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# VOTER ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

A Nonpartisan Guide for 501(c)3  
Nonprofits

## A Letter from the Leaders

Nonprofit New York is proud to partner with Community Votes and Nonprofit VOTE to share these critically important resources with nonprofits across the sector.

Nonprofit organizations are integral contributors to the New York area's economy and social safety net. Nonprofits are crucial components in how we build community, create art, and push for change together.

We are also important drivers of our multi-racial democracy. The past year has provided powerful illustrations of why we must not take our democracy for granted. Making sure that all New Yorkers have their voices heard, supporting voter education, and encouraging participation are not partisan or political issues — they are responsibilities.

Nonprofits with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status are prohibited from engaging in any efforts to influence the outcome of an election, but this does not mean that nonprofits need to be passive observers of democracy in action. We need to embrace and expand our role in motivating and facilitating civic engagement. And that is exactly what this toolkit makes possible.

We extend enormous thanks to Nonprofit Votes, Chai Jindasurat, and Celine Yip, for the vision, dedication and hard work clearly reflected in this document.


Signed Meg and Louisa,

**Louisa Hackett**

Founder & Director, [Community Votes](#)

**Meg Barnette**

President & CEO, [Nonprofit New York](#)



“Voter registration and turnout projects are among the most achievable, affordable and effective civic engagement activities around, especially when conducted in conjunction with trusted community-based nonprofits.

This is true because communities that vote are communities whose voices are heard.”

Chris Hanway | Executive Director  
Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement  
Nonprofit New York Member

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# **NONPROFITS AND VOTING**

## **Yes We Can!**

**The 2021 Voter Engagement Toolkit**

## Staying Nonpartisan: Permissible Election Activities Checklist for 501(c)3 Nonprofit Organizations

The federal tax code contains a single sentence that defines the prohibition of partisan political activities by 501(c)(3) charitable organizations. It states 501(c)(3) organizations 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.”

When activities are considered partisan political activity depends on the “facts and circumstances” in each situation. What is clear is that there’s still a lot a 501(c)(3) can do on a nonpartisan basis to promote voter and civic engagement as part of its charitable and educational mission during the election season.

### Permissible Nonpartisan Activities - with common examples

The IRS affirmatively states that **501(c)(3) organizations may conduct voter engagement** or connect with candidates on a nonpartisan basis. This includes encouraging voter participation, educating voters, and talking to candidates about issues. 501(c)(3) organizations may:

#### 1. Conduct or Promote Voter Registration

- a. Conduct a voter registration drive at your nonprofit or in your community.
- b. Encourage people to register to vote in your communications, on your website or at events.

#### 2. Educate Voters on the Voting Process

- a. Provide information on when and where to vote - such as finding their poll location, getting an absentee ballot or contacting their local election office for help.
- b. Remind people of registration or election deadlines and dates.

#### 3. Host a Candidate Forum

- a. Sponsor a candidate forum with other community partners for all the candidates.
- b. Encourage your community to attend your forum or another candidate forum sponsored by a trusted partner.

#### 4. Create a Candidate Questionnaire

- a. Submit questions to all the candidates in a race of interest to your nonprofit.
- b. Use Nonprofit VOTE’s fact sheet or Bolder Advocacy’s fact sheet on creating a candidate questionnaire for specific guidelines to follow to remain nonpartisan.

#### 5. Distribute Sample Ballots or Nonpartisan Voter Guides

- a. Provide nonpartisan information about who and what is on the ballot.

#### 6. Continue Issue Advocacy During an Election

- a. Continue your regular advocacy or lobbying activities during the election period, as long it is related to pending legislation on issues you have a history of working on and not timed or otherwise structured to influence how people vote.

## 7. Support or Oppose a Ballot Measure

*Unlike candidates for office, nonprofits may take sides on a ballot measure. IRS rules treat this as a lobbying activity, not electioneering.*

- a. Educate the public on your position within your normal lobbying limits.
- b. Have your board take a position for or against a question on the ballot.

*Note: If you plan to make a significant investment of staffing and funds on ballot measure advocacy, review the state's campaign spending disclosure laws regarding ballot measures.*

## 8. Encourage People to Vote

- a. Send reminders to your staff, clients and constituents about voting in the next election and why voting is important.
- b. Nonprofits may conduct any type of get out the vote activity to encourage people to vote as long as it's about participating as a voter and not suggesting who to vote for.

### Prohibited Partisan Activities

The partisan prohibition means **a 501(c)(3) organization** or a staff member speaking or acting on behalf of the nonprofit **may not**:

- Endorse a candidate.
- Make a campaign contribution or expenditure for or against a candidate.
- Rate or rank candidates on who is most favorable to your issue(s).
- Let candidates use your facilities or resources, unless they are made equally available to all candidates at their fair market value - such as a room commonly used for public events.

The main principle for being nonpartisan is to conduct voter engagement and education in the context of your educational and civic mission and not in a way intended to support or oppose a specific candidate. So if you hold a candidate forum or offer to brief the candidates on issues of importance to your organization, make sure you treat the candidates equally. When you do voter registration or remind people to vote, do it in the context of the importance of voting – encouraging active citizenship and giving voice to the communities you serve.

#### What does it mean to rank or rate a candidate?

Anything that indicates which candidates you think are better or worse on your issues could be seen as a partisan endorsement. This would include things like giving candidates letter grades (A, B, C, etc.), but even commentary that compares candidates' views to yours is a problem. Take, for example, a voter guide you create to publicize where candidates stand on an issue that also includes your organization's position on the issue. This would tell the voter which candidates you believe gave the "correct" answer. When you circulate or publicize a nonpartisan guide giving candidate positions, keep your opinion out of it. Let voters use the information presented to make their own decisions.

### Resources

- Nonprofits, Voting and Elections: A 501(c)(3) Online Guide to Nonpartisan Voter Engagement, located at [nonprofitvote.org](https://nonprofitvote.org)

- Federal Funds and Voter Registration: for organizations receiving Community Service Block Grants or AmeriCorps/National Service programs, located at [nonprofitvote.org](https://nonprofitvote.org)

If you have a question, contact Nonprofit VOTE at [info@nonprofitvote.org](mailto:info@nonprofitvote.org) or Bolder Advocacy at [advocacy@afj.org](mailto:advocacy@afj.org). Or visit online:

- Nonprofit VOTE – [nonprofitvote.org](https://nonprofitvote.org)
- Bolder Advocacy – [bolderadvocacy.org](https://bolderadvocacy.org)

Source: [Nonprofit VOTE](#)



## Checklist: Seven Reasons to Do Voter Registration

### 1. Get the Attention of Candidates

Communities with high registration and turnout rates are more likely to get attention from candidates and campaigns, including more frequent candidate appearances and campaign contacts (campaign literature, reminders to vote, etc.)

### 2. Build Community Clout

Office holders pay close attention to who turns out to vote. Communities with high turnout gain increased access to office holders and increased clout.

### 3. Create Community Advocates

Voters are more likely to become advocates for their community and to participate in the political process in other ways, for example, by volunteering for a political campaign or training to become a poll worker.

### 4. Build Community Leadership

As communities become mobilized to vote, leaders from within the community emerge, including those who will seek office.

### 5. Gain Representation that Reflects the Diversity of Your Community

Communities that register and vote are more likely to gain representation that reflects the diversity and interests of their community.

### 6. Reach Voters Whom No One Else Can

Because of the work you do, you have access to community members whom traditional campaigns are often unable to reach. Furthermore, you've earned your clients' and constituents' trust and respect, giving you the opportunity to reach them in a way that no one else can.

### 7. Create a Lifelong Voter

A registered voter is a likely voter. Typically, nine out of ten registered voters will turn out to vote in a presidential election. Voting is habit forming. Getting someone registered and helping them turn out to vote in one election dramatically increases the chance that they'll vote again.

Source: [Nonprofit VOTE](#)

## Dos and Don'ts: Federal Funds and Voter Registration

All 501(c)(3) organizations must follow the same IRS rule barring charities from conducting partisan political activities to support or oppose candidates while allowing nonprofits to conduct voter engagement and election activities on a nonpartisan basis. In a few special cases Congress has added stipulations on the use of certain federal funds to restrict voter registration activities. In contrast, the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) requires state agencies offering federal assistance like Medicaid or WIC to offer voter registration to those who sign up.

### Federal Funds with Voter Registration Restrictions

#### Community Service Block Grants (CSBG)

Nonprofits who receive Community Service Block Grant funding, like Community Action Agencies:

#### **CANNOT**

- Use CSBG funds to pay for staff or materials to conduct voter registration.
- Use CSBG funds to provide rides to the polls.

