

A large, stylized illustration of the text "RALLY FOR OHIO" in red, 3D block letters. The letter "O" in "OHIO" contains a football. Below the letters, a man in a suit is running, and a man in a striped shirt is holding a sign that says "Vo". A small airplane is flying in the sky.



Welcome

Cleveland VOTES is a nonpartisan organization that believes in the power of community and networks. We help people learn about civic issues, connect with one another, and take action to build a more fair and equal democracy. We believe everyone should have the opportunity to participate in civic life, and that our democracy should reflect the people, cultures, histories, and experiences of our communities.

At Cleveland VOTES, we believe democracy is about more than voting in elections. It is something we practice every day. Democracy is shown in how we care for each other, share information, work together, speak up for our communities, and imagine a better future for everyone. At a time when many people feel disconnected or unsure about our institutions, building strong community relationships and supporting civic engagement is more important than ever.

Every day, the decisions made by leaders and institutions affect our lives. These decisions shape our neighborhoods, schools, health, safety, and opportunities. To create positive change, we need to stay informed, stay connected, and work together.

That is why Cleveland VOTES is committed to educating, empowering, and connecting communities across Northeast Ohio (and beyond). We do this through nonpartisan civic engagement, leadership development, partnerships, creative community events, and programs.

We believe everyone has a role in building a stronger democracy. Whether you organize your neighbors, create art, lead conversations, speak up for change, mentor young people, share resources, or simply want to get more involved, your voice matters and your actions make a difference.

This toolkit was created for individuals, organizations, community groups, and institutions that want to strengthen democracy, address unfair systems, and build a more just and inclusive future. While it reflects the civic landscape of 2026, including today's challenges and opportunities, we see it as a living resource that will continue to grow and change with our communities.

Thank you for being part of this work. Together, we can build a stronger democracy that works for everyone.



2026 Important Democracy Dates

Civic Holidays

Civic Holidays are nonpartisan days of action that strengthen and celebrate our country's democracy! They bring together a wide range of organizations and communities in pursuit of an America where everyone participates and votes. Each holiday accounts for a different phase of democratic participation: registering to vote, making a plan, casting a ballot, and thanking the community members who make elections possible. Together, the Civic Holidays celebrate the entire voting experience, from registration to casting your ballot.

September 15, 2026: [National Voter Registration Day](#)

October 5-9, 2026: [National Voter Education Week](#)

October 20, 2026: [Election Hero Day](#)

Oct. 27, 2026: [Vote Early Day](#)

2026 Midterm Election Key Dates

October 5, 2026 [by 9:00 p.m.]: Voter Registration Deadline for the 2026 Midterm General Election

October 6, 2026: Early In-Person and Absentee Voting Begins for the General Election

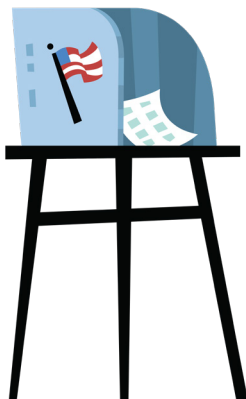
October 27, 2026: Deadline to Request an Absentee Ballot

November 3, 2026: Election Day and Absentee Ballots Postmark Deadline [Must be received by 7:30]

Options to Cast Your Ballot

There are **THREE** ways to cast your ballot:

-  **Vote by Mail or Absentee** (please note these terms are interchangeable)
-  **Early Voting** in person at your local Board of Elections
-  **In Person on Election Day** at your local polling precinct



Next pages will detail the process for each option.

Vote-by-Mail / Absentee

Voting by mail remains safe, secure, and accessible, but Ohio law has changed. Your absentee ballot must now be received by your Board of Elections by 7:30 PM on Election Day to be counted. Mailing it late could mean your ballot does not arrive in time.

