



American Center for Outreach

The Civic Process: Getting Out the Vote in Your Community

VOTER REGISTRATION

(WHAT IS IT? HOW TO USE IT?)

To exercise your right to vote, a citizen must register with local election officials. In Tennessee, a qualified voter must be properly registered no later than thirty (30) days before the election.

WHY VOTE?

As a voter, you can voice your opinion about issues that matter most to you. Registering to vote is the first step in a democratic process that ensures your voice will be heard. By voting, you will be able to show how you feel on some of the following topics:

- Equality
- Civil Rights
- Democracy
- Government for a better future
- Healthcare
- Values-based foreign policy
- Immigration policies
- Education
- Homeland Security policies



Above all, voters benefit from a reason to vote. Research demonstrates that voters are much more likely to vote when they sense something is at stake — to gain or to lose.

'Your vote matters'

Every vote cast plays a role in determining who will win and form the government, or which way a referendum issue is resolved.

'It is a citizen's right and duty to vote'

As part of a civic body, every citizen is granted political and legal rights of which voting is one. At the same time, every citizen in a democratic society is morally required to participate in order to ensure lawful, responsible and legitimate government.

'Voting is a "cool" thing to do'

The idea that voting is both an enjoyable activity, and even more so, an activity that is an attractive and desirable part of one's lifestyle.

VOTER QUALIFICATIONS

1. You must be a **citizen** of the United States, (18) years of age or older on or before the date of the next election.
2. You must be a resident of Tennessee. This means that you live in the state of Tennessee.
 - A. The residence of a person is the place where the person lives and is where, during periods of absence, the person definitely intends to return.
 - B. A person can have only one residence.
 - C. A change of residence is made not only by moving, but also by intent to remain in the new location permanently, and by demonstrating actions consistent with that intention.

VOTER ID LAW

Starting in 2012, registered voters in Tennessee will have to show government-issued photo identification in order to cast a ballot at the polls.

Acceptable forms of ID include:

- Tennessee driver license with a photo (current or expired)
- A driver license issued by another state (current or expired)
- U.S. passport
- Federal employee ID with photo
- State employee ID with photo (including those issued by state universities)
- U.S. military ID
- Gun permit card with a photo

* Student ID cards from state universities are NOT acceptable.



The new law requiring a government-issued photo ID to vote applies *only to those voting at polling places*. It does not apply to those casting absentee ballots under state law, including those age 65 or older who wish to vote absentee or those voting at licensed nursing homes.

HOW CAN I APPLY FOR A FREE PHOTO ID CARD?

Voters should visit a Tennessee driver services center and **request a free photo ID license for the purpose of voting**. When applying for a free photo ID license, voters must provide all of the following:

1. Proof of U.S. citizenship
2. Primary proof of identity
3. Secondary proof of identity
4. Two proofs of Tennessee residency
5. A Social Security Number or sworn affidavit if no Social Security Number has been issued
6. Proof of any name changes if different than name on primary ID

Note: Photocopies of any of the above documents are not acceptable.

For more information see the following website: <http://www.tn.gov/sos/election/qualifications.htm>

Example of a voter registration form: <http://www.tn.gov/sos/election/forms/ss-3010.pdf>

Example of a sample ballot: http://www.nashville.gov/vote/docs/ballots/pdf/110804_General1.pdf

WHERE TO VOTE?

To find out your voter status and where your voting precinct please visit <https://tnmap.state.tn.us/voterlookup/>

WHY REGISTER VOTERS?

Expand the Electorate

Elections are often determined by those who do NOT vote as much as by those who do. Nonprofit organizations often work with constituencies that are underrepresented in our democracy. Communities of color, low-income people, new Americans, young people, and people with disabilities are just a few examples of such groups. By reaching out to these constituencies, you can dramatically expand who is voting and whose concerns will be addressed. When communities are organized and empowered to vote, they find that their voices are more readily heard by their elected representatives.

