YWCA 2020 Get Out The Vote Guide

eliminating racism empowering women

YOUR VOICE.
YOUR VOTE.
YOUR FUTURE.
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DISCLAIMER: Although YWCA USA is sharing resources and suggestions, we are not offering any guarantees or directives. The questions of whether and how to utilize these resources and suggestions are to be answered solely by each association, based on their individual determination. Each local association should review the materials and determine for themselves whether, and to what extent, the materials are applicable to their own specific circumstances.
INTRODUCTION

Ensuring access to the voting booth is an important part of YWCA’s commitment to eliminating racism and empowering women and—now more than ever—it is critical to ensuring a healthy, safe, empowered future for our communities. Higher voter participation has been associated with higher employment rates, lower recidivism rates, and more positive health outcomes in communities, as well increased attention from our elected officials and candidates for office. New challenges to the voting process posed by the COVID-19 global pandemic, along with pre-existing systemic and historical barriers to the voting booth for communities of color, have made our collective commitment to civic engagement even more critical this election year.

As trusted leaders in our communities, YWCAs are in a unique position to ensure that women—especially women of color—get to the polls and that our experiences and needs are valued, represented, and made a priority to those we elect to public office on November 3, 2020. Studies have shown that nonprofits like YWCA play a vital role in increasing voter participation, especially among historically marginalized groups. Nonprofit organizations tend to reach individuals who are younger, lower-income, and more diverse than the general public. Moreover, the national reach of the YWCA network affords us the opportunity to reach the estimated 37 million women of color voters in this country with timely information and tools to fully exercise our right to vote.

You may be wondering how your YWCA can meaningfully engage voters in your community this year, especially given new challenges posed by COVID-19, limited resources, and rules around 501(c)(3) organizations participating in elections. This toolkit and the accompanying workshop series hosted by YWCA USA and national partners are intended to provide a menu of engagement options and tools for developing a GOTV plan that is responsive to your YWCA’s goals, interests, and capacity.

2020 is an important year - we encourage every YWCA to participate in one way or another!
STAYING 501(C)(3) DURING AN ELECTION YEAR

You may be wondering how your YWCA can meaningfully engage voters in your community this year, given the existing IRS rules around 501(c)(3)s and elections. The good news is that you can probably do a lot more than you expect, as long as your activity falls within the limitations outlined below.

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 conducting activities during the 2020 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 as an Election 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 or ranking candidates on who is most favorable to your issue(s)

Have questions about the do’s & don’ts for 501(c)(3)s or a GOTV activity not included above? Check out the GOTV Tools & Resources included in this toolkit below for additional guidance around 501(c)(3) rules & regulations. You can also call the toll-free Bolder Advocacy hotline at 866-NP-LOBBY (866-675-6229) or reach out to the YWCA USA Policy & Advocacy Team at advocacy@ywca.org.
ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE ON ELECTION YEAR MESSAGING

501(c)(3) nonprofits like YWCAs are prohibited from conducting any campaign intervention. This means 501(c)(3) organizations may not help or hurt the chances for election of any particular candidate or group of candidates, regardless of political party affiliation. For instance, 501(c)(3) organizations may not campaign to get specific women or Latinos elected, even if they don’t care which party the candidates are, or even if the election is non-partisan.

Risk can arise when a communication could be perceived as attempting to influence voters. Here are some topics to avoid:

➔ talking about a candidate’s qualifications
➔ commenting on whether someone is a good or a bad candidate
➔ discussing a candidate’s record
➔ talking about “voters” and making references to the election (e.g., instead of saying “voters understand” or “voters will not accept,” say “the community understands” or “Americans won’t accept”)
➔ identifying a candidate by name
➔ making a statement about which candidate is better on the 501(c)(3) organization’s issues
➔ asking a candidate to commit to supporting a particular issue or piece of legislation if elected

These documents from Bolder Advocacy clearly outline these parameters:
- Commenting on Candidates and Campaigns
- Praising and Criticizing Incumbents
- Election Checklist for 501(c)(3) Nonprofits

Once the election is over, we have a bit more leeway in commenting on the election outcome. However, even in the post-election context, it’s important that we continue to avoid making partisan comments, particularly ones that suggest that one party or candidate is more favorable for an organization’s issue or concerns. Don’t focus on the candidate, but keep your focus on our public policy concerns.

