

ELECTIONS UNDER PRESSURE

Nonprofit Guide to Supporting Free and Fair Elections



About this Guide

Public confidence in elections is at an all-time low, but nonprofits can play a role in ensuring that people understand how to vote and how their vote will be counted.

Many voters will face challenges when they try to vote in the 2026 midterms: New districts, new identification requirements and deadlines, purged voter databases, a climate of disinformation and fear, and tremendous political noise all combine into a **real risk that these hurdles will keep eligible Americans from voting and will silence their voices.**

Nonprofit organizations can take action to strengthen civic participation and foster trust in our electoral system:

- 1. Every nonprofit in the United States has a stake in stable institutions, legitimate elections, and functioning governance.**
If voters stop believing that elections are open, transparent, and accountable, every policy goal and public service effort becomes harder to achieve. Nonprofits, by definition, have a vested interest in a free and fair democracy
- 2. Nonprofits are uniquely trusted and well-positioned to educate and influence voters in support of basic democratic principles.**
Nonpartisan nonprofits top the list of messengers trusted by Americans across the political spectrum

This Nonprofit Guide to Supporting Free and Fair Elections is designed to help nonprofit organizations take immediate, meaningful action to support eligible voters to safely and freely cast their vote and have that vote counted.

AUTHORS

Nonprofit VOTE is a nonpartisan organization that provides resources and training to 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofits on how to conduct nonpartisan voter and civic engagement activities.

M+R is a nonprofit consulting firm dedicated to advancing the cause of justice, alleviating suffering, and solving the greatest challenges we face.

DISCLAIMER

This guide is designed to equip nonprofit organizations with the nonpartisan tools and information needed to support free and fair elections and foster safe communities.

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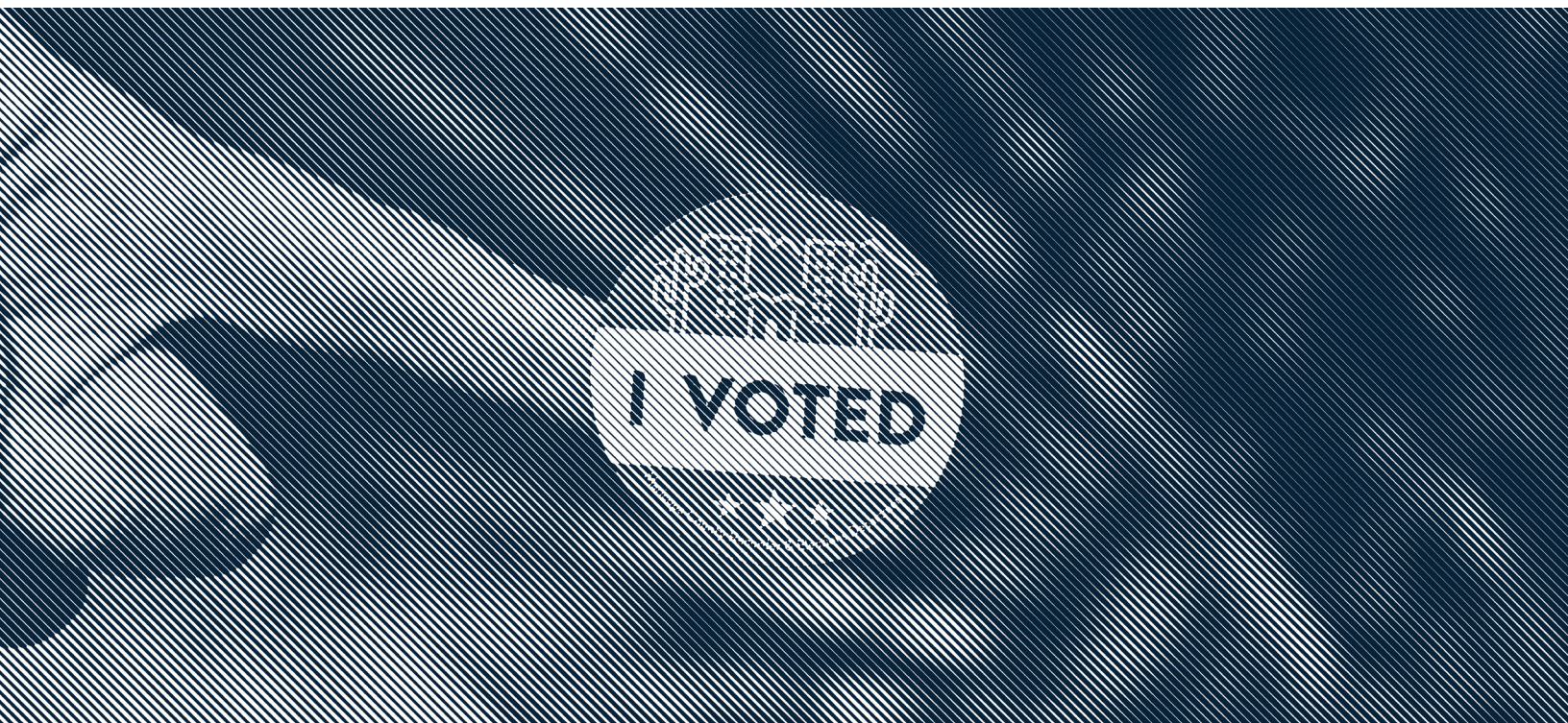


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I. Why 2026 Is Different

We are witnessing a profound crisis of confidence in our democratic systems. Americans are seeing increased political and societal polarization, rising mis- and disinformation, and changing voting rules. Left unchecked, this environment fuels a sense of pessimism and disengagement that could keep eligible Americans from making their voices heard in the 2026 Midterm elections.

