

**INTERFAITH VOTER
ENGAGEMENT
HANDBOOK**

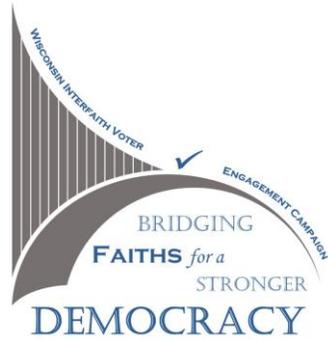
WISCONSIN INTERFAITH VOTER



ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

BRIDGING
FAITHS *for a*
STRONGER

DEMOCRACY



The Wisconsin Interfaith Civic Engagement Project:

Bridging Faiths for a Stronger Democracy

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1. The Wisconsin Interfaith Civic Engagement Project

The Wisconsin Council of Churches (WCC) and Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice (WVJ) are partnering to engage the interfaith community in the democratic process in 2020. It is our belief that engaging in this work will build increased understanding and stronger ties among different faith communities; increase engagement in the electoral process; and result in a greater understanding by faith communities of the influential role they can play in the public square. Our project will consist of five phases:

Outreach

The first phase of the project is outreach to promote project engagement. We will connect with a broad range of faith communities, including Christian, Jewish, Unitarian, Muslim, Baha'i, and Quaker, Buddhist and Sikh communities. We will also reach out to African American, Latinx, and Hmong congregations. Additionally, we will connect with community organizations serving minority and underserved populations, and target both urban and rural localities across the state.

Kickoff Meeting: Bridging Faiths for a Stronger Democracy

For real connections to be made among different communities, in-person interaction is necessary. On February 13, 2020, there will be an evening of dialogue which will explore what civic and democratic engagement means to those gathered, and how that connects to their faith. The event will include training on the historical intersection of faith and social justice, and challenges and opportunities for religious organizations to be engaged in the public square.

Voter Engagement Training

Throughout 2020, we will hold voter ambassador trainings and recruit trained individuals from the different faith communities and from within the communities we most want to reach – low-income, minority, and low-voter-turnout communities - to engage in voter registration drives and voter information events around the state.

Get out the Vote Plan of Action

We will facilitate faith communities' engagement in a variety of GOTV activities, including candidate forums, town hall meetings, voter registration drives, carpools to the polls, canvassing, etc. At voter registration events in the community, we will be deliberate in pairing people from different faith communities to work together. In this way, interfaith relationships will be strengthened through working together for a common purpose.

Evaluation and Lessons learned for Future Interfaith Organizing

The final, fifth phase of our project is evaluation. We will look for evidence that congregations in the target regions engaged in interfaith dialogue and partnered with faith communities other than their own on projects that increased civic engagement and had a positive impact on minority and underserved populations within their geographic region. A further mark of success will be evidence of plans for different faith communities continuing this work together beyond the life of our project.

2. Why faith-based civic engagement?

Faith-based civic engagement can help strengthen American civic life.



Faith In/And Democracy is a pilot funding and learning initiative led by Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE) to explore the ways faith and faith communities can support democracy and civic life. “With this project, we hope to uncover the power and potential of faith communities to ease the divisions that plague our political, civic, and social processes,” said Kristen Cambell, Executive Director of PACE. “At this decisive time for our democracy, we were humbled to learn about the depth and breadth of work happening at this important intersection, and are thrilled to amplify a piece of it through this effort.”

The “Faith In/And Democracy” grants come out of PACE (Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement) to support exploration of how faith and faith communities can support democracy and civic life. Wisconsin is one of only five states to receive this grant. You can read more about it at <http://www.pacefunders.org/faith/>. Because this is a pilot project, participating organizations will be asked to provide feedback at the end to help guide similar efforts in the future. In addition, we ask volunteers to record their activities and interfaith interactions as they work throughout the year.

People of faith are trusted messengers and are uniquely positioned to do this work.

“Civic engagement” refers to structured participation in secular institutions such as voting, ballot initiatives, issue advocacy, and public policy discussions. Since public policy issues often have moral and ethical implications, many faith traditions encourage their members to speak out in support of their values. Civic participation is a way for people of faith to ensure that their voices and commitment to social justice are heard. It is also a way to engage with the wider community to ensure that access to voting is a reality for all.

It sometimes appears that people are withdrawing from participation in civic life because they don’t know who to trust and don’t feel that their efforts will make any difference. But religious organizations remain trusted messengers for reliable nonpartisan information, grounded in the important values that their members share. Religious organizations and local nonprofits provide a strong organizational structure for meaningful involvement that cuts through the sense that nothing can be done. Research shows that people are most likely to participate in the civic life of their communities when they hear about it through people with whom they share a connection. Congregational life is a rich source of connection that is well-suited to civic engagement.

In addition, religious congregations are often connected with communities where people are less likely to be registered or less likely to vote, where connection and trust have already been established through service programs and partnership in local events. As the US Conference of Catholic Bishops writes, “Parishes are among the few institutions that can reach groups notably under-registered or under-represented in the political process.” These include low-income people, communities of color, linguistic communities, new citizens, and youth.

