Incorporate Voting

Choose activities and services to incorporate conversations about voting, such as —

- ☐ Point of service,
- ☐ Classes and trainings,
- ☐ Meetings,
- ☐ Community events.

EDUCATE YOURSELF.

Learn about conducting voter participation activities and voting in your state.

Visit www.NonprofitVOTE.org to:

- Sign up for a webinar training or view a powerpoint presentation,
- View or download toolkits, checklists and fact sheets,
- Use our website's 50 state guide to voting in your state.



Voter Registration

Principles

Focus on the Month before the Deadline

Studies demonstrate that more people register closer to the deadline and that voters who register nearer the election are more likely to vote.

- ✓ Plan ahead to have your most active voter registration in the few weeks before your state's deadline.
- ✓ Use this time to promote voter registration in your communications and signage in your office.



“Voter registration is a first step. Encouraging registered voters to vote remains the key goal. Give your highest priority to voter education and helping your community turn out and vote.”

Decide Your Approach

Not all nonprofits are suited to do voter registration. Some organizations may want to primarily promote registering to vote instead by reminding their audience of the deadline and how to register. Others will take a more pro-active approach.

- ✓ Consider your approach from the three levels suggested on the next page.

Know What to Expect

Manage your expectations for registering voters. Many people are already registered, especially following a high-profile presidential election. Some people are not yet citizens and therefore not eligible to vote.

- ✓ Many registered voters, especially in communities served by nonprofits, move frequently. You can remind them that they need to re-register to vote with their new address.

Understand Voter Registration in Your State

Every state has its own procedure for voter registration. Different states have varying deadlines, along with different ways to obtain, fill out and return forms.

- ✓ Use our website's "Learn About Voting in Your State" tool to go to the Voter Registration web page for your state.
- ✓ View or print NonprofitVOTE's Voter Registration Checklist (in the "find resources" section of our website).

Activities

Every year, thousands of potential voters are disenfranchised simply because they miss the deadline for voter registration or don't know to re-register when they move. Making sure staff and the people you serve are registered to vote is a first step toward increased voter and civic engagement in your community.



There are different levels of voter registration activities. Consider the capacity and mission of your organization, as well as the character of your relationships and interactions with clients when planning what type of voter registration activity to do.

Level One: Publicize and Promote

Promote voter registration deadlines and how-to's in the weeks before the election.

- ☐ Announce registration deadlines and how or where to register to vote at events, in newsletters, in e-blasts or on your website.
- ☐ Talk about registering to vote at a staff or board meeting. Ask new staff if they are registered to vote.
- ☐ Put up posters advertising voter registration deadlines, along with where to get and return voter registration forms.

Level Two: Do Registration on Site

Incorporate voter registration into your ongoing activities and constituent interactions.

- ☐ Register all new employees.

- ☐ Assign a staff member to plan and direct voter registration activities. Train a staff member on how to do voter registration. Use our website's Voter Registration checklist and resources from your local election office.
- ☐ Have voter registration forms available and offer voter registration to new clients at intake.
- ☐ Designate a staff person to promptly return forms to your Local Election Office in person once a week.
- ☐ Set up a space in your lobby with voter registration cards, instructions and a drop box for completed registrations. Consider leaving out a sample registration form highlighting all the required fields.

Level Three: Mobilize and Partner

For organizations with the time and resources, extend your registration efforts outside your agency to the community you serve.

- ☐ Identify partners in your neighborhood or service-area and encourage them to register voters – like other nonprofits, libraries, schools or small businesses.
- ☐ Have staff or volunteers conduct a voter registration table at community events or highly-trafficked locales. Good locations are where likely voters from the neighborhood congregate – supermarkets, stores, school events, places of worship, transit stops, etc.
- ☐ Bonus: Voter registration tabling is a great opportunity to educate people about your organization!

BUSY SITES WORK BEST

We don't recommend going door-to-door to register voters – unless it is combined with canvassing for another purpose. Too many people aren't home, aren't qualified to vote or are already registered. It's more cost-effective to register people at your nonprofit or in busy public places frequented by people from your neighborhood – grocery stores, libraries and the like.