While the number of women and diversity of candidates running for office could make this a potentially historic election, context is critical in any comments that YWCAs may want to make through social media, a press release, or in other communications. We hope the following language and suggestions are a helpful guide as you think through your messaging.

Tips to guide your messaging:

➔ Frame your message around YWCA’s history, community presence, and continuing readiness to work with policymakers at all levels to address the critical issues in your community, and to further our mission to eliminate racism and empower women.
➔ If there is a “notable first” for an elected office, a historically significant number of seats won, or other “first” for women, women of color, people of color, LGBT+ people, or other community, take notice of that historic fact along the lines of “women have the power and
capability to be leaders" or “seeing the rich diversity of our community reflected in the leaders who represent us makes a difference.”

➔ Focus on the issues, not the candidates.
➔ Call on leaders/policymakers to step aside from partisan divides to focus on the issues and solve the problems that are impacting women, families, and communities.
➔ Emphasize that our focus will remain where it has been for 160 years: on advocating for policies, services, and supports that advance our mission of eliminating racism and empowering women.

A Note about Commenting on Historic Firsts

If the historic firsts from the 2018 election continue in 2020, many of us may want to publicly comment on women and people of color being elected to office. Such statements also need to comport with the guidelines shared here for 501(c)(3) organizations.

We provide here a *sample* message that can be modified as appropriate for this purpose:

YWCA is happy to be celebrating the [first woman governor of ____ state] [historic number of women/people of color running for/elected to Congress]! We have worked for women’s empowerment and racial justice for [# of years of local YWCA] [more than 160 years] and know that [women’s / diverse] leadership can change history. These firsts truly matter. When Helen Claytor became the first African American president of YWCA USA in 1967, she led change for our organization. It’s no surprise that in 1970 we adopted the One Imperative to eliminate racism wherever it exists and by any means necessary – work that continues today at the center of our mission.

“We look forward to seeing how this historic moment will impact not only our [nation’s][state’s] history,” said ____, CEO/ED of YWCA ____. “We are building a future where nothing is off-limits to them.”

This is *one* example to demonstrate the nuance and flexibility that is needed in making statements about candidates and elections. We’ll share more communications tools and guidance in future toolkits.
CAPACITY & ASSET MAPPING WORKSHEET

You may be wondering how your YWCA can meaningfully engage voters in your community this year, given limited staff time and resources. The good news is that you may already have access to several key assets that would make GOTV work easier. Use the worksheet below to help you identify your available assets and evaluate your organizational capacity to empower voters this year.

STEP 1
What are my YWCA’s unique strengths and assets? Check all that apply to your YWCA:

Staff Assets
- CEO/Exec. Dir. committed to GOTV work
- Staff person whose role includes civic engagement, policy, or advocacy
- Staff person whose role includes volunteer recruitment & management
- Staff person whose role includes communications

Communications Assets
- Organization is active on social media
- Strong social media following
- Access to email lists of supporters, donors, and/or program participants
- Familiarity working with local news media
- Strong reputation in community

Expertise Assets
- Prior experience doing GOTV work
- Young Leaders Program or Other Civic Engagement Programming

Relationship Assets
- Active board members willing to engage
- Ability to contact current and/or former program participants
- Reliable group of volunteers
- Relationships with other organization(s) in the area potentially interested in GOTV collaboration
- Relationships with local elected official(s)
- Relationships with local news media outlet(s)

Field Assets
- Space for hosting a GOTV event
- YWCA centrally located & accessible
- Good foot traffic through YWCA
- Racially/ethnically diverse community
- Community likely receptive to GOTV efforts
- Funding designated for GOTV work
- Access to, or familiarity with, video conferencing platforms
- Access to, or familiarity with, text or phone banking platforms

STEP 2
Add the number of boxes you checked above and write the total here: ________ / 25

➔ 12 - 25 suggests your YWCA may have high capacity to engage in GOTV work.
➔ 6 - 11 suggests your YWCA may have moderate capacity to engage in GOTV work.
➔ 1 - 5 suggests your YWCA may have minimal capacity to engage in GOTV work.

Consider also doing an asset and capacity analysis over time, as some of the assets you identified above may be less available during certain months (for e.g. scheduled renovations to an event space).