Civic engagement is an important part of many faith traditions.

Many faiths encourage their members to be active in civic affairs and voting. Examples include:



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

We are called to conversation and prayer around our role as U.S. residents and as people of faith in ensuring our election systems promote dignity and respect for all. ELCAvotes! is an initiative to:

- Expand the role of the church in encouraging faithful and non-partisan voter participation by providing faith based resources around voting;
- Provide a framework for all Lutherans to understand and speak out about the intersection of voting/elections, racial/gender and economic justice;
- Provide young adults the tools to understand and speak about what it means to be a young person of faith who is civically engaged; and
- Engage with and equip ethnic communities to talk about voting rights and race and their connection with elections today.

https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/ELCAVotes?_ga=2.159898877.19725565.1580435917-1487755959.1579818656



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

VOTER EDUCATION AND VOTER REGISTRATION

“In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in civic life is a moral obligation.” *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, No. 13.

Catholic social teaching strongly promotes active citizenship. Through our opportunities as citizens, we can help shape a world more committed to protecting human life and dignity and promoting justice and peace. In their statement *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the bishops state, "In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation" (No. 13). The following ideas and suggestions are designed to help parishes promote civic responsibility by offering non-partisan voter education rooted in the values of the Scriptures and Catholic teaching.

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/voter-education-and-voter->



MUSLIM GOTV is a national project of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, to encourage Muslim civic engagement and participation in national and state elections to amplify our community's voice on election day.

WHY VOTE?

YOUR RIGHT: If you don't use your right to vote, you may lose your right to vote.

YOUR VOICE: So you can complain with integrity.

VOTING COUNTS: We build our nation with votes.

CHAMPION: Encourages you to fight for Truth, Justice, and the American Way!

FUTURE: To set a good example for younger generations.

BE HEARD: Sit at the table or you get served.

<https://www.muslimsgotv.com/gotv-campaign/>



Honoring Oak Creek through Civic Engagement

On August 5, 2012, a morning of peaceful prayer was pierced with gunshots and terror. Six lives were lost at the hands of a hate-driven gunman at the Oak Creek, Wisconsin Gurdwara. Since then, neither the misguided hate nor the unnecessary violence has ceased. Sikh Americans are still too often viewed as not fully American. But, as we all know, Sikh Americans are as *American* anyone else – our religion speaks to the very essence of what makes America great and exceptional. As the fifth-largest religion in the world, Sikhism bears remarkable resemblance to American ideals: tenets of gender and racial equality, religious tolerance, helping one's neighbors, and serving those less fortunate....

It has been four years since the lives lost in Oak Creek. In honoring the lives lost, it is time to actively build a more positive future; one in which all communities are accepted and celebrated, and Sikh-American civic engagement is a step toward that future.

<https://www.sikhnet.com/news/honoring-oak-creek-through-civic-engagement>



The problems in our world often seem too big to confront. We see injustice every day and feel that change can't or won't happen. But our faith is infused with hope and built on a foundation of action. By serving the vulnerable, feeding the hungry, and standing in solidarity with the oppressed, we serve as God's hands.

Voting is a natural extension of faithful action. The decisions made by our representatives have a wide reaching impact. We have enormous potential to make positive change. We must engage our legislators, vote, and encourage everyone in our communities to do the same.

Our faithful voice is needed. It is tempting to disengage from the political process. As people dedicated to creating a just world for all, we know we must be involved.

Join the Our Faith, Our Vote campaign. Discover how your congregation can participate in the electoral process through faithful, nonpartisan engagement. The United Church of Christ can help with resources on civic engagement, voter registration information, issue education, and voter mobilization.

This election season it is essential that people raise their voices and vote. Will you join us?

<https://www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvote>



What is Jewish about voter engagement?

As we work together as the Reform Movement to fulfill the sacred mandate of tikkun olam, world repair, voter engagement is essential. As Jews and American citizens, we have an obligation to participate in elections to ensure that policies at the local, state and national levels bring us closer to achieving our vision of a world where all people experience justice, compassion and wholeness. Rabbi Yitzhak taught, "A ruler is not to be appointed unless the community is first consulted" (Talmud, Brakhot 55a). To ensure that our voices and commitment to social justice are heard in the public sphere, we must educate ourselves on the voting process, register and show up at the polls. We also have a responsibility to engage with our wider community to ensure that access to the vote is a reality for all.

<https://rac.org/rac-civic-engagement-campaign>



Quaker engagement in civic life is best exemplified by the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). FCNL describes itself as “a nonpartisan organization that seeks to live our values of integrity, simplicity, and peace as we build relationships across political divides to move policies forward.” The values on which FCNL bases its work are drawn from the Quaker testimonies: simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship. Quakers believe in living life in the spirit of love and truth and peace, reaching for the best in oneself and answering “that of God” in everyone. Quaker testimonies are expressions of the commitment to put those beliefs into practice.