These hurdles faced by voters could prevent millions of eligible Americans from voting:



New maps from redistricting: Changes to congressional and local district boundaries (or even headlines about potential changes to district boundaries) can cause confusion about which candidates are on a ballot or whether one's polling location has changed



Increased voter roll removals: Some states have increased the rate at which they remove voters from active registration status in the name of increasing accuracy. This means that voters may unknowingly have their registration status altered before they reach the polls and may need to re-register



Mail ballot confusion: Because of recent changes in how USPS postmarks mail, all voters should now mail their ballots earlier than they have before: five to seven days ahead of Election Day. Many states have revised rules around mail voting and early voting, so voters need to be extra vigilant to make sure that their mailed-in vote counts



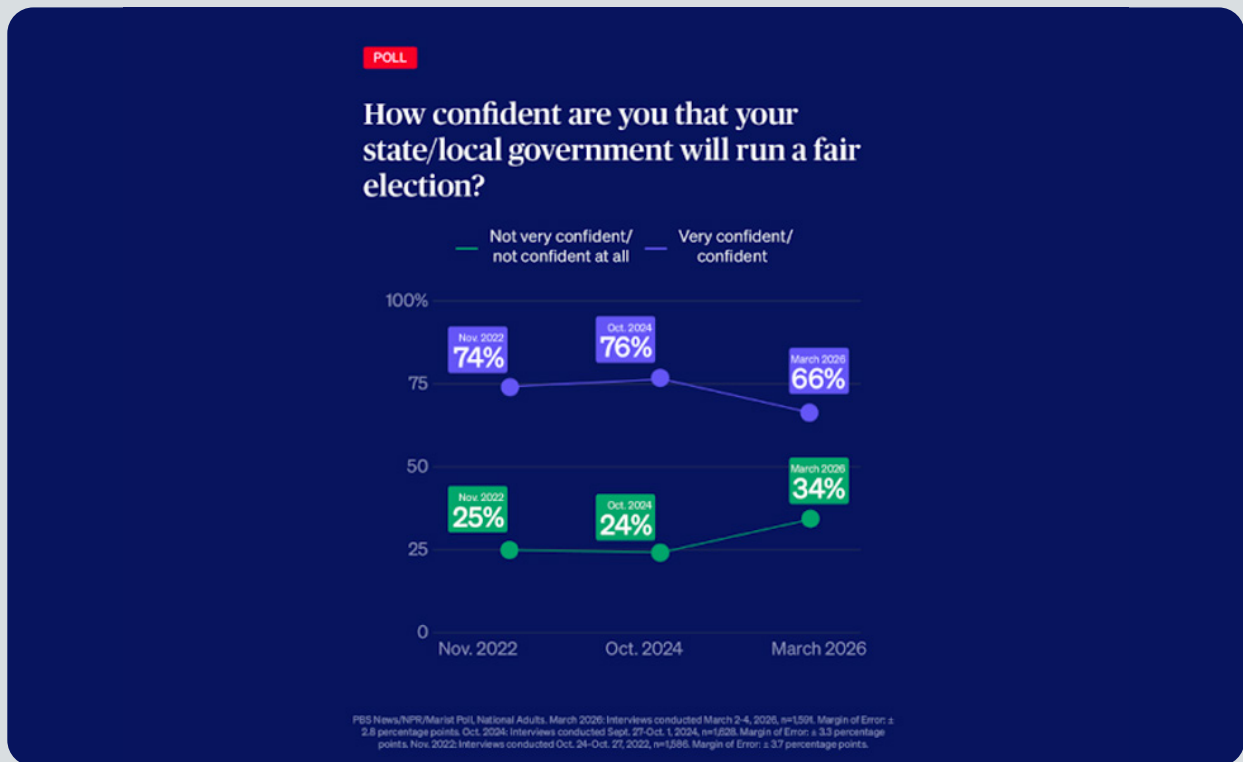
New voter identification rules: Some states are shifting requirements in terms of which specific forms of identification are required to vote. Voters who lack access to particular government-issued documents, passports, or birth certificates in these select states now face immediate barriers to casting a regular ballot.

More than 21 million Americans (9%) do not have access to a current (non-expired) driver's license in their current legal name



Rising mis- and disinformation: The modern information environment is heavily flooded with false rumors, political noise, and AI-generated falsehoods, problems sometimes exacerbated by the comments of political leaders. Rather than educating the public, this environment frequently misleads voters about the safety of the election process, proper polling procedures, and standard deadlines

It's no wonder that public confidence in election integrity is at an all-time low.



Many Americans feel they are living through a real-time dismantling of democracy, and they have good reason: Independent international metrics that measure how robust democratic systems are across nations, recently reported the United States has fallen to its lowest level since 1965.

The single best defense against the erosion of democracy is high voter participation and robust public confidence in the voting process itself.

While legal challenges serve a vital role to strengthen democracy, they are a “top-down” approach that may not always protect voters until after damage is done.

True, lasting election protection must be “bottom-up.” **Voter education and engagement strengthens democracy itself in real time.** We must build immediate visibility and confidence in current election procedures, drive voter turnout, generate transparent interaction with polling places, clarify issues around new laws and redrawn districts, inoculate against and counter misinformation more quickly, and show why responsive, ethical governance matters.

As trusted messengers, nonprofits have a critical role to play in voter engagement and election protection efforts.

II. Nonprofits Are Trusted Messengers

Amid increased political noise and polarization, it has become harder and harder for Americans to figure out what is normal, true, or real. Trusted messengers like nonpartisan nonprofit organizations are more important than ever.

NONPROFITS PLAY A UNIQUE ROLE

Threats to Free and Fair Elections Directly Impact Nonprofit Missions

America's nonpartisan and nonprofit organizations, regardless of mission, are part of what makes democracy work, and they have much to lose from attacks on elections. **If voters stop believing that elections are open, transparent, and accountable, every policy goal and public service effort becomes harder to achieve**, which ultimately erodes the essential intersection of advocacy and community engagement occupied and led by nonprofits and civic groups.

The Public Expects Nonprofits to Lead Civic Stewardship

Ensuring the integrity of elections is not a partisan act—it's an act of civic stewardship and a legitimate charitable activity. **Overwhelming majorities of people across the political spectrum, including nonprofit donors, agree that nonprofits and civic groups should help people vote.**

In [M+R polling](#) of nonprofit donors, 71% agreed that nonprofits have a responsibility to educate the public about the election process AND speak out when they believe fair elections are threatened.

New [polling by Independent Sector](#) found strong majorities of respondents want nonprofits to educate the public about voter rights, candidates' positions on issues, offer rides to polls, and much more.

