



How to Use the 2004 Voter Registration and GOTV Toolkit

Residents of affordable housing are particularly affected by many of the issues at stake in this election year. At the federal level, the Bush administration has mandated that HUD implement sweeping reforms to the Section 8 voucher program, and many residents of affordable housing are in jeopardy of losing their vouchers. At the local level in San Francisco, a \$200 million affordable housing bond measure is on the ballot, aiming to create 3,200 homes for San Francisco families and seniors. It is critical that residents of affordable housing are registered this year and turn out to vote.

To assist our members with voter registration and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts, NPH has put together a this toolkit. This toolkit equips service coordinators, resident organizers and property management staff to carry out these efforts at their Bay Area developments by providing information on:

- How to run a successful voter registration campaign and timeline;
- Permissible election activities checklist;
- Keeping track of registered voters;
- Registering affordable housing developments as polling places;
- Voter registration and GOTV resources;
- Voter registration and absentee applications.

For more information about this toolkit, contact Geeta Rao at geeta@nonprofithousing.org or 415-989-8160 x22. Good luck!



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Solano County

(contact Geeta Rao)

Bay Area

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Six Easy Steps Housing Providers Can Take to Implement Voting Campaigns

1. Get voter registration applications.

You can do this at your state Board of Elections. To find out how to contact your state Board of Elections, visit <http://www.nlihc.org/vrem/registration/board.html>.

2. Know who can register.

In order to register:

- You must be at least 18 years of age by Election Day
- You must be a U.S. Citizen
- You must be registered by a certain date. (To view the registration deadlines by state, please go to <http://www.nlihc.org/vrem/education/deadlines.html> or call Katie at 202-662-1530 x222.)

3. Determine how you are going to get eligible voters to register.

The goal should be to make registration part of the regular activities of your organization. There are many ways this can be done (Explain why it is important that they register, but also make sure they don't feel as though registering to vote is mandatory.). Here are just a few:

- Help tenant associations and/or leaders develop and implement a plan to register other tenants
- Register people when they come in to pay their rent
- Register people when they go through the intake process
- Register people when they pass through a common area
- Register people when they come to pick up goods provided by your agency
- Register people at regular meetings
- Set up registration tables at previously scheduled events
- Find one more people who receives services from you clinic who is willing to register others
- Announce the voter registration initiative in a mailing that goes out to your clients
- Provide incentives for clients who can register the most people

4. Set a goal for registering voters, keep track of who and how many people you register to vote, and make sure the forms are returned.

If possible, you should get people to fill out the form in your presence, collect the form from them, make a copy, and then return it to the local election authority for them. This will allow you to make sure all forms are returned. It will also give you the opportunity to collect their information, enabling you to get back in touch with them about upcoming civic engagement events. Keeping good records will also allow you to remind new voters to vote on Election Day (Inform the client that their information will be made public once they are registered). Setting a goal and keeping a running tally of the number of people you register will get people more excited about registering, education and mobilizing voters. (See page titled, "Keeping Records.")

5. Work with other non-profits to plan other civic engagement activities.

While registering voters is a great first step, it is important that we work together to educate and mobilize our newly registered voters. There are many things you can do, from hanging up posters to planning candidates' forums. For a more comprehensive list, please call Katie at 202-662-1530 x222.

6. Make a connection with a "Get Out the Vote" organization to make sure your newly registered voters get to the polls on Election Day.

There are many Get Out the Vote (GOTV) organizations all over the country, and many will be willing to work with your organization to make sure all the voters you registered and educated will actually make it to the polls on Election Day. (See page titled, "Organizations Working on Mobilization")



Project-Based Housing

How to incorporate **VOTER REGISTRATION, EDUCATION, AND MOBILIZATION (VREM)** into the regular activities for Project-Based Housing:

Registration:

- Identify tenant leaders who can orchestrate door-to-door registration campaigns.
- Use job training, childcare, computer, or other classes to register potential voters.
- Register residents when they pay their rent.
- Have one deputized registrar on each floor or in each building who is in charge of registering residents.
- Obtain poll sheets (which list all registered voters at a given address) from the Board of Elections and crosscheck them with a current tenant list to create a list of current residents who are not registered to vote at the building address. Then have one or more tenants call or visit each person on the list at various times and invite them to register right now.