In *The World We Seek: FCNL Statement of Legislative Policy*, FCNL emphasizes: Active and informed citizen participation in the political and electoral process is essential to the proper functioning of government. FCNL works directly with Members of Congress through its staff in Washington D.C. as well as supporting local Advocacy Teams, which develop relationships with their Members. Wisconsin has active Advocacy Teams in Madison and Milwaukee.

<https://www.fcnl.org/>

Interfaith collaboration strengthens our voice in the public square.

Interfaith civic engagement work is an opportunity to find strength in numbers. While building stronger ties among different faith communities, we can also arrive at a greater understanding of the influential role that faith communities can play in the public square.



The commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves informs all aspects of human life together. In today’s religiously diverse society, where religious disagreement is a given, unreserved respect for those of different religious traditions also needs to be a given. Treating neighbors who have differing religious outlooks as equal partners in a common human calling to promote the common good is a basic principle for governing interfaith relationships that is not only consistent with, but also commensurate with Christian belief....

The Wisconsin Council of Churches invites its member churches . . . to support ongoing work with related organizations and people of other religions in public policy advocacy and to initiate work in other program areas of common concern. -- *Loving our Neighbors: A Statement of the Wisconsin Council of Churches on Interfaith Relations* (2014)

<https://wichurches.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/LovingOurNeighbors.pdf>



Ecumenical and Interfaith Collaboration

“It is a Christian obligation to vote, and more than that, it is the church’s responsibility to help get souls to the polls.” – Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry

Christ demands of us the humility to remember that The Episcopal Church is not the only church, nor Christianity the only faith, revealing God's love in the world. The work of making God's kingdom known on earth will be done in collaboration with people from many paths. Inter-religious hate and intolerance are alive and ill in the world, bringing persecution and violence. The Church must respond with active love to create dialogue, understanding, and hope.

The Diocese of Milwaukee works towards unity among Christian denominations through active participation in the Wisconsin Council of Churches and among faiths through the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee.... At the national level, The Episcopal Church works towards worldwide Christian unity through participation in the World Council of Churches and ... offers fantastic resources for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue through their Office of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations.

<http://www.diomil.org/mission-and-ministry/ecumenical-and-interfaith-collaboration/>

3. How to develop a civic engagement program

Organizing your own congregation

Civic engagement projects are great tools for reaching out to all parts of your congregation.

Laying the groundwork:

- check for resources offered by your denomination at state and national level
- talk with clergy and lay leaders about your plan
- establish the nonpartisan nature of the effort and prepare a disclaimer for materials
- offer adult and youth classes, newsletter articles, and presentations to the congregation on how civic engagement is consistent with your values and other commitments
- identify a core working group
- decide what’s realistic and choose activities that work for your congregation
- set a goal, for example, making sure every eligible congregant is registered AND votes
- set a schedule, for example, organizing, training and volunteer recruitment in spring; voter registration and voter ID in spring and summer; GOTV in fall; publicity all year
- see section 4 for more details and suggestions on organizing within your congregation

Points to make:

- religious organizations and clergy are trusted messengers
- the most effective civic engagement is one-on-one with people you know
- this is nonpartisan: it’s about issues and values, not people or parties

- it can be good for all kinds of volunteers: public speaking, comfortable one-on-one, event organizers, behind the scenes mailings and phone calls

Activities within the congregation:

- offer voter registration at some congregational events
- distribute voter pledge cards
- provide outreach to those less likely to vote: young adults, college students, housebound, low-income, without transportation, people of color
- keep up publicity during the year through congregation newsletters & emails, signs, slogans and buttons, information about voter ID, early voting, election dates
- make sure absentees order their ballots: military, college, snowbirds
- offer rides to the polls and rides to DMV to get ID
- follow up on pledge cards and voter registrations to make sure people actually vote, using personal calls and postcards – 3 contacts per person is optimal
- evaluate your success and congratulate your members

Many denominations have their own online information on organizing a civic engagement campaign. See section 6 for resources from various denominations and nonpartisan nonprofits.

Finding community partners

The most effective voter registration, voter education, and get out the vote (GOTV) efforts are done with partners. Many congregations already have trusted local partners that they work with or serve. Many communities are home to nonpartisan organizations already involved in voter engagement work. Things to note:

- most efforts will be easier and more effective with a broader group
- decide what geographic area it makes sense to reach – rural areas sometimes have lower voting rates and would benefit from collaboration
- contact other area congregations and nonprofits that do voter engagement
- contact the League of Women Voters, Voter ID Coalition (in Dane County), and city clerks for training on voter registration and information to share
- in some areas, well-developed training programs are already underway and you can direct your volunteers there
- essential: do NOT coordinate with candidates, political parties, or partisan groups
- once you have some partners, set an initial meeting to discuss plans, communication, and sharing resources
- meet regularly to stay connected
- schedule time to work with members of other faiths

In Wisconsin, community partners doing civic engagement work include the League of Women Voters, NAACP, Voces de la Frontera, Centro Hispano, and the Urban League. See section 6 for more information.