STEP 3
If you determine your YWCA has minimal capacity, consider undertaking the “Tier 1” activities listed below. Consider “Tier 2” activities if/when you have moderate capacity and “Tier 3” activities if/when you have high capacity to engage in GOTV work.
HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

You may be wondering how your YWCA can meaningfully engage voters in your community this year, given limited capacity and novel challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The good news is that there are still many opportunities to register, educate, and mobilize voters in your community, whatever your capacity level may be!

Below is a list of suggested activities for YWCAs interested in engaging voters, organized from the lightest lift engagement (Tier 1), to moderate lift engagement (Tier 2), to the heaviest lift engagement (Tier 3). If you are unsure where your YWCA might fall on this spectrum, consider filling out the Capacity & Asset Mapping Worksheet included earlier in this toolkit.

As you plan your GOTV activities, remember to always consider who in your community is being served by them and who is being left out. Although it might be easiest to engage in only digital advocacy this election season, doing so would likely neglect those with unreliable internet access in your community. Moreover, this “digital divide” in broadband access has been found to disproportionately affect communities of color and low-income families.

2020 is not only an election year — it also marks the 55th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act and the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment expanding the right to vote in this country. As YWCAs, it is imperative we prioritize GOTV activities that will empower historically marginalized communities and ensure that women — especially women of color—are able to fully exercise their fundamental right to vote on November 3rd.

- Educate your community through your social media, newsletters, and/or website.
  Consider developing a digital communications plan to share timely information around:
  - How to register or update an existing voter registration in your state;
  - When, where, & how to vote in your community;
  - Upcoming election deadlines in your state;
  - The rights of voters; and
  - Why voter participation is important to your YWCA.
  Not sure what the voting procedures and deadlines are for your state? Fill out the “My State Worksheet” and see the list of GOTV Tools & Resources included in this toolkit below.

- Ask your staff and board members to add a line to their email signature encouraging voter participation. Consider focusing your message on voter registration over the summer and shifting to a message of education and mobilization in the fall.

- Ensure your staff are registered to vote and aware of key deadlines and voting options.

- Display printed GOTV materials around your YWCA, especially in highly trafficked areas.

- Ask front desk staff to remind visitors of upcoming election deadlines. (once safe to do so)

- Set out blank voter registration and/or mail-in ballot request forms in spaces accessible to program participants & public. (once safe to do so)
Designate a public computer in your YWCA for voter registration. (once safe to do so)
Sign up to participate in National Voter Registration Day, September 22nd.
Share YWCA Voter Registration Portal, PSA, and/or YWomenVote Report.
Follow YWCA USA’s Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram pages & reshare GOTV posts on your social media platforms.

Contact clients or program participants with GOTV information. Consider asking direct service staff to reach out to program participants with information on voter registration and voting options in your state, as well as reminders to vote closer to the election.
Launch a creative social media challenge. Consider asking followers to post photos or videos of themselves pledging to vote, tagging three friends, and explaining #YWomensVote and/or why voting is important to them. Consider a GOTV art or poetry competition with the winner’s work featured on your social media platforms or printed as a poster at your YWCA.
Place printed GOTV flyers in local businesses and public places that remain open. Consider places that are highly trafficked, like grocery stores and laundromats.
Place printed GOTV flyers in meal deliveries and/or mailings to program participants.
Share GOTV information at virtual fundraisers & events for your YWCA. Consider developing a message for staff leading the event to share at the beginning or end of the event.
Distribute GOTV flyers at organization fundraisers and events. (once it is safe to do so)
Write an op-ed or letter to the editor. Consider writing about why voter participation in your community is important to your YWCA and submit your piece to local newspapers that have wide print and online circulation in your community.
Translate existing GOTV materials into languages spoken by your community.
Organize tabling at your YWCA to share voting information. (once it is safe to do so)
Host a community discussion with a panel of experts and/or community leaders. Consider selecting a diverse group of panelists and leading a discussion exploring voting barriers and options in your community, highlighting the importance of voter participation for your YWCA and any upcoming deadlines in your state. This can be done virtually through a video conferencing platform or in person. (once it is safe to do so)
Introduce your YWCA to candidates running for office in your area. Consider sharing issues that are of importance to your YWCA and providing a tour of your YWCA to the candidates once it is safe to do so, but avoid endorsing or opposing any candidates.
Reach out to other community organizations in your area to identify upcoming GOTV events, potential opportunities to collaborate, and useful resources to share.