Education:

- Include educational materials in packets given to residents.
- Contact other service providers about holding civic education events in which you invite local candidates to talk about issues of interest to your clients.
- Host watch parties for your residents when there are debates on television.
- Organize a group of residents to attend a local event held by candidates.
- Incorporate voter education into job training, computer, childcare, or other classes.
- Hang fliers displaying pertinent civic education materials such as: When, where and how to vote.
- Display campaign literature from all potential candidates in public areas.

Mobilization:

- Keep a database of all newly registered voters' names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses (if available).
- Organize tenant leaders to lobby local election authorities to move or add a polling place to your facility.
- Contact local Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) organizations that will be able to make reminder phone calls, go door to door, drive people to the polls, and distribute sample ballots, <http://www.nlihc.org/vrem/registration/whotocontact.html>.

For more information please contact Katie at the National Low Income Housing Coalition, 202-662-1530 x222, Katie@nlihc.org.



Homeless Shelters

How to incorporate **VOTER REGISTRATION, EDUCATION, AND MOBILIZATION (VREM)** into the regular activities of a Homeless Shelter:

Registration:

- Register people when they go through the intake process at your shelter. It is important to make sure you are registering people who will still be living at the address they register under on Election Day.
- Offer prizes to residents who register the most new voters in the shelter.
- Use job training, childcare, computer, or other classes to register potential voters.

Education:

- Include educational materials in packets given to residents.
- Contact other service providers about holding civic education events in which you invite local candidates to talk about issues of interest to your clients.
- Host watch parties for your residents when there are debates on television.
- Organize a group of residents to attend a local event held by candidates.
- Incorporate voter education into job training, computer, childcare, or other classes.
- Hang fliers displaying pertinent civic education materials such as: When, where and how to vote.
- Display campaign literature from all potential candidates in public areas.

Mobilization:

- Keep a database of all newly registered voters' names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses (if available).
- Organize tenant leaders to lobby local election authorities to move or add a polling place to your facility.
- Contact local Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) organizations that will be able to make reminder phone calls, go door to door, drive people to the polls, and distribute sample ballots, <http://www.nlihc.org/vrem/registration/whotocontact.html>.

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Public Housing Authorities

How to incorporate **VOTER REGISTRATION, EDUCATION, AND MOBILIZATION (VREM)** into the regular activities of Public Housing Authorities:

Registration:

- Residents can fulfill their community service requirements by organizing or participating in civic engagement activities.
- PHAs can make a practice of registering new voters when residents come to pay their rent.
- Identify tenant leaders who can orchestrate door-to-door registration campaigns.
- Use job training, childcare, computer, or other classes to register potential voters.

Education:

- Include educational materials in mailings to residents.
- Contact other PHAs and service providers about holding civic education events in which you invite local candidates to talk about issues of interest to your clients.
- Host watch parties for your residents when there are debates on television.
- Organize a group of tenants to attend a local event held by candidates.
- Incorporate voter education into job training, computer, childcare, or other classes.
- Hang fliers displaying pertinent civic education materials such as: When, where and how to vote.
- Display campaign literature from all candidates in public areas.

Mobilization:

- Keep a database of all newly registered voters' names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses (if available).
- Organize tenant leaders to lobby local election authorities to move or add a polling place to your facility.
- Contact local Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) organizations that will be able to make reminder phone calls, go door to door, drive people to the polls, and distribute sample ballots, <http://www.nlihc.org/vrem/registration/whotocontact.html>.

For more information please contact Katie at the National Low Income Housing Coalition, 202-662-1530 x222, Katie@nlihc.org.



Community Based Organizations

How to incorporate **VOTER REGISTRATION, EDUCATION, AND MOBILIZATION (VREM)** into the regular activities of Community Based Organizations.

Registration:

- Partner with other organizations that offer you access to clients or tenants directly.
- Make a practice of adding voter registration for new clients during the intake process.
- Register existing clients when they come in to receive your services.
- Dedicate one staff person, volunteer, or intern who will be in charge of making sure all clients are aware of the opportunity to register to vote.
- Use job training, childcare, computer, or other classes to register potential voters.
- Offer incentives to clients who can get the most other clients to register to vote.