Getting Ready & the Importance of Partnerships: The most effective voter registration, engagement, and Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts are done in partnership with community, state, and national partners. Many congregations already have justice partners whose efforts include voter outreach. Supporting their efforts from door knocking, data entry, phone calling, giving rides to the polls, renting vans, raising money and more is the best way to keep building the movement as we work for electoral justice in 2020.... There are also many democracy groups that work exclusively on combating voter suppression and increasing civic engagement. Partner groups can train congregational volunteers for voter registration activities from door knocking to data entry, obtain lists of unregistered and infrequent voters, provide maps, forms, and software, and track progress.

<https://www.uua.org/justice/vote2020>

Coordinating with the Wisconsin Interfaith Civic Engagement Project

Through this project, we want to learn how building relationships among faith communities, learning from the different teachings of our respective faiths regarding social justice and political action, and forming friendships across faith communities can inspire people to take action in the electoral process. We hope to build interfaith understanding and a shared knowledge of best practices. We want to learn how to educate people of faith so that they can be inspired and impelled by the teachings of their faith to get involved in the political process.

Because this is a grant-funded project that is exploring the effectiveness of interfaith civic engagement, we ask that you participate in collecting data about what you've done and providing feedback on how well it has worked. Your feedback will be needed until the end of the project in December.

We will provide:

- general information, referral to resources and other organizations
- local facilitators to help organize participants in several locations
- ideas for how to organize your efforts
- advice on what 501(c)3 organizations may and may not do under state and federal law

We ask you to:

- share new resources that you find
- work hard to develop and appreciate interfaith partners
- continue to find new partners in your community
- share your successful ideas and your thoughts on what to do differently next time
- call with questions
- keep data for evaluation – an activity log is included at the end of this packet

Questions? Call us!

- **Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice, 608-513-7121**
- **Wisconsin Council of Churches, 608-837-3108 ext. 22**

4. Menu of possible activities

Providing information to voters

Sharing timely, accurate information is one of the easiest and most useful things you can do in an election year. Voting requirements can be confusing and deadlines are easy to overlook. Misinformation and intimidation may inhibit people from voting. Whether you do outreach in your own congregation or in the broader community, people will appreciate getting solid information from a nonpartisan source.

Elements of a voter information campaign might include:

- looking for volunteers with skills in social media, publicity, graphic design
- setting up a schedule for publicity in newsletters, local papers, social media, etc.
- publicizing voter ID requirements ahead of time, since getting the proper photo ID can be a source of delay
- publicizing registration deadlines, where to register, availability of online registration
- publicizing election dates, early voting options, how to make absentee ballot requests, same-day registration
- using social media to offer frequent reminders and bits of good information
- sharing personal stories about the importance of voting or why your volunteers enjoy registering people to vote or canvassing
- publicizing when people may vote again following a felony conviction (https://elections.wi.gov/sites/default/files/publication/154/voting_guide_for_ex_felons_incarcerated_voters_pd_24428.pdf)
- holding an educational event like a film or speaker



In Wisconsin, we are fortunate to have several sources of good information. The state offers [MyVote](https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/), where residents can find all kinds of great information in English and Spanish:

- find out if they are currently registered to vote
- find out what proof of residence they will need to register
- find out what kinds of photo ID they will need to vote
- register online if their home address matches their information on file at DMV
- see registration deadlines
- update their name and address
- find out where their polling place is
- see what's on the ballot for the next election
- find out how to vote absentee
- sign up for calendar reminders

<https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/>



A frequent source of confusion is that Wisconsin law has different requirements for the ID needed to vote and the ID needed to register. When registering, a voter must provide **proof of residence** from a list of approved documents showing the voter’s current address. When going to the polls, voters must bring a photo ID as proof of **identification**, again choosing from a list of documents approved by state law. The Wisconsin Elections Commission’s “Bring It to the Ballot” website offers information on what types of photo ID will be acceptable on election day and how to get a free state ID if you don’t have one.

The Elections Commissions also has an information hotline: **1-866-VOTE-WIS**.

<https://bringit.wi.gov>



In Wisconsin, municipal or city clerks are the elected officials in charge of voter registration and elections. Before starting your campaign, talk to the clerks in the municipalities where you will be working to see if they have materials for you to use or special recommendations, forms, or requirements. Check the website of your municipal clerk for the following information:

- eligibility to vote
- how to register at the municipal clerk’s office
- clerk’s office hours, deadlines for registration
- options for early voting
- other sites for voter registration, such as libraries and colleges
- how to register by mail and submit proof of residence
- how to request absentee, overseas, and military ballots
- confidential voter registration
- information about voter ID
- whether they provide voter registration training

To find your municipal clerk, visit MyVoteWisconsin: <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/MyMunicipalClerk>.

Voter ID and voter registration

Working on a voter registration campaign can be quite gratifying, as you meet and encourage young voters, help new citizens exercise their new rights, and provide information to people who wonder if they’re eligible to vote. It’s also a good way to spend time getting to know people from other congregations and organizations as you sit together and support each other as you work.

However, this is an area where Wisconsin state law is very detailed, so it is essential that all volunteers have training and supervision before assisting with registration or offering advice.