Here's how to vote from home in 2026:

- Request your absentee ballot application as early as possible by visiting VoteOhio.gov [Absentee Ballot Application Form](#).
- Don't have a printer? No worries — you can handwrite the required information from the application onto a blank sheet of paper.
- Once completed, mail or deliver your application to your local Board of Elections. [Look up the address for the Board of Elections in your county](#).
- You will receive your ballot application in the mail.
- Absentee voting and ballot mailing begins:
October 6, 2026 for the November 3
General Election.
- Complete and return your completed ballot ASAP. You can:
 - Mail it back early (don't forget your stamps!), OR
 - Drop it off at your [local county Board of Elections](#) secure ballot drop box before 7:30 PM on Election Day.



Want to know the status of your ballot after you submit it? The Ohio SOS provides a [ballot tracker tool](#).

Early Voting In Person at Your Local Board of Elections

We encourage everyone to safely and confidently cast their ballot early whenever possible. There are many [proven benefits to early voting](#), such as reduced stress on the voting system on Election Day, shorter lines on Election Day, improved poll worker performance, early identification and correction of registration errors and voting system glitches, greater access to voting, and increased voter satisfaction.

General Election 2026 Early Voting Schedule

Begins: October 6, 2026

Ends: November 2, 2026



It's important that once you select the day you want to vote early that you look at the schedule to ensure your local Board of Elections is open. The hours do vary week to week during the early voting period. The [2026 Early Voting Schedule](#) can be seen below.

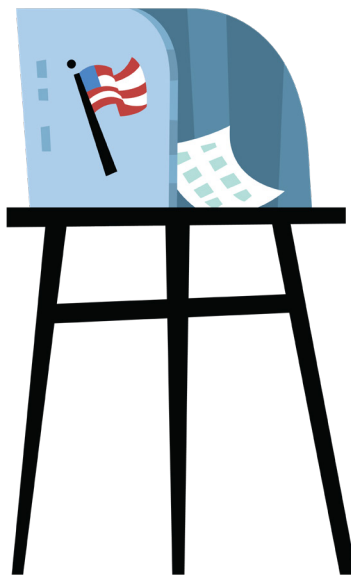
Weekdays*	October 6 - 23	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Saturday	October 24	8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Monday	October 26	7:30 AM - 7:30 PM
Tuesday	October 27	7:30 AM - 8:30 PM
Wednesday through Friday	October 28 - 30	7:30 AM - 7:30 PM
Saturday	October 31	8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Sunday	November 1	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Election Day Information

The General Election is **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2026.** *The polls are open from 6:30 AM – 7:30 PM.*

Before Election Day:

- Review your sample ballot
- Confirm your polling location
- Make your voting plan
- Bring an acceptable photo ID if voting in person



To learn more about how to get #ElectionReady, please review the Ohio Voter Checklist on the next page:

Ohio Voter Checklist

The links listed are trusted sources and will provide accurate information.

Check your registration: We recommend routinely checking your voter registration status to ensure you are active. The Secretary of State is required to conduct routine maintenance, and there are times when a voter may be erroneously removed from the voting rolls.

Update your registration: Be sure to update your registration if you have moved since the last election or have a name change.

Look up your sample ballot and check out **Vote411:** It's important to look up what will be on your ballot. There may be a unique issue that will appear on your ballot that's unique to your precinct or municipality.

Research issues and candidates: We highly recommend researching the candidates and issues you will see on your ballot. The two websites mentioned here will provide you information on both. And beyond these websites, be sure to review candidates and issue-specific websites. For example, **Ohio Fair Courts Alliance** provides helpful information on judicial races every election.

Check your polling location: Even if you've voted at the same polling precinct for the last 10+ years, please still confirm your location. Polling locations do close or change. If you show up to the wrong polling location, you may have to cast a provisional ballot which won't be counted until after election day.

Choose your **acceptable Ohio voter ID:** It's important that you decide in advance which voter identification you are going to bring to vote in person (early OR on Election Day). The current acceptable forms of identification are as follows:

- An Ohio driver's license
- An Ohio state ID card
- An interim identification form issued by the BMV
- A U.S. passport or passport card
- A U.S. military ID card, Ohio National Guard ID card or U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ID card



IMPORTANT! Don't have a voter ID?
Check out VoteRiders—they can help you get one for free!

Special Circumstances + Populations

All voters have the right to cast their ballot. There may be special circumstances, but that does not preclude you from fairly accessing your right to vote.

