

YWCA 2019 Get Out The Vote Guide



YOUR VOICE.
YOUR VOTE.
YOUR FUTURE.

eliminating racism
empowering women

ywca

INTRODUCTION

Empowering our communities to engage in civic life is an important part of YWCA's commitment to eliminating racism and empowering women. While there are many ways community members can be civically engaged, participating in the electoral process through voting is one way to shape the policies and laws that affect our everyday lives. We encourage YWCAs to undertake this important work and support the communities they serve by engaging voters in the 2019 election.

There are many opportunities to engage voters this election, whatever your capacity level may be! We are excited that many YWCAs have worked on intensive voter registration campaigns in partnership with other nonprofits in their states, through National Voter Registration Day, and through local Get Out the Vote (GOTV) activities. We hope every YWCA will find a way to participate in this important work!

This GOTV Guide will provide you with short one-pagers that will help you get **comfortable**, get **registered**, get **motivated**, and **get out the vote** during this election season!

GET COMFORTABLE

The IRS clearly states that 501(c)(3) organizations may conduct voter engagement and connect with candidates on a nonpartisan basis. This includes encouraging voter participation, educating voters, and talking to candidates about issues. This section provides guidelines for local YWCA associations in conducting activities during the 2019 election season.

GET REGISTERED

Nonprofits play a vital role in increasing voter participation among historically disenfranchised groups. Many of the communities we serve are underrepresented in the political process. A 2018 [report on engaging new voters](#) by NonProfit VOTE showed that nonprofits disproportionately reached individuals who are younger, lower-income, and more diverse than the general public—groups that historically participate in elections at lower rates. As YWCA works to eliminate racism and empower women, we can help engage our communities in the political process. This section provides guidance and resources on how to effectively undertake voter registration activities.

GET MOTIVATED

With our nation-wide reach and deep ties in the community, YWCA has a unique ability to engage and mobilize voters who are often left out of the political process, and to highlight policy priorities that activate social change for those voters. In the weeks leading up to the 2019 election, YWCAs can get staff, volunteers, clients and community members motivated by emphasizing the value of each person, each vote, and the issues that matter in your community. This section provides guidance and resources on the various education and engagement activities local YWCAs can undertake to ensure your community learns more about where the candidates stand on the issues, and the candidates hear your communities voice about what matters in this election.

GET OUT THE VOTE

Our work does not stop with registration! We can continue to engage our communities until Election Day and beyond through voter education (making sure voters have the information they need to cast a ballot that counts) and voter mobilization (encouraging voters to turnout to vote). Voter turnout is an important factor in ensuring that those elected into office hear and meet the needs of people of color and women. Every vote truly does count. In this section you will find a list of ways to increase voter education and voter turnout.

GET COMFORTABLE

The IRS clearly 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. Below are guidelines for YWCAs in conducting activities during the 2019 election season.

As 501(c)(3) organizations, YWCAs can:

1. Promote or conduct voter registration
2. Educate voters on the where, when, and how of voting
3. Encourage and remind people to vote
4. Encourage staff to serve on Election Day as a poll worker, translator, or other nonpartisan volunteer
5. Distribute nonpartisan sample ballots, candidate questionnaires, or voter guides
6. Host or cosponsor a candidate forum (the forum must be open to all candidates, conducted in a balanced way, and include a nonpartisan panel of questioners)
7. Hold a voter education event
8. Educate the candidates on your issues
9. Continue issue advocacy during an election
10. Support or oppose ballot measures as a lobbying activity (subject to normal lobbying limits)
11. Conduct nonpartisan training on issues and organizational skills
12. Allow staff to participate as individuals in political campaigns, on their own time and not as representatives of the organization

YWCAs may NOT conduct *partisan* activities to support or oppose any candidate for public office and are prohibited from:

1. Endorsing a candidate
2. Making a contribution to a candidate or party. This includes “in-kind” contributions such as publicity, staff time, and use of facilities or assets, *unless* those resources are made equally available to all candidates at their fair market value
3. Rating candidates on who is most favorable to your issue(s)

Have questions about the do’s and don’ts for 501(c)(3)s? Check out [this webinar](#) or [this resource](#) from NonProfit Vote. You can also call the Bolder Advocacy hotline at 866-NP-LOBBY (866-675-6229).