Build the Base

In grassroots organizing and voter engagement, access to people is critical. Every nonprofit organization has a core base (the group of people who support you) from which to start – your staff, boards of directors, donors, and volunteers. To win victories that change people's lives, nonprofits need to expand this base by finding allies. Voter registration is an excellent way to do this. A voter registration drive gets nonprofits out into the community, contacting their constituencies and providing an outlet for people to become involved in your work. Because registered voters become part of public record, you can record the name and information of each new voter you register. In this way, voter registration becomes a critical way to build your list of supporters and identifies people to get out to vote.

Create Opportunities to Talk About Issues

Nonpartisan voter registration allows nonprofit organizations to create a community dialogue about the issues and challenges you are seeking to address. Nonpartisan voter registration is not about candidates or political parties; it is about connecting the issues that people care about to the power to do something about those issues. By making the connection between affordable housing, public safety, or health care and our elected decision-makers, nonprofits can turn concerned citizens into empowered voters.

Further the Mission of Your Organization

For nearly all nonprofit organizations, improving the lives of those served by the organization is core to the mission. A nonprofit can further this mission by equipping its constituents to participate in the electoral process. While it may seem like a step outside of the regular, day-to-day work of your nonprofit organization, imagine the impact on your work if every staff and board member, every volunteer, and every client voted.

In nonpartisan voter registration, a nonprofits' overall goal should include:

- Increasing voter turnout (the number of people who go to the polls)
- Expanding the electorate to include under-represented communities

From: Wellstone Action Fund

HOW TO REGISTER PEOPLE TO VOTE

1. Know the laws. Rules regulating voter registration vary from state to state. Be sure you understand who is eligible to register, and when. Deadlines for voter registration for various elections change every year. Make sure you have the most up to date information from your local Board of Elections.
2. Get the cards. The first step to get voter registration cards from your county or city elections office.
3. Be approachable. Bring colorful banners, wear t-shirts with a relevant message and your organization or campaign logo.
4. Ensure you have information and materials in relevant languages for your target audience. Have fliers available in English and relevant languages that explains why you are doing this and why it is so important.
5. Fill the card out with the person registering. Make sure that they fill it out properly and completely and that they use their full address, etc.
6. Take the card with you. If the person says they will mail the card, try to persuade voters to let you turn in their cards. Assure them that you are turning in many people's cards and that theirs will get to the right place in time.
7. Get their permission to contact them with information about the election and their polling place. You could have a separate clipboard sign-up for this purpose.
8. Remind the voter that they should bring their ID to the polls.
9. Hand-deliver the cards. Familiarize yourself with the laws regarding when, where, and how to deliver cards. These can vary widely and it is best to be safe.

UNDERSTANDING THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT IN THE U.S. AND TENNESSEE

Three Levels of Government

1. Federal Level:

Executive: President
Legislative: House of Representatives
Judicial: Supreme Court

2. State Level:

Executive: Governor
Legislative: General Assembly
Judicial: State Courts



3. Local (examples):

Nashville

Executive: Mayor Karl Dean

Legislative: Metro Council:

Judicial: Local City Courts

Knoxville

Executive: City Mayor Madeline Rogero

Legislative: Knoxville City Council

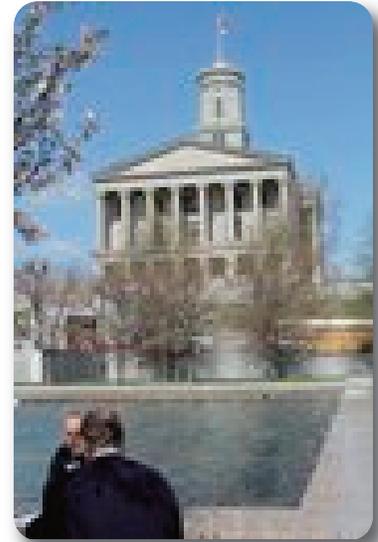
Judicial: City Courts

Memphis

Executive: City Mayor A C Wharton, Jr.

Legislative: Memphis City Council

Judicial: City Courts



**Note: Some areas of the state will have both city & county governments.*

As a citizen of your county, the state of Tennessee, and the United States you can vote for members of the following offices: city or county mayor, governor, representatives, senators, and president.