Education:

- Include educational materials in packets given to new and old clients.
- Contact other service providers about holding civic education events in which you invite local candidates to talk about issues of interest to your clients.
- Host watch parties for your clients when there are debates on television.
- Organize a group of clients to attend a local event held by candidates.
- Incorporate voter education into job training, computer, childcare, or other classes
- Hang fliers displaying pertinent civic education materials such as: When, where and how to vote.
- Display campaign literature from all potential candidates in public areas.
- Hold a contest in which clients write essays about the importance of voting.

Mobilization:

- Keep a database of all newly registered voters' names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses (if available).
- Organize tenant leaders to lobby local election authorities to move or add a polling place to your facility.
- Contact local Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) organizations that will be able to make reminder phone calls, go door to door, drive people to the polls, and distribute sample ballots, <http://www.nlihc.org/vrem/registration/whotocontact.html>.

For more information please contact Katie at the National Low Income Housing Coalition, 202-662-1530 x222, Katie@nlihc.org



Social Service Agencies

How to incorporate **VOTER REGISTRATION, EDUCATION, AND MOBILIZATION (VREM)** into the regular activities of Social Service Agencies:

Registration:

- Make a practice of adding voter registration for new clients during the intake process.
- Register existing clients when they come in to receive your services.
- Dedicate one staff person, volunteer, or intern who will be in charge of making sure all clients are aware of the opportunity to register to vote.
- Use job training, childcare, computer, or other classes to register potential voters.
- Offer incentives to clients who can get the most other clients to register to vote.

Education:

- Include educational materials in packets given to new and old clients.
- Contact other service providers about holding civic education events in which you invite local candidates to talk about issues of interest to your clients.
- Host watch parties for your clients when there are debates on television.
- Organize a group of clients to attend a local event held by candidates.
- Incorporate voter education into job training, computer, childcare, or other classes
- Hang fliers displaying pertinent civic education materials such as: When, where and how to vote.
- Display campaign literature from all potential candidates in public areas.
- Hold a contest in which clients write essays about the importance of voting.

Mobilization:

- Keep a database of all newly registered voters' names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses (if available).
- Organize tenant leaders to lobby local election authorities to move or add a polling place to your facility.
- Contact local Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) organizations that will be able to make reminder phone calls, go door to door, drive people to the polls, and distribute sample ballots, <http://www.nlihc.org/vrem/registration/whotocontact.html>.

For more information please contact Katie at the National Low Income Housing Coalition, 202-662-1530 x222, Katie@nlihc.org.



Sample Timeline for Voter Registration and GOTV Activities

August

Contact all County Offices of Elections
Register Affordable Housing Developments as Polling Places
Make Arrangements to Obtain Voter Registration Forms
Make Arrangements to Obtain Absentee Ballots (refer to Voter Registration document)
Order Signage - Posters - Promotional Materials
Brainstorm with Management and Services Staff - Begin Planning Events

September

Have Voter Registration Forms Available for all Developments
Have Absentee Ballots Available for all Developments
Put Incentive Plan Into Effect & Tracking System
Schedule and Begin Promoting Voter Reg Events / Voter Ed Events

October

Have Voter Registration Forms Available for all Developments
Have Absentee Ballots Available for all Developments
Continue with Incentives
Continue Scheduling and Promoting Voter Reg Events/Voter Ed Events
Close of Voter Registration: October 18th, 2004
Last Day To Request Absentee Ballot: October 26th, 2004

November

Last Minute GOTV Efforts
Election Day: November 2nd, 2004
Election Day Voters Party



Keeping Records

It has been proven time and time again that just registering voters will not ensure an increase in voter turnout or voter education. To have a successful education and mobilization operation, you must have accurate records of all new registrants. This list will also aid in making sure you know just how many people your organization has registered.

The easiest way to keep the records is in some sort of database. Your voter database doesn't need to be complex or have a lot of fields. Many people find Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access two of the easiest databases to use. Your database* should include separate fields for first and last names**, phone numbers, street number, street name, city, state, zip code, telephone, and email.

There are a number of ways to compile the data. One way is to enter the data straight from the voter registration card once the new registrant fills it out (check with your state board of elections and make sure you can make copies of the voter registration cards and then send them in).

Another way is to have the new registrant fill out a pledge card. He or she would give you one side and keep one side. That card contains all the information needed for your records and will remind the new registrant to vote. We are certain there are many ways to capture the information needed to ensure your clients receive all the educational material they need and to ensure they remember to go to the polls on election day.