Voters with Disabilities

Accessible Absentee Voting

Ohio voters with disabilities can request an accessible absentee ballot, which is an absentee ballot in an accessible format that can be marked with assistive technology. This is a secure, safe, and accessible option to vote privately and independently.

[Access the Absentee Ballot Application for a Voter with a Disability.](#)

Accessible Voting Equipment

All polling places must include technology to assist voters with disabilities, such as:

- Audio ballots
- Braille and tactile lettering
- Large-print and zoom screen options
- Adjustable color contrast
- Adjustable screen height or tilt
- Sip-and-puff devices
- Touch-screen or button navigation



[Learn more about assistive voting technology in Ohio.](#)

Curbside Voting

If you are physically unable to enter a polling location due to a disability, you may vote curbside:

- Two election officials from opposite major parties will bring your ballot to your vehicle or to the door.
- To vote curbside during early voting, contact your county board of elections in advance to make arrangements.
- On Election Day, you may send someone inside to notify poll workers that you wish to vote curbside.



[Learn more about curbside voting.](#)

Issues on Election Day

If you or someone you know has a disability and you run into issues on Election Day, here are two numbers to have on hand:

- **ADA Coordinator for the Ohio Secretary of State**
614-387- 6039
- **Disability Rights Ohio Voter Hotline**
1-800-282-9181 [available on election day]
- **Election Protection Hotline**
1-866-OUR-VOTE

Voters Who Are Returning Citizens/Formerly Incarcerated

- If you are currently incarcerated for a felony, you cannot register or vote during incarceration.
- If you have two convictions for violating election laws, you are permanently barred from voting in Ohio.
- If you are convicted of a misdemeanor, you retain your right to vote.
- If you have a felony conviction but are on probation, parole, or community control, or have completed your sentence, you can register and vote.
- If your voter registration was canceled due to incarceration, you must re-register by the registration deadline before voting again.

More information may be found on the [Ohio Secretary of State website](#). And we encourage you to view the ACLU of Ohio's [Your Right to Vote page](#). You can even download [this card](#) or request print copies.



Voting While Hospitalized

If you or your minor child are hospitalized on Election Day due to an unforeseen accident or medical emergency:

Submit a completed absentee ballot request to your county board of elections by 3:00 p.m. on Election Day.

If you are hospitalized in the same county where you are registered, you can receive and return your ballot through:

- Two board of elections representatives, OR
- A qualifying relative (spouse, parent, sibling, child, stepparent, stepchild, grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, or in-law).

A qualifying relative may both deliver your ballot and return your completed ballot to the board office by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.



[Learn more about voting while hospitalized.](#)

Voting for Military and Overseas Citizens

If you are serving in the U.S. Armed Forces or living overseas, you can still vote in Ohio state and local elections. Federal laws protect your right to vote while away from home:

- Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)
- Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act

Ohio law extends these federal protections to state and local elections.



[Learn more about voting while overseas.](#)

Voting as a College Student

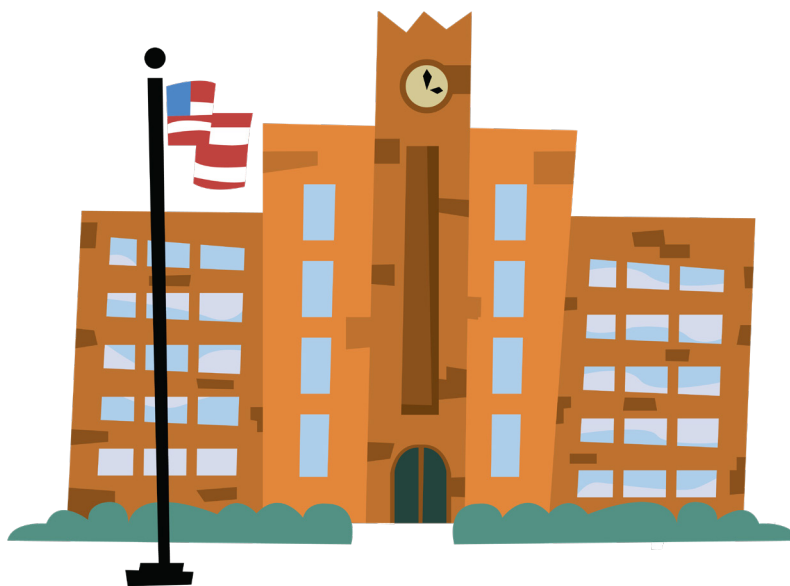
If you are a college student who goes to school in a different city from your hometown, you will need to decide if you want to vote in your hometown OR vote in the city your college is located.

