Are you new to voting? Are you new to starting discussions with others about voting? Here are some handy questions to consider.

**JOBS & WAGES**
- Does my employer pay its employees and contractors fair wages and salaries? What about my friends’ and neighbors’ employers? Who decides what “fair” means here?
- Can I afford college? Can I send my children to college?
- Are income, sales, property, and employment taxes in my city/state/country fair for individuals and businesses?

**EDUCATION**
- Do our public schools receive enough funding for the services they provide?
- Where does the funding for our public schools come from? Who decides where the funding comes from?
- Do I know any teachers whose classrooms are lacking enough supplies?
- Are children and teachers in my community safe while they are at school?
PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY
- Who is keeping my community safe from crime, and how are they funded?
- Do I feel safe in my neighborhood? Do my neighbors feel safe? Why or why not?
- What does the word “safe” in these questions mean to me? What does it mean to other people?
- Does my community’s public safety structure need reorganizing? Why or why not?
- Do I feel like I would be treated fairly by the justice system? Would my neighbors, friends, and family be treated fairly by the justice system?
- What does the word “fair” in these questions mean to me? What does it mean to other people?

TRANSPORTATION
- What transportation options do I have in my neighborhood? How can they be improved?
- Who decides if they can be improved and who pays for improvements?
- Is it easy to get from my neighborhood to my job? Would it be easy without a car?
• How do I feel about the way the local, State, and Federal government are managing the COVID-19 crisis? How does the way the government is handling the crisis affect life in my community?

• Do I have enough access to healthcare services? Why or why not?

• Are my friends, family, and neighbors’ healthcare needs being met? What about my elderly friends, family, and neighbors?

• Do I know anyone who has trouble getting to the grocery store or who can’t afford as much food as they need? What would make it easier?

• Are global warming, pollution, and litter impacting quality of life in my neighborhood?

• Is my neighborhood clean and environmentally safe? How is the air quality? Would I eat food grown in the soil in my neighborhood? Why or why not?

• Would I use solar power and other clean energy sources for my house and transportation if they were more available? How can they be made more available?
COMMUNITY AND CIVIC LIFE

- What opportunities do I have to be heard on issues that impact my neighborhood?
- Does the community council feel like a place where I am welcome? What about the local political party that I identify with? What about City Council and City Hall? The State legislature? Congress in Washington, D.C.?
- What public spaces do I love in my community, and how are they funded? Who takes care of them? Who decides what they look like, what hours they are open, and whether to keep them publicly available?
Election Day is Tuesday, November 3rd, 2020

Did you know that you can request your absentee ballot RIGHT NOW?

Check your registration here¹ (even if you just KNOW you are registered already).

Not registered? Let’s fix that.² Make sure to register by October 5th, 2020.

Do you want to vote by mail this year? Print out and complete this form and mail it to your Board of Elections today! You have until the Saturday before the election to get it in, but don’t wait! Upon receiving your ballot, complete and return it as soon as you can.

Voting early? Make sure to go to the Hamilton County Board of Elections at 4700 Smith Rd. between October 6th and November 2nd, 2020. You can also bring your ballot in person to the ballot dropbox at the Board of Elections office at the address above.

Voting in person on Election Day? Look up your polling location here, and make sure to bring ID. If you do not have a photo ID, make sure to bring a current utility bill, bank statement, payroll check, or military ID.³

¹ https://www.vote.org
² https://votehamiltoncountyohio.gov/register/
³ Voters who do not provide any ONE of these documents at the precinct will still be able to vote using a provisional ballot and providing the last four digits of their social security number or appearing at the Board Office within 7 days of Election Day to provide ID.
ID is required in order to vote (including by mail), but it does not have to be a photo ID.

Ohio does not require a reason to vote early or by mail.

Ohio does not send out absentee ballots automatically; they must be requested by sending a form in the mail. Forms can be downloaded from the Hamilton County Board of Elections or here: https://absentee.vote.org/

Persons who have been charged with a felony and are no longer incarcerated may re-register to vote in the State of Ohio.

Accessible voting stations are available at all polling stations for persons who may have difficulty filling out a paper ballot.

Historic numbers of Americans are expected to vote by mail this year, which means additional stress is going to be placed on local Boards of Elections and the United States Postal Service. Some municipalities are setting up ballot drop boxes in order to expedite collection efforts, but if that is not an option for you, you should plan to return your ballot by mail as soon as possible.