#### **CAN**

- Use non-CSBG funds to do voter registration such as having staff or others not paid by CSBG funds help register voters, so long as it's not identified as a service of the agency. In this case, voter registration should be done outside of service delivery, for example, at a table or local event.
- Use CSBG or other funds to do any other kinds of nonpartisan voter engagement activities to promote voter education and voter participation such as reminding staff and clients about an upcoming election. However, it is recommended that CSBG funds used for nonpartisan election activity be limited and not done in a way to give public perception of the agency as being in any way involved in partisan politics.

#### Head Start

Head Start has similar restrictions to that of CSBG recipients, except Head Start had language added in 2007 to amend the Head Start Act to affirm a Head Start program's right to have outside groups do nonpartisan voter registration drives at their sites. A Head Start program:

#### **CANNOT**

- Use Head Start funds to conduct or have employees conduct voter registration activities.
- Use Head Start funds to provide rides to the polls.

#### **CAN**

- Have a nonpartisan organization or non-Head Start personnel do voter registration at Head Start facilities during all hours of operation.
- Do any other type of nonpartisan voter education, such as keeping parents and others informed about how, when, and where to vote.

#### **Do CDBG funds have similar restrictions?**

No. Unlike with CSBG funds, there are no restrictions on doing voter registration or any type of nonpartisan activity. A nonprofit CDBG funds should follow the same rules that apply to any 501(c)(3) organization barring partisan, political activity to support or oppose candidates.

### AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)

AmeriCorps members and other recipients of CNCS funding are subject to the standard 501(c)(3) prohibition on partisan political activities for or against candidates. Additionally, while charging time to the AmeriCorps program or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program, CNCS supported personnel or service volunteers:

#### **CANNOT**

- Do voter registration during work hours or while performing work for the host organization.

#### **CAN**

- Make voter registration forms and information available on the premises for clients.
- Conduct any other type of nonpartisan voter education as undertaken by the organization where they are doing service.
- Do political activities in personal time outside of work and when not representing the organization they are assigned to.

### Legal Services

Legal Services groups are the most restricted. Legal Service employees and volunteers are generally prohibited by the Legal Services Act (LSA) and related policies from conducting any kind of nonpartisan or partisan political activity or issue advocacy.

### Federal Funds with Requirements to Do Voter Registration

The [National Voter Registration Act of 1993](#) requires several types of federally supported agencies—such as those that offer public assistance or primarily serve people with disabilities—to proactively offer the people they serve the opportunity to register to vote. These include nonprofit agencies like community health centers or food pantries that sign people up to receive Medicaid, WIC, food stamps and other federally funded public assistance programs.

See Nonprofit VOTE's [factsheet](#) on the National Voter Registration Act for more information.

### Resources

- CAPLAW, [Election Year Refresher for Nonprofit Community Action Agencies](#)
- Legal Information Institute, [Prohibited uses of CDBG Funds](#)
- Corporation for National and Community Service, [Prohibited Activities](#)
- Legal Services Corporation, [Regulations CFR 45 Part 1608](#)
- Nonprofit VOTE, [National Voter Registration Act Factsheet](#)
- Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, [National Voter Registration Act \(NVRA\) FAQ](#)

Source: [Nonprofit VOTE](#)

## FAQ: HIPAA and Civic Engagement at Health Centers

This fact sheet is provided for guidance only. It is not a legal opinion.

**What is HIPAA?** HIPAA is the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. The primary goal of the law is to make it easier for people to keep health insurance and protect the confidentiality and security of healthcare information. For health centers, protecting patient health information is also a legal requirement under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

**What does the Privacy Rule protect?** The HIPAA Privacy Rule protects the confidentiality of identifiable health information, including personal and demographic data, that relates to:

- the individual's past, present or future physical or mental health or condition,
- the provision of health care to the individual, or
- the past, present, or future payment for the provision of health care to the individual, and that identifies the individual or could be reasonably used to identify the individual and their personal information.

**What are the HIPAA issues when doing voter registration?** Voter registration cards and information are not subject to HIPAA regulations. A center's ability to copy voter registration data to later contact a registered voter is a matter of their state's election law. There is no law or rule in New York State prohibiting photocopying or retaining information from completed registration applications. A voter's date of birth, signature, full or partial Social Security Number and driver's license number should be removed before copying any application.

**How does HIPAA affect collecting advocacy or pledge to vote cards?** Voter and civic engagement is a voluntary, opt-in activity. Patients voluntarily provide contact information for this purpose. It is okay for health centers to ask patients to fill out a pledge to vote or advocacy card and to track the data for follow up and program evaluation. It's a good policy to restrict what staff have access to the list. Please see the 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet below regarding sharing of the list with a civic engagement partner.

**How does HIPAA apply to creating a civic engagement database used for advocacy, education or program evaluation?** HIPAA prohibits the use of your electronic health records (EHR) or other patient database for activity related to your civic engagement program. You should not use patient data from the patient's record to fill out voter registration forms or add to your database. Only use information you received directly from the patient on their voter registration form, voter pledge or advocacy card or other civic activity.

A civic engagement database may include staff, family, community members as well as patients.

- Don't include a special field in your database that identifies the individual as a patient.
- You may share contact information with another civic partner to, for example, invite people to a forum or do nonpartisan voter education. If you do, you should request they not identify the list with your health center.
- Your health center may also use a civic engagement list to evaluate the success of your outreach program.

Please contact [info@nonprofitvote.org](mailto:info@nonprofitvote.org) for more information and guidance.

Health care providers can contact [vot-er.org](http://vot-er.org) to get a free healthy democracy toolkit to help their patients register to vote.

Source: [Nonprofit VOTE](http://NonprofitVOTE.org)

## FAQ: Nonprofits and Ballot Measures

Ballot measures ask voters to vote on laws, bonding issues, or constitutional amendments. New York State allows ballot questions or propositions to be put before the voters by legislative action.

### Can a nonprofit take a position for or against a ballot measure?

**Yes. Activity on ballot measures is lobbying – not electioneering.** Ballot measure advocacy is an attempt to influence the passage or defeat of a law or constitutional amendment – not the election or defeat of a candidate. 501(c)(3) organizations are free to take sides on ballot measures as a lobbying activity, subject to normal limits on lobbying. If an organization is communicating with the general public about a ballot measure, it is considered Direct Lobbying (rather than Grassroots Lobbying) because the organization is speaking directly to the decision makers. This is important because there are different limits on the two types of lobbying, with grassroots lobbying being more restricted than direct lobbying. Ballot measure advocacy is more a first amendment right to advocate on issues than a matter of tax law. Any organization or individual is free to express their opinion for or against a proposed law or constitutional amendment.

### What are common activities for nonprofits on ballot measures?

**Your organization can engage in a range of activities related to ballot measures**, such as: making an endorsement, communicating your position to the public, organizing volunteers to work on passage or defeat of an initiative, or hosting an educational forum or event. You can also distribute neutral educational materials designed to inform the public about both sides of the question.

### How much can a 501(c)(3) nonprofit spend on lobbying?

**Your spending limits depend on which federal test your nonprofit chooses to measure its lobbying and how much you anticipate to spend on lobbying in one year**

1. Under federal law, if your nonprofit has elected to measure its lobbying under the 501(h) expenditure test, you will have clearer guidance and can do more advocacy. Under this test, you can spend as much as 20% of your annual budget on lobbying, including influencing ballot questions or legislation. Filing the 501(h) form is generally recommended for nonprofits that do any significant amount of lobbying and advocacy.
2. If your 501(c)(3) has not filed the 501(h) form, your lobbying falls under the “insubstantial part test.” In this case, you may only spend an “insubstantial” amount of money on lobbying efforts. “Insubstantial” is generally assumed to be 3-5% of annual spending.<sup>1</sup>
3. In New York State, if a 501(c)(3) expects to spend \$5,000 or more lobbying they must register with the Joint Commission on Public Ethics.<sup>2</sup>
4. In New York City, if a 501(c)(3) expects to spend \$5,000 or more lobbying on New York City legislation they must register with the City Clerk Lobbying Bureau.<sup>3</sup>

### Are there any spending limits for ballot measure advocacy?

There are no limits on spending on ballot measures, beyond the limits on lobbying discussed above.

<sup>1</sup> *Lobbying Under the Insubstantial Part Test*, Bolder Advocacy, [www.bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Lobbying\\_under\\_the\\_insubstantial\\_part\\_test.pdf](http://www.bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Lobbying_under_the_insubstantial_part_test.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> For more information, please see the Lawyers Alliance for New York’s [Advocacy](#) resources.

<sup>3</sup> For more information, please see the Lawyers Alliance for New York’s [Advocacy](#) resources.

Some states require you to file an expenditure report if you devote substantial funds to ballot measure advocacy as, for example, a primary sponsor of a ballot measure or an active partner. Contact your state's campaign finance office for more information.