Once you have this information recorded, you should work with national groups putting together Get Out The Vote (GOTV) operations to make sure that all of your new registrants are reminded to go to the polls on Election Day.

ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Job, child care and transportation difficulties can make getting to the polls an extra challenge for people with low incomes. One way to assist people in their voting can be to provide them with absentee ballots. The rules by which people can vote by absentee ballot vary by state. Depending on the rules in your state, your organization may want to provide absentee ballots to the people you have registered. The records you have kept will make this easier. www.electionline.org/site/docs/html/absentee_voting.htm.

*

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Street Number</u>	<u>Street Name</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Zip Code</u>	<u>Telephone</u>	<u>Email</u>
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** Many GOTV organizations will want to knock on the doors of registered voters on Election Day. Separating first and last names, street numbers and street name, as well as state and zip codes makes this process easier.



Voter Registration, Absentee Voting and Poll Information

Voter Registration

The standard *state* voter registration application can be found at: <http://www.ss.ca.gov/elections/votereg1.html>. *County* voter registration applications can be downloaded at the website of county election offices (see attached matrix for website). All registration materials are available at your local county elections office, library, US Post Office.

First-time voters who register by mail must submit either a copy of a valid photo identification, the last four digits of their social security number or another government document that shows their name and address (i.e. utility bill) along with the application. The mailing address can be found on the application. Voter applications can also be sent to the county elections office upon completion (see attached matrix for address). First-time voters who register in person can do so at the county election department.

Voter registration materials are available in Spanish, Tagalog, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean.

The deadline to register to vote is October 18, 2004.

Voting Absentee

If you are already registered and want to apply for an absentee ballot:

- 1) Use the application printed on your Sample Ballot, which you will receive prior to every election.
- 2) Apply in writing to your county elections official.
- 3) A standard absentee ballot application for all counties can be found at: http://www.ss.ca.gov/elections/elections_m.htm.

The application or letter must contain 1) your name and residence address as stated on your registration card; 2) the address to which the absentee ballot should be sent (if different than your registered address); 3) the name and date of the election in which the you would like to vote absentee (e.g. November 2, 2004, General Election); and 4) the date and your signature.

To become a *permanent* absentee voter you must indicate so on your absentee ballot application. If you are already a permanent absentee voter, an absentee ballot will be sent directly to your address before every election.



If you are not a registered voter:

If you are using a county registration application, often times you can select to vote absentee on the form. If you used the standard state application, you then follow the steps described above for voting absentee.

The deadline to apply for an absentee ballot is October 26, 2004.

Make Your Affordable Housing Development a Polling Place

One strategy to increase voter turnout among residents of affordable housing is to locate polls at affordable housing developments. For all nine counties, NPH has provided a matrix with the necessary information to register any location as a polling place. Affordable housing providers may also want to recruit residents as poll workers. Many counties provide poll workers with a stipend for the day.

Note: State law requires that all polling places used during the March election be used, unless unavailable, during the November election of the same year. Nevertheless, there are still many opportunities for first-time facilities. Additionally, each county must submit a finalized list of polling places to the state no later than 88 days before the election. To find the polling place nearest you, visit: <http://www.lwv.org/voter/vote.cfm?pid=polling>.



Bay Area Voter Registration Resource Guide

County	County Election Offices (ballots, voter guides, voter information, etc.)	Locating polls at an affordable housing developments:
Alameda	Bradley J. Clark, Registrar of Voters 1225 Fallon Street, Room G-1 Oakland, CA 94612 (510) 272-6973 (510) 272-6982 Fax Hours 8:30am - 5:00pm E-Mail: brad.clark@acgov.org Web Site: www.co.alameda.ca.us/rov/index.htm	For Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley, and Albany, contact Leo Fernandez at (510) 635-5259. For other cities in Alameda, contact Francisco Caravallo at 635-5260.
Contra Costa	Stephen L. Weir, County Clerk 524 Main Street P O Box 271 Martinez, CA 94553 (925) 646-4166 (925) 646-1385 Fax Hours 8:00am - 5:00pm Website: www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/elect/index.htm	Call (925) 646-4166 and select option 3 of message service. Selection process begins at the end of August.
Marin	Madelyn De Justo, Assistant County Clerk/Registrar of Voters 3501 Civic Center, Room 121 San Rafael, CA 94903 P O Box E San Rafael, CA 94913-3904 (415) 499-6448 (415) 499-6447 Fax Hours 8:00am to 4:30pm Website: co.marin.ca.us/depts/RV/main/index.cfm	(415) 499-6448
Napa	John Tuteur, Registrar of Voters Napa County Registrar of Voters 900 Coombs Street, Room 256 Napa, CA 94559-2946 (707) 253-4321 (707) 253-4390 Fax Hours 8:00am - 5:00pm E-mail: elections@co.napa.ca.us Website: www.co.napa.ca.us/GOV/Departments	Kathy Sternberg at (707) 253-4321 or Cindy. On-going process, no deadline, first come first served basis.