HOW VOTING WORKS

Party Caucuses

Caucus - closed meeting of party members in each state. Delegates select the party's choice for presidential candidate. Currently, six states, including Iowa and Nevada, hold party caucuses to select presidential nominees.

Presidential Primaries

Presidential Primary Elections - special elections in which voters select candidates to be the party's nominee for president in the general election.

Primary Season: January-June of election year

- State party organizations decide the rules for the primaries in a particular state

Closed Primary

- Voters may vote in a party's primary only if they are registered members of that party
- Examples: California, Florida, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania

Open Primary

- A registered voter may vote in any *party primary* regardless of his or her own party affiliation
- *Crossover voters* – voters who usually vote for one party, vote in the primary election of the other party
- Examples: Michigan, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Tennessee

General Election

- Voters decide which candidates will actually fill elective public offices
- Elections between candidates of opposing parties
- "The battle for the center" as candidates vie for independent, more moderate voters

From: Youth Leadership Initiative

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO VOTE?

- The power to elect candidates and influence decision makers.
- Urgency and Importance:
 - Research demonstrates that voters are much more likely to vote when they sense something is at stake — to gain or to lose. These voters not only believe that their vote will make a difference; they believe that the votes of their peers or community will have an impact as well.
 - The urgency and importance your nonprofit communicates will make a difference in how your staff and constituents view voting.
- Help your staff and constituents make a connection to what's on the ballot and how it can impact their lives.
- Good Issues to focus on: education, civil rights, homeland security, deficit, and health care.

Being Nonpartisan

Like all election activities, 501(c)(3) nonprofits must carry out voter registration on a nonpartisan basis. Additionally, being nonpartisan will benefit your voter engagement work. Nonpartisanship reinforces your organizational status as a trusted community institution that is respectful of the personal views of your clients and constituents. Finally, many new and infrequent voters are wary of partisan politics. Your nonpartisanship allows you to have conversations with your community that bring politics back to the real issues affecting their lives.

Whatever your personal views, being nonpartisan when representing your nonprofit is relatively straightforward and easy. But, be prepared for people to attempt to engage you in a partisan discussion. When training staff and volunteers to register voters, it can be helpful to role-play such a scenario.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Registrant: Who should I vote for?

Nonprofit Employee or Volunteer: Great question! However, we are a nonpartisan organization, not supporting any specific candidate or party. We just want to make sure that you have everything you need to access your right to vote and to select the candidate that is best for you. Here is some literature to help you find out more about the candidates and issues at stake in this election.

From: www.nonprofitvote.org

WHAT IS GET-OUT-THE VOTE (GOTV)?

Get Out the Vote efforts are typically started 2 – 3 weeks before Election Day. We focus on getting our community members who are registered to go vote at the polls through the use of several techniques including canvassing, phonebanking, etc.

What does nonpartisan GOTV look like?

- The emphasis is on participation, not partisanship. In nonpartisan GOTV efforts we invite organizations and individuals to come out on behalf of democracy itself. We ask people to vote “for themselves” at the same time they cast their ballot for a candidate
- Nonpartisan GOTV is celebratory, fun, engaging and inspiring. Organizers should pay attention to culture and use it to help people feel good about voting and helping others to vote. Invite musicians, clowns, artists, stilt-walkers and jugglers to share their talents. Have balloons, food and lots of photo-ops
- Nonpartisan GOTV builds community spirit. It is young and old working together - people of all races, faiths and backgrounds – joining together to make their community stronger
- Nonpartisan GOTV is focused on protecting the right to vote. It is uncompromising in its commitment to ensuring that every person who is eligible to vote is able to vote

From: *Wellstone Action Fund*

Canvassing Tips

The most effective way to directly engage voters is in a one-to-one conversation. Canvassing, or going door-to-door, is one of the best ways to convince a voter to support the campaign. Canvassing allows a campaign to personally deliver a message and provides individual interaction between the voter and the campaign. Going door to door brings campaigning to the streets and provides a personal touch, particularly when the volunteer knocking on your door is from your immediate neighborhood.