Elements of a voter registration campaign might include:

- help with voter ID: share information, offer rides to DMV, refer to voter ID coalition
- send volunteers to voter registration training, pair up with experienced volunteers
- ask the city clerk to provide additional places to register, extend early voting hours, provide volunteer training
- look at maps for underrepresented areas, canvass to offer information about voter ID requirements and registration
- typical underrepresented populations: 18-year-olds, recently moved, college students, housebound, homeless, very rural areas, very urban areas
- provide information or registration in places where underrepresented people might go: colleges, senior centers, stores and malls, library, shelters and meal programs
- offer reminder postcards for newly registered people
- provide info about absentee voting: military, college students, snowbirds
- even if already registered, encourage people to go online and verify registration

The Madison city clerk provides **monthly trainings for volunteers** who wish to become “Voter Education Ambassadors”. This training prepares volunteers to offer voter registration at locations other than the municipal clerk’s office and sites staffed by the municipal clerk. The training is open to nonresidents of the City of Madison, but trainees should also consult with clerks in their home locations to find out about local differences.

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/clerk/elections-voting/election-officials/voter-education-ambassadors>

Voter registration training has in the past been provided by Coalition of Voting Organizations of Brown County and Indivisible Chippewa Valley.



The League of Women Voters is the nation’s largest and longest-standing grassroots voter registration organization. Their volunteers register hundreds of thousands of voters and host community voter registration drives across the country each year. They concentrate our registration drives at locations that reach large numbers of unregistered voters, including high schools and community colleges, transit hubs and naturalization ceremonies.

Before starting a voter registration drive in your community, be sure to see what the League of Women Voters is already doing and whether they offer any trainings for your volunteers to attend. It is also helpful to sign up for their mailing list to stay on top of local voter registration drives and candidate engagement events.

VOTE411.org is a project of the League of Women Voters. On their website you can find a lot of the same information that you’ll see on MyVote, explanations of some election processes and terms, and a list of upcoming debate and issues.

<https://www.lwv.org/elections/increasing-voter-registration>

The **League of Women Voters of Dane County** offers advanced voter registration trainings that build on the “Voter Education Ambassador” training offered by the Madison city clerk. Their follow-up training, *Everything you wanted to know about helping voters but were afraid to ask*, reviews and reinforces information from the VEA training and includes practice activities.

LWV of Dane County also has materials online, including the PowerPoint presentation from their training and video modules on specific topics such as online voter registration, paper registration, proof of residence, voter ID, behavior and communications, and registering UW students. They conduct outreach events at senior centers, food pantries, high schools, and colleges. Their website is filled with forms, checklists, training materials, event planning guides, and other resources.

<https://www.lwvdanecounty.org/voter-service>



The Voter ID Coalition of Dane County is a coalition of the League of Women Voters of Dane County, NAACP of Dane County, and a number of other partners, include Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice and First Unitarian Society Social Justice Ministry. The mission of the Coalition is to educate voters about the requirement to show an approved photo ID to receive a ballot on Election Day or when voting absentee. A specific goal is to identify voters who may not have an acceptable voter photo ID, and to arrange for direct assistance to those who need help obtaining one.

The Voter ID Coalition offers a statewide hotline for questions about voter ID. In Dane County, they also coordinate rides to DMV for people who need to apply for a state-issued photo ID card. Volunteers are needed around the state to staff the hotline. The Voter ID Coalition will provide training to volunteers.

- Voter ID hotline: 608-285-2141
- Rides to DMV: see <http://www.voteridwisconsin.org/rides-to-dmv>

<http://www.voteridwisconsin.org/>

Candidate engagement

While faith-based organizations must take care to stay nonpartisan, they may discuss the issues that matter to them and find out where candidates stand by giving candidates the opportunity to present their views and answer questions. This is most often accomplished through town halls, candidate forums, and questionnaires. These are good opportunities to coordinate with other faith-based and community nonprofits in order to draw a larger crowd and cover a broader range of issues.

The months leading up to an election present a unique opportunity to raise the profile of issues important to your community and build relationships with candidates running for elected office at the local, state, and national levels. Whether your congregation hosts its own nonpartisan candidate forum or debate, likely in partnership with others, or you attend an event planned by another organization in your community, there will be many opportunities for your congregation to learn about candidates and their views.

Engaging with candidates plays a critical role in your civic engagement strategy by educating your community on important social justice issues; creating and developing relationships with candidates; and building the power of your congregation.

<http://rac.org/sites/default/files/Candidate-Engagement-Toolkit.pdf>

The candidate engagement toolkit of the Religious Action Center also offers how-to guide on planning a nonpartisan candidate forum or debate, developing a turnout strategy, staying non-partisan, and follow-up ideas and strategies.