Voting in Your Hometown Election

Though you may be living on or near campus during the school year, you can participate in your hometown elections even from out of state. You can do so by maintaining your permanent home address as your voting residence and casting your ballot by:

- [Requesting an absentee ballot](#) from your county board of elections and voting by mail; OR
- Voting early in person in the 28 days before a primary or general election at your [home county board of elections](#) if you won't be at home on Election Day; OR
- Going to your assigned polling location on Election Day.

It's good to plan ahead before you go away to school. For example, you can request your absentee ballot now from your hometown county board of elections to vote.



Voting from Your Campus Address

You may be able to vote from your campus address. [Please review the residency requirements for voter registration](#) or contact your [county board of elections](#) to discuss your specific circumstances.

If you are eligible and choose to vote in the election from your campus community, you must fill out a new [voter registration form](#) at least 30 days prior to the election using your campus address. This will cancel your hometown registration as you can only vote once in any given election.

Why Join the Movement?

Cleveland VOTES has been committed to expanding the definition of who is in fact a democracy builder. The absence of a 'title' should not stop anyone from joining the movement. Why? Because democracy and politics impact ALL of us. Whether you are an artist, business owner, healthcare worker, or a local librarian, decisions are being made daily that will either help or hinder your ability to serve your community.

Before you decide how you will show up for your community, it's important to ask yourself: What is my WHY? In other words, what does this moment mean to you, your neighbors and your community?

- Interested in quality education for your children? **Join the movement!**
- Do you believe in fair and equitable elections/voting rights? **Join the movement!**
- Should our communities be free from environmental hazards? **Join the movement!**
- Interested in ensuring that workers have safe working conditions? **Join the movement!**

Once you know why you are doing this work, you will need to find partners to do it with you. Remember that those who are closest to the issues often have the best ideas for solutions (or they are already creating their own solutions). In the following pages, you will find examples of both general best practices and suggestions for effectively selecting members of the community to join the movement with you.



Best Practices + Partners in Action:

General Suggestions

TIP: Understanding Your Assets

Before a company, government entity, local business and/or a local nonprofit organization begins to consider external strategies for equitable civic engagement, we recommend looking inward first. Organizations and even individuals often have many existing assets that you may be able to use when looking to elevate the Election or local issues of importance in your community or neighborhood. Always think of communication strategies as an opportunity to **educate and activate your audience and network**. The below suggestions may be adapted and applied to local small businesses, nonprofits or government agencies.

E-newsletters

E-newsletters are a great way to communicate key information, dates, and reminders to your constituents virtually. Also, to save time, consider creating graphics that can be easily repeated in both newsletters and on social media. Don't have the funds for a newsletter platform subscription? That's ok! There are some platforms that will let you send a certain amount of free messages, **such as [beehiiv](#), [Kit](#), and [Mailchimp](#)**.

You can either start a new newsletter dedicated solely to democracy news or you can devote a section of your current newsletter to it. For example, Cleveland VOTES has a section in our newsletter devoted to democracy headlines and election updates.

Digital + Social Media

Now more than ever, to maintain everyone's health and safety, we are leveraging our engagement via social media platforms. While social media provides opportunities to connect with community members and encourage meaningful engagement, these platforms can just as easily enable the spread of misinformation, making it even more important to communicate with purpose and consistency. Cleveland VOTES and our partners leverage the following strategies:

Before starting a digital campaign, take time to understand how your audience uses social media and which platforms they are most active on (Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Bluesky, WhatsApp, Reddit, or others). Knowing where your audience is and how they engage will help inform how you create and post content.