Despite evidence indicating that the public wants nonprofits to help them vote, fewer than 1 in 3 nonprofits are doing so, according to a [report](#) by Nonprofit VOTE using survey data from Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF). This leaves a significant opportunity for more nonprofits to lead the charge to increase voter turnout and trust in fair elections.



Nonprofit Engagement is Effective

In a [Nonprofit VOTE analysis](#) of 120 nonprofits across nine states that engaged over 60,000 voters, “voters engaged by nonprofits saw a 10 percentage point boost in voter turnout compared to their counterparts in the same communities.” This impact was even greater among historically marginalized groups, including young voters, low-income voters, people with disabilities, and people of color, and it held true across a wide range of participating nonprofits, including food pantries, housing clinics, health centers, and family service agencies.

The bottom line: Nonprofit engagement in elections is effective and impactful.

ELECTION ENGAGEMENT IS LEGAL FOR 501(C)(3) NONPROFITS

501(c)(3) organizations are free to support elections on a nonpartisan basis.

The federal tax code governing election activity for 501(c)(3) organizations is a single sentence: Nonprofits are “prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in – or intervening in – any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for elective public office.”

That leaves a lot that nonprofits **can** do. Nonprofits can take nonpartisan actions such as telling people when, where, and how to vote; hosting candidate forums; etc. Nonprofits can also continue their normal advocacy and lobbying efforts during elections.

The key is *nonpartisan*: Nonprofits should not take sides for or against candidates. To be “nonpartisan” means that nonprofits cannot endorse candidates or parties, make campaign contributions for or against a candidate, rate or rank candidates, let favored candidates exclusively use their resources, etc. (Resources can be made equally available to all candidates, however.)

Nonpartisan Activity: What's Allowed?

Can do	Cannot Do
★ Register the public to vote ★ Distribute accurate voting information: election dates and times, early voting dates and times, polling locations, sample ballots, and a list of places to drop off ballots if voting by mail ★ Offer free rides/transit to the polls ★ Distribute new district maps ★ Dispel misinformation about voting ★ Educate the public about voter rights, such as the right to vote free of intimidation or harassment ★ Educate about how votes are counted and how elections are certified	★ Issue endorsements ★ Make campaign contributions for or against any candidate ★ Rank or rate candidates (scores, ratings, etc.) ★ Give select candidates access to nonprofit resources, such as printers, furniture, building space, staff time, etc. ★ Only invite certain candidates to participate in nonprofit-hosted events, candidate forums, etc (while not all candidates might participate once invited, nonprofits should make best effort to <i>invite</i> all candidates and allow them to participate if they want)

Resources:

- [Nonprofit VOTE Webinar: Staying Nonpartisan for Nonprofits Doing Voter Engagement](#)
- [Nonprofit VOTE Guide: Staying Nonpartisan: Permissible Election Activities Checklist](#)
- [Alliance for Justice Bolder Advocacy Program: Nonprofit Advocacy Rights, Nationally and by State](#)

HOW TO TALK ABOUT VOTING AND ELECTIONS

Lead With What We Are FOR

A common instinct is to sound the alarm about civic problems, but research shows that messaging focused on threats fuels pessimism and disengagement. Leading with what we support, as well as our shared values and everyday benefits that audiences value, keeps the focus on a positive, pro-voter narrative. Frame your messaging around what a fair society is supposed to deliver:



Full voter participation: Most Americans want every eligible voter to vote, because the true will of the people should shape our elections



Shared freedom and community: We all deserve to live in a society where our core freedoms are protected and our voices are heard. Safeguarding these liberties is a shared responsibility



A right to decide our future: We have the collective power to decide what happens to us and to improve our system, free from the control of a select few



An open and honest government: We deserve a system that is genuinely accountable, responsive to our needs, and focused on advancing freedom, safety, opportunity, and justice for everyone



An equal opportunity to thrive: A healthy system ensures our government focuses on the needs of everyday people and works to alleviate widespread financial burdens like healthcare, housing, and the high cost of living

Embrace Language That Unifies

Lean into unifying language that naturally broadens your message's appeal while stepping away from language that divides. Here's some language that is safe to use:

- ★ **"Civility" and "checks and balances":** These also serve as political bridges for all sides
- ★ **Plain language:** Instead of using political jargon, just describe what's happening in plain English (e.g., say "keeping people from voting" instead of "voter suppression," "silencing our voices" or "kicking voters off rolls")
- ★ **"Community" and "belonging":** These are some of the strongest, politically unifying words that resonate highly across ideological lines
- ★ **Protecting free and fair elections:** It is important to focus on protecting free and fair elections or our democratic system and **to not** focus on any particular politician(s)



Don't Fan the Flames

When you see mis- or dis-information online or hear rumors about chaos at the polls, **pause**. High-panic framing and reposting of unsubstantiated claims can inadvertently scare people into staying home. Keep people calm and confident by sharing the facts and pointing to credible sources of information.



Focus on what is normal / not normal. In a noisy atmosphere, it can be hard for people to discern when information is weird or different. When they hear what is normal or not normal is plain language and from a nonpartisan messenger, they are more likely to understand



Do not repeat mis- or dis-information. Repeating claims in an attempt to discredit them backfires. Instead, focus on sharing accurate information from trusted sources

Resources:

- [Democratic Communications Collaborative: Communications Guide: Elections - 2026](#)
- [866-OUR-Vote Election Protection Hotline](#)



EXAMPLE: THE MID-OHIO FOOD COLLECTIVE

Grove City, OH

No matter what a nonprofit's mission may be, it connects to a free and fair democracy. The Mid-Ohio Food Collective connected hunger relief with civic engagement.

They started by distributing election information at their existing food distributions and neighborhood-based programs, eventually building up to create their own election resource guides, trainings, and toolkits.

III. What Nonprofits Can Do to Support a Successful Election

Up to 5.7 million additional votes may have been cast in the 2024 general election if voter confidence levels had been higher. Research further indicates that information about voters' rights, election monitoring, and legal support increase Americans' propensity to vote.