### **Staff Activity**

There are no limitations to what nonprofit staff can do regarding ballot initiatives, except those set forth by the nonprofit itself as a matter of employee policy. As a matter of good policy, the decision to endorse or oppose a ballot measure should be made by the organization's Board of Directors.

### **Resources**

- Bolder Advocacy, [501\(c\)\(3\) Public Charities and Ballot Measures: An online toolkit](#)
- National Council of Nonprofits, [A Guide to taking the 501h-election](#)
- National Council of Nonprofits, [The Benefits-of-filing-the-501h-election](#)
- Bolder Advocacy, [Lobbying Under the Insubstantial Part Test](#)

Source: [Nonprofit VOTE](#)

## Pocket Guide: New York State Voter Facts

Click [here](#) to view and/or download this file as a PDF.

### Preview of Fact Sheet



## NEW YORK VOTER FACT SHEET

### VOTER FAQs:

**WHAT SHOULD I KNOW TO BE REGISTERED TO VOTE?**

- How Old Do I Need to Be? At least 18 years-old by Election day. If you are 16 or 17 you can pre-register to vote.
- Can I Register Online? Yes, if you have a DMV issued license or ID.
- I Have a Felony Record, Can I Still Register? Yes, must not be on parole for a felony conviction (unless parole pardoned or restored rights of citizenship).
- I Am Homeless, How Do I Register? Use the address or cross streets for wherever you sleep.
- Where Do I Register in Person? At your County Election office.
- Is There a Residency Requirement? Yes, you must be a resident of the state and the county/township for 30 days before you vote.

**WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT VOTING IN-PERSON?**

- Do I Need ID to Vote? No, unless your registration information doesn't match.
- When Can I Vote? See the Important Dates.
- Where Can I Find My Polling Place? See Helpful Links: New York State's Voter Portal.
- I Have a Disability, Are Polling Places Accessible to Me? Accessible polling locations are available.

**WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT VOTING BY MAIL?**

- Who Can Vote By Mail? Anyone registered voter using the proper excuses -- absent from county, illness, COVID-19.
- How Do I Apply for a Vote By Mail Ballot? In person or by mail. See Helpful Links: Request/track absentee ballot
- How Do I Return My Ballot? By mail (postage paid) or in-person drop off.
- When is My Ballot Due? Postmarked by 5pm on November 2. We recommend you send in your ballot by Early Voting Day, October 23th.
- How Do I Track My Ballot? See Helpful Links: Request/track absentee ballot

### IMPORTANT DATES

Primary Election: June 22  
Registration Deadline: May 28  
Vote by Mail Request Deadline: June 15  
Early Voting Period: June 12 - June 20

###

General Election: Nov 2  
Registration Deadline: Oct 8  
Vote by Mail Request Deadline: Oct 26  
Early Voting Period: Oct 23 - Oct 31

### HELPFUL LINKS

**Register to Vote Online:**  
[dmv.ny.gov/more-info/electronic-voter-registration-application](https://dmv.ny.gov/more-info/electronic-voter-registration-application)

**State Voter Portal:**  
[voterlookup.elections.ny.gov](https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov)

**Request /track absentee ballot:**  
NYS: [nysballot.elections.ny.gov](https://nysballot.elections.ny.gov)  
NYC: [vote.nyc/page/absentee-voting-0](https://vote.nyc/page/absentee-voting-0)

**Additional Info:** Social distancing and mask wearing is encouraged.

### PRINTABLE FORMS

**State Registration Form:**  
[elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/download/voting/voteregform-eng-fillable.pdf](https://elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/download/voting/voteregform-eng-fillable.pdf)

**Federal Registration Form:**  
[eac.gov/voters/national-mail](https://eac.gov/voters/national-mail)

[voter-registration-form](#) (in multiple languages)

**Vote By Mail Application:**  
[nysballot.elections.ny.gov](https://nysballot.elections.ny.gov)

\* SOURCE: New York State Board of Elections. Please note that the information contained herein is accurate as of 2/10/2021. The best way to get current information - particularly in light of COVID - is to check with New York State's or New York City's Board of Elections.



## FAQ: New York State Voter Registration

### Who is eligible to register to vote?

- United States Citizens
- Adults 18 years old by election day
- Residents of NY for at least 30 days before election
- Not claim the right to vote elsewhere
- Not be in prison or on parole for a felony conviction (unless received a pardon by the Governor)

NOTE: A person sixteen and seventeen may preregister to vote. They will automatically be registered upon reaching the age of eligibility.

### Can a person with a criminal record register to vote?

**YES** | In New York State, someone **CAN VOTE** if they are:

- Convicted of a misdemeanor or violation
- Incarcerated for a misdemeanor (able to vote by absentee ballot)
- Convicted of a felony by a state or federal court and on probation
- On parole AND pardoned by the Governor

**NO** | In New York State, someone **CANNOT VOTE** if they are:

- Convicted of a felony by a state or federal court and currently incarcerated
- Convicted of a felony by a state or federal court, on parole and not pardoned by the Governor

### Can a student in New York State register to vote in New York?

**YES** | Students from out of state can register to vote in New York.

New York State students that have a residence in another state must fill out a registration form indicating New York State residency. The New York State registration will cancel out the registration in the other state.

### Can a person without a home register to vote?

**YES** | A homeless person has the right to vote.

On the voter registration form, use the location/address that is considered home, such as the address or cross street where they sleep. For the mailing address, use the address of a shelter or P.O. box.

### Can a person use a PO mailbox as their permanent address on the voter registration form?

**NO** | A voter registration form will not be processed if a P.O. box is the permanent address.

A physical address is needed to determine the political district a person votes in. There is a section on the form to put in a mailing address. The mailing address can be a P.O. box.



## What are the voter registration deadlines for 2021?

### **PRIMARY ELECTION DATE - June 22, 2021**

- **February 14, 2021** is the last day to change party affiliation and be able to vote in the primary
- **May 28, 2021** is the last day to postmark an application
- **June 2, 2021** is the last day to submit an application in person

### **GENERAL ELECTION - November 2, 2021**

- **October 8, 2021** is the last day to postmark an application
- **October 13, 2021** is the last day to submit an application in person

## Does a person have to register every year?

**NO** | Once a person registers, they are permanently registered unless:

- Their **name changed** since the last election
- They have **not voted for 5 years**
- They want to **change party affiliation**

NOTE: February 14, 2021 is the deadline to change a party affiliation and be able to vote in the June 22, 2021 primary.

## Does a person have to re-register if they move?

**NO** | The registration of voters who move within New York State and fill out a change of address with the United States Postal Service will automatically be updated.

**YES** | If a person moves out of state they will need to register to vote in that state.

## Are registered voters more likely to be called for jury duty?

Possibly, but people are called who are not registered. Jurors are drawn from lists of state taxpayers and licensed drivers as well as from voter registration rolls.

## How can a person find out if they are registered to vote?

- Call the Board of Elections 1-866-868-3692
- Check On-Line: [voterlookup.elections.ny.gov](https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov)

## How does a person register to vote?

**On-line** via the New York Department of Motor Vehicles at [dmv.ny.gov](https://dmv.ny.gov)

*Requires drivers license or government issued identification*

**By mail**

Download a form at the New York State or New York State or City Board of Elections  
*Requires printer, envelope and stamps*

Pick up a form at the Library, Post Office or Department of Motor Vehicles  
*Requires envelope and stamps*

**By mail** via Third Party Website at [register2vote.org](https://register2vote.org)

*Requires*

1. Signing the registration form sent to your address.
2. Mailing the form back to the Board of Elections in the stamped envelope.

### **Someone registered to vote, but never received anything. What do they do?**

If they registered correctly, check with the New York Board of Elections by calling, visiting in person, or going online and using the voter lookup tool: [voterlookup.elections.ny.gov](https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov)

### **What happens if a person doesn't pick a political party?**

- They will not be allowed to vote in the primary.
- New York State has closed primaries.
- Only party members are allowed to vote in the primary that selects the party's candidates for the general election.

NOTE: February 14, 2021 is the deadline to change a party affiliation and be able to vote in the June 22, 2021 primary.