Understanding how your audience uses social media is a first step in establishing strategy. Strategy defines why you are using social media by identifying goals and desired outcomes. Your methods define how you will achieve those goals. By outlining both you create a more effective, coordinated, and effective digital presence.

Create S.M.A.R.T goals for your digital presence (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time bound)

Before creating any post, ask:

- What do we want someone to do?
- Who is this message for?
- Why does this matter to our community?

Every post should have one primary objective. Examples:

- Register to vote
- Attend a community meeting
- Learn about an issue
- Share information with neighbors
- Sign up for updates

Digital + Social Media Continued

Make Action-Oriented Content

People are more likely to engage when they know exactly what to do next.

Instead of: "Voting is important." Try: "Register to vote by October 6." Or "Join us Tuesday at 6 p.m. to learn about local issues."

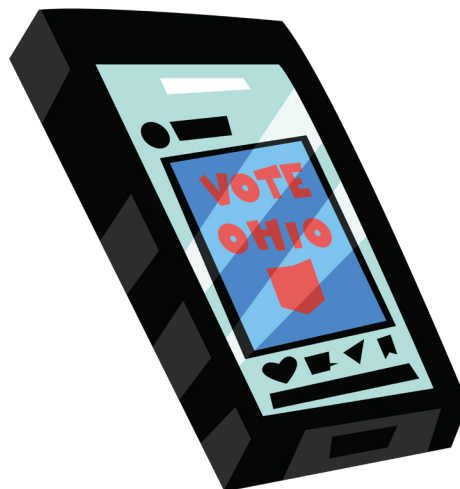
Lead With Why It Matters

Instead of saying: "The city council meets Tuesday." Try: "Decisions about parks, roads, and neighborhood investments happen at City Council meetings. Here's how you can participate." Connect civic engagement to everyday life.

Make content accessible. Accessibility helps everyone engage.

- Add captions to videos
- Include alt text for images when available
- Use CamelCase for hashtags (exp: #NationalVoterRegistrationDay)
- Maintain strong color contrast
- Avoid flashing graphics

Cleveland VOTES makes all of our social media graphics on [Canva](#), which offers some free templates if you are not able to afford a subscription. You can also use [Adobe Express](#).



Getting to the Polls

Getting registered to vote is only part of the voting journey. Unfortunately, not everyone has reliable transportation to get and from their polling locations. Because of that reason, consider amplifying free rides to your community. While the offerings for free rides may vary per election cycle - one resource we recommend is [RideShare2Vote](#). Additionally, the rideshare programs (Lyft and Uber) may offer free or discounted codes.

Hot Cards and Mailers

Unfortunately, in a day and age where technology and social media are heavily used, not everyone has access to those resources. We want to ensure we are being as accessible as possible to the constituents we serve. Keeping in mind that digital redlining (lack of broadband or internet connectivity) exists in certain communities. Therefore, it is important to provide the same content you share virtually to share in print. Consider sending mailers such as hot cards or printed community newsletters to your neighborhoods so they can stay up-to-date on current events and programs.

Below is an example voter pledge card we have available during election season. It is a great way to help people create a voting plan and provide additional information.

[Here is an example voter pledge card](#)



Internal Influencers

Who is a trusted voice within the organization? People listen to those they trust. Who is trusted within your organization and has a connection to the constituents you engage? Encourage them to do a short PSA! As followers are quickly scrolling through their social media feeds, data and research tell us that they are more likely to stop and watch a video.

Membership List Integration + Strategy

It's always important to start with existing constituent lists you may have and reach out to that audience first before engaging in external audiences. Using reminders like birthdates to provide a gentle reminder about voter registration status has been helpful for some partners.

Right to Protest

According to the [ACLU](#), “The First Amendment protects your right to assemble and express your views through protest. However, police and other government officials are allowed to place certain narrow restrictions on the exercise of speech rights”. Make sure you're prepared by brushing up on your rights before heading out into the streets. Be sure to check out the Protesters' Rights [resources](#).

