The “Eligible Eight” Best Practice Responses

There are eight common scenarios you may encounter when working with voters. In order to help eligible voters participate, we must be effective in our communications with them. You Can Vote’s tested responses and approaches can help you bring voters into the process respectfully and without judgment. This handout is a guide for volunteers to meet voters where they are and educate them using our proven best practice approaches.

1: “I can’t vote.” Simply ask “Can you tell me why?” (listen). Another option is to say “The only requirements to vote in NC is to be a citizen who is over 18, and not currently be on probation or parole for a felony conviction” (listen) If they say “I have a felony on my record.” ask “Are you finished with your parole and probation?” (listen). Or “Are you still on papers?”

   [IF FINISHED SERVING] “Oh that’s great! In North Carolina your rights are immediately restored when you are done serving your sentence. I can help you register to vote right now!” (point to fridge card showing the rule).
   [IF STILL SERVING]: “As soon as you finish your parole your rights will be reinstated and you can then register to vote. Would you like a form to complete when the time comes?”

2: “I don’t vote. It doesn’t matter” (Respect this statement and listen!) “I’m sorry to hear that. There are a lot of state and local races on the ballot (point to WOB link on fridge card). These offices impact the daily life of our local community members. What do you care about? (listen, point to what is on the ballot that is of concern to them) AND: “If you register to vote today, you will be able to vote if you change your mind. It doesn’t mean you have to vote-you’ll just have the option to do so.” (pause, lift up clipboard)

3: “I don’t have an ID so I can’t get registered.” “Do you live in North Carolina? As long as you are here for 30 days prior to Election Day and meet the eligibility requirements, you can register. I don’t need an ID to help you fill out the registration form.”

4: “I registered online.” “Oh that’s great! We do have partial online registration now. Let’s make sure the process was completed through the DMV website.” (listen, offer to do voter lookup) OR: “Was this recently on the NC DMV website? Let’s double check to see if you are registered, and if not, I can help you complete the process now.” (listen, offer to do voter lookup and confirm address and to make sure it is active further explain that it is important to make sure it’s all good before heading to the polls.

5: “I already voted.” “Great - thanks for being a voter! There is another election coming up now that we want to make sure you are ready for.” (show election dates on the fridge card)

6: “I think I registered when I got my ID.” “That’s great, we are finding a lot of voters who did this but have not received the card with their polling location from the Board of Elections. Did you receive the card in the mail? (listen, offer voter lookup) Same as above, check and verify addresses to make sure their registration went through.

7: “I’m a student so I don’t live here.” “We’re glad to have you in North Carolina for now! As long as you are here, you can choose to register and vote here. I can help you do that. If you want to vote in your home-state you will have to request an absentee ballot from your home state board of elections.” (listen) Another approach: “There’s a lot on the NC ballot this year, and decisions by these lawmakers will impact your life. If you want a choice on those matters, you can register and vote here. When you move, you can re-register”

8: Might not speak English. Ask in English “Do you need information to vote?” If there seems to be a language barrier, hand them a card in Spanish and point to the “who can register.” Please do not hesitate to approach someone. If you do speak some Spanish, approach as you would any other voter. Changes in your dialogue could be “Do you have questions about registering?” or “Have you voted before?” “Do you need information about voting?” “Sr/sra, tiene preguntas sobre las próximas elecciones?” “Ha registrado(a) para votar?” “Necesita información sobre cómo puede registrarse?” Keep it simple. Many non-English speakers have someone with them to help translate.