Voter Education

Principles

An educated voter is a likely voter. Nonprofits are excellent conduits for voter education information.

Voting Takes:

Knowledge About the Voting Process

Many registered voters still lack the confidence and knowledge to take the time to vote in an election. Nonprofits are trusted messengers that can help voters with the when, where and how of voting.

- ✓ A person who votes will often spread that knowledge to families, friends or neighbors.

Confidence about Casting a Ballot

One reason why people don't vote is fear of failure. No one wants to feel unsure of what is on the ballot or where or how to vote. After voting once, it is easier to become a repeat voter.

- ✓ Voters have more confidence when they know the candidates or issues in at least one key race on the ballot.

Urgency and Importance

Above all, voters benefit from a reason to vote. Research demonstrates that voters are much more likely to vote when they sense something is at stake — to gain or to lose. These voters not only believe that their vote will make a difference; they believe that the votes of their peers or community will have an impact as well.

- ✓ The urgency and importance your nonprofit communicates will make a difference in how your staff and constituents view voting.
- ✓ Help your staff and constituents make a connection to what's on the ballot and how it can impact their lives.



“After voting once, it is easier to become a repeat voter.”

WHAT NEW VOTERS WANT

The California organization Easy Voter researched why people do or don't vote. For those that don't, they found it wasn't as much lack of time as lack of knowledge about their choices or unsure about the voting process. New voters, in particular, wanted more:

- Reasons why to vote from a peer perspective,
- Help with or training about how to vote,
- Basic information on what's on the ballot, choosing a party or what the offices up for election are all about.

Activities

VOTER EDUCATION ON THE VOTING PROCESS

Promote the When, Where and How of Voting

Use your in-person contacts and communications to promote the when, where and how of voting. Some examples include:

When

- ☐ Election date
- ☐ Deadline to vote by mail or vote early
- ☐ Polling hours

Where

- ☐ Polling places
- ☐ Early voting locations

How

- ☐ How to vote absentee or early in-person
- ☐ Where to get help voting
- ☐ ID needed, especially for first time voters or states with stricter requirements

Include Lessons About Voting

Does your nonprofit have classes and trainings? As a trusted source for new information, your group activities are a great vehicle for promoting knowledge on the voting process — especially for younger voters and new citizens

Sample classroom activities

- ☐ Hold a mock election at your nonprofit or in a neighborhood school.
- ☐ Teach voting vocabulary words.
- ☐ Discuss the principles of a fair democracy or fair election.
- ☐ Pass out voter registration forms or sample ballots
- ☐ Cover specifics for your area — what races are on the ballot, how to vote, polling place locations, ballot initiatives.

Do Special Education Activities

Depending on who you serve, there are many approaches to voter education.

- ☐ Hold a special event about the election for one of your programs. Serve food.
- ☐ Discuss the election with those who are not citizens and ways they can participate as a volunteer.
- ☐ Make sure ex- offenders understand their right to vote in their state.



“Helping a new voter learn where to vote, when to vote and how to vote increases turnout.”



Voter Education

VOTER EDUCATION ON CANDIDATES AND BALLOT MEASURES

Display or Distribute Sample Ballots

A sample ballot helps voters feel more comfortable with the process of voting, which gives them more confidence when casting their ballot. Print out copies of sample ballots and post them in your lobby, or have a stack of them available in waiting rooms and intake areas.

Where to find sample ballots:

- ☐ Your State Election website,
- ☐ Your Local Election website,
- ☐ Your Local Newspapers.

Candidate Questionnaires

Candidate questionnaires give your community members the opportunity to hear from the candidates on the key issues that matter to your organization. Additionally, candidate questionnaires are a great way to engage the candidates and let them know that your organization is interested and attentive to their positions.

Here are some basic to-do's to be nonpartisan. For more on candidate questionnaires, visit us online at: www.NonprofitVOTE.org.