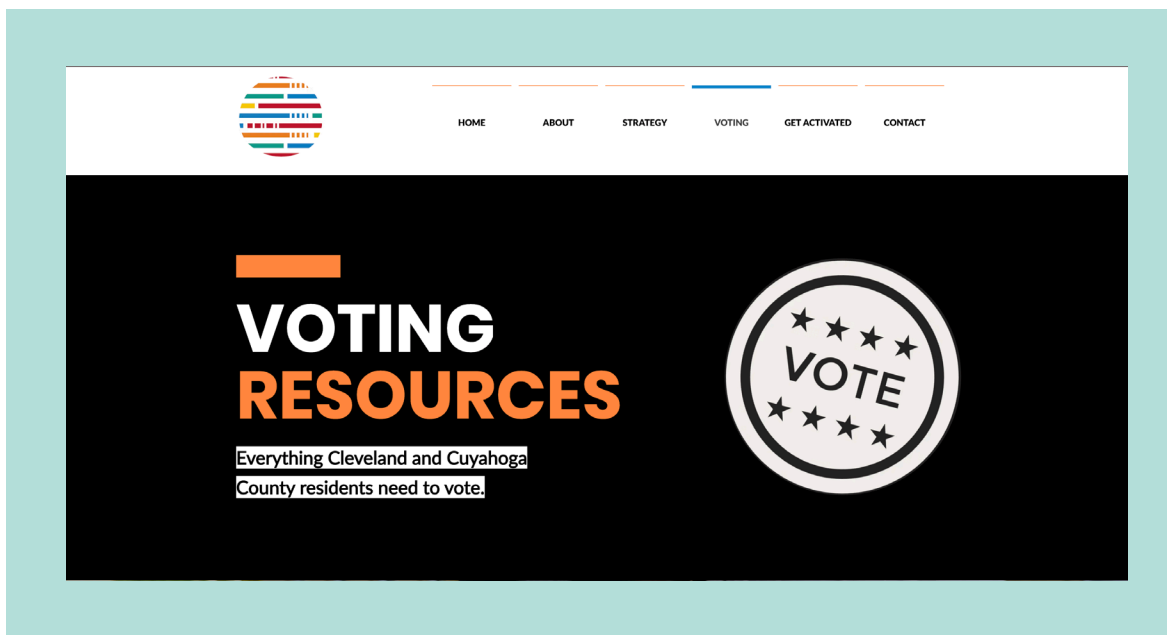


Voter Education Guides and Reports

It's vitally important that we provide voters fair, equitable, and trusting nonpartisan sources of information so they are ready to VOTE! Cleveland VOTES has been producing a voter guide for the past few years that is available in print or digital form. Check out our [2026 Election Guide](#). As the election gets closer, you may check with local organizations like your local League of Women Voters chapter. They often offer free information and resources—you just need to ask.

Website and Landing Pages

One mainstay that is often overlooked is your organization's website or landing page (in the case of campaigns). Cleveland VOTES and other partners have created [dedicated website pages](#) filled with pertinent information related to civic participation. Using resources like a lightbox to draw attention to your page can be helpful.



Some examples:

- [Vote 411](#) [League of Women Voters]
- [Power Your Vote](#) [NAACP]

Suggestions by Type of Entity

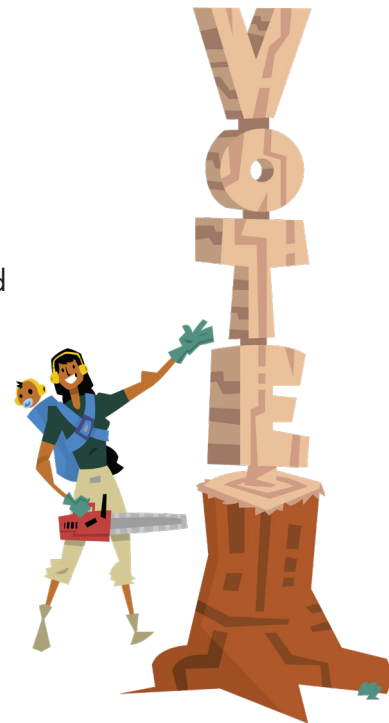
In this next section, we will break down specific suggestions based upon the type of entity you are or populations you support in the community.

Academia and Schools

Young adults and children are the future of our democracy. With civics no longer in our schools, contact your schools and voice that you want your students to learn about civic education. Explore programs such as [Alliance for Youth Action](#).

Artists, Creatives + Cultural Organizers

Artists, creatives and cultural organizers have a long standing relationship with the social justice movement. They play a vital role in social justice movements because they help turn ideas, experiences, and demands for change into stories, images, sounds, performances, and collective experiences that people can feel and understand. Cultural organizers go beyond simply creating art. They often connect creative practice with grassroots organizing. They may bring artists into campaigns, coordinate cultural events, develop movement messaging, build partnerships between organizations, and make sure that community members themselves have opportunities to tell their stories. While Cleveland VOTES offers its own creative activism program locally, we also look to national organizations such as the [Center for Artistic Activism](#) and [The Center for Cultural Power](#) for inspiration and validation that artists/creatives/cultural organizers are essential to the movement. Ohio's creative ecosystem also has trailblazing organizations such as [Creative Ohio](#), [Maroon Arts Group](#) and [Deep Roots Art Gallery](#).



Businesses

Businesses of all sizes can help strengthen civic participation by supporting employees and customers during election seasons. Initiatives like [Time to Vote](#) and [the Civic Alliance](#) have demonstrated how employers can create workplace cultures that value civic engagement and community participation.

Businesses can support democracy by:

- Encouraging employees to make a voting plan
- Sharing nonpartisan election information
- Providing flexibility for voting or poll working
- Displaying voter information in storefronts or digital spaces
- Partnering with local civic organizations on outreach efforts

Democracy works best when participation is accessible, informed, and supported across every sector of our communities. Cleveland VOTES has been fortunate to partner with local small businesses such as [ThirdSpace Action Lab](#), [Roaming Biscuit](#), [Mason Creamery](#) and [Opus 216](#) (just to name a few!). Each has leveraged their audience and customer base to celebrate and appreciate the importance of civic engagement as it relates to our community's civic health.



Cleveland VOTES' 2024 "Time off to Vote" Campaign



Employers-
Pledge to giving time off on Election Day!

CLEVELAND VOTES

With Election Day right around the corner, we are urging employers to consider providing time off to their employees on November 5, 2024.

Pledge now at
bit.ly/PledgeTimeOff

THESE ORGANIZATIONS HAVE PLEDGED TO GIVE THEIR EMPLOYEES TIME OFF TO VOTE

- ThirdSpace Action Lab
- Let's Make a Change
- Smart Development
- Ohio Environmental Council
- Plexus LGBT + Allied Chamber of Commerce
- Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless
- Neighborhood Leadership Institute
- Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park
- Cleveland Leadership Center
- Young Latino Network
- Cleveland Branch NAACP
- MidTown Cleveland
- Cleveland Owns
- Towards Employment

CLEVELAND VOTES

THESE ORGANIZATIONS HAVE PLEDGED TO GIVE THEIR EMPLOYEES TIME OFF TO VOTE

- Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation
- Fellows + Associates, LLC
- OPAWL - Building AAPI Feminist Leadership
- Tremont West Development Corp.
- MyCom Cleveland
- Union Miles Development Corp.
- Karamu House

CLEVELAND VOTES

PLEDGE TIME OFF FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES NOW AT:

[BIT.LY/PLEDGETIMEOFF](https://bit.ly/pledgetimeoff)

CLEVELAND VOTES

Community Development Corporations (CDCs)

Community Development Corporations (CDCs) are deeply rooted neighborhood institutions that often serve as trusted connectors between residents, resources, and local decision-making processes. Across Cleveland and Northeast Ohio, CDCs continue to play a vital role in strengthening community voice and civic participation.



As direct community resources, CDCs can support civic engagement by:

- Serving as trusted hubs for nonpartisan election information
- Providing access to vote-by-mail applications and voter registration materials
- Hosting civic education events, candidate forums, or neighborhood conversations
- Sharing information about local issues, public meetings, and voting opportunities
- Partnering with grassroots organizations and resident leaders to increase participation

Because CDCs are embedded within neighborhoods and maintain long-standing relationships with residents, they are uniquely positioned to help build civic muscle and strengthen local