Get some postage stamps now and support the USPS! You will be glad you have them, and so will your friends and family who might not have them on hand. They can be ordered directly from USPS.
Vote for candidates who share your views. Here’s how different levels of government make decisions that affect YOU directly.
JoBS AND WAGES
• State sets minimum wage, which is $8.70 in Ohio as of January of 2020.
• The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, part of the United States Department of Labor, sets and enforces standards for safe and healthy conditions for workers.

EDUCATION
• County assesses property values and collects property taxes, which are used to fund schools.
• State determines funding allocations for schools.
• Federally mandated standardized testing ties school funding to test results, which can put some schools at a disadvantage.
PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY

- The federal government funds the FBI, which investigates certain crimes all over the country, including in Cincinnati.

- The **Ohio Department of Public Safety** includes the BMV, the **Emergency Management Agency**, **Emergency Medical Services**, **Criminal Justice Services**, **Ohio Homeland Security**, and the **Ohio State Highway Patrol**.

- The county manages the Sheriff’s office and the county jail and criminal courts.

- The city manages the local police department and sets staffing levels and police priorities.
ENVIRONMENT

• The Environmental Protection Agency operates at the state and federal levels to set and maintain standards to keep our air, water, and land clean, as well enforcing these standards through the rule of law.

TRANSPORTATION

• The Federal government provides funding for highways, transportation infrastructure, and public transit.

• The Ohio Department of Transportation supports the state highway system and promotes transportation initiatives statewide.

• City manages streets, bike lanes, provides funding for buses and streetcar.
HEALTH

Coronavirus

• Unemployment benefits for workers displaced by the pandemic come from the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, and has been supplemented with federal money from the federal CARES Act through the end of July, 2020.

• The State Health Director and the Governor of Ohio have determined safety standards and restrictions, with attempted interference from the Ohio legislature.

• County Health Department is charged with enforcing State coronavirus-related mandates for businesses and individuals. The County also received and distributed a large amount of CARES act funding.

• Major relief packages like the CARES Act are passed by the federal government through Congress, and contain programs like the Paycheck Protection Program, which has provided many businesses with funds to keep them, and their employees, afloat.
HEALTH

Healthcare Access

• States have the power to accept federal Medicaid expansions through the Affordable Care Act that was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama and enacted in March of 2010.

• The Hamilton County Addition Responses Coalition connects people who struggle with addiction to recovery services and resources.

• The City runs public health clinics through its health department, providing affordable health care and dental care, even to people without insurance.
COMMUNITY AND CIVIC LIFE

- The US Supreme Court, State Supreme Courts, Courts of Appeals, District Courts, Bankruptcy Courts, and Legislative Courts adjudicate different types of cases. Judicial seats are filled by either election or appointment. Learn more about the different types of Courts and judges [here](#).

- Different parks are maintained and regulated at the Federal, State, and Local level. Local Departments of Recreation provide low-cost or free activities for individuals, communities, and families.
Budgets

One of the most important reasons to vote - how your tax dollars are spent! Here is a breakdown of how elected officials spent your taxpayer dollars at the Federal, State, and City level.

**FEDERAL**

- Social Security: $1.0 Trillion
- Medicare: $644 Billion
- Medicaid: $409 Billion
- Nondefense: $661 Billion
- Other: $642 Billion
- Defense: $676 Billion
- Net Interest: $375 Billion

**STATE**

- Medicaid: 36.73%
- General Government: 20.53%
- Health & Human Services: 10.21%
- Social Security: 9.26%
- Justice & Public Protection: 4.90%
- Education: 3.50%
- Other: 20.53%

**LOCAL**

- Police: 36.4%
- City Manager’s Office: 4.6%
- Recreation: 3.8%
- Parks: 2.2%
- Community & Economic Development: 2.3%
- Law: 1.8%
- Finance: 1.8%
- Public Services: 3.5%
- Non-Departmental: 4.8%
- Transfers Out: 4.8%
- Other: 3.9%

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While You’re Here...

Now that you’ve made sure your voice will be counted, make sure you are counted in the United States Census! Visit Greater Cincinnati Counts to assure fairness in representation, distribution of federal funds, political redistricting.
Thanks for your support!

If you would like to contribute to future versions of the First Aid Kit, donate here!

Don’t live in Cincinnati but you would like to adapt this guide for local use? Send us a note!

Learn more about Action Tank