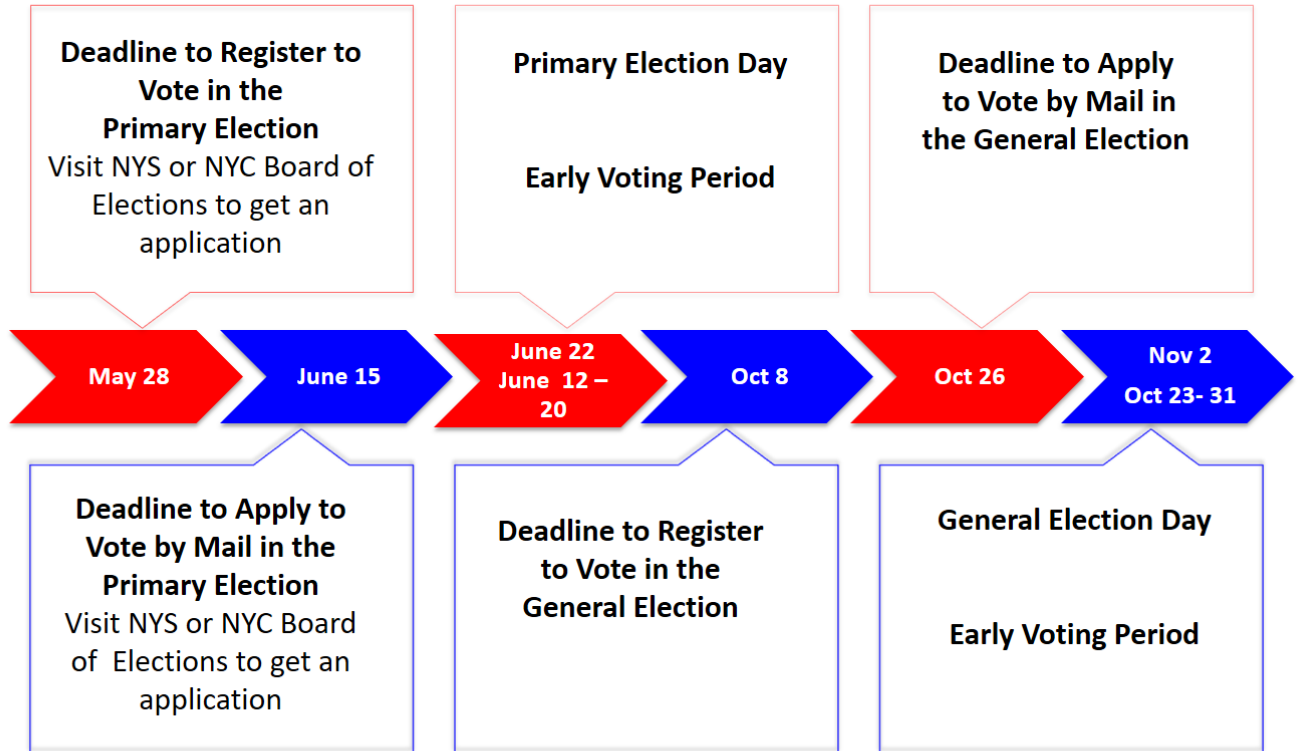
### **Where can someone get nonpartisan information about the election and candidates?**

- Ballotpedia: Information about Elections, Elected Officials and Candidates: [ballotpedia.org](https://ballotpedia.org)
- League of Women Voters Candidate Guide: [vote411.org](https://vote411.org)
- New York City Campaign Finance Board Candidate Guide: [nyccfb.info](https://nyccfb.info)

Source: [New York State Board of Elections](https://www.elections.ny.gov). The information contained herein is current as of 3/5/21. The best way to get current information is to check with the New York State Board of Elections office.

## 2021 Timeline: New York State Election Dates and Deadlines

Click [here](#) to view and/or download this file as a PowerPoint file.



Source: [New York State Board of Elections Political Calendar](#)

## FAQ: New York State Elections

### What is the difference between a primary and general election?

Primary elections are like play off games in sports where the winners (best candidates) go on to compete in the championship game (the general election). Candidates from the same political party compete in a primary election in order to determine who will represent the party in the general election.

General elections are open to all registered voters. Eligibility to vote in a primary is determined by each state. New York has closed primaries; meaning only voters registered in a political party are eligible to vote in that party's primary election.

### What is a closed primary?

In a closed primary, only registered members of a political party can vote in that party's primary. For example, only voters registered in the Republican Party are allowed to vote in the Republican primary election and only registered Democrats are eligible to vote in the Democratic primary.

### When are the 2021 elections?

#### The Primary Election is June 22, 2021.

- People can also **vote early from June 12 – June 20**
- May 28, 2021 is the last day register to vote (post mark)
- June 2, 2021 is the last day to register to vote in person

#### The General Election is November 2, 2021

- People can also **vote early from October 23 - 31, 2021**
- October 8, 2021 is the last day to register to vote (post mark)
- October 13, 2021 is the last day to register in person

### How does a person find out where to vote?

New York State and City residents can visit: [voterlookup.elections.ny.gov](https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov)

New York City residents can visit: [findmypollsite.vote.nyc](https://findmypollsite.vote.nyc)

### Is identification required before voting in person?

**NO**, New York State **does not require voters to present identification** before voting.

**BUT**, if a voter did not fill in the last 4 digits of their social security or driver's license number on the voter registration form, identification must be provided at the polling place when voting for the first time.

Voters can present the following forms of identification:

- A current, valid photo ID, including but not limited to a drivers' license or a DMV-issued non-driver photo ID
- A current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document with the voter's name and address

### Is voting by mail an option?

**YES** | All registered voters can request an absentee ballot and vote by mail. An excuse is required, such as being absent from the country, having a disability or a temporary illness such as the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19.

**To request an absentee ballot** visit: [elections.ny.gov/VotingAbsentee](https://elections.ny.gov/VotingAbsentee)

**New York City voters can** visit: [vote.nyc/page/absentee-voting-0](https://vote.nyc/page/absentee-voting-0)

**June 15 is the deadline** to request a ballot to vote in the primary election.

**October 26 is the deadline** to request a ballot to vote in the general election.

### Can the status of a mail-in ballot be checked?

**YES**

**To track your New York State ballot** visit: [nysballot.elections.ny.gov](https://nysballot.elections.ny.gov)

**To track your New York City ballot** visit: [nycabsentee.com/tracking](https://nycabsentee.com/tracking)

### What if a person's name is not on the voter roll at the polling site?

The polling site is based on a person's address. If they are at the correct polling site, they have the right to ask and vote by an affidavit ballot. The affidavit ballot will be counted after election officials confirm that you are registered to vote.

### What if a voter has a disability?

All polling sites in New York must be compliant with the Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA). All polling sites must have a Ballot Marking Device (BMD). A voter with sight or physical restrictions can use the BMD machines. There are certified inspectors at each location to assist a voter with using the BMDs.

Residents living outside New York City can apply through the NYS Board of Elections website (search: become a poll worker).

### What if a voter encounters a problem voting on Election Day?

The New York Attorney General runs an Election Protection Hotline: 1-800-771-7755

Sources: [New York State](#) and [New York City Board of Elections](#). The information contained herein is current as of 2/10/21. The best way to get current information is to check with the New York State Board of Elections office.

## FAQ: Ranked Choice Voting

Starting in 2021, New York City voters will have the option to rank their top 5 candidates (including a write-in) in our local primary and special elections for Mayor, Comptroller, Public Advocate, Borough President, and City Council. If voters still want to vote for just one candidate, they can. Runoffs are eliminated & candidates will need to win with at least 50% + 1 of the votes.

### What is Ranked Choice Voting?

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) allows voters to rank candidates by preference instead of choosing just one. It works like this:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Choice: The candidate you love.
- 2nd choice: The candidate you like.
- 3rd or 4th choice: The candidate you like slightly less.
- 5<sup>th</sup> choice: The candidate you can stand.

### Why change the system? Why change if now?

After years of careful study, in the 2019 election, New Yorkers voted overwhelmingly (almost 75%) to adopt Ranked Choice Voting. Ranked Choice Voting promotes candidates who are able to get broader support than plurality elections (the current system) since the winning candidate typically has strong first-choice support and also receives a high number of second and third-place votes.

### What benefits has Ranked Choice Voting brought to other cities and states?

Ranked Choice Voting gives voters more say in who gets elected. Even if your first-choice candidate does not win, you are still able to affect the outcome by supporting your 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or even 5th choice. Because candidates will need broad support (even from voters who may not rank them first), campaigns are more likely to focus on appealing to voters and less on attacking each other.

Ranked Choice Voting also leads to more diverse candidates winning office. Cities that have implemented Ranked Choice Voting have elected more women and more women of color, making their elected officials more representative of their communities.

### Who else uses Ranked Choice Voting?

Seventeen U.S. cities including San Francisco, Santa Fe, and Minneapolis use Ranked Choice Voting, in addition to the State of Maine. It is also used by the Academy Awards!

### How are ranked choice ballots counted?

To win, a candidate must receive at least a majority of total votes counted. A majority is 50% of the total, plus one vote. After all the votes (including absentee and affidavit ballots) are in, counters will tally only the first-choice votes. If no candidate wins a majority based on first-choice votes, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is defeated, and the second choices from each voter whose candidate was defeated are reallocated as if they were first choices.