Building confidence in elections is not about persuading nonprofit audiences to support a particular candidate or policy. **By proactively educating audiences and supporters, nonprofits help create more informed electors and reduce confusion during election season.**

Nonpartisan nonprofit organizations can weave the following pillars of engagement into existing outreach:

- 1. Help People Check Their Voter Registration, Understand What's on the Ballot, and Make a Plan to Vote**
- 2. Support Effectively Run Elections**
- 3. Educate about Voter's Rights, How to Report Concerns, and How Election Disputes are Legally Resolved**

1. HELP PEOPLE CHECK THEIR VOTER REGISTRATION, UNDERSTAND WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT, AND MAKE A PLAN TO VOTE

This is the most basic and important activity for all nonprofit organizations to share with their supporters. While this guide encourages nonprofits to take the “extra” steps, helping supporters check their registration and helping them make a plan to vote is paramount.

Provide Voters with Critical Information on Changes to the Voting System

With so many changes to how voting works in 2026, **helping voters understand when, where, and how to vote will be crucial.**

Voters need to know when early voting opens, where and when they can vote early, when ballots are due, when Election Day is held, the hours the polls are open, the process to count ballots, when to expect results, and who makes decisions in a contested election scenario.

- Share election dates and deadlines with community members and encourage them to save the dates
- Share webinars, briefings, facts, social media charts or infographics and more with community members to help them understand how the process works
- Create simple and straightforward print and online materials to explain the elections process to your organization's audience. Take into consideration reading levels, languages, and trust with government systems
- Share links and contact information for your local election office

Resources:

- ➔ [Nonprofit VOTE: State by state voter guides](#)
- ➔ [Local/County Elections Office Directory](#)

FOR ORGANIZATIONS WITH ON-THE-GROUND PRESENCE:

Physical materials can be useful to have available for community members, either to put up or pass out:

- Key election dates: Include voter registration deadline, early voting options and deadlines, Election Day date and poll hours, and any voter ID requirements
- What to expect from the voting process: Short chart or infographic with an outline of how the process works, including the vote counting period

Help Supporters Check their Registration and Make a Plan to Vote

Provide voters with critical information on changes to the voting system, including changes due to redistricting or other new state laws since the last election. This is especially important in 2026 as redistricting, changing election laws, and voter roll purges will all impact whether, when, and how voters cast their ballot.

Disseminate trusted information about voting options. With barriers to voting and an ever-changing election landscape, many Americans face confusion about early voting, vote-by-mail options, absentee ballot requests, and poll location changes. By sharing accurate, localized, and up-to-date information, nonprofits can empower their audiences and supporters to vote with confidence.

Resources:

- [Vote.gov](#): Government website with up to date information to support voters through registration, mail-in and absentee voting, early voting, voter ID requirements, and more
- [TurboVote](#): Similar to [vote.gov](#), but is not a government website, which may be more appropriate for some audiences
 - Increased number of languages and accessibility options
- [Nonprofit VOTE: Nonprofit Voter Engagement Guide](#)
- [Nonprofit VOTE: Voter Registration and Engagement Timeline](#)
- Ballot Information
 - [Vote411: Personalized Voting Information](#)
- Check Registration
 - [Nonprofit VOTE: Sample Script for Voter Registration with Common Responses](#)
 - [Nonprofit VOTE: National Voter Registration Day](#)
 - [Restore Your Vote: Voter Registration Resources for People with Felony Convictions](#)
 - [Vote.gov: Voting While Unhoused](#)
 - [Vote.gov: Voting With a Disability](#)
 - [Vote.gov: Voting From Outside of the U.S.](#)
- Voting Information
 - [TurboVote: Request an Absentee or Mail in Ballot](#)
- Mail in Voting
 - [Fair Elections Center: Postal Service Changes and Mail in Voting](#)
- [National Association of Secretaries of State: #TrustedInfo campaign](#)

EXAMPLE: MANNA FOODBANK

Asheville, NC

Asheville-based Manna Foodbank works with Democracy NC to help grow voting access in Western North Carolina, including voter registration and voter photo ID information.



[Video on Youtube](#)



HELP VOTERS NAVIGATE VOTER ID AND PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP RULES

Every state has different rules on what kind of identification is needed to register to vote and to cast a ballot (rules can be different for registering and voting, even within the same state). Rules differ widely: Some states accept non-photo IDs or student IDs, while others strictly mandate unexpired, government-issued photo IDs at the polls or when casting a mail-in ballot.

Documentary Proof of Citizenship (DPOC) Proposals. Laws requiring a document that proves citizenship in order to register to vote—such as a U.S. passport, certified copy of your birth certificate, a driver’s license that states you are a citizen (though not all state driver’s licenses or REAL IDs provide proof of citizenship), or naturalization papers—are in place in **Arizona, Louisiana, New Hampshire, and Wyoming**, and are being debated in other states.

Changing rules can lead to confusion about what is and isn’t required. **Nonprofits can make sure that voters have accurate state-specific information.**

Resources:

- [VoteRiders](#): Leading nonpartisan organization dedicated to helping eligible voters secure the identification they need to vote:
 - [State by state Voter ID Laws](#)
 - [Free one-on-one assistance](#) for individuals who need help securing key documents and government-issued IDs
 - Call the 866-ID-2-VOTE helpline for fast, reliable answers about state ID requirements
 - [Chatbot](#)
- [National Conference of State Legislatures: State by state guidance for Documentary Proof of Citizenship](#)

EXAMPLE: THE DETROIT CHANGE INITIATIVE

Detroit, MI

Detroit-area nonprofit focused on providing resources to their community, including community empowerment, civic participation, youth development, and mentoring.

The Detroit Change Initiative regularly shares information with young people and students on social media to access mobile Secretary of State vans to help get identification documents.

MOBILE OFFICE IS COMING TO YOU



Calling All Students & Community
Members
We Will Be Visiting Sites Near You

MICHIGAN SECRETARY OF STATE



The Secretary of State Mobile Office will be visiting

7/03/25	Greenfield Union	421 W 7mile Rd. Detroit MI
7/15/25	Ronald Brown Academy	11530 Outer Drive Detroit MI.
7/21/25	Munger	5525 Martin St. Detroit MI.
7/23/25	Academy of America's	3811 Clcotte St. Detroit MI.
7/24/25	Fischer School	15491 Maddeliene St. Detroit MI.
7/25/25	Bates Academy	19701 Wyoming St. Detroit MI.