GET REGISTERED

Nonprofits like YWCA play a vital role in increasing voter participation among historically marginalized groups. The communities we serve are often underrepresented in the political process. [A 2018 study by Nonprofit VOTE and CIRCLE](#) showed that nonprofits disproportionately reached individuals who are younger, lower-income, and more diverse than the general public—groups that historically participate at lower rates. As YWCA works to eliminate racism and empower women, we can help engage our communities in the political process. This page provides guidance and resources on how to effectively undertake voter registration activities.

- **[Know your state’s voter registration deadlines and rules:](#)** States have varying rules regarding voter registration. Get to know the following as it pertains to your state:
 - Registration deadline
 - Eligibility criteria
 - How to get and return registration forms
 - Whether online registration is allowed
- **Help people register to vote – it's NOT too late!**
 - Ask staff, clients, and community members, “Can I help you update your voter registration?”
 - [Provide training](#) to your staff and volunteers
 - [Learn more](#) about asking someone to register to vote
 - Make it easy for people to register:
 - ALL states with the exception of *North Dakota and Wyoming* may use the [National Mail Voter Registration Form](#) to register voters. This is a quick and simple voter registration tool. Print the forms and share. Double check forms are [filled out correctly](#), signed, and mailed in!
 - [If your state allows](#) online voter registration, designate a computer in your office for clients, staff, and community members to use.
 - Got more time and capacity?
 - Organize a [voter registration drive!](#)
 - Join nonprofits around the country on [National Voter Registration Day](#), September 25! There are multiple ways you can participate, depending on your time and capacity:
 - Promoting voter registration on social media
 - Organizing a voter registration event on September 24th
 - Allowing volunteers to register voters at your location.

- **Voters with special circumstances:** Some community members may have special circumstances that affect their ability to both register and vote. Learn if/how you can help these individuals to register in your state:
 - [Domestic Violence Survivors](#)
 - [Homelessness](#)
 - [Disability](#)
 - [Ex-Offender](#)
- **Stay nonpartisan**
 - Nonprofit staff or volunteers may not suggest what candidate to support or what party to join.
 - When answering questions about candidates and parties, volunteers and staff may refer people to other sources, such as a local newspaper or other nonpartisan voter guide.
 - Nonprofits are free to register all the people they serve, including staff, volunteers, and the local community. Nonprofits may also target underserved areas with a history of lower voter participation.

Have more questions about how to hold a drive or help register people to vote? Check out [this webinar](#) or [this resource](#) from NonProfit Vote.

SAMPLE TWEETS

Today is #NationalVoterRegistrationDay! Already registered? Then help register 5 friends!
<http://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/> #YWWote

New in town? Don't forget to register to vote! There's still time! Register today:
http://www.eac.gov/assets/1/Documents/Federal%20Voter%20Registration_6-25-14_ENG.pdf
 #YWWote

GET MOTIVATED

In the weeks leading up to the election, get staff, volunteers, and community members motivated by emphasizing the value of each person, each vote, and the issues that matter in your community. This page provides guidance and resources on the various education and engagement activities local YWCAs can undertake to ensure your communities learn more about where the candidates stand on the issues, and the candidates hear your community's voice about what matters in this election.

- **Mobilize staff and volunteers**
 - Help staff and volunteers to understand the connection between their work and voting. Get them registered and then give them a role to play in GOTV efforts.
 - While representing YWCA, staff and volunteers must remain non-partisan. [Watch](#) to learn more about what staff can and can't do.

- **Educate voters about the voting process**
 - Provide information on when, where and how to vote: [election date, polling place, ID requirements](#)
 - Obtain sample ballots from your local Board of Elections to share with voters. Remember to remain non-partisan – do NOT make recommendations on candidates.