We repeat the process until we are down to the last two candidates. In each round, the candidate now in last place is defeated, and the second choice votes on those ballots are redistributed. If the second choice on those ballots has already lost, the voter's third choice is then redistributed, and so on. The process is repeated until the top vote-getter of the final two candidates is declared the winner.

### **How many candidates can a person rank?**

You can rank up to 5 candidates, as many or as few as you'd like.

### **Why should someone rank the candidates?**

- More choice, more power!
- Even if your favorite candidate doesn't win, you still have a say in who's elected.
- You can vote your conscience without worrying that you're wasting your vote or electing a candidate you don't like.
- Ranking a 2nd, 3rd, etc. choice will never hurt your favorite candidate.

### **What is +1 actually referring to (50+1)?**

50% + 1 is the definition for a majority of voters. The 50% represents half of voters, and the + 1 represents the one single vote needed to get over 50% and achieve the required majority.

### **How likely are we to know who the winner is on election night?**

Not very likely.

We won't know the actual winner until all of the absentee and affidavit ballots have been counted and added in with the in-person early voting and Election Day ballots. In New York state, that often takes more than 10 days or 2 weeks.

### **Is there training available about ranked choice voting?**

Yes!

The New York City Campaign Finance Board, and Rank the Vote NYC offer training. Visit [nyccfb.info](https://nyccfb.info) and [rankthevoteny.org](https://rankthevoteny.org) to learn more and request training.

### **Where can someone learn more about Ranked Choice Voting?**

[Fair Vote](#), [Rank the Vote NYC](#), and the [New York City Campaign Finance Board](#) all have educational materials about Ranked Choice Voting. Also, there are videos on YouTube explaining how ballots are counted.

Sources: [New York City Campaign Finance Board](#) and [Rank the Vote NYC](#)

## FAQ: Becoming a Poll Worker

### When are poll workers needed?

During early voting, June 12 to June 20, 2021 and Primary Election Day, June 22, 2021.  
During early voting, October 23 to October 31, 2021 and General Election Day, November 2, 2021.

### Who is eligible to be a poll worker?

Poll workers must be New York State registered voters.

- Students 17 years old are eligible if their school participates in a qualifying program.
- Interpreters do not need to be registered voters.
- All poll workers are paid for training and each day they work.

**People living in New York City** can get an application by visiting [vote.nyc](https://vote.nyc.gov)

**People living outside of New York City** can get an application by visiting [elections.ny.gov](https://elections.ny.gov)

### What do poll workers do?

1. Prepare the polling place for voting
2. Set up the voting equipment
3. Sign-in and process voters
4. Enforce social distancing
5. Demonstrate voting procedures to the voters
6. Sanitize voting equipment
7. Close the polling place
8. Canvass and report the results
9. Assist voter if requested

### Are poll workers paid?

Yes, poll workers get paid for training and each as they work.

### How can someone become a poll worker?

An application is required.

- People living in New York City can get an application by visiting [vote.nyc](https://vote.nyc.gov)
- People living outside New York City can get an application by visiting [elections.ny.gov](https://elections.ny.gov)

Sources: [New York State](https://www.elections.ny.gov) and [New York City Board of Elections](https://www.elections.ny.gov)



# 2021 ELECTION TOOLS

The 2021 Voter Engagement Toolkit

## Checklist: Getting Started with Voter Engagement

### Get Started

Before you begin, think about why this work is important to you and your organization. This might include advancing your issues, building clout in your community, or empowering your clients by promoting engaged and active citizenship. Visit Nonprofit VOTE's website to learn about the many ways nonprofits have encouraged their staff and individuals they serve to vote.

### Capacity

- ☐ Get buy-in from your Executive Director or other leadership
- ☐ Choose a staff lead who can involve and motivate other staff and volunteers
- ☐ Consider ways to involve the people you serve in your election activities
- ☐ Identify assistance and resources from a community partner and your local elections office

### Knowledge

- ☐ Understand the guidelines for 501(c)(3)s on how to stay nonpartisan
- ☐ Learn about voting in New York State – key dates, how to register, early voting options, etc.
- ☐ Find out what's on the ballot in your locality and state for the upcoming election

### Plans

- ☐ Choose your target audience – clients, constituents, staff, your local community, or others
- ☐ Select appropriate opportunities for engagement: as part of daily services, in classes, at trainings or events, as a project for a youth group, or incorporated into community outreach
- ☐ Create a specific timeline for your plan

### Voter Registration

Decide on your approach. Some nonprofits actively register voters, while others focus on promoting registration by announcing deadlines, making forms available, or helping voters register online. If you plan to conduct voter registration make sure to:

- ☐ Familiarize yourself with New York State's voter registration procedures, how to obtain and return forms, online registration (if available), and guidelines for hosting a registration drive
- ☐ Set concrete and attainable goals and tie them to deadlines
- ☐ Target pre-existing opportunities – at your nonprofit and in the community at citizenship ceremonies, graduations, or other events
- ☐ Create a schedule for tabling opportunities in the waiting room, lobby, and at events
- ☐ Enlist volunteers and staff to enhance your efforts

### Engaging Candidates

- ☐ Plan at least one activity that engages local candidates on your issues.
- ☐ Identify a race that's important to your community – city council, mayor, state representative, Congressional representative, or others

- ☐ Choose from five main candidate engagement options: Candidate Forums, Candidate Appearances, Sharing Research, Candidate Questionnaires, or Asking Questions at events
- ☐ Be familiar with nonpartisan guidelines for candidate work, which requires equal treatment of all candidates in the same race

## Ballot Measures

The majority of states ask voters to weigh in on laws, referendums, constitutional amendments, local bond issues for public programs, and other issues.

- ☐ Find out if any ballot measures, amendments, or other questions are on the ballot
- ☐ Learn what 501(c)(3) nonprofits can do to influence passage and educate the public
- ☐ Decide your approach: Will you take a position for or against the issue? Or will you stay neutral and share nonpartisan information highlighting both sides of the issue?

## Voter Education

There are two kinds of voter education. The first covers the when, where, and how of voting. The second identifies what's on the ballot.

- ☐ Identify voter education opportunities at your events, classes, and in your communications
- ☐ Develop an internal and external communications plan for the election

## Get Out the Vote and Election Day

Don't forget that some of the most important work happens near and on Election Day when you encourage, help, and mobilize your community to vote. The final push takes preparation and a clear understanding of the payoff: research shows that the most effective messages come from trusted messengers – people of similar interests and backgrounds – made in-person or through peer-to-peer social media.

You can activate voters simply by:

- ☐ Promoting early voting (by mail or in-person)
- ☐ Providing personal reminders in-person, by mail, or over the phone
- ☐ Giving out information to help your community vote – help lines or polling hours and locations
- ☐ Linking the election to the future of your issue or nonprofit services
- ☐ Making Election Day special by treating it as a holiday for democracy!

Source: [Nonprofit VOTE](#)

## Guide: Making a Voter Engagement Plan

The best way to prepare for an Election is to create a plan for your nonprofit! The following questions can help determine the important who, when, where, and why questions that come up when building any plan.

### CAPACITY

1. How will you get buy-in from organizational leadership for voter engagement?
2. Who on staff can involve and motivate other staff and volunteers?
3. Who among the people you serve can be involved in developing and implementing plans?
4. Which community partners can you engage in this work and what assistance can they provide?

<b>During a...</b>	1-1 meeting	Staff meeting	Board meeting
<b>The “why”</b>	Connected to mission	To bolster advocacy	To empower clients

### KNOWLEDGE

1. What is the number for your local elections office? Call them and develop a contact there.
2. Where online can you and voters find information about local elections, including how to check registration status, request an absentee ballot, and find a polling place?
3. What are the major dates in your area for elections?
4. What’s on the ballot in your locality and state for the upcoming election? Visit [Vote411.org](https://www.vote411.org)

<b>Election</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Registration Deadline</b>	<b>Mail ballot request deadline</b>
<b>Primary</b>			
<b>Run off/special</b>			
<b>General</b>			

### DEFINING GOALS

1. Who is your target audience – clients, constituents, staff, your local community?
2. When will activities take place?
3. What are your goals? How many people do you want to engage overall and how will you track engagement?

**Choose all that apply:**

At intake/in the waiting room	During daily services	In classes or trainings
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As a project for a youth group	During community outreach	Via digital communications
Via texting or phone banking	Drop offs/mailers	Other?

### VOTER REGISTRATION

1. How will you offer voter registration aligned with New York State's procedures?
2. On what days and times will registration be offered, or when will messages be included in communications or drop offs?
3. Who will be responsible for training staff and disseminating and collecting applications?