MUST HAVE Documents Needed:

Original Birth Certificate

Social Security Card

2 proofs of address (transcript & student profile sheet or parent with license present)

Complete your Secretary of State transactions, including:



Michigan ID
First-time



Real ID
Must Have Original
Birth Certificate &
Proof of Social
Security Number



Renew driver's
license or ID



Transfer title



Apply for/renew
disability placard

Need YOUR Real ID, want to work this summer, plans to travel or going away to school???

The 1st 100 students to RSVP The ID Cost will be covered by
Detroit Change Initiative & Journey Faith Group o

Registrar for attendance via TEXT ONLY at 313.444.9170 or bit.ly/WEAREIDD

Cost is covered For School Aged Children, but
All are welcome to get serviced

For more information or to
schedule your visit during this
Mobile Office event, contact

3134449170 via Text Only



Detroit Change Initiative Instagram

Encourage Early Voting

Encouraging people to vote as early as possible, preferably in person. Voting early allows supporters to avoid long lines, potential and unexpected scheduling conflicts, transportation challenges or adverse weather, or any last minute emergencies that could interfere with their voting plan. Mail-in voting also ensures that voters who live overseas, are serving in the military, or have disabilities can vote.

Every state has their own rules for early in-person voting and requesting and postmarking absentee ballots. Include resources for supporters to look up their local rules in voter-facing communications, particularly as early voting and absentee deadlines approach.

For voting by mail, encourage voters to return ballots at least six to seven days in advance.

Resources:

→ [Vote Early Day](#)

Encourage Supporters to Help Others Check Their Registration and Make a Plan to Vote

A study by Outvote and Columbia University's Data Science Institute found that a text message from a friend increased the likelihood of voting by 8.3 percentage points. Nonprofits should equip their high-propensity voting supporters to encourage their families, friends, neighbors, and communities to register and plan to vote well ahead of voting deadlines. You can provide sample scripts, host a phone or text bank, or invite participants to connect with neighbors.

Example from [Vote Early Day](#):

Sample Script (for Talking to Voters):

Hello! Thanks so much for being a voter! I'm [your name] and I'm volunteering with [Organization]. We are out here today because it's Vote Early Day, so we are trying to get more people to cast their ballot ahead of Election Day. Will you text three people right now and remind them to vote early?



2. SUPPORT EFFECTIVELY RUN ELECTIONS

Voting is an incredibly local process and relies on thousands of volunteers at every stage of the process. Local election officials are working hard and are often the target of violence and intimidation.

When nonprofit organizations show support for election officials and poll workers, it humanizes them, demystifies the process, and helps build public confidence in elections. In doing so, it helps to tamp down on conspiracies and misinformation that thrive when election mechanics are not fully understood.

Recruit Poll Workers

Poll workers are everyday community members who undergo specialized training to help administer the in-person voting process on Election Day or during early voting. These dedicated individuals work to ensure that polling locations operate smoothly and can help minimize problems such as malfunctioning equipment, closed facilities, and hours-long lines that actively discourage voter turnout.

Ultimately, how a poll worker welcomes, supports, and treats a voter with fairness and dignity can shape that person's confidence in the system and determine whether they choose to vote in future elections.

Resources:

- [Election Assistance Commission: Sign Up to be a Poll Worker](#)
- [Power the Polls: Poll Worker FAQ](#)
- [Power to the Polls: Support for Poll Worker Recruitment](#)
- [Usa.gov: State and Local Election Offices](#)

**FOR LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND AFFILIATES:**

Connect to local election protection coalitions in order to build relationships with election and democracy protection tables well ahead of election season:

- Encourage your local leadership to participate in coalition meetings and to share resources
- Refer your supporters to these organizations as another trusted way to receive information or assistance



Thank Election Officials

Elections officials administer our elections and ensure the integrity of our democratic processes. They are the backbone of our democracy, and they work under immense pressure. Election officials now face intense public scrutiny, shifting legal regulations, and, unfortunately, high levels of harassment and threats. Despite the heightened stress, tension, and long hours, they show up to do their jobs with strict professionalism so that every eligible citizen can make their voice heard.

Build a relationship with your local elections office. Well ahead of the election, find out how your nonprofit can support their work. Where do they need poll workers? Can you host an event that helps the community understand how votes are counted? Closer to the election, if questions arise about election rules, procedures, and deadlines that can't be answered on the local election website, local election staff will have the most accurate and up-to-date information.

Thank election officials. Support election officials by directing your network to send thank-you cards or positive community messages. Consider joining in on Election Hero Day (Tuesday, October 20).

Resources:

- [U.S. Vote Foundation: Local Election Office Contact Information](#)
- [Center for Civic Design: Message Templates for Thanking Election Officials](#)
- [Election Hero Day](#)
- [Election Hero Day: Toolkit](#): Includes key messages and talking points, ways to celebrate, social copy and graphics, email copy, and more

Recruit Volunteers for Other Electoral Activities

In certain states/localities, specific opportunities exist to do poll monitoring, help cure ballots, and more. Organizations can provide resources and opportunities for their audiences and supporters, such as:

- Protect the Vote: Nonpartisan Election Protection Volunteer Program: Ensure eligible voters are able to participate in our democracy
- Pizza to the Polls: Deliver free food to people who are participating in civic life, from long lines at polling places to nonpartisan events focused on voter education, registration, and turnout
- Election Protection Volunteers
 - Opportunities for legal professionals
 - Poll monitoring program
 - Ballot Curing: Ballot curing is a process that allows voters to correct certain problems with their mail-in or absentee ballots (such as signature doesn't match, missing date, etc.). Ballot curing rules and timelines vary dramatically across states, and sometimes by counties within states
 - If a volunteer is in a locality that allows for ballot curing, they may be called upon quickly to contact voters to correct their ballot
 - Organizations should identify supporters in localities with ballot curing protections and connect them with organizations that are doing ballot curing. Let them know they could be contacted on a short timeline, including same-day volunteer requests



3. EDUCATE ABOUT VOTER'S RIGHTS, HOW TO REPORT CONCERNS, AND HOW ELECTION DISPUTES ARE LEGALLY RESOLVED

Ensuring the community your nonprofit serves understands their rights as voters, knows where to turn if they have concerns about the electoral process, and has an understanding of how potential electoral disputes are resolved will add an additional layer of confidence in the democratic process.