- ☐ Cover a broad range of issues in your questions.
- ☐ Make sure the questions are clear and unbiased.
- ☐ Distribute the questionnaire to every candidate in the race.
- ☐ Give candidates a reasonable time period in which to respond, and try to make sure that each major candidate has responded.
- ☐ If a candidate does not respond, write "Did Not Respond" under their name. Do not leave them out of the printed responses, or fill in their issue positions from external sources.

TIP

Candidates are asked to respond to many questionnaires. You have to make your questionnaire a priority. Co-sponsor it with a coalition or other organizations. Build in time to follow up with candidates and broadcast their responses.

- ☐ Plan to promote their answers to all constituents and partners.

Distribute Nonpartisan Voter Guides to Your Community Members

Nonpartisan candidate guides can be great documents to have on hand in a lobby or service area of a nonprofit organization. Not only do they provide an important, unbiased overview of what your community will be voting on come Election Day, they can be taken home by clients and shared and circulated among family and friends. Some voter guides may also come out in multiple languages.

Where to find candidate guides

- ☐ Some State Election websites have official guides.
- ☐ Nonpartisan organizations like the League of Women Voters or Smart Voter (CA).
- ☐ Issue coalitions in your area that produce candidate guides for their members.



Distribute Guides to Ballot Measures

(see section on ballot measures below)

Ballot measures are about laws or constitutional amendments, not candidate elections. You may advocate for or against a ballot measure as a lobbying activity. You may also choose to distribute nonpartisan information on ballot measures as a nonpartisan voter education activity.

Take a position

- ☐ Sign onto a coalition or a public statement advocating a "yes" or "no" vote.
- ☐ Pass out materials educating your constituents on why to vote "yes" or "no" on a ballot measure.
- ☐ Report advocacy expenditures, if any, as a lobbying activity subject to normal limits on lobbying.
- ☐ If your nonprofit lobbies, you should file the 501(h) election with the IRS to standardize lobbying reporting on your 990, including a clear guideline for lobbying spending.

Distribute a neutral voter guide on the ballot measures, i.e. guides that explain the ballot measures but don't take a position for or against

- ☐ Get a neutral guide to questions on the ballot – covering issues of interest to your audience. (Find non-partisan ballot measure guides from the same sources as candidate guides noted above.)
- ☐ Remember! Nonpartisan voter guides are education, not lobbying. There are no limits to spending money or time on nonpartisan education for voters about ballot measures.

WANT TO CREATE YOUR OWN CANDIDATE OR BALLOT MEASURE GUIDE?

Check out these resources on creating a nonpartisan guide to the candidates:

- Election Year Advocacy: Candidate Questionnaires and Voter Guides (Alliance for Justice)
- Easy Voter (www.easyvoter.org) has good examples. It has created nonpartisan voter guides for California voters in multiple languages since 1994.

For more on conducting a candidate forum, visit www.NonprofitVOTE.org, where you will find online and print resources including:

- “A Nonprofits Guide to Hosting a Candidate Forum,”
- Our online training, “Conducting a Candidate Forum.”



Sponsor or Promote a Candidate Forum

Sponsoring and promoting candidate forums or debates makes your nonprofit a player. It connects you to candidates, increasing your status as a policy expert and helps you gain access to elected officials after the election. Additionally, a forum is a great opportunity to allow your community members to hear directly from candidates on the issues that matter to them.

Some options include:

- ☐ Co-sponsoring a candidate forum with other nonprofits,
- ☐ Advertising a forum sponsored by others,
- ☐ Holding a debate watching party.

Getting out the Vote *Families*



Principles

The chief goal of get-out-the-vote activities is to encourage new or infrequent voters to participate. People are most likely to vote when they have been contacted by someone they know or when they seek or receive help in the voting process.

Make It Personal

The strongest finding of voter mobilization research is that people are more likely to participate when they are personally contacted by someone they know. People respond to people, especially a friend, neighbor or a community-based agency that they know and trust.

- ✓ Rather than less personal handouts or mass emails, look for opportunities to create conversations about voting at your point of service, in meetings, on the phone or at trainings or events.