Host a text or phone banking event. Consider hosting an event where volunteers commit to calling or texting 4 or more friends, family, acquaintances from the comfort of their home with timely voting information. You may want to designate a specific day and time, design a script
for volunteers to follow, develop a system for tracking participation, and provide incentives for volunteers with the most logged contacts. Consider partnering with other organizations in your area to leverage collective resources and maximize impact.

- **Host an issue forum or candidate forum on gender and racial equity issues.** This is an ideal opportunity to engage your mayor, town council member, superintendent of education, public health official, state legislator, Member of Congress, or other policymakers in your community. Make sure to follow c3 guidelines, especially when you have invited any candidates for elected office to participate. Consider partnering with other organizations in your area to leverage collective resources and maximize impact.

- **Develop a candidate questionnaire focused on gender & racial equity.** Consider using the questions to structure a nonpartisan candidate guide, article pitched to local news media, or a candidate forum. Consider partnering with other organizations in your area, like the League of Women Voters or others with experience in developing election guides.

- **Organize an Early Voting Day of Action.** Consider selecting a day to highlight early in person and early mail-in voting opportunities in your state. Consider partnering with other organizations in your area or your local election office.

- **Develop a fact sheet on voter information and deadlines specific to your state.** See the worksheet below to help you get started.

- **Conduct follow up outreach to those who filled out digital or paper pledge to vote cards.** Consider calling pledgers closer to the election with reminders about available voting options.

- **Take a position and educate your community about ballot measures.** Reminder: Though 501(c)(3)s may NOT endorse a candidate, they may take a stance on a ballot measure.

- **Host debate watch parties.** (once it is safe to do so)

- **Organize door-to-door canvassing to share voting information.** (once it is safe to do so)

- **Provide rides to the polls on election day.** Consider organizing carpools and recruiting volunteers to drive people to and from polls. Choose a central gathering location, potentially at your YWCA. Consider providing meals or snacks for clients and community members who you are transporting to the polls. (once it is safe to do so)

- **Provide child care for voters.** (once it is safe to do so)

- **Accompany voters to the polls.** (once it is safe to do so)

- **Throw an election day party.** Consider gathering in the morning to encourage voters to get to the polls or in the evening to watch the results together. (once it is safe to do so)

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Have questions about any of these suggestions? Interested, but not sure how to start? Check out the GOTV Tools & Resources included in this toolkit below for additional guidance around voter registration, voter education, candidate engagement, voter mobilization, and more. You can also reach out to the YWCA USA Policy & Advocacy Team at advocacy@ywca.org.
VOTING IN MY STATE WORKSHEET

The 2020 General Election will be held on November 3rd across the United States, but the voting process -- including voter deadlines, options, and barriers -- vary widely by state. Use the worksheet below to position yourself as an educational resource for your community and plan around upcoming deadlines and requirements in your state.

Voter Registration
1. The voter registration deadline in my state is: ____________ for new voter registration and ____________ for updating an existing registration.
2. Same-day voter registration is available in my state: YES / NO
3. Online voter registration is available in my state: YES / NO
4. Eligibility criteria in my state: __________________________________________________________
5. ID Requirements in my state: _____________________________________________________________
6. An Address Confidentiality Program for voter registration is available in my state: YES / NO
7. Available languages: ________________________________________________________________
8. ADA Accessibility: ___________________________________________________________________

Voting By Mail, i.e. Absentee Voting
9. Voters in my state automatically receive a vote-by-mail ballot: YES / NO
10. Voters in my state must request a ballot but no excuse is needed: YES / NO
11. Voters in my state must request a ballot and need an excuse: YES / NO
   a. Valid excuses in my state include: ______________________________________________________
12. The deadline for requesting a mail-in ballot in my state is: ______________________________
13. The deadline for returning a mail-in ballot in my state is: _______________________________
14. ID Requirements in my state: __________________________________________________________
15. Available languages: _________________________________________________________________
16. ADA Accessibility: ___________________________________________________________________

Voting In Person
17. Early in-person voting is available in my state: YES / NO
18. Early in-person voting will be held during the following dates: __________________________
19. Polling sites are open during the following hours on Election Day: ______________________
20. Guaranteed time off to vote is available in my state: YES / NO
21. ID Requirements in my state: ___________________________________________________________
22. My state has committed to the following health & safety precautions:
   ________________________________________________________________
23. Available languages: __________________________________________________________________
24. ADA Accessibility: ___________________________________________________________________