Educate the Public About How Elections Work

Providing clear, basic voting information from trusted sources helps reduce confusion, address voter concerns, and instill confidence that our election process works. By encouraging community members to rely on official communications rather than rumors or speculation, trusted organizations can effectively counter misinformation and inoculate against both existing and future disinformation.

Resources:

- [How Elections Work](#): Learn what happens before the election, during the voting period, and after the election



Publicize the Election Protection Hotline

Ensure community members are aware of the [866-OUR-Vote Election Protection Hotline](#) so they know where to turn should they encounter problems or have any questions while voting. Individuals can call or text the hotline to report a voting issue or connect with trained volunteers. Include the hotline number in voter guides, email and SMS programs, and social media content.

ELECTION PROTECTION HOTLINE INFORMATION

- ★ **English: 1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683)**
- ★ **Spanish: 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA (1-888-839-8682)**
- ★ **Asian Languages: 1-888-API-VOTE (1-888-274-8683)**
- ★ **Arabic: 10844-YALLA-US (1-844-925-5287)**
- ★ **Text: 866-OUR-VOTE**
- ★ **Email: hotline@866ourvote.org**

Resources:

→ [Election Protection: Toolkit Materials](#)

DISTRIBUTE KNOW YOUR RIGHTS INFORMATION

Provide easy-to-understand as well as state- and locally specific “know your rights” materials to community members as often as possible. Materials should include what voter identification is required, what voting options are available, how to cast a provisional ballot, and what protections exist for voters with disabilities, felony convictions, or language needs; unhoused voters, and those who need other accommodations.

Key Protections

- ★ If polls close while you’re in line, you have the legal right to stay and vote
- ★ If your name isn’t on the voter list, ask for a provisional ballot—don’t leave
- ★ If voting machines malfunction, request a paper ballot
- ★ If you make a mistake on your ballot, ask for a new one
- ★ Your vote is private. No one has the right to see how you vote or pressure you inside the polling place

Resources:

- [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\): Know Your Rights, Voting Rights](#)
- [National Conference of State Legislatures: Electioneering Prohibitions Near Polling Places](#)



HELP SUPPORTERS IDENTIFY AND RESIST MISINFORMATION

Provide information and resources that help supporters evaluate election information before sharing it online.

Tips:

- Repost messages directly from state or local elections offices to avoid partisanship or misinformation
- Use [FactCheck.org](https://factcheck.org), [PolitiFact](https://politifact.org), [Snopes](https://snopes.com), or the [Brennan Center's election rumor tracker](https://www.brennancenter.org/election-rumor-tracker) to debunk election rumors
- Use the [SIFT framework](#) to verify any claim about voting procedures or election results
 - Stop
 - Investigate the source
 - Find better coverage
 - Trace information to its original context

RESPOND TO INTERFERENCE

In the case of external interference in the election, nonprofits should follow core principles to ensure free and fair elections:



Amplify verified facts only. Lean exclusively on direct updates provided by trusted, official state and local election offices. Avoid posting unverified rumors regarding ballot counts or system errors



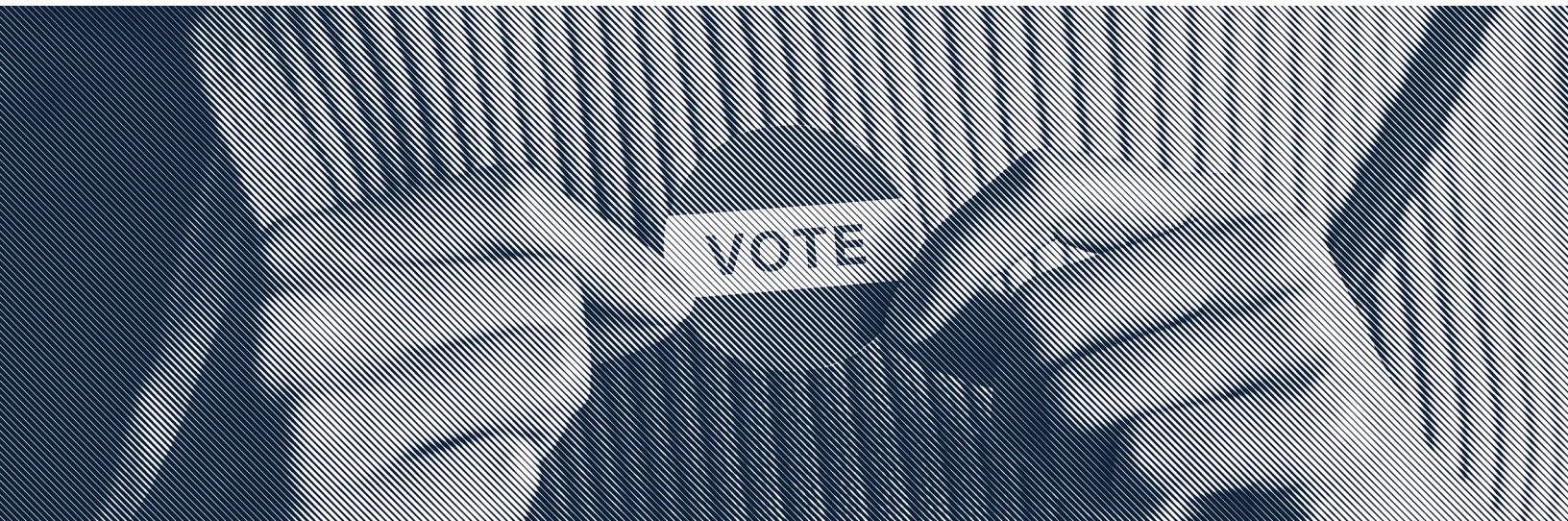
Commit to strict nonviolence. Center all messaging on peaceful, unified community resilience and respect for the legal administration process



Accountability to ensure votes are counted. It may be necessary to demonstrate unity in the call for election integrity by echoing the call for election officials to carry out legal election processes to count every vote. This is why it's important for leaders to organize and communicate with one another ahead of time: so they can quickly align messaging in the moment

Resources:

- [Princeton University: Elevating Community Safety and De-Escalation Approaches](#)
- [Harnessing Our Power to End Political Violence](#)



IV. Planning Your Election Protection Effort

An effective civic education or election protection strategy doesn't require a complete overhaul of your current operations—it relies on weaving these crucial messages into your existing supporter outreach and engagement strategies.