Getting out the vote before and on election day

September to election day is the time when most civic engagement campaigns hit their highest level of activity. During these months, you can expect to:

- train volunteers to remain nonpartisan as they interact with the public
- develop a publicity and social media campaign
- assemble information, print materials, order buttons
- publicize early voting and absentee voting options
- publicize registration deadlines and same-day registration
- keep training volunteers and registering voters
- organize rides to DMV to obtain voter ID
- organize rides to early voting or to the polls on election day
- canvass underrepresented areas to promote voting
- use voter lists to contact infrequent voters and encourage them to vote
- organize phone banks and step up one-to-one contacts
- plan a rally or hold signs to remind people to vote
- request announcements from the pulpit and at other meetings
- follow up on pledge cards





Get Out the Vote: An average election in the United States has around 60% of the eligible voting population turning out at the polls. There are a variety of reasons why people don't get out and vote: their job schedule does not allow it, they are away and didn't apply for an absentee ballot, disillusionment with the political atmosphere, among others. With the rise in popularity of suppressive voting legislation, we may see an even lower turnout than normal in this election.

Tell your neighbors: Remind your friends, neighbors, family members, and congregations to vote on November 6th. Let them know that voting is one of the best ways to make our voices heard. If the political system is not what they'd like it to be, they can change it through voting. Remind them that Election Day involves voting far more than the presidency - important local issues are also at stake. You and your friends can get together and organize a night of phone banking before the election to call the families in your church directory and remind them to vote.

Help out: Some people you know may not be able to make it to the polls. If you know of someone who does not drive, offer them a ride to their polling place on Election Day. If you know many people who don't drive, ask a few friends to volunteer. Single parents or working parents may not be able to leave their children alone to go to the polls. Offer to babysit.

Teach your kids: The largest block of eligible voters who don't turn out at the polls are young people. Start talking to your children (and nieces, nephews, friends' children, and grandchildren) about voting. Let your children know that their political opinions and their vote matters so future generations will turn out at the polls.

http://www.uccfiles.com/VoteFaithfully_Toolkit.pdf%20



Mobilization: How do we move our people?

- *Targeting* - Using specific metrics to build the universe to mobilize by county/precincts.
- *Data Collection* - Set up mechanisms to make asks of the targets to stand with you as a stakeholder (voter/volunteer/activist/member) and collect key information.
- *Communication and Digital* - Maximize electronic communication – Facebook, Email, Text Messages; Utilize direct Mail – Determine what type of mail program is useful; and Phone Banking - Run phone programs that target members and the general public.
- *Direct Voter Contact* - Engage members and the general public through direct contact.
- *Ladder of Engagement* - Build internal and external opportunities for activism and volunteerism. Examples, Ask contacts to volunteer to register a set number of new voters; Ask contacts to recruit friends & neighbors; Ask for commitment to walks, phone banks and GOTV efforts.

<https://naACP.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Turn-Out-2018-NAACP-GOTV-Guide.pptx>

5. Staying nonpartisan: 501(c)(3) dos and don'ts

Clergy and lay leaders sometimes express concern that involvement in secular political matters may alienate some members of the congregation or may threaten the organization's nonprofit tax status. However, by staying carefully nonpartisan and by grounding your work in the values and traditions of your denomination, you can do civic engagement work with confidence. The resource below offers a good summary of the basic rules.



Election Checklist for 501(c)(3) Public Charities: Ensuring Election Year Advocacy Efforts Remain Nonpartisan (adapted for Wisconsin)

Federal tax law explicitly prohibits activity by 501(c)(3) organizations that supports or opposes candidates for public office, but it also recognizes the importance of their participation in the democratic process. The law allows charities to engage in a wide variety of nonpartisan election-related activities, including voter registration and education as well as ballot measure campaigns.

The IRS prohibits what it calls “campaign intervention” by 501(c)(3) organizations. A 501(c)(3) organization may not help or hurt the chances for election of any particular candidate or group of candidates, regardless of political party affiliation. For instance, a 501(c)(3) could not campaign to get specific women or Latinos elected, even if they do not care whether the candidates are Republican, Democrat, or even if the election is non-partisan (no party affiliation).

A 501(c)(3)'s role during an election must be educational – and to encourage civic participation. Although there is a lot a 501(c)(3) can do around an election, the organization needs to stop short of directly or indirectly telling people how to vote or for whom to vote.

Permissible Election Activities by 501(c)(3) Public Charities

With certain restrictions, a 501(c)(3) MAY do the following:

- engage in limited lobbying
- continue to advocate for the organization's issues during an election year
- educate all of the candidates on public interest issues within the purview of the organization
- [criticize sitting elected officials](#), especially if the organization has a history of doing so
- publish [legislative scorecards](#)
- conduct nonpartisan public education sessions about participation in the political process
- prepare candidate [questionnaires and create voter guides](#)
- rent, at fair market value, mailing lists and facilities to other organizations, legislators, and candidates if an on-going activity and not only for a particular candidate or party
- conduct nonpartisan get-out-the-vote and voter registration drives
- canvass the public on issues
- sponsor [candidate debates](#)
- work with all political parties to get its positions included on the party's platform

- distribute communications in close proximity to the election that do not expressly advocate for the election or defeat of the candidate, but refer to a candidate (often described as “electioneering communications”)
- conduct [voter protection activities](#)
- establish an [affiliated 501\(c\)\(4\) organization](#), which can engage in partisan electoral activity as a secondary activity

The IRS considers [ballot measure advocacy to be lobbying](#), not election activity. However, the state of Wisconsin considers support or opposition to most ballot measures the same as supporting or opposing a candidate, and therefore this is prohibited activity for a non-profit in Wisconsin.