Give Voters the Help They Need

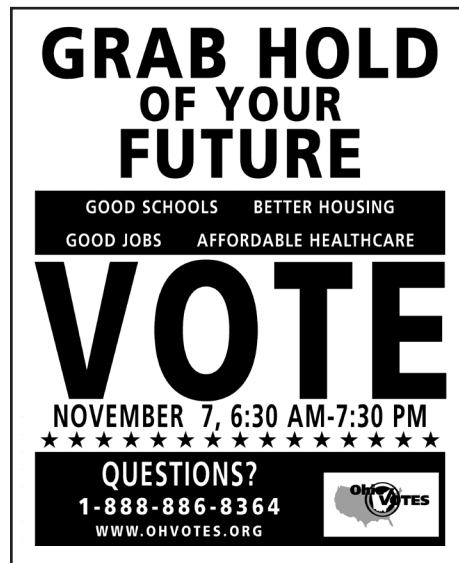
Newer voters can let small things keep them from the polls. Not knowing polling place hours and location, where to vote if they've just moved, what kind of identification is necessary can all create barriers to participation.

- ✓ Nonprofits have experience referring people to services or how to find assistance with tasks, such as casting their ballot.

Turn Up the (nonpartisan) Volume

In the final days before an election, potential voters may get turned off by overly partisan campaigns, or find other reasons not to participate. Nonprofits can use their nonpartisanship and credibility to reinforce the importance and urgency of voting in a way that will increase turnout.

- ✓ Potential voters start to pay more attention to voting in the final weeks. This is a time when your strong endorsement to vote will affect whether they will participate or not.



What's the Message?

We recommend avoiding negative messages like "If you don't vote, don't complain" or calls to civic duty without other information about the election. Because people respect your agency, your messages that encourage people to vote or connect voting to the future of your issue or community is a better approach on its own than many slogans used in the past.

"People are more likely to participate when they are personally contacted by someone they know."

Activities

In the last two weeks...

Create Visibility

Your signs, displays and messages on the election should be visible to everyone who walks into your agency or attends any of your trainings or events.

- ☐ Place Vote November 2 signage — posters, flyers, etc.— throughout the lobby and all public spaces.
- ☐ Make announcements or hold discussions at meetings, events, classes, etc.
- ☐ Encourage popular local media sources to promote both the election and places where voters can go to find help.

Provide Help

Help your constituents succeed in voting. Once a voter, they'll be more likely after the election to follow issues and participate in community affairs.

- ☐ Orient staff to answer basic election questions on where a voter can get help voting.
- ☐ When providing services, ask people if they're planning to vote and if they need help.
- ☐ Work with your 2-1-1 human service help line to have them answer basic voting-related questions, like those on finding polling places or checking voter registration.
- ☐ Advertise rides to the polls or where to get help.
- ☐ With help from volunteers, call a list of your constituents about voting on Election Day.

Raise the Stakes

The urgency and importance you communicate in the last two weeks will make your constituents more likely to take time to vote.

- ☐ Use all your methods of communications — in-person, online and otherwise.
- ☐ Do more to tie the election to an issue and the future of your agency and your community.
- ☐ Provide translated information and materials, where possible.



On Election Day

Make Election Day special. Treat it like a day of political importance and a time to celebrate democracy.

- ☐ Allow staff to spend part or all of Election Day doing nonpartisan get out the vote activities.
- ☐ Encourage your staff and volunteers to sign up as poll workers or translators.
- ☐ Ask everyone you connect with if they've voted or need help voting.
- ☐ Put up big "Vote Today" signs with a number to call or place to go for help.
- ☐ Have an Election Day party.

EARLY VOTING

Early voting is growing. Almost one out of three voters voted early in 2008 in-person or by mail. Getting out the vote now includes helping people find their early voting locations or using a mail-in ballot. Go to NonprofitVOTE.org's page on "Voting in Your State" to find out more about early voting (in-person or by mail) in your state.