Non-Profit Housing Association
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415.989.8166 fax
www.nonprophousing.org



County	County Election Offices (ballots, voter guides, voter information, etc.)	Locating polls at an affordable housing developments:
San Francisco	John Arntz, Acting Director of Elections City Hall - 1 Dr. Carlton B Goodlett Place, Room 48 San Francisco, CA 94102-4635 (415) 554-4375 (415) 554-7344 Fax Hours 8:00am - 5:00pm E-mail: sfvote@sfgov.org Website: www.ci.sf.ca.us/election/index.htm	Call (415) 554-4375 and ask for Precinct Services
San Mateo	Warren Slocum, Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder 40 Tower Road San Mateo, CA 94402 (650) 312-5222 (650) 312-5348 Fax Hours 8:00am - 5:00pm E-mail: registrar@smcare.org Website: www.shapethefuture.org	Greta Macaroy at (650) 312-5222
Santa Clara	Jesse Durazo, Registrar of Voters 1555 Berger Drive, Bldg. 2 San Jose, CA 95112 P O Box 1147 San Jose, CA 95108-1147 (408) 299-VOTE (408) 998-7314 Fax Hours 8:00am - 5:00pm E-mail: registrar@rov.sccgov.org Website: www.sccvote.org	Michael at (408) 299-7655
Solano	Laura Winslow, Registrar of Voters P.O. Box I Fairfield, CA 94533 (707) 421-6675 (707) 421-6678 Fax Hours 8:00am - 5:00pm E-mail: elections@solanocounty.com Website: http://www.solanocounty.com/elections	Joshua Collins at (707) 421-6675. Currently in process, apply immediately.
Sonoma	Janice Atkinson, Assistant Registrar of Voters 435 Fiscal Drive Santa Rosa, CA 95403 P O Box 11485 Santa Rosa, CA 95406-1485 (707) 565-6800 (707) 565-6843 Fax Hours 8:00am - 5:00pm Website: www.sonoma-county.org/regvoter/index.htm	Teri Bauer (707) 565-6817 Must have finalized list of polling places 88 days before election. The earlier the better.



Case Studies

BRIDGE Housing

In 2000, BRIDGE conducted voter registration drives at ten of their properties around the Bay Area. Efforts included sending a staff person to the property with voter registration forms, helping residents fill them out, and hand-delivering the completed forms back to the county election offices. BRIDGE had a fairly strong turnout (10-20 people) at each of these drives, but the majority of the residents were already registered, and they only registered 3-5 people at each of these events.

BRIDGE followed-up by providing resident managers with voter registration materials so that they could encourage new residents to register to vote through the lease-up process. BRIDGE also posted fliers a couple of weeks before the election reminding residents to vote and provided separate fliers with maps to the nearest polling place. BRIDGE has located polls at least three of the properties.

EAH

In early summer of an election year EAH sends out packets to their tenants that include voter registration applications. They also do a GOTV mailing and hold a contest and raffle afterward. EAH has found that absentee ballots are critical to ensuring that residents vote.

MHDC

In the past, MHDC has worked to educate and register residents by holding voter information workshops hosted by their resident coordinators. Using the Department of Elections list of registered voters, MHDC sets up a phone tree a week prior to the election reminding residents to vote. MHDC also holds a raffle for the residents who voted and prizes are given out.

Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition

Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition worked with county elections officials to have polling places located on their property sites. They also created an incentive program where property managers received bonuses for registering tenants to vote; however, the incentive program was not very successful in actually getting tenants registered.