<b>Registration applications:</b>	Print in house	Pick up at election office	Online registration
<b>Training or certification:</b>	Required	Available, not required	Not available
<b>In language materials:</b>	State application	Federal application	In person translation
<b>Deadline for submitting completed applications:</b>			

### ENGAGING CANDIDATES & BALLOT MEASURES

1. Identify one or more races that's important to your community, it could be a primary race.
2. Decide your approach: Candidate Forums, Candidate Appearances, Sharing Research, Candidate Questionnaires, or Asking Questions at events
3. Find out if any ballot measures, amendments, or other questions are on the ballot
4. Decide your approach: Will you take a position for or against the issue? Or will you stay neutral and share nonpartisan information highlighting both sides of the issue?

### GET OUT THE VOTE AND ELECTION DAY

1. Craft social media and other digital messages for promoting early voting (by mail or in-person), relevant links, and hotlines for voters. Schedule messages to run at least weekly during October (or month before a primary election date) and daily the week before the election.
2. How will you provide personal reminders? Consider if they will be in-person, by mail, or over the phone/text.

Source: [Nonprofit VOTE](#)

## **Guide: Planning and Running a Voter Registration Drive**

This tool provides ideas on when, where and how to get your staff and volunteers registered to vote.

### **Timing: When to do it**

We recommend doing it in one week before the voter registration deadlines. Remember there are deadlines for the Primary election and deadlines for the General Election. The week of National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) happens on the fourth Tuesday of September. This holiday takes place in advance of states' voter registration deadlines for the fall elections. Set up a table in a central location or share information for the duration of the week and plan a special event on NVRD itself. Alternatively, you may prefer to do it at a time when more volunteers are around or around a major staff event.

### **Staffing: Who coordinates and who does the voter registration**

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

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

### **Kick Off: Inform staff about the drive and encourage them to participate**

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

### **Suggested Tactics: Ideas to get started**

#### **Virtual Voter Registration Week**

Dedicate a week to sharing information about voter registration digitally both internally inside your office and on social media. This can look like sharing information about how to register to vote or check your registration in staff emails or hosting a webinar for staff on how they can register and vote with an expert.

#### **Door knock – or “cube knock” - your office (even virtually)**

Door knocking is a campaign staple. Try it in your office. If you are working remotely, create an individual check-in plan to serve as a “door knock.” Have a few volunteers divvy up the work, or have one person do it. Find someone who is passionate about voting and to whom you just can't say “no” or “I don't have time” to take it on.

*A staff member with ACCESS in Dearborn, MI takes his cube-knocking duties seriously and makes the rounds every election cycle. Part of his role with ACCESS also includes raising money for scholarship funds for the organization, and reports that staff know that “when he comes knocking, he’s either asking people to register to vote or to donate to the organization’s scholarship fund.” He reports it’s much easier to get to yes for voter registration.*

## A Table or Booth

Set up a table or booth for a week during work hours and in an area convenient for staff and volunteers. One or two people may primarily staff the table, but consider rotating in other staff for short shifts. Make the booth festive and appealing. Use red, white and blue balloons, bunting or other inexpensive decorations. Provide treats or giveaways to make the booth more inviting.

## Staff meetings

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

## Join the party

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

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

## Department competition

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

## For your volunteers

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

## For those who are already registered

Some staff and volunteers are likely already registered. You can have information for them

about requesting a mail-in ballot or pledge to vote cards that can be sent to them closer to the election as a reminder to vote.

### **Promotion: Create visibility for the drive**

- Provide email and social media reminders.
- Place promotional posters in high-traffic areas, such as the main lobby, elevators and employee break rooms.
- Take pictures and post them in your internal communications.

### **Recognition: Give props to those who led the effort.**

Hand out awards or give recognition to coordinators and registrars in a staff meeting or newsletter. A personal note of thanks is always welcome!

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

Source: [Nonprofit VOTE](#)



## Seven Tips on Getting Out the Vote

Use these tested and studied strategies to successfully promote voting!

**1. Make it Personal.** Voter mobilization research shows that people are more likely to participate when contacted by someone they know. Voters respond best to other people, especially friends, neighbors, and community-based agencies that are familiar and trusted. Rather than focusing on impersonal handouts or mass emails, look for opportunities to initiate conversations about voting while delivering services, in meetings, on the phone, or at trainings and events.

**2. Make it Easy.** There are many things that can keep voters from the polls. Not having basic information about the election—like when the polls are open, how to find your poll location if you've recently moved, or what kind of identification is necessary—can create participation barriers. Fortunately, nonprofits are well equipped to help voters get the information they need to vote with confidence. This information can be found at [canivote.org](https://canivote.org).

**3. Highlight Competitive Races.** Competition drives turnout. Voters respond when they perceive that an election is competitive or high profile. You can encourage this by highlighting closely contested candidate races or ballot measures.

**4. Consider Timing.** Get-out-the-vote efforts have the greatest impact in the final weeks and days leading up to the election when voters who are less likely to turn out pay more attention. Designate a day for a big early voting push. Then pump up the volume in the final week before the early voting period and on Election Day itself!

**5. Help Voters Plan.** People are more likely to vote if they visualize their plan to do so. Will they request a mail ballot or vote early in person? What time will they head to the polls on Election Day? Ask people to think specifically about when and how they plan to vote.

**6. Use Positive Messaging.** Negative messaging—like "If you don't vote, don't complain"—or calls to civic duty without additional information about the election can be counterproductive. Use positive messages that encourage people to vote by connecting the election back to your community's future and your organization's issues.

**7. Raise the Stakes.** Voters respond to urgency. If the election seems important, people are more likely to turn out because they believe that their vote will make a difference to promote or protect an issue or community they care about. Use your mission and core issues to highlight what's at stake.

### Get-Out-the-Vote Efforts Pay Dividends

Research shows that if you persuade one person to vote, they will likely influence at least one additional friend or family member to vote too. Casting a ballot for the first or second time can instill a lifelong voting habit.

Source: [Nonprofit VOTE](#)

## Sample Emails: Reminders to Register to Vote and Vote

An email from leadership, such as an Executive Director, board member, or CEO sends an important message to staff about how much your nonprofit values voting and civic participation. It encourages staff to make their voice heard and provides helpful election information.

### Timing

Send an initial email 2-3 weeks in advance of the Voter Registration Deadline and Election Day. You can follow that email up with a reminder the day before the deadline. The samples can be modified for primary or local elections by changing the date.

### Content

Typical content will include a short reason why voting is important and information that helps people register to vote, and vote such as a reminder of your “time off to vote” policy or information about casting your ballot on or in advance of Election Day.

## Voter Registration Ask – Sample Email

### **Subject Line**

Register to Vote for the Upcoming Election

### **Email Draft**

Dear Colleagues,

We at [Organization Name] are asking all our staff and volunteers who are eligible to register to vote. If you're already registered, now is the time to make sure your voter registration is up-to-date at your current address. Our goal is to have 100% of eligible staff registered by the week of [Insert Date]. Will you help us reach that goal?

When we ask elected officials to support our issues and funding for services like ours, having our staff, board, and volunteers be registered voters makes our voice that much stronger. [Insert org. specific or election-specific information].

#### *Option 1: Direct*

[Employee Name] will be coming around the office with registration forms asking you if you need to register or update your registration [Insert timeframe]. They can help you fill it out and return it.

#### *Option 2: Indirect*

You can learn more about registering and voting using Rock the Vote's Voter Registration. Visit [rockthevote.org](http://rockthevote.org)

We appreciate your service to [Organization Name]. Thank you for being a registered voter!

Sincerely,

[Insert sender]

## Get Out the Vote Ask – Sample Email

### Sample #1: Provide a Reminder to Vote and Helpful Voting Information

**Subject line** - Make Your Voice Heard Tuesday, November [X] – helpful voting information

Dear Colleagues,

As you are likely aware, there is an important election Tuesday, ([Insert Date]) for ([Insert offices and ballot measure]). We depend on elected officials to support our issues, services, and funding. It makes a difference if we can say our staff and community are voting.

There are important issues at stake such ([Insert one or two]). We encourage you to cast your ballot. Polls are open ([Insert time]). If you need help finding your poll, check with the New York State Board of Elections.

Find information about where, when, and how you can vote at [canivote.org](https://canivote.org). Thanks again for your service to ([Our nonprofit/local community]) and for being a voter!

Should you have any questions, contact – ([Insert name and email of someone on staff who can help folks navigate voting concerns]).

Signed,

[Insert name of sender]

### Sample #2: Reminder of Your Policy on Time Off to Vote

**Subject line:** Election Day is ([Insert date]) – Take Time to Vote on Election Day

There is an important election Tuesday, ([Insert date]) for ([Insert offices and ballot measure]). We encourage all staff who are eligible to vote to cast their ballot.