Nonpartisan Guidelines

FOR 501(C)3 ORGANIZATIONS



A 501(c)(3) organization may not conduct partisan activities to support or oppose any candidate for public office, including:

- Endorsing a candidate,
- Making a campaign contribution or expenditure for a candidate,
- Rating candidates,
- Letting candidates use any of its facilities or resources, unless those resources are made equally available to all candidates at their fair market value.

There is a wide range of nonpartisan activities nonprofits may do to encourage voter participation and promote voter education.

10 Activities 501(c)(3) Organizations Can Do on a Nonpartisan Basis

1. Promote Voter Registration
2. Do Voter Education on the Process of Voting – where, when and how to vote
3. Encourage and Remind People to Vote (Get Out the Vote)
4. Help on Election Day as a poll worker or non-partisan volunteer
5. Distribute Nonpartisan Sample Ballots or Voter Guides
6. Sponsor a Candidate Forum
7. Hold a Voter Education Event
8. Educate the Candidates on Your Issues
9. Advocate for Your Issues During an Election
10. Support or Oppose Ballot Measures as a Lobbying Activity (subject to normal lobbying limits)

Learn more

Nonprofits, Voting and Elections: A guide to nonpartisan voter engagement for 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, NonprofitVOTE

Find the guide on our website in the following formats:

- Online Guide,
- Narrated Slide Presentation,
- Print publication for download in English or Spanish.

The guide also provides links to the election resources for nonprofits of the IRS, Alliance for Justice and others.

“Charities are allowed to conduct nonpartisan activities that educate the public and help them participate in the electoral process (such as) voter education, voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives and candidate forums.”

—IRS office of Exempt Organizations

Nonprofit staff members often have questions about their personal involvement (on non-work time) in political campaigns or work with candidates. There is no prohibition on political activities for nonprofit employees during their free time. However, staff members cannot be seen as representing the organization on a campaign nor may they use organizational resources for a candidate. Here are some frequently asked questions about the political participation of nonprofit staff and keeping nonprofit voter engagement nonpartisan.

Q: When is it personal time?



A: Nonprofit staff may engage in partisan activities, such as supporting a candidate, outside of normal work hours. A staff member may also take vacation or personal time for the purpose of engaging in political activity.

Q: Can staff be identified with their nonprofit organization when supporting a candidate?

A: Nonprofit staff members may identify their place of employment at a political event. Nonprofit staff members who are spokespeople for their organization or visibly associated with it, should make it clear that they are in attendance at the event or activity as a private citizen and not on behalf of the organization they work for.

Q. Can staff be listed as a supporter of a candidate with the name of the organization?

A: 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."

Q: What about board members and volunteers?

A: Board members and volunteers should follow the same protocol outlined for staff members described above while representing their nonprofit organization.

Q: What if a candidate lists the name of the Executive Director or a nonprofit staff member without their permission?

A: If a candidate lists the Executive Director or any nonprofit staff member with the nonprofit's name on a campaign brochure without the appropriate disclaimer — for identification purposes only — the organization is not at fault. Ask the campaign to remove your organization's name from the list. Save a copy of your e-mail or written request to the candidate in your files.

SEPARATING YOUR PERSONAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION FROM YOUR NONPROFIT WORK

- Provide political campaigns or a candidates a personal phone number and e-mail and times to call you outside of your work hours.
- Don't use any of your organizational resources to support or oppose a candidate (e.g. organizational vehicles, copy machines, paper, etc.).

Nonprofit organizations, themselves, may offer certain resources to candidates — e.g. space or phones — but only if publicly available to all candidates in a race at their fair market value (rental).

Learn more

Election Activities of Individuals Associated with Nonprofits, Alliance for Justice, www.afj.org

Nonprofits & Ballot Measures



What is a ballot measure?

Ballot measures ask voters to vote on laws, bonding issues or constitutional amendments. If the vote is on a proposed law, it's called a "ballot initiative". If the vote is on a law already passed by the legislature, it's called a "referendum".

How are ballot measures different from candidate elections?

The IRS considers activity on ballot measures lobbying – not electioneering. The IRS makes this distinction because advocacy on ballot measures is an attempt to influence the passage or defeat of a proposed or existing law or constitutional amendment – not the election or defeat of a candidate. Therefore nonprofits may work for or against any ballot measure as a lobbying activity.