Local League of Women Voter Offices in the Bay Area

Depending on your location the local League of Women Voters can:

- provide Pro/Con views on the upcoming ballot measures
- supply voter registration materials
- send someone to do an educational presentation on ballot measures at your site
- answer many of your voting related questions
- website to locate polling places: <http://www.lwv.org/voter/vote.cfm?pid=polling>

Alameda

P.O. Box 1645, Alameda, CA 94501
(510) 869-4969

Central San Mateo Co.

444 Peninsula Avenue #1, San Mateo, CA 94401
(650) 342-5853

Diablo Valley

500 St. Mary's Rd. #14, Lafayette, CA 94549
(925) 283-2235

Fremont/Newark/Union City

P.O. Box 8212, Fremont, CA 94537
(510) 794-5783

Los Altos/Mtn. View

97 Hillview Ave., Los Altos, CA 94022
(650) 941-4846

Marin County

412 D Street, San Rafael, CA 94901
(415) 459-0292

Berkeley/Albany/Emeryville

1414 University Ave. #D, Berkeley, CA 94702
(510) 843-8824

Cupertino-Sunnyvale

P.O. Box 2923, Sunnyvale, CA 94087
(408) 733-0454

Eden Area

5130 James Ave., Castro Valley, CA 94568
Contact Jean Gaylord at (510) 537 6722

Livermore/Amador Valley

P.O. Box 702, Livermore, CA 94551
(510) 443-8683

Los Gatos/Saratoga/Monte Sereno

P.O. Box 2865, Saratoga, CA 95070
(408) 867-8683

N. San Mateo County

P.O. Box 5734
S. S. Francisco, CA 94083
(650) 952-2981

**Oakland**

1305 Franklin St. Suite 311, Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 834-7640

Piedmont

206 Pacific Ave., Piedmont, CA 94611
(510) 653-0112

San Francisco

114 Sansome St. #513, SF, CA 94104
(415) 989-8683

Solano County

154 Flying Dutchman Ct., Vallejo, CA 94591
(707) 557-2283

S. San Mateo County

800 Alma St., Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 325-5780

Palo Alto

457 Kingsley Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301
(650) 327-9148

Richmond Area

1245 Navellier, El Cerrito, CA 94530
(510) 237-4039

San Jose/Santa Clara

P.O. Box 5374, San Jose, CA 95150
(408) 271-7163

Sonoma

2421 Coddington Center, Santa Rosa, CA 95401
(707) 546-5943



Voter Registration Resources

The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)

<http://www.nlihc.org/vrem>

- NLIHC's Voter Registration, Education and Mobilization project (VREM) outlines opportunities to participate in the events leading up to the November elections. Certain restrictions apply to 501 (c)(3) organizations (see handout "Permissible Election Activities Checklist") however, activities such as voter registration drives do not jeopardize your 501 (c)(3) status.
- Other resources on the NLIHC website include:
 - Contact information for groups working on voter mobilization
 - A list of important dates
 - Record keeping information
 - Voting rights information
 - Information on registering the homeless, public housing residents, tenants of project based units, and people at other social service agencies
 - How to host special events, including political forums
 - Voter campaign flyers and posters

Easy Voter Guide

<http://easyvoter.org>

- Provides free copies of a pamphlet that includes party and candidate descriptions, arguments for and against state propositions, and voter registration information. Available in many languages.

The National Coalition for the Homeless

<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/vote2004>

- Provides detailed information about registering homeless voters and mobilizing non-profit organizations.

Boston Vote

<http://bostonvote.org>

- An innovative non-profit organization aiming to increase voter turnout in Boston.

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Permissible Election Activities Checklist

501 (c)(3) public charity organizations are strictly forbidden from engaging in any political activity in support of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. The IRS will consider all of the facts and circumstances surrounding an activity to determine whether the activity violates this prohibition.

However, 501 (c)(3) public charity organizations can engage in nonpartisan voter education activity and in a limited amount of lobbying.