#### **Add reason – for example**

- Voting creates stronger communities for us, our members, our clients, and everyone that is a part of communities we live in.
- As civically engaged leaders in our community, we can set a good example by voting.

Here is a reminder of our time off to vote policy and helpful voting information.

You are allowed to take up to two hours off to vote on Election Day without loss of pay. We recommend taking time off at the beginning or end of your regular shift, whichever allows for more

free time to vote. We also acknowledge that sometimes lines at the poll can be unpredictable. Should it take you longer to cast your ballot, please let your supervisor know.

If you experience issues at the polls, please call the election protection hotline at 866-OUR-VOTE.

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

Signed,

[Insert name of sender]

Source: [Nonprofit VOTE](#)

## Template: Pledge to Vote

Voter research shows that asking people to fill out a pledge to vote card increases voter turnout. Pledge cards have dual purposes. First, they communicate important election information, such as deadlines to register to vote and apply for a vote by mail ballot, as well as reminding people of election dates. Second, they capture a person's contact information so they can be sent reminders to vote.

Below are templates for a virtual and paper "I Pledge to Vote" card. The virtual pledge card can be set up using google forms or form site.

Click [here](#) to view and/or download these templates as a Word document.

### Preview Pledge Card

INSERT ORGANIZATION LOGO	<b>I WILL VOTE IN THE 2021 ELECTION</b> First Name _____ Last Name _____ City _____ State _____ Zip/Postal Code _____ Email _____
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>I Pledge to Vote in 2021</b></p> <p>We have an important opportunity to ensure our communities are heard by voting in the Primary on June 22 and the General election on November 2.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pledge to vote to make your voice heard on the issues you care about.</b></p> <p>Include your cell phone number to receive text reminders.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Primary Election Day is June 22</b>  <b>General Election is November 2</b></p> <p>Visit <a href="http://vote.org">vote.org</a> to register to vote and request a mail in ballot</p> <p><i>Our organization is not affiliated with any political party or candidate. Your information will never be sold to a third party.</i></p>	<p><b>WANT REMINDERS BY TEXT?</b>          Yes, enter Phone Number _____</p> <p><b>WANT UPDATES FROM (INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION)?</b>          Yes _____          No _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ADD YOUR NAME BUTTON</b></p>

## Shareable Social Media Graphics

Social media is an effective way to garner interest and attention, particularly now with less in-person events. Nonprofits can use social media to inform their network and clients of important information on voting.

Remember, graphics should be attention-grabbing with short, punchy text. Use colors and pictures to grab the attention of viewers!

Use the following sample social media graphics as they are or as inspiration for your own graphics!

To download these graphics as PNG files, click [here](#) and [here](#).

### Preview Social Media Graphics

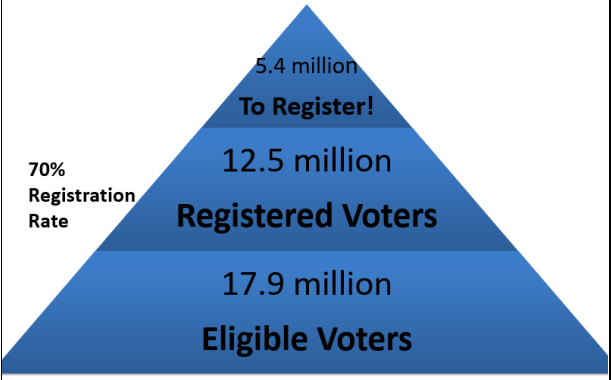


## Training: Nonprofit Elections

This training includes activities on increasing voter turnout, as well as informing voters about relevant information on how, when, and why they should vote.

Click [here](#) to view and/or download the full slide deck as a PowerPoint file.

### Slide Previews

<p><b>New York Nonprofit 2021 Elections Training</b></p> <p><b>Part One: Voting Matters</b>  <b>Part Two: Nonpartisan Power</b>  <b>Part Three: New York State Voting Rules</b>  <b>Part Four: Get-out-the-Vote Tips</b></p>	<p><b>Being Nonpartisan – The One Rule</b></p> <p><b>A nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization may not:</b></p> <p><i>support</i> or <i>oppose</i> a candidate for public office or a political party</p> <p><b>A nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization may not:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make an endorsement</li> <li>• Donate money or resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Voting Profile - New York State</b></p>  <p>70% Registration Rate</p> <p>5.4 million <b>To Register!</b></p> <p>12.5 million <b>Registered Voters</b></p> <p>17.9 million <b>Eligible Voters</b></p>	<p><b>SOME ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Email</b> from the Executive Director about deadlines &amp; links to register to vote</li> <li>• Convene group to <b>email/text</b> their colleagues, friends and neighbors</li> <li>• <b>Table</b> during work hours in an area convenient for staff</li> <li>• Post information on <b>website</b></li> <li>• Promote voting via <b>social media</b></li> <li>• Make announcements at <b>staff and community meetings</b></li> <li>• Place <b>posters</b> in high-traffic areas</li> <li>• Take <b>pictures</b> and post them internally</li> <li>• Organize a <b>civic engagement party</b> and invite people to register to vote and/or request a mail in ballot</li> <li>• Create a goal to <b>get 100% of eligible staff registered to vote</b></li> <li>• Create a goal to <b>get 100% of eligible staff pledged to vote</b></li> </ul>

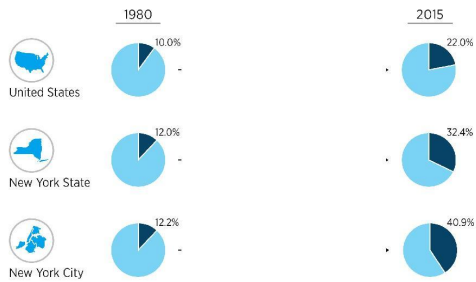
## Discussion Guide: Income and Taxes

This discussion guide outlines a series of activities to explain the income disparity among those who vote in New York City and the U.S.

Click [here](#) to view and/or download this discussion guide as a PDF.

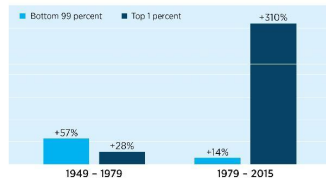
### Preview Pages

#### FACT #1 SHARE OF ALL INCOME GOING TO THE TOP 1 PERCENT



Source: Emmanuel Saez, U.S. data updated June 2016; Estelle Sommeiller, Mark Price, and Ellis Waezeter, Income inequality in the U.S. by state, metropolitan area, and county, Economic Policy Institute, June 16, 2016, New York state data; Independent Budget Office data for New York City; and FPI estimates based on IRS 2014 data for state.

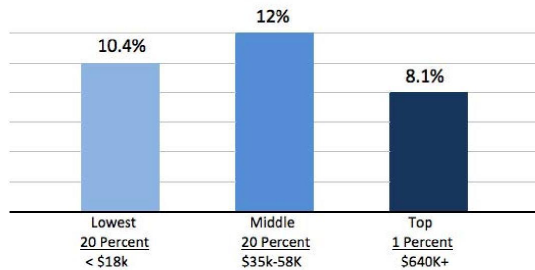
#### FACT #2 INCOME GROWTH IN NEW YORK STATE



Source: Sommeiller and Price, and FPI estimates.

Charts from Fiscal Policy Institute Policy Brief March 2017

#### FACT #3 PERCENT OF NEW YORK STATE AND LOCAL TAX BURDEN BY INCOME GROUP



Charts from Fiscal Policy Institute Policy Brief March 2017

#### FACT #4 VOTER TURNOUT BY INCOME IN NYC In the 2016 National election:

36% of New York City eligible voters with incomes below \$20,000 voted

92% of New York City eligible voters with incomes over \$150,000 voted

Source: U.S. Census and New York City Board of Elections data as compiled by the New York Civic Engagement Table