What 501(c)(3)s Cannot Do

While there are a number of activities 501(c)(3) public charities can do, there are a few activities they cannot do. 501(c)(3)s are prohibited from:

- endorsing candidates for public office
- making any campaign contributions (whether monetary or in-kind)
- making expenditures on behalf of candidates
- restricting rental of their mailing lists and facilities to certain candidates or engaging in such business transactions for the first time with candidates
- asking candidates to sign pledges on any issue
- increasing the volume or amount of criticism of sitting officials who are also candidates
- publishing or communicating anything that explicitly or implicitly favors or opposes a candidate or ballot measure in Wisconsin
- highlighting the differences between candidates for public office on a high-profile issue on which the candidates in an election have diverging views
- making a positive or critical reference to someone in his or her status as a candidate
- engaging in issue advocacy when your organization cannot articulate a clear non-electoral purpose for the activity or communication
- criticizing sitting legislators or other elected officials by attacking their personal characteristics or attacking them in their status as a candidate, rather than focusing on the substance of a policy issue

<https://www.bolderadvocacy.org/resource/election-checklist-for-501c3-public-charities-ensuring-election-year-advocacy-efforts-remain-nonpartisan/>

If you have additional questions about how to keep your civic engagement work nonpartisan, be sure to consult an attorney or call the Wisconsin Interfaith Civic Engagement Project for help. More information can be found at:

- Union for Reform Judaism Religious Action Center, *Rules for Nonprofits*, <https://rac.org/sites/default/files/Rules-for-Non-Profits.pdf>
- Pew Research Center, *Preaching Politics From the Pulpit*, <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/02/preaching-politics-from-the-pulpit-2012/>
- Nonprofit VOTE, *Nonprofits, Voting and Elections: A Guide to Nonpartisan Voter Engagement General Rules*, <https://www.nonprofitvote.org/nonprofits-voting-elections-online/general-rules/>

6. Contact information, resources, acknowledgments

Contact information

Project website: <https://interfaith-vote-wi.squarespace.com/>

Sponsoring Organizations:

Wisconsin Council of Churches
30 West Mifflin, Suite 602, Madison WI 53703
608-837-3108 ext. 22
<https://www.wichurches.org/>

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
c/o Madison Christian Community
7118 Old Sauk Road
Madison, WI 53717
608-513-7121
<https://wisconsinfaithvoicesforjustice.weebly.com/contact.html>

Project leaders:

Dr. Peter Bakken has been Justice and Witness Coordinator for the WCC since 2005. He received his Ph.D. in Theology from the University of Chicago Divinity School. He is the author of the WCC publication, *Hunger at Our Doorstep: A Study-Action Guide for Wisconsin Congregations* (2006; 2014) and co-author of *Becoming Welcoming Communities: Immigration in Light of Biblical Faith* (2011). Prior to joining the staff of WCC he was Coordinator of Outreach for the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies.

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis is President of WFVJ and Chair of the Wisconsin Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, a board member of the NAACP of Dane County, and a founder and organizer for the Dane Sanctuary Coalition. Rabbi Margulis holds a Masters in Judaic Studies from New York University, and was ordained at Hebrew Union College (HUC). Rabbi Margulis served as the Director of Clergy Programming for the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice from 1996 to 2008.

Sadat Abiri, founder, Muslim Women United for Peace, holds a Masters in Nursing with a specialty in Psychiatric Mental Health, a Masters in Public Health, and a graduate certificate in Global Health from the UW-Madison. Originally from Nigeria, she moved to Madison in 1981. Ms. Abiri is the recipient of the State of Wisconsin Governor's Minority Business Award and the YWCA Women of Distinction Award.

Websites and toolkits

You can find links to these and other resources on the Wisconsin Interfaith Voter Engagement Campaign website, <https://interfaith-vote-wi.squarespace.com/>

For information on organizing a civic engagement campaign, see:

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ten Easy Steps for Organizing a Non-partisan Voter Registration Drive*, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/voter-education-and-voter-registration.cfm>
- The Episcopal Church, *Vote Faithfully Election Engagement Toolkit*, https://episcopalchurch.org/files/ogr_vote_faithfully_2020_election_toolkit.pdf
- United Church of Christ, *Our Faith Our Vote*, <https://www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvote>
- Union for Reform Judaism Religious Action Center, *Voter Engagement Toolkit*, <http://rac.org/sites/default/files/Voter-Engagement-Toolkit.pdf>
- Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice, *2020 Get Out the Vote Toolkit*, <http://uusj.net/wp1/2020-get-out-the-vote-toolkit/>
- NAACP, *Civic Engagement Toolkit*, <https://naacp.org/campaigns/fighting-for-democracy/>
- Project VOTE, *Civic Engagement*, <https://www.projectvote.org/issues/civic-engagement/>
- PACE, *The Civic Engagement Primer*, <http://www.pacefunders.org/civic-engagement-primer/>