MAKE YOUR PLAN

Each organization will develop their own unique approach. Here's how to get started developing a game plan unique to your organization:

- 1. Secure buy-in**
- 2. Assess capacity and establish priorities**
- 3. Develop your plan**

1. Secure Buy-In

- Establish the “why” that explains how your mission, strategic plan, or other organizational goals benefit from public, nonpartisan communication around elections
- Consider your target audience: supporters, constituents, staff, volunteers, your local community, or others. Meet your audience where they are and build a deeper relationship by engaging on elections as a timely issue that impacts both them and your organization
- Consider which election protection activities would be most appropriate for your organization
- Get buy-in from your executive director, board, or other leadership. Consider any specific organizational dynamics, procedures, or protocol

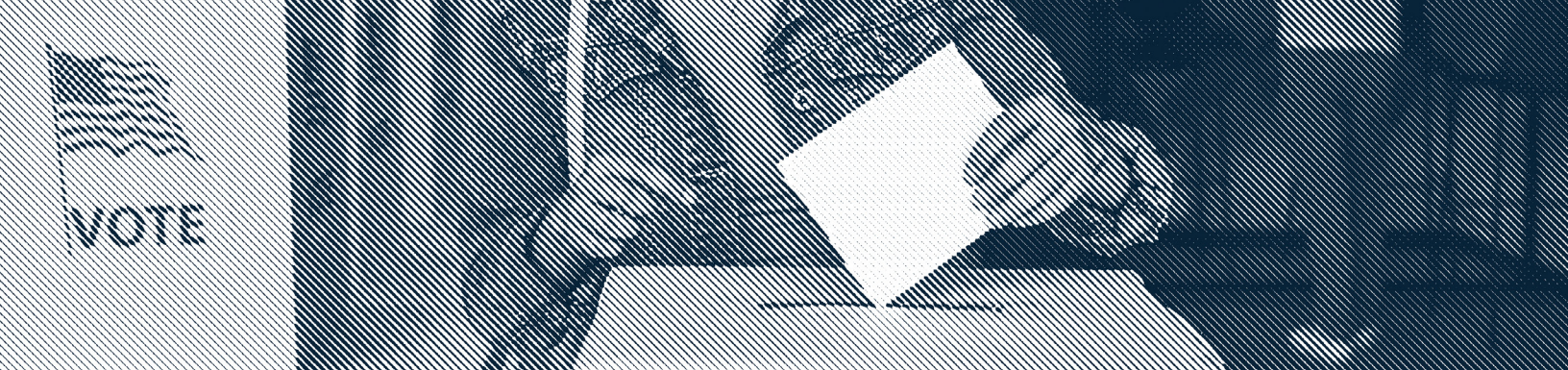
2. Assess Capacity and Establish Priorities

- With organizational buy-in, choose a staff lead who can coordinate your organization's efforts, including involving staff and volunteers as appropriate
- Assess organizational capacity and resources in order to establish priority activities that will drive the most impactful election protection efforts

3. Develop Your Plan

- Select opportunities for engagement: Will you talk about elections as part of daily services, in classes, at trainings or events, as a project for a volunteer group, or incorporate into community outreach?
- Gather resources to inform your outreach from trusted institutions. (Don't forget the resources in this guide!)
- Create a specific timeline for your plan (see below for sample timeline)
- Match activities with your organizational calendar
 - Look at your organizational calendar and work backwards from Election Day. Take into consideration major holidays, organizational events, anniversaries, and opportunities for election protection





SAMPLE ACTIVITIES BASED ON CAPACITY

Every organization's engagement will look different. Here is how organizations with differing levels of capacity may engage in election protection activities.

1. Organizations with small capacity could:

- Share Election Protection Hotline in your email newsletter, website, or social media
- Print a flyer or poster with "know your rights" information and put it in a highly visible area, like your lobby or on a community bulletin board
- Post or share an infographic explaining the elections process
- Give your staff the day off on election day to be a poll workers

2. Organizations with medium capacity could:

- *[Small capacity sample activities above, plus...]*
- Help election protection organizations by using your resources to recruit volunteers for activities like poll monitoring, staffing a hotline, or acting as poll workers
- Include information about what to expect at elections in your outreach, for instance while tabling at community events
- Organize volunteers to thank election officials

Organizations with large capacity could:

- *[Small and medium capacity sample activities above, plus...]*
- Host a lunch-and-learn or other educational program about the election process. You could invite officials from your local elections office. Sometimes they can even bring a voting machine to help demystify the process
- Organize with other nonprofits in your network to form an election protection coalition for your region (or connect with an existing one)

SAMPLE ELECTION PROTECTION CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

External communications should follow your most commonly used and highest engagement channels to ensure effective outreach: Use email, SMS, social media, and other tactics as appropriate.

Here is a sample election protection campaign timeline for a large organization that plans to be heavily involved in election protection efforts:

August

- 8/11: National Poll Worker Recruitment Day
 - **8/11 Message: Poll worker recruitment**
- Share educational guides as appropriate on social media

September

- 9/15: National Voter Registration Day
 - **9/15 Message: Check your voter registration**
 - Encourage community members to get three friends or family members to check their registration, as well
- Late-Sept: Early voting & vote by mail requests begin in many states

October

- **Early-Oct Message: Vote early**
 - One of the best ways to ensure your vote is counted is to vote as early as possible
 - Encourage supporters to vote early:
 - Early in-person
 - By mail: Request your ballot as early as possible and mail it back right away (at least one week before Election Day)
 - Encourage supporters to bring three friends / family to vote early