All volunteer canvassers should be briefed on facts about the issues, goals of the canvass, step-by-step training on what to say when talking to voters, and other helpful hints. Finally, the volunteers should receive well-organized walk kits that include a canvass script, walk sheets (the list of the voters they will be talking to), maps of the area that explicitly lay out the route, emergency contact numbers if questions arise, and instructions on how and where to turn in all materials at the end of the walk. Once out on a route, canvassers should keep in mind a few guidelines:

- Be polite, thank the person, and move on if you encounter someone hostile
- Do not enter the home of either a supporter or opponent; speed and efficiency are critical
- Be considerate and do not walk on people's yards
- Do not linger at a door if someone obviously does not have time or interest in talking
- Be mindful of your safety; travel in pairs when necessary
- Be sure to ask the person for his or her vote; if you don't ask for a vote, don't expect to get one
- Be sure to ask the person for their commitment to vote; if you don't ask for a vote, don't expect to get one.
- Do not go to random houses and addresses. Use a canvas list that was obtained through a voter database.
- Always have a partner who is also canvassing on the same street for safety reasons. We do not recommend that you enter anyone's home, even if invited.
- Knock on the door and/or ring the doorbell. Repeat twice and wait at least a few minutes to give voter time to get to the door.
- Introduce yourself and the organization you are with. Tell them that you are here to remind them to vote on Election Day. Provide them with any important materials that you have including their polling site information.
- Remain respectful even if the person treats you otherwise.
- Don't feel discouraged if not everyone opens the door for you. Remember that the other members of your team are also making phone calls

Voters respond to direct, personal contact that engages them in conversations about the issues that matter to them. This is best accomplished by trained, motivated volunteers from their own precinct who know the local issues and can develop leadership from the bottom up. By having multiple, direct, targeted conversations with voters at the precinct level, grassroots campaigns can win the right way.

— STEPS FOR RUNNING A CANVASSING CAMPAIGN PROVIDED BY WELLSTONE ACTION! —

Step 1: GET YOUR VOTER LIST

Choose what doors to knock on (and what to say):

Defining the canvassing program is a central component of developing your field plan. Any doorknocking that you do should be determined by this plan, which is all driven by the number of votes you need to win (in a partisan campaign) or your goals for increasing voter turnout (in a nonpartisan campaign).

A canvassing program can deploy campaign workers and volunteers in a given neighborhood to directly appeal to voters. Going door to door brings campaigning to the streets and provides a personal touch. Canvassing is done to identify voters' preferences as well as to persuade undecided voters. A canvass shows the voter a campaign in action and gives an impression of momentum. Being visible in a community also motivates a campaign's supporters and serves to unnerve the opposition.

The goals of the doorknock will be different depending on what phase of a campaign you are in (registering voters, identifying voter preferences, persuading voters, or get-out-the-vote), as will which doors you choose to knock on. Will you go to every house in a precinct? Undecideds only? People with a consistent voter history? People who need more contact to be persuaded to turn out? People who care about a specific issue?

Effective canvassing requires extensive advance work in the areas to be walked, and considerable time should be spent determining the best routes to canvass; walking in the opposition's strong areas is a waste of time and will ensure that a volunteer canvasser will not return in the future. The campaign needs to look at the makeup of the households and try to have canvassers reflect the areas in which they are working.

After answering these questions, based on your field plan, you can make strategic decisions about the content of the conversations you and your volunteers will have at the door, based on the specific audience.

Step 2: GET PREPARED

It's critical that you run a well-organized, well-prepared doorknock. Not only will it ensure effective, efficient contact with voters, but also provide a valuable volunteer experience and portray the campaign as having their stuff together.

A good doorknock operation starts with well organized walk packets. These key materials are what you give your volunteers and will help make sure they are successful in their conversations at the doors.