May a 501(c)(3) nonprofit work for or against a ballot measure?

Yes. Nonprofits are free to work for or against ballot questions up to normal lobbying limits. For example, a nonprofit may choose to engage in any number of activities in support of or opposed to any ballot measure – from making an endorsement and communicating their position to their constituents and the general public to organizing volunteers to work on a ballot measure or hosting a forum or event.

What if my nonprofit provides neutral information about ballot measures?

If the materials on ballot measures are purely educational, and don't advocate for the measures' support or defeat, distributing these materials is a nonpartisan voter education activity. It is neither lobbying nor electioneering. There are no limits on the amount of nonpartisan/neutral voter education a nonprofit may do regarding ballot measures or any type of election.

What are the 501(c)(3) lobbying limits for ballot measures?

Your lobbying limits depend on which test your non-profit chooses to measure its lobbying.

1. If your nonprofit has elected to measure lobbying under the 501(h) expenditure test (highly recommended!), you will have clearer guidance and can do more lobbying. Under this test, you can spend as much as 20% of your annual budget on lobbying, including influencing ballot questions or legislation..
2. If your 501(c)(3) has not filed the 501(h) form, its lobbying falls under the "insubstantial part test". In this case, it may only spend what is an "insubstantial" amount of money on lobbying such as work for or against a ballot measure. "Insubstantial" is not clearly defined.



How does my nonprofit elect the 501(h) lobbying expenditure test?

File a one-page, one-time form with the IRS - Form 5768. Once submitted and approved your nonprofit has higher and more clearly defined lobbying limits. It includes annual reporting of expenditures on your Form 990.

What about disclosure of spending on ballot measures under state campaign finance laws?

Some states ask anyone spending more than a certain amount on a ballot measure to file a disclosure report. States do not limit your spending on ballot measures. However, states may ask individuals, organizations or others to file disclosure reports with a state or local campaign finance office. For more information, contact your state's campaign finance office.

Learn more

Ballot Measures and Public Charities, Alliance for Justice, www.afj.org

Electing the 501h test, Alliance for Justice, www.afj.org

Electing the 501h test, Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest, www.clpi.org

ON A NONPARTISAN BASIS

Elections present a great opportunity to interact with candidates for elected office. As a 501(c)(3) organization, you can't endorse or support candidates. However, this does not mean you shouldn't use campaigns to get your issues in front of the candidates. A campaign is a chance for your nonprofit to build relationships, share your policy ideas and influence future debate.

Here are six ways charities can connect to candidates during elections. The "For more" section suggests additional resources that can be found on our website's "Work with Candidates" and "Stay Nonpartisan" pages.

1. Sponsor a Candidate Forum

When you sponsor a candidate forum, your nonprofit gets connected with the candidates, raising your profile with future elected officials and candidates for office. A candidate forum puts the candidates in front of voters from your neighborhood to state their positions, answer questions and respond to each other and the audience.

- ✓ For more: NonprofitVOTE's "Nonprofit's Guide to Hosting a Candidate Forum" and "Nonprofits Voting and Elections," the League of Women Voters' "FAQ on Candidate Forums-Debates"

2. Have a Candidate Attend an Event

You may invite candidates to attend one of your events. The invitation itself gets your name in front of the candidates. Having a candidate attend an event provides an informal opportunity for your constituents, board and staff to meet office seekers.

- ✓ For more: The nonpartisan guidelines that apply to holding a candidate forum apply here as well.

3. Do a Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate questionnaires let candidates know about the issues you care about. Ask the candidates to answer a set of questions. Post their answers on your website or turn them into a nonpartisan candidate guide.



Questionnaires take time to prepare and conduct, so you may want to consider collaborating with a partner or coalition.