- 10/20 Election Hero Day
 - **10/20 Message: Celebrate Election Hero Day**
 - Educate community members about the critical role that election officials and poll workers play
 - Thank election officials
- **Late October message: Ballot return and “know your rights” information**
 - Share “know your rights” information with supporters, including the 866-OUR-VOTE Election Protection Hotline
 - Give supporters tips for engaging on social media
 - Encourage supporters to share resources with three friends or family members

November

- **11/3: Election Day**
 - **11/3 Message: Final Election Day reminders, including polling place, mail-in ballot dropbox return process, and “know your rights” information**
 - Encourage supporters to follow best practices at polling places. (Keep calm; report issues if they see voter intimidation or interference to the 866-OUR-VOTE election protection hotline.)
 - Encourage supporters to help three friends or family members get to the polls or return a mail-in ballot to a dropbox
- Speak up publicly about the importance of election integrity. This is another chance to thank your local election officials and poll workers for their hard work counting and certifying votes
- **Post-election messaging:** expect the process of counting and certifying votes to take time, especially in close elections (see next chapter)

SUPPORT YOUR OWN STAFF

Don't forget about your own staff! Nonprofit staff may need support casting their ballot and may be motivated to take additional action, like signing up as a poll worker. Consider how you share information with your staff, in addition to supporters.

Give Employees Time Off To Vote

Make sure voting is accessible for your staff:

- Give them all of the same resources and reminders listed in this guide
- Give time off on Election Day and during early voting periods, or ensure flexible scheduling
- Consider giving staff paid time off to be a poll worker, especially in organizations with a wide geographic distribution or a base in swing congressional districts

Note: Some states have legal requirements to give staff time off to vote.





V. Looking Past Election Day

Many election results will not be fully finalized on election night, and that is normal! It takes time for election officials to meticulously adhere to state laws, verify that processes were followed, and perform strict security checks to ensure an accurate count. Long delays can sow distrust, but they should be viewed as a sign that the process is working.

Here is why finalizing results often takes days or weeks:

- **Bans on “Pre-Processing” Mail-In Ballots.** Before a mail-in ballot can be fed into a scanner, election workers must complete several security steps such as verifying the voter’s signature, checking identification numbers, and physically opening the envelopes. In several states, including Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, state laws explicitly prohibit election workers from beginning this pre-processing work until the morning of Election Day
- **High margins of mail-in and postmarked ballots.** The popularity of mail-in voting vastly shifts the calculation timeline
 - **Late-arriving ballots:** Under state laws in much of the country, ballots postmarked by Election Day are legally permitted to arrive and be counted several days after the election. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld these rules, protecting late-arriving mail and military/overseas ballots
 - **Election Day drop-offs:** In states like Arizona, a large percentage of mail-in ballots are hand-delivered directly to dropboxes on Election Day. These cannot be processed or tabulated until the polls officially close, which requires days of physical handling and signature checks

- **Strict security checkpoints: provisional and cured ballots.** It can take time to fully verify all ballots, especially those with outstanding information
 - **Provisional ballots:** If a voter's eligibility is questioned at a polling place (e.g., they are in the wrong precinct or forgot their ID), they cast a provisional ballot. Officials must manually research the voter's registration history afterward before deciding to count it, which takes substantial time
 - **Ballot curing:** Many states have "signature cure" windows, giving voters a set number of days after Election Day to fix minor errors, such as a missing signature or an mismatched ID number on their mail ballot envelope
- **Razor-thin margins in competitive races.** In very close races, state laws often require re-counts or other processes to ensure that every single vote was counted correctly. Candidates may also request a recount if the race was within a certain margin

It's critically important that election officials are allowed to follow all vote-counting and legal certification processes.

Resources:

→ [The Center for Election Innovation & Research: What Happens After We Vote](#)



PLAN AHEAD FOR ELECTION DAY AND THE VOTE-COUNTING PERIOD AFTER

As we have seen in previous elections, this standard verification window is where external pressure on the system is often highest. As a trusted voice, nonprofits play an important role in how election day and the vote counting period after are perceived by the public. In order to be prepared, nonprofits should plan ahead:

- ★ **Consider likely scenarios.** Conduct basic scenario-planning with your leadership team to understand how you will share accurate information if tallies take multiple days
- ★ **Plan engagement.** Think ahead about how your organization may or may not engage within each of the scenarios
- ★ **Connect to other local organizations and networks that are doing voter- or election-protection work.** Know who to contact and how you might share messaging or engagement in certain scenarios
- ★ **Secure internal organizational alignment.** Planning ahead will give your organization time to align on what you think is most likely to happen, what your engagement boundaries may be, and how you may or may not engage

Pressure on the system is expected to be felt most sharply in districts where elections are close. If you are in a very competitive district, consider connecting with your local election protection coalition in advance.

VI. Additional Resources

NONPROFIT VOTE: NONPROFIT VOTER ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

The Nonprofit Voter Engagement Guide is designed to help nonprofits engage their communities in elections while staying nonpartisan. This toolkit offers clear guidance, practical examples, and easy-to-use tools to help nonprofit staff and leaders navigate voter engagement activities including voter education, hosting candidate forums, and get out the vote (GOTV).

Resources:

- [Nonprofit VOTE: Nonprofit Voter Engagement Guide](#)
- [Nonprofit VOTE: Upcoming Webinars](#)

INDEPENDENT SECTOR: VOICES IN ACTION

Independent Sector, Nonprofit VOTE, League of Women Voters, and Alliance for Justice's Bolder Advocacy program launched Voices in Action, a collaborative initiative to equip nonprofits with the tools, confidence, and clarity they need to engage their communities in the democratic process ahead of the 2026 midterm elections and beyond.

They send monthly emails with guidance on nonpartisan voter engagement, key dates and deadlines, outreach strategies, and more.

Resources:

- [Voices in Action: Sign up for the series](#)

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NONPROFITS: NONPROFIT NONPARTISAN VOTER ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

This Voter Engagement Guide provides a roadmap of how charitable nonprofits can effectively engage in elections on a nonpartisan basis, leverage your networks for greater impact, and build relationships with elected officials. Voting is something we can't take for granted. Nonprofit organizations have a critical role to play in promoting voting as a safe and accessible activity to strengthen our communities.

Resources:

- [Nonprofit Nonpartisan Voter Engagement Guide](#)
- [Elections and Community Engagement Resources](#)