501 (c)(3)s MAY:

- engage in limited lobbying, including work on ballot measures
- conduct nonpartisan public education sessions about participation in the political process
- educate all of the candidates on public interest issues
- publish legislative scorecards (with certain restrictions)
- prepare candidate questionnaires and create voter guides (with certain restrictions)
- canvass the public on issues
- sponsor candidate debates (with certain restrictions)
- rent at fair market value mailing lists and facilities to other organizations, legislators, and candidates (with certain restrictions)
- conduct nonpartisan get-out-the-vote and voter registration drives
- establish a controlled 501 (c)(4) organization
- work with all political parties to get its positions included on the party's platform (with certain restrictions)

501 (c)(3)s MAY NOT:

- endorse candidates for public office
- make any campaign contributions
- make expenditures on behalf of candidates
- restrict rental of their mailing lists and facilities to certain candidates
- ask candidates to sign pledges on any issue (tacit endorsement)
- increase the volume or amount of incumbent criticism as election time approaches
- publish or communicate anything that explicitly or implicitly favors or opposes a candidate.

Note: This handout provides general guidelines only, and is intended to serve as an overview. Because the application of law is fact-sensitive and context is critical, it should not be relied upon as legal advice. Organizations should consult with their attorney to receive guidance on special rules governing their conduct.

Alliance for Justice
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Election Activities of individuals associated with 501 (c)(3) Organizations

The prohibition on partisan political campaign activity does not apply to the activities of officers, directors, or employees acting in their individual capacity. Staff may work on political campaigns outside work hours, or using their available leave time. However, leaders and volunteers may not use the facilities, equipment, personnel, or other resources of the organization to provide support or oppose a candidate or campaign.

Below are examples of instance when the actions of board members, officers, or employees can be seen as actions on behalf of the organization in a political campaign:

1. The director of an organization makes states biased for or against candidates for public office during an event sponsored by the organization or in any of its publications.
2. An employee of an organization wears a political button at a public event or function when acting on behalf of the organization.
3. An employee gives the organizations mailing list to a candidate
4. An organization permits a candidate to use the organizations office for a phone back with out charge.
5. A board of directors thanks an Executive Director for her work on behalf of a candidate.

An organization can help to protect itself from violating these laws by:

1. Requiring officers or employees acting as individuals engaged in partisan political activity to clearly state that they are acting in their individual capacity, not on behalf of the organization, and that any reference to their work for the organization is made only for identification purposes.
2. Notify employees of their limitation on use of their staff time and office facilities. Time sheets should reflect that an employee took leave to participate in partisan activity.
3. Disavowing any partisan actions or employees that appear to be authorized by the organization, taking steps to ensure such actions are not repeated. Such a disavowal should be in writing and done in a timely manner.

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Voting Rights

Help America Vote Act

In 2000, significant numbers of voters all over the country were disenfranchised in many ways. Since then, Congress has passed the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) in an effort to correct many technical errors found in the voting system. A key portion of the bill provides funds to states to upgrade outdated voting equipment. HAVA also set up many requirements to make voting easier and more accessible: machines must give voters the opportunity to fix any mistakes they might have made on their ballot, each polling place has at least one voting machine for the disabled, and each polling place must post a voter's bill of rights.

Of significant importance to advocates is **provisional voting**. According to new requirements, any eligible voter who shows up to the polls must be allowed to vote, even if his or her name does not show up on the voter registration rolls. Each 'provisional' vote will then be counted if it is confirmed that the voter should legitimately have been on the list of registered voters.

Advocates are highly encouraged to learn more about HAVA at The Civil Rights Coalition for the 21st Century's website: www.civilrights.org/issues/voting/details.cfm?id=11254.

In addition, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has a long history of advocating for improved voting rights of disenfranchised populations, and its website offers much useful information on voting rights: www.naacp.org/work/voter/voting_rights.shtml.

Rights of Homeless Voters

People who are homeless face special voting challenges. The National Coalition for the Homeless offers resources on number of issues low income and homeless voters might face.

For information addressing voter registration policies and practices that may impose requirements that interfere with or preclude registration by people who are homeless, such as requiring a residential address, mailing address, personal identification numbers or documents; requiring compliance with registration deadlines; and/or periodic "purging" of voter registration rolls, see www.nationalhomeless.org/vote2002/legalrights.html.

To review selected legal cases in which voting rights among low income and homeless individuals were ruled on, see www.nationalhomeless.org/vote2002/cases.html.

Each state has its own policies regarding homeless voter registration policies and laws. For a state-by-state review of homeless voter registration policies and laws, visit www.nationalhomeless.org/vote2002/state.html.