- ✓ For more: NonprofitVOTE's "Nonprofits, Voting and Elections," the Alliance for Justice's "Election Year Advocacy: Candidate Questionnaires"

4. Share Your Policy Ideas

Elected officials can benefit from your ideas year-round. During elections, they need the latest research and fresh ideas to answer questions and connect to voters. You're an expert in your field. Make your existing research and ideas available to all candidates

- ✓ For more: NonprofitVOTE's "Nonprofits, Voting and Elections"

5. Attend Candidate Events

You can ask questions at candidate events. If you are representing your nonprofit, however, your approach must be nonpartisan (e.g., you must ask the same questions at the events of all candidates for the same office.)

- ✓ For more: NonprofitVOTE's "What Nonprofit Staff Can Do" fact sheet

6. Set up a 501(c)(4) Organization

Nonprofits who do more legislative advocacy often establish a related 501(c)(4) organization. 501(c)(4) organizations may do an unlimited amount of lobbying. They may also do partisan election activity so long as election work is secondary to its primary purpose. Donors to a 501(c)(4) organization do not get a tax deduction.

- ✓ For more: the Alliance for Justice's "Comparison of 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4) and Political Organizations," the IRS' "Social Welfare Organizations-501(c)(4)s"



Be a Poll Worker

Poll workers are the front lines of helping people vote on Election Day. Consider being a poll worker in your community.

□ Sign Up to Be A Poll worker



To become a poll worker, contact your local election board.

Visit our website's "Voting in Your State" page and select your state. Click on the Become A Poll Worker link to find your Local Election Office or poll worker sign up page.

□ Job Description

Poll workers help prepare the polling location, greet voters, verify registrations and provide ballots. At the end of the day, poll workers close the precinct and prepare election materials for delivery to the Elections Office.

□ When to Apply

It is best to apply 1-2 months before the election.

Some areas with high need continue to take applications up until the week before Election Day.

□ Hours and Pay

Poll workers generally receive stipends of around \$100 or more depending on the state and the duties. It's a long, but rewarding day. The shift can be 12 hours or more - from before the poll opens and until after it closes - with occasional breaks. Some states also offer half day shifts.

□ Qualifications

In most states poll workers are required to be a registered voter and/or a resident in the area where they are

serving and at least 16 years old. An increasing number of areas have programs for high school and college students to assist at the polls.

□ Poll Worker Training

State and local election boards offer training online or in person leading up to the election. Training is required.

□ And Don't Forget ...

Cast an absentee ballot beforehand if you work a full day at a polling place that is not your own. On a different note, get some sleep the night before and enjoy the voters and the people you share the day with.

Learn More

- Use "Voting in Your State" map at our website for a link to poll worker sign up in your state.
- Poll Worker Requirements by State, U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 2007 or www.Vote411.org, website of the League of Women Voters.

TRANSLATORS NEEDED!

In many areas, translators are needed and welcome to assist non-English speaking voters by translating voting information and answering voters' questions. Some jurisdictions allow translators to assist non-English and limited-English speaking voters in voting booths.

The Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network is an official partner of the National Association of Secretaries of State



Voter Registration

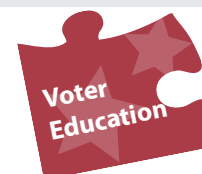
(ex: Advertise deadline and how to register, offer voter registration, have a youth group table at a busy neighborhood locale. See pages 4-5 for more.)

Other staff or volunteers involved _____

Target Audience (Staff, constituents/clients, surrounding neighborhood, parents of children served) _____

Communication and Event opportunities (E-newsletters, social media, conference, annual event) _____

Points of Service/Programs (Service delivery or intake, regular trainings or classes) _____



Voter Education

(ex: Include a discussion of voting in a class or training, co-sponsor a candidate or voter education event, display a sample ballot or poster with the Election date and where to get help voting. See pages 6-9 for more.)

Other staff or volunteers involved _____

Target Audience (Staff, constituents/clients, surrounding neighborhood, parents of children served) _____

Communication and Event opportunities (E-newsletters, social media, conference, annual event) _____

Points of Service/Programs (Service delivery or intake, regular trainings or classes) _____

Making a Plan Worksheet



Get Out the Vote

(ex: Ask people if they're planning to vote or need help voting, Reminders about voting early or voting by mail, Election day reminders and celebrations.)