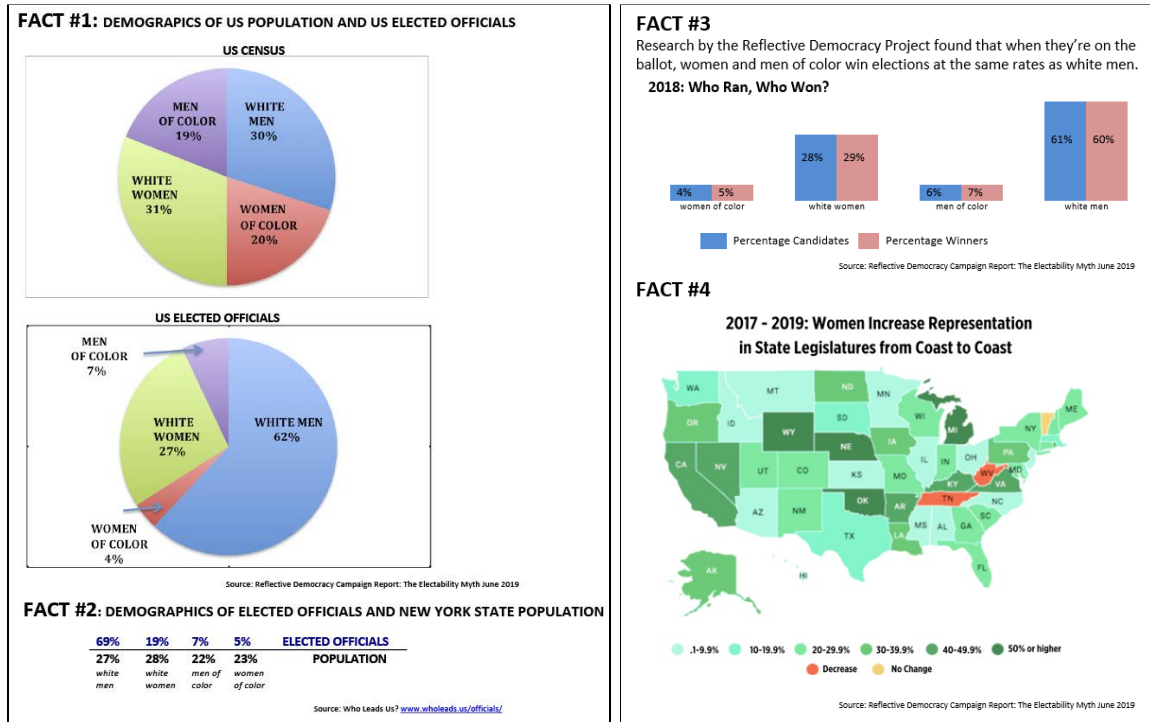


## Discussion Guide: Demographics and Political Representation

This discussion guide outlines a series of activities to explain the demographics among those who vote in the U.S.

Click [here](#) to view and/or download this discussion guide as a PDF.

### Preview Pages

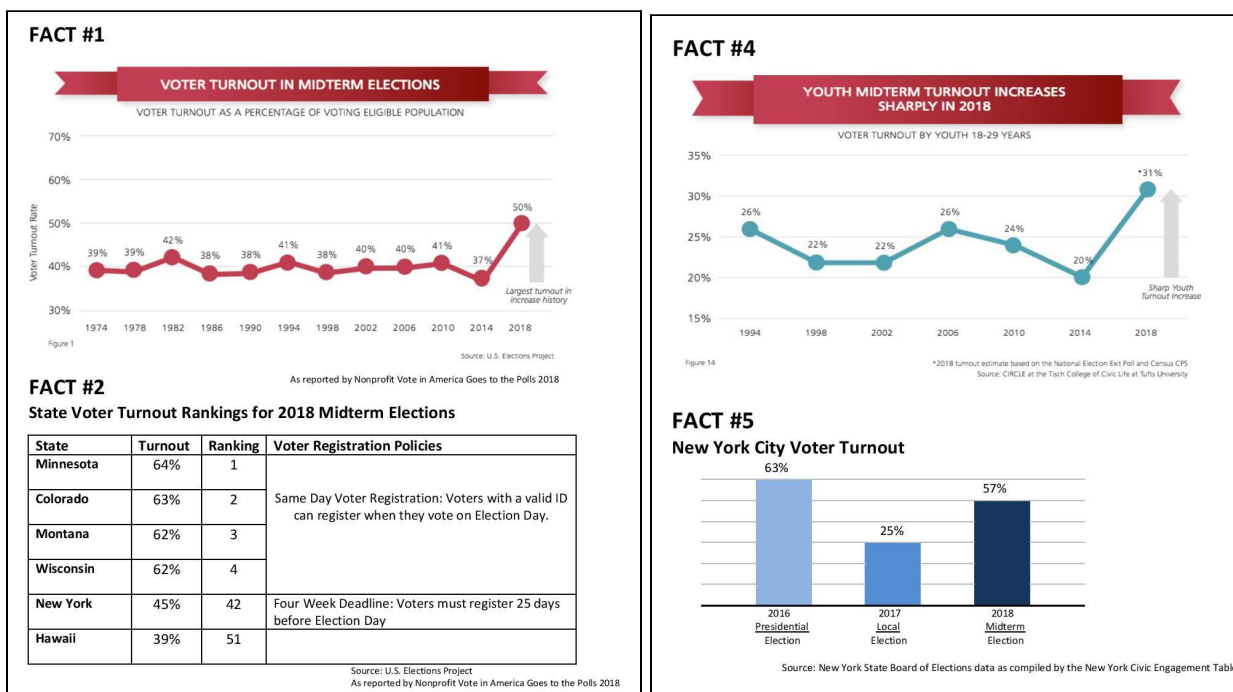


## Discussion Guide: Voter Registration and Turnout

This discussion guide outlines a series of activities to explain the voter registration vs voter turnout among those who vote in the U.S.

Click [here](#) to view and/or download this discussion guide as a PDF.

### Preview Pages



## Pocket Guide: Political Offices, Terms, and Election Dates

Number		Office	Term Length & Limits	Election Year
CITY	51	Council Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4 year terms</li><li>Limited to two four-year terms</li><li>EXCEPT 2 year terms every 20 years to allow for redistricting following the Census: 2021 and 2023</li></ul>	2021
	5	Borough Presidents		
	5	District Attorneys (1 per Borough)		
	1	Comptroller		2023
	1	Public Advocate		
	1	Mayor		
STATE	150	Assembly Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2 year terms</li><li>No term limits</li></ul>	2022 2024
	63	Senators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2 year terms</li><li>No term limits</li></ul>	2022 2024
	1	Governor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4 year terms</li><li>No term limits</li></ul>	2022 2026
NATIONAL	435	House of Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2 year terms</li><li># Per state based on Census</li><li>No term limits</li></ul>	2022 2024
	100	Senators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>6 year terms</li><li>2 from each state</li><li>1/3 up for election every two years</li><li>No term limits</li></ul>	2022 2024
	1	President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4 year terms</li><li>Limited to two terms</li></ul>	2024

## Nonpartisan Education Resources

### Websites

[ballotpedia.org](https://ballotpedia.org)

Information about candidates, politicians and government institutions

[congress.gov](https://congress.gov)

Voting records of a U.S. Senator or Representative

[nyassembly.gov/mem](https://nyassembly.gov/mem)

List of legislation sponsored or co-sponsored by a NY State Assembly member

[nysenate.gov/senators](https://nysenate.gov/senators)

List of legislation sponsored or co-sponsored by a NY State Senate member

[vote411.org](https://vote411.org)

Personalized voting information

### New York Organizations

[Common Cause New York](#)

Campaigns to make voting easier and holding government accountable

[COMMUNITY Votes](#)

Supports the integration of voter engagement within existing nonprofit programs

[Lawyers Alliance of New York](#)

Helps organizations understand laws on lobbying and political activity

[Let New York Vote Coalition](#)

Working to make registering and voting more accessible and equitable

[New York City Campaign Finance Board – NYC Votes](#)

Promotes civic engagement through community outreach, voter registration and educational resources

[New York Civic Engagement Table](#)

Supports partner organizations voter engagement activities

[New York State League of Women Voters](#)

Source of nonpartisan election information

[New York City League of Women Voters](#)

Provides guides to government and legislators representing New York residents

Rank the Vote NYC

## **National Organizations**

### **Ballot Ready**

Resources to inform and turn out voters

### **Bolder Advocacy**

Resources and trainings to help nonprofits advocate

### **Fair Vote**

Promotes electoral reforms, including Ranked Choice Voting

### **Nonprofit VOTE**

Provides resources and training on nonpartisan voter and civic engagement

## About the Authors

**Nonprofit New York**'s mission is to strengthen and unite New York's nonprofits. Engaging with over 4,000 nonprofits in the New York City area, we're building a thriving community of extraordinary nonprofits - a relentless, collective force for good.

Looking for ways to improve your management practices? Check out our upcoming [trainings](#) and [other learning opportunities](#)!

**Community Votes** builds the capacity of community-based social service agencies in New York City to take up nonpartisan voter mobilization so more unrepresented citizens participate in our democracy. Visit our [website](#) for more information!

**Nonprofit VOTE** works to build lasting capacity for nonpartisan voter engagement and a robust civic voice throughout the nonprofit sector. Visit our [website](#) to learn more about our webinars, trainings, toolkits, and on-line resources.

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Have questions on this toolkit? Contact Louisa Hackett ([lhackett@communityvotes.org](mailto:lhackett@communityvotes.org)), founder of Community Votes.