Please note -- the only official source of voting information in your state will be your state or local election office. Make sure to confirm the details above by reviewing your local election office’s website.
Now that you have identified your YWCA’s available assets and capacity to engage in GOTV work (pg. 5), explored GOTV activities that would leverage your assets and empower marginalized voters in your community (pg. 6-8), and gained a deeper understanding of the election rules and deadlines within your state (pg. 9), **you are ready to incorporate that information into a plan of action.**

The election is less than five months away! Use the worksheet below to develop a GOTV plan and timeline that is responsive to your YWCA’s particular needs, interest, and capacity. As a frame of reference, YWCA USA will be focusing on voter registration July through September, voter mobilization September through November, and voter education throughout. Voter registration training will be provided in mid-July, followed by training on organizing GOTV events in August and GOTV communications training in September. YWCA USA also plans to activate our supporters and network around key dates like the 55th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act (8/6), the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment (8/18), Women’s Equality Day (8/26), National Voter Registration Day (9/22), the presidential debates (9/29, 10/15, 10/22), and of course Election Day (11/3).

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#YWOMENVOTE COMMUNICATIONS

BACKGROUND

2020 is a critical year for civic engagement. The 2020 Presidential Election and Census fall on the 100th anniversary year of the 19th amendment and the 55th anniversary year of the Voting Rights Act -- two critical milestones that expanded voting rights to women and people of color. Through this multimedia campaign, we will work to ensure that all voices are heard this election season, particularly those of women of color.

LINK

YWomenVote.org

WHAT’S THE PLAN?

Through this multimedia campaign, we encourage you to participate in digital efforts to uplift the importance of voting in the 2020 Election.

HASHTAGS AND TWITTER HANDLES

Please use the hashtag #YWomenVote for anything on social media related to the 2020 Election and YWCA’s national Get Out The Vote campaign. You can also use 2020 Election and Get Out The Vote hashtags like #Election2020, #GetOutTheVote and #GOTV to join the national conversation. Engage YWCA USA by tagging us @YWCAUSA or sharing our posts on Twitter, Facebook, and/or Instagram.

GRAPHICS

Share these graphics on social media to further amplify our Get Out The Vote messaging.

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

We have drafted these sample social media posts to make engaging in our Get Out The Vote campaign as easy as possible. Please feel free to draft your own as well. Remember to use appropriate hashtags to help further amplify your messaging and tag YWCA USA on Twitter, Facebook, and/or Instagram.

- As Americans come together to demand justice for George Floyd and countless others, the need for everyone’s voices to be heard in our elections is clear. Will your voice be heard in #Election2020?

- We know that women of color have always led change and we won’t stop now. Make sure you and your community members are registered to vote TODAY. It’s Your Voice. Your Vote. Your Future. Visit ywcavote.org. @YWCAUSA #YWomenVote
In this critical moment for our nation, our collective efforts can root out injustice, transform institutions, and create a world that sees women, girls, & people of color the way we do:

Equal.
Powerful.
Unstoppable.

Register to vote TODAY.
@YWCAUSA #YWomenVote

Voting rights and the fight for racial justice are deeply interconnected. As communities across the country are taking to the streets to demand justice and equality, it’s more important than ever to ensure fair and equal access to the ballot box.

@YWCAUSA #YWomenVote

In this critical moment, remember: our voices have power. And through our votes, we will be heard.

@YWCAUSA #YWomenVote

Amid a pandemic AND this historic moment in our fight for civil and human rights, our work to dismantle barriers to the ballot box is more vital than ever. No voter should have to choose between their health or participating in our democracy.

@YWCAUSA #YWomenVote

This is a moment of reckoning for our nation, and a moment that demands more: More voices heard. More votes cast. More Americans coming together to decide our collective future.

@YWCAUSA #YWomenVote

Healthcare was a top priority for women in this country even before COVID19. We need to safeguard healthcare coverage for preexisting conditions, birth control, and preventative services like mammograms. Ensuring comprehensive HealthCare is WomenVote.

