A Guide For Faith Communities

Calling on all people of faith, churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples to establish a volunteer network within their congregations to Get Out the Vote.

This election is the most critical in our lifetime!
YOUR VOTE MATTERS

- The call to promote justice, compassion, and equality is one shared across all faiths.
- Your vote has an immense impact! Some elections are decided by a small number of votes. In 2016, Donald Trump won Michigan by just 13,080 votes. In 2017, a Virginia House seat ended in a tie after the recount.
- This election, we have an opportunity to begin healing a nation that is in desperate need of healing (see our “sermon to heal America” for inspiration).
- If we believe that our core values, of loving our neighbor, should be reflected in the public square, we must encourage our faith communities to hold decision makers accountable by voting.

STATE VOTING LAWS

- The simplest way to find state-specific and accurate information is to visit https://www.newmoralmajority.org/all-souls-to-the-polls.
- Each state has its own early voting policies and vote by mail requirements.
- If your state has a voting ID law, inform people so they can have the necessary identification when they vote.
- Congregations and faith leaders can share information about states’ voter registration deadlines and election dates and online resources on voting in all 50 states. You can also find resources at Vote411 or check your state election board’s website.

ORGANIZE All Souls To The Polls Efforts WITH FAITH COMMUNITIES

- Once you’ve located the early voting location best for your congregants, coordinate opportunities to go to the polls together. When people have a plan to vote and are encouraged by peers, they are more likely to vote.
  - Be prepared with extra masks and make sure participants follow 6-feet social distance guidelines
- For those who have trouble with transportation, coordinate car pools or shuttle systems. Make sure everyone who is providing rides and participants are wearing masks to minimize risk of exposure to COVID-19. Lyft is offering 50% off one ride up to $10 to any polling location or dropbox using the code 2020VOTE on Election Day.
- Long lines have become a major story, particularly as access to polling places has been limited in recent years as some in power want to reduce people’s power to use the vote. Congregations can create safe, socially distanced environments outside of polling locations by providing food, family-friendly music, water, etc. making the wait to vote more enjoyable.
EARLY VOTING LIST, VOTE BY MAIL AND ABSENTEE BALLOTS

For elders, those who work long hours or multiple jobs, and those who do not have access to transportation, voting early, voting by mail, or using an absentee ballot (depending on your state) is one of the most helpful tools to make sure people vote. These options allow people the flexibility to have various options when it comes time to vote.

- Always check ahead of time to ensure that you are still registered with updated information such as current address
- Find when and where early voting is happening in your region
  - Going to early voting polling locations can help with ensuring smaller crowds and shorter lines, which is especially important while keeping social distancing guidelines
- Early voting locations are often open during the weekends
- State by state list of Early Voting Schedules

SUPPORT PEOPLE IN LEARNING TO VOTE BY MAIL

- Voting from home, and encouraging everyone in your family of faith to participate, are some of the most effective ways to increase participation and voter turnout
- Voting by mail or absentee ballots is well tested without any evidence of voter fraud (fact check here). Do not be put off by stories claiming your vote won’t count.
- Offer to assist people voting by mail for the first time. Consider offering notary services at your house of worship, if your state requires a notarized ballot.
- Avoid pitfalls - ensure your signature matches other government documents on file such as your Driver’s License
- Know Your Rights on Voting by Mail - ACLU Resource: Keep Calm and Carry On
- If you were unable to sign up for “vote by mail” at least one week ahead of deadlines in your state, you may want to consider safe, in-person early voting options

VOTER REGISTRATION DURING COVID-19

Neighborhood canvasses and voter registration at in-person events will likely not be an option for most organizations in 2020. However, there is still so much that you can do online. It will be important to know your state’s laws. Below are ideas on actions congregations can take legally to support voter registration during COVID-19:

- Voter registration trainings via webinar
● Bulletin inserts and congregational newsletters with pertinent information about voter registration and early voting, linking to our page where (in states that have same-day registration) people can register online: https://www.newmoralmajority.org/register-to-vote

● Announce critical information about voter registration, early voting and vote by mail during your congregation’s weekly service.

● Host voter registration video conference parties, sharing screens and registering online together

● Create social media videos or graphics with critical information on voting including registration, early voting, voting by mail and registration deadlines

● Social media challenges: challenge your congregation to tag 5 friends and family members and encourage them to vote.
  o Use the hashtag #iVote4 and post a picture of yourself after you’ve voted. Feel free to include a story that speaks to some of the values that inspire your vote (Love, Justice, Equality, Decency)

● Utilize relational organizing to make sure you are connecting with other faith communities in your region who you can collaborate with

MEDIA, RADIO AND SOCIAL MEDIA

● Create Facebook events for All Souls To The Polls activities, including volunteer canvassing/phone banking, and vigils

● Post “Selfies” with small posters saying why you vote as a person of faith.
  Use #iVote4 so that New Moral Majority and others can amplify your posts!

● For larger events, create a media advisory and send it to press contacts (reach out to chris@newmoralmajority.org for help).

● Promote All Souls To The Polls activities on your congregation’s social media accounts

● Create videos for social media from faith leaders who are trusted messengers about the importance of voting early and voting by mail as a spiritual act.

MEDIA, RADIO AND SOCIAL MEDIA

● Contact your local public radio or religious radio outlets to share stories of faith communities promoting civic engagement and Get Out The Vote. Be sure to tell the stories of why people are voting.

● Write an Opinion Editorial about the moral imperative to vote and strengthen our democracy through civic engagement

● If you have new American voters in your congregation, work to promote their vote via radio or television outlets in their native language
For social media, consider using the following hashtags: #iVote4 and #FaithVoter

**POLL WORKERS, POLLING MONITORS AND ELECTION PROTECTION**

- Poll workers are the link between election administration—the laws, rules, and procedures that govern the election process—and the voters. They are paid front-line staff of the democratic process who sit at the table, check rosters, and hand out ballots. In 2020 there is a huge shortage of poll workers, learn how to become a poll worker here
- Polling Monitors or poll watchers are responsible to make sure there is a fair voting process by monitoring poll workers and offering voters information about their rights without discrimination. Monitors assist people in finding their correct polling station so their vote will count. Our partners at Sojourners have launched a “collars and lawyers” effort to protect the vote, and more people are needed: http://lawyersandcollars.org/
- See Center for American Progress resources on election protection.

**FOR LEADERS OF NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

- Get Out the Vote and voter mobilization activities can easily be done in a non-partisan way that is perfectly legal and friendly to non-profit organizations
- Non-partisan, 501(c)3 organizations should avoid endorsing any candidates or parties on the behalf of your organization.
- When you provide a message consistent with the faith teachings your congregation supports, you don’t have to worry about crossing any IRS boundaries.
- The restrictions on political campaign activity does not restrict leaders of organizations from expressing their personal views on political matters if they are speaking for themselves as individuals. Nor are leaders prohibited from speaking about important issues of public policy.
- A congregational leader can attend an event for a particular candidate and express support of the candidate as long as he or she does not state or otherwise imply that they are speaking on behalf of their congregation. However, if a minister made the same statement at an official church function or in an official church publication, that statement would be prohibited political campaign activity (from IRS FAQ).

*These are general guidelines and should not be considered legal advice*