For information on voter ID and voter registration, see:

- Wisconsin Elections Commission, MyVote website, <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/>
- Wisconsin Elections Commission, Bring It to the Ballot website, <https://bringit.wi.gov>
- City of Madison Clerk, Voter Registration, <https://www.cityofmadison.com/clerk/elections-voting/voter-registration>
- League of Women Voters of Dane County, Voter Service, <https://www.lwvdanecounty.org/voter-service>
- Voter ID Coalition, <http://www.voteridwisconsin.org>

For training on voter registration assistance, see:

- City of Madison Clerk, Voter Ambassador Training, <https://www.cityofmadison.com/clerk/elections-voting/election-officials/voter-education-ambassadors>
- League of Women Voters of Dane County, Voter Service, <https://www.lwvdanecounty.org/voter-service>

Community Partners



Voces de la Frontera works to fight voter suppression and the historic marginalization of Latinx voters through voter registration drives and GOTV activities. Their website includes written information and video instructions for voter registration, in Spanish and English.

<https://vdlf.org/campaigns/get-out-the-vote/how-to-register-to-vote/>



The NAACP *Civic Engagement Toolkit* focuses voter registration, increased voter turn-out, and relational (one-to-one) organizing. The website offers a social media guide, shareable graphics and videos, guidance on using demographic information to target efforts, and PowerPoint presentations on voter registration and GOTV.

<https://naacp.org/campaigns/fighting-for-democracy/>



The League of Women Voters is the nation's largest and longest-standing grassroots voter registration organization. Their volunteers register hundreds of thousands of voters and host community voter registration drives across the country each year. They concentrate our registration drives at locations that reach large numbers of unregistered voters, including high schools and community colleges, transit hubs and naturalization ceremonies.

<https://www.lwv.org/elections/increasing-voter-registration>



The purpose of the Wisconsin Muslim Civic Alliance is to educate the Muslim community of Wisconsin and its allies in civics, democracy, and related issues, and to encourage participation in the electoral process. The long-term vision for this organization is to be an active, robust, respected member of the advocacy community; to be the resource of choice for issues related to voting and democracy for the Muslim community; and to build mutually beneficial partnerships with elected officials for the equality and advancement of the Wisconsin Muslim community.

<https://wisconsinmuslimcivicalliance.org/index.php/welcome/>

Activity log

To track our volunteer effort and report to our grant funder, we want to track all of the hours you spend on nonpartisan civic engagement activities as part of this project, from January 1, 2020 to November 30, 2020.

There is an activity log at the end of this handbook for you to fill out monthly when you have activity to report. Please send your sheets at the end of each month to intern@wichurches.org or upload them on our website at <https://interfaith-vote-wi.squarespace.com/>.

In addition, please comment on these questions each month if applicable:

- What efforts did you make to work with people of other faith or backgrounds?
- Which activities were especially successful or didn't turn out the way you planned?
- What additional resources do you need?

Acknowledgements

The Wisconsin Interfaith Civic Engagement Project wishes to thank:

- Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE) for funding this initiative.
- First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee, First United Methodist Church of Madison, and Bradford Community Church Unitarian Universalist in Kenosha for hosting our kickoff meeting.
- Our participating partners in this project.
- Our local facilitators.
- The organizations whose online materials appear in this booklet.
- Our interns Johnathan Roone Kozlowski and Daniel Phillips Garlock.

Activity Log - Wisconsin Interfaith Civic Engagement Project

Name: _____

Month: _____

Affiliation (group and town): _____

Instructions: To track our volunteer effort and report to our grant funder, please keep track of the hours you spend as part of this project, from January 1, 2020 to November 30, 2020. Hours from different days can go on the same line. **For example,** if you registered voters four times this month:

Voter registration		Totals
# hours worked	2, 2, 1.5, 3	8.5
# voters registered	7, 5, 4, 8	24
# other assistance	2, 0, 3, 3	8

Voter registration	<i>assisting registration, information, early voting, hotlines, rides to DMV</i>	Totals
# hours worked		
# voters you registered ¹		
# other assistance		
Training	<i>attending training or training others, preparation time & materials</i>	
# hours attending		
# hours training		
# people attending ²		
Events	<i>arranging or attending speakers, films, drives</i>	
# hours attending		
# hours preparing		
# people attending ³		
Get out the vote	<i>canvassing, info booths, rallies, phone banks, reminders, rides to polls</i>	
# hours worked		
Organizing, interfaith connections, publicity, and support	<i>arranging/attending meetings, emails and calls; developing interfaith connections; newsletter articles, pulpit announcements, social media; mailings, scheduling, website updates, pledge cards</i>	
# hours worked		

In addition, please comment each month if applicable:

- What efforts did you make to work with people of other faith or backgrounds?
- Which activities were especially successful or didn't turn out the way you planned?
- What additional resources do you need?

At the end of each month, please send your sheets to intern@wichurches.org or upload them on our website at <https://interfaith-vote-wi.squarespace.com/>.

¹ report the number of people you personally served

² only the trainer should report the number of people trained

³ only the event organizer should report the number of people attending