@YWCAUSA

Women are change-makers—in our families, our workplaces, our communities, and our country. This November, let’s make sure our voices are heard at the polls!

bit.ly/2O9Nfmy
@YWCAUSA #YWomenVote
GOTV TOOLS & RESOURCES

501(c)(3) Rules & Regulations
- Bolder Advocacy Checklist
- Nonprofit VOTE Checklist
- Nonprofit VOTE Toolkit
- United Way Toolkit
- Bolder Advocacy Toolkit
- Using Social Media to Promote Voting
- Being Nonpartisan Webinar
- Engaging Your Staff in Elections
- What Staff Can(‘t) Do
- Commenting on Candidates and Campaigns
- Praising and Criticizing Incumbents
- Sample 501(c)(3) Organizational Policy for Election Season
- Ballot Measures and Public Charities: Yes, You Can Influence That Vote
- Bolder Advocacy Ballot Measure Toolkit
- Nonprofit VOTE Ballot Measure Toolkit
- 501c3 Ballot Measure Webinar
- Toll-Free 501(c)(3) Hotline

Voter Registration
- YWCA Voter Registration Portal
- Check Your Voter Registration Status
- Check Your State’s Voter Registration Deadline
- Nonprofit Votes Count Voter Registration Toolkit
- Nonprofit Registration Toolkit
- Voter Registration in the Age of COVID-19 Webinar
- Running a Nonprofit Voter Registration Drive Webinar
- Registering Staff and Volunteers to Vote Webinar
- Voter Registration Drives
- Seven Reasons to Do Voter Registration
- Debunking Voter Registration Myths
- Online and Mail-In Voter Registration During COVID Crisis
- Tips for Asking Someone to Register
- YWCA Register to Vote Here Poster
- Sample Script for Voter Registration with Common Responses

YWCA-Branded
- YWCA Voter Registration Portal
- Your Voice. Your Vote. Your Future. PSA
- YWomenVote Report
- YWCA Register to Vote Here Poster
- Paper Pledge to Vote Cards
- Stand Against Racism 2020 Toolkit
- YWCA 2020 GOTV Communications Toolkit (forthcoming)

Candidate Engagement
- YWCA YWomenVote 2020 Report
- Engaging in Party Conventions
- Hosting a Candidate Forum
- Hosting Candidate Debates
- Forum Checklist
- Guidance on Candidate Questionnaires from Bolder Advocacy
- Guidance on Candidate Questionnaires from Nonprofit VOTE
GOTV TOOLS & RESOURCES

**Voter Education**
- Check Your Voter Registration Status
- Check Your State’s Voter Registration Deadline
- Check Your State’s Absentee Ballot Request & Return Deadlines
- Requesting an Absentee Ballot
- Check Your State’s Early In Person Voting Schedule
- Find Your Local Election Office
- Find A Sample Ballot
- Find Your Polling Place
- Find the Voter ID Laws in Your State
- Know Your Rights - Voting Rights
- Check Your State’s Ballot Measures
- Rock the Vote State Voting Guide
- COVID-19 State Voting Guide from Vote.org
- COVID-19 State Voting Guide from National Conference of State Legislatures
- COVID-19 State Voting Guide from Vote411
- State Absentee/Vote-By-Mail Policies
- Report: Making Vote By Mail Work for Everyone
- COVID-19 & Policy Options for Expanding Mail-in Ballots
- Report: How to Protect the 2020 Vote from COVID Report
- April & March letters from the civil rights community

**Voter Mobilization**
- Get Election Reminders
- Find A Sample Ballot
- Personalized Ballot Information
- Getting Out The Vote for Nonprofits: Tactics and Messaging that Work
- Nonprofits Get Out the Vote
- Mobilizing Voters Experiencing Homelessness
- Mobilizing Voters Who Are Survivors of Domestic Violence
- Mobilizing Voters With Disabilities
- Mobilizing Voters Who Were Formerly Incarcerated
- I Have a Felony Conviction - Can I Vote?
- Engaging New Voters - Planning & Best Practices
- Making a Voter Engagement Plan: Questions to Consider
- Seven Tips on Getting Out the Vote
- 10 Things to Do from Now Until Election Day
- State-By-State Provisional Voting Rules
- Sample Email to Staff to Vote
- YWCA Paper Pledge to Vote Cards
- Your Voice. Your Vote. Your Future. PSA
- Nonprofit Votes Count Get Out The Vote Toolkit
- Stand Against Racism 2020 Toolkit
- Election Protection Hotlines in Multiple Languages
GLOSSARY OF COMMONLY USED TERMS

Absentee Ballot: A ballot completed by a voter who cannot physically be present at their precinct on Election Day. Sometimes used interchangeably with “mail-in ballot.”