Other staff or volunteers involved _____

Target Audience (Staff, constituents/clients, surrounding neighborhood, parents of children served) _____

Communication and Event opportunities (E-newsletters, social media, conference, annual event) _____

Election Day

(ex: Provide staff time off to vote, Create Election day visibility throughout agency. . See page 11 for more.)



Other staff or volunteers involved _____

Target Audience (Staff, constituents/clients, surrounding neighborhood, parents of children served) _____

Communication and Event opportunities (E-newsletters, social media, conference, annual event) _____

Points of Service/Programs (Service delivery or intake, regular trainings or classes) _____

Points of Service/Programs (Service delivery or intake, regular trainings or classes) _____

NonprofitVOTE Resources

WWW.NONPROFITVOTE.ORG

Guides and Toolkits

- A Voter Participation Starter Kit for Nonprofits and Social Service Agencies
- A Nonprofit's Guide to Hosting a Candidate Forum
- A Nonprofit's Guide to Voter Registration
- Nonprofits, Voting and Elections: A Guide to Nonpartisan Voter Engagement for 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organizations
- Nonprofit VOTE Online Guide to Voter Turnout

Checklists

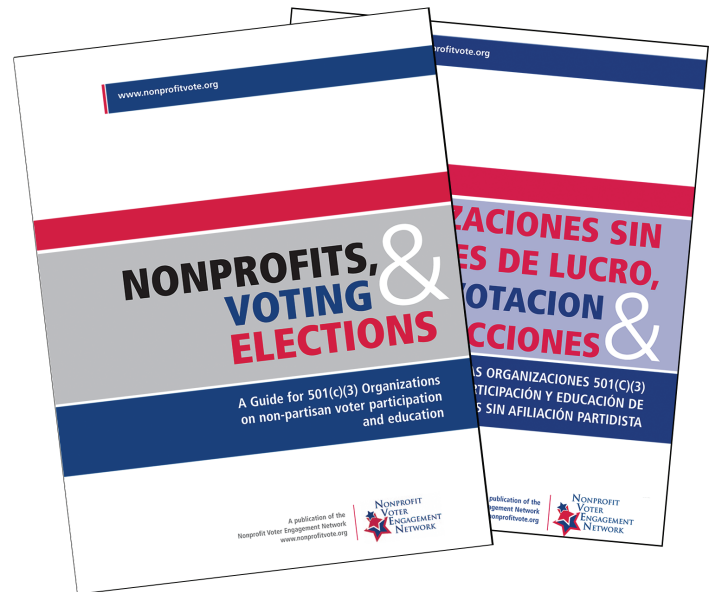
- A Dozen Easy Ways to Get Out the Vote
- Be a Pollworker
- Candidate Forum To Do list
- Get Out the Vote the Electronic Way
- Giving Rides to the Polls on Election Day
- Making a Plan worksheet
- Payroll Stuffer
- Tiers of Voter Engagement
- Top 10 Reasons to Register and Vote
- Voter Registration

Fact Sheets

- 501 c3 Permissible Activities
- Ballot Measure Advocacy
- Nonprofits Staff and Elections
- Who Is a Voter
- Working with Candidates
- Why People Vote
- Federal Funds and Voter Participation

Training Presentations

- A Nonprofit's Guide to Hosting a Candidate Forum (narrated)
- A Guide to Nonpartisan Voter Engagement for 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organizations (narrated)
- Recent Webinars (with audio)



Posters and other materials

- Register to Vote posters
- Get Out the Vote poster (near elections)

America Goes to the Polls

- America Goes to the Polls: A Report on Voter Turnout in the 2008 Elections
- America Goes to the Polls: Voting Gaps in the 2008 Election
- America Goes to the Polls: A Report on Voter Turnout in the 2006 Elections

Other

- Web Badges and Widgets



Hunger Housing Jobs
Community Human Services

Youth Healthcare Families
Education Advocacy

Child care Citizenship Neighborhoods
Disabilities Immigration