Walk packets should include:

1. Map - their "turf", or area that they will be expected to cover, should be clearly marked.
2. Walk lists - name and addresses of the people, based on targeting data, that the volunteer will be talking to today. This will correspond with the map.
3. Script - A guideline for the volunteer's conversations with voters (see more on scripts below)
4. Tally sheet - This is where volunteers will record the results of their conversations - who they actually spoke to, what they said, how many of them will vote for the candidate or come out to volunteer. This is the most important item in the packet!
5. Literature.
6. Talking points or special instructions.

Step 3: TRAIN YOUR VOLUNTEERS

On the day of the canvass, be sure to plan for plenty of time to train your volunteers before heading out to the doors. Be sure to thank them profusely for coming! Give a brief update on the campaign, and go over any talking points or key issues that have come up in recent canvasses.

Hold up a sample map and walk packet, and go over every component of the packet, paying close attention to how to interpret the walk sheets and record the data from their conversations.

Go over the script by modeling it aloud. Allow time for the volunteers to practice delivering the script to each other. Go over the campaign's key issue positions and messages, but also let your volunteers know that if they don't know the answer to a voter's question, that's ok. It's much better to say "I'm a volunteer and I am not sure about that. Can I make someone from the campaign gets back to you on that?" Be sure to keep track of any questions like this for follow-up after the doorknock.

Also, when training volunteers on how to deliver the script, be sure to emphasize a few points.

- Be confident going to the door, and assume support. If you assume that the voter won't be supportive and/or won't want you coming to their door, you are more likely to get that reaction.
- Maintain eye contact, and DO NOT READ the script. Volunteers should practice and be very comfortable with the script before heading for the doors.
- Control the conversation, and make it interactive. Be sure to actually respond to what the voter says, rather than just moving on to the next part in your script. Use the information you gain from the voter (what issue they care about, etc) to better connect their interests to your message.
- Make sure there is always an action step and a clear ask. Try to get a firm commitment, yes or no. Practice "making the ask" and stop talking - wait for the answer.
- Remember basic etiquette and courtesy. Don't step inside without being invited, walk across people's yards, or linger at a door if someone obviously doesn't have time or interest in talking.

Step 4: DEBRIEF AND COLLECT DATA

A volunteer doorknocking operation is only as good as the debrief at the end of the night and the data that you collect and enter back into your database. If you can't track that those conversations happened, then they might as well not have happened at all.

Make sure volunteers know that they need to bring their walk packets back at the end of the night, and provide a warm, comfortable space for them to gather, debrief, and add up their tallies for the night. As the organizer, be present and ask volunteers as they come back, "how did it go?" This is more than just being polite - your volunteers are on the front line of your campaign, hearing voter attitudes and issues. For small campaigns that don't have the resources for polling and focus groups, then your reaction at the doors is the only way to know if your message is resonating and how the campaign strategy is working.

As you have your volunteers tally up, a few measurements will be helpful for future field planning.

1. The total number of doors knocked on
2. The total number of contacts completed (people you actually spoke with)
3. The total number of new supporters identified

These are useful for a few reasons. First of all, if you divide the total number of contacts made by the total number of doors knocked, you can get your contact rate for that particular volunteer. This information can help you make more efficient voter contact.

You also want to make sure you are collecting all the data from the walk sheet, including voter IDs, issue IDs, requests for literature or lawn signs, donation pledges, etc.

Before sending volunteers home, be sure to recommit them for another doorknock in the future!

Step 5: DATA ENTRY AND PREPARE FOR NEXT KNOCK

It should go without saying that all the data that you collect from doorknocking needs to be quickly entered into your voter database, but unfortunately this sometimes forgotten or, more often, neglected and done in a haphazard way. It's vital that data on voter preferences, issue preferences, and other updates get data entered immediately so that it can be used to pull the lists for the next knock and reflects the most recent conversation voters have had at the door. For your next doorknock, use this newly updated data to target the voters you need to speak to and incorporate what you have already learned about them to have a more effective conversation with them at their door.