- **Tie YWCA's mission and issue priorities to the election:** Use this time as an opportunity to further your issue advocacy by helping voters understand the connection between voting and YWCA issue priorities.
 - Educate voters and candidates about YWCA's policy priorities
 - Submit an op-ed or letter to the editor to your local newspaper, highlighting the importance of a YWCA priority in your community.
 - [Engage your social media](#) followers with a blog, tweet, or Facebook post about the importance of a YWCA priority in your community.
 - Hold issue forums: Get Out the Vote initiatives can include a campaign to educate voters about the important issues on which policy is being debated. This can be accomplished by holding issue forums on YWCA issue priorities. At each event, speakers representing a variety of perspectives on an issue should be invited to present information and give the public an opportunity to make informed decisions.
 - Invite people to speak about both sides of an issue. Presenters may be nonprofit professionals, academics, local, state, or federal lobbyists, or others with expertise in the policy area under discussion.
 - Include an introduction by a community leader to provide context and explain why these issues are important to YWCA without endorsing one policy position over another.
 - Present the issues objectively and fully.

- Remain non-partisan. Avoid endorsing or alluding to your endorsement of any candidate, policy position, or legislation.
- Advocate on [ballot measures](#)
 - Take a “yes” or “no” position on a ballot question and educate staff, community leaders and the public on your position. Reminder: Though 501(c)(3)s may NOT endorse a candidate, they may take a stance on a ballot measure.
- Engage candidates and voters
 - Host debate watch parties
 - Share a voter guide or candidate questionnaire created by your local newspaper, [League of Women Voters](#), or other community partners, or [create one yourself](#)
 - [Host and promote Candidate Forums](#). Reminder: 501(c)(3)s may NOT state YWCA's position on an issue/legislation when asking a candidate's position on that issue/legislation.

Have questions about voter and candidate engagement? Check out [this webinar](#) about voter education and registration for staff, volunteers and board members, and [this "Motivate the Vote" webinar](#), both from NonProfit VOTE.

SAMPLE TWEET

Watching tonight's #debate? What do you want the candidates to discuss? #Election2019
#YWomensVote #GOTV

GET OUT THE VOTE

Our work does not stop with registration! We can continue to engage our communities until Election Day and even beyond. Last election, YWCAs helped encourage voter turnout through partnerships with other organizations to host townhalls and candidate forums, some associations amplified important voter information through social media and PSAs, and others helped get voters to the polls by providing transportation and childcare.

Voter turnout is an important factor in ensuring that those elected into office hear and meet the needs of people of color and women. Every vote truly does count.

Here you will find a list of ways to increase voter turnout.

- **Talk to potential voters**
 - Talk with voters one-on-one about the importance and urgency of voting. People are more likely to participate when they are engaged by someone or an entity they are personally connected with.
 - Use positive messages that encourage people to vote by connecting the election back to your community's future and your organization's issues.
 - Follow up with newly registered voters. Keep a list of all of the names, addresses and phone numbers of the people you register and mail/call them in the days before the election.
- **Provide relevant information to voters**
 - Look up your community's [polling location and hours](#) and [ID requirements](#)
 - Print, fill in, and post YWCA "Your Voice, Your Vote, Your Future" signage throughout your local association.
- **Know voter rights**
 - If voters are experiencing harassment or difficulties at the poll, encourage them to use [1-866-OUR-VOTE](#) (866-687-8683) to get assistance. Here are a few things to note:
 - Voters with limited English proficiency and those with disabilities have the right to bring a family member or friend into the polling booth to assist them.
 - No voter can be turned away without being allowed to vote. If you believe that you are registered to vote, you have the right to cast a "provisional ballot".
 - If you are in line before the polls close, you are legally entitled to vote.
- **Remove barriers to voting**
 - Organize carpools: Recruit volunteers to drive people to and from polls. Choose a central gathering location, potentially at your facility.
 - Provide childcare: Consider providing childcare on Election Day.

- Provide food: Consider providing meals or snacks for clients and community members who you are transporting to the polls.
- **Celebrate Election Day**
 - Throw a party on Election Day to get people excited! Gather in the morning to encourage voters to get to the polls, or in the evening to watch the results together.

Have questions about getting out the vote? Check out this [tipsheet](#) from NonProfit Vote.

SAMPLE TWEETS

SAVE THE DATE: Remember to vote on November 5th! #YWomenVote [Attach Sharegraphic]

Need help getting to the polls on November 5th? Call this number: [local assistance] #YWomenVote
#[Your Community]