Ballot Initiative: A proposed law drafted by citizens and placed on the ballot, which voters are asked to approve or reject on Election Day. Similarly, a referendum is a proposed law or the repeal of an existing law, which voters are tasked with approving or rejecting.

Citizens United v. FEC (“Citizens United”): A 2010 Supreme Court decision striking down all caps on the amount of money a person could donate to a Political Action Committee (PAC) and declaring that corporations and unions could also make unlimited donations to a PAC. Previous to the decision, campaign finance regulations limited who could donate and how much could be donated to a PAC.

Delegates: People chosen to represent their town or state at a national political convention. A pledged delegate must support the candidate chosen by the voters they represent. An unpledged delegate is not bound to support a specific candidate. A superdelegate is often a party official or veteran politician. Superdelegates are not required to be chosen or elected to the position. They can support any candidate they choose.

Elector: A person who is certified to represent their state’s vote in the Electoral College. The Electoral College is the process Americans use to elect the president and vice president. The number of electors a state receives is equal to that state’s number of U.S. senators and representatives. Those electors then gather to cast the state’s votes in the Electoral College. They vote for the candidate who won in their state during a presidential election. (but c.f. National Popular Vote Interstate Compact)

Gerrymandering: The practice of drawing district lines to favor one political party, individual, or constituency over another. Racial gerrymandering is the practice of drawing district lines to favor one racial group over another.

Help America Vote Act (HAVA): A law that authorizes federal funds for elections and created the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, which helps states comply with HAVA to adopt minimum standards on voter education, registration, and ballots.

National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC): An agreement, adopted by states through legislation, to give all of that state’s electoral votes to whichever presidential candidate wins the popular vote nationwide, rather than the candidate who won the vote in just that state.

Nonpartisan: Not tending to help or hurt the chances for election of any particular candidate or group of candidates, regardless of political party affiliation.

Political Action Committee (PAC): A group organized to raise money or support for a politician or cause. Prior to Citizens United, campaign finance laws limited who could donate and how much could be donated to a PAC. Citizens United struck down these rules and opened the doors for PACs to accept unlimited donations from individuals, corporations, or unions. A Super PAC is a group able to accept unlimited political donations. Although technically they are barred from coordinating activities with any candidate or campaign, they often find ways around this rule.
**Polling Place:** The location where voters cast their votes. This may be in a school, community center, church, or other centrally-located public place.

**Popular Vote:** The votes cast during an election for a candidate or about an issue. Whichever candidate or decision about an issue gets the most votes has won the popular vote. (U.S. president and vice president are determined by an Electoral College vote.)

**Precinct:** Each city, county, state, or other geographic area is divided into precincts for the purpose of assigning polling places and gathering votes. Precincts are sometimes called “districts.”

**Provisional Ballot:** a type of ballot used when there are questions about a voter’s identity or their ability to vote in a specific precinct. Provisional ballots are counted once a voter's information is confirmed. 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”.

**Sample Ballot:** An example of what the official ballot will look like. These can be used to help people make decisions, and are often published by newspapers or websites.

**Shelby County v. Holder:** A 2013 Supreme Court decision striking down the formula used to determine when a jurisdiction is required to obtain “preclearance,” or approval, for changes to their voting laws or practices. Preclearance is required under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act for jurisdictions with a history of race-based voting discrimination. Although preclearance is technically still required of these jurisdictions, it is unenforceable until Congress passes a new formula.

**Voter Intimidation / Voter Suppression:** Attempts to prevent eligible voters from voting, or to force them to vote a certain way.

**Voting Rights Act of 1965 (“the VRA”):** A law that prohibits voter discrimination based on race, color, or membership in a language minority group. It also requires certain places to provide election materials in languages besides English and requires certain jurisdictions with a history of voting discrimination to obtain “preclearance,” or approval, for changes to their voting laws or practices

**WOC:** Acronym for “women of color”

**19th Amendment:** An amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1920, that proclaimed “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.” Although expanding access to the voting booth for White women, women of color continued to be disenfranchised until voter discrimination based on race, color, or membership in a language minority group was outlawed by the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

**Sources:**
- https://www.usa.gov/voting-and-election-definitions
- https://www.usa.gov/voting-laws
- https://ballotpedia.org/Glossary_of_election_policy_terms
QUESTIONS?

Contact the YWCA USA Public Policy & Advocacy Team at advocacy@ywca.org