PHONEBANKING

Sample phone script for GOTV volunteers to encourage voters to go to the polls:

"I'm calling from the ACO GOTV campaign. It is so important for Muslim Americans to turn out at the polls, so please, remember to vote today. Polls are open from 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M., and your polling place will vary by region. Do you know where that is? Do you need a ride to the polling place? Thank you so much for your time and once again: please don't forget to vote today."

The most common way to get people to the polls is by calling them on the phone. The benefit of volunteer phoning is that it is free and that volunteers enjoy making these calls. On Election Day, phoning starts early in the morning and ends just before the polls close at night.

You can do this in the evenings and on weekends as not to interfere with your day to day operations.

Does calling people make any difference?

Research done on past "Get Out The Vote" drives shows that calling people significantly increases voter turnout. The effect is most powerful when voters are called on more than one occasion, including on the election day itself; and if the caller is able to establish a personal connection with the voter - that's what you should be aiming for. Calling also helps in simpler, logistical ways by helping identify people who need a ride to the polls, or who don't know where their polling station is.

Where can I make phone calls from?

You can call from any phone, anywhere in the United States. You will want to call from somewhere that you have access to the web so you can use this site to get phone numbers and record information about the calls you make. You can disconnect from the internet while you make a call if you need to. But you will need to re-connect again after completing the calls to submit information about how the call went. If you do need to disconnect from the internet when making calls, please click on the "Calling without a computer?" link in the navigation bar on the left of the page.

How many phone calls should I make?

You should aim to make as many, or as few, calls as you are able. While it is important to try to contact as many voters as possible, you should aim to make a real connection with each person you speak to, to ensure that he or she is willing and able to vote on November 6th. If you feel you need a bit of time to make that connection, you should feel right doing that and not just trying to call as many people as possible.

How long should each phone call take?

Each complete call should take you no more than a 2 or 3 minutes. If you strike up a good rapport with the person you have called you should feel comfortable talking for longer, particularly if you judge that it may help encourage the person to vote or even persuade some of his/her friends to vote.

What do I do if the person is not there?

If you are able to leave a message – either on an answering machine or with someone else at the number – please state briefly why you called and say that you, or a fellow volunteer will call again.

What do I do if I have to speak to someone other than the person I was trying to contact?

First ask to speak to the person you are trying to contact. If he or she is not there leave a short message explaining briefly why you called and ask if it would be okay if you, or a fellow volunteer called again. If the person you are speaking to sounds interested in what you are doing, please try to encourage them to go and vote as well.

What do I do if the person does not want to be called?

You should respect the person's desire not to be called. You should note that the person is "Not Interested – Don't Call".

From: VoterCall

SUPPLIES AND ITEMS NEEDED FOR GOTV VOLUNTEERS

- Pens
 - Plenty of clipboards (every canvasser should have a clipboard)
 - Access to a voter database
 - Call lists
 - Canvassing lists (names and addresses for registered voters in the designated area for GOTV campaign)
 - Phones
 - Sample call scripts
 - Fliers explaining the campaign
 - List of local polling sites
 - Contact information for campaign coordinators in case of any questions or concerns
 - A clear volunteer schedule so everyone is aware of who needs to be where at what time
 - Interpreters or bi-lingual volunteers available in relevant languages to ensure that all callers and canvassers can provide adequate information to potential voters.
 - Cards for the organization or GOTV headquarters to give to potential voters upon request
 - Water bottles and snacks for the long day ahead
 - Pledge cards if they are a part of your GOTV effort
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A. Political Educational Organizations

IRC 501(c)(4) requires that organizations operate primarily in promoting in some way the common good and general welfare of the people of the community. To meet this requirement, many IRC 501(c)(4) organizations engage in educating the community.

The rules for 501(c)(4) provide that an organization is operated exclusively for the promotion of social welfare if it is primarily engaged in promoting in some way the common good and general welfare of the people of the community, i.e., primarily for the purpose of bringing about civic betterment and social improvements.

In addition, monetary contributions or donations made to a 501(c)(4) are not tax deductible where donations to a 501(c)(3) are tax deductible.

For More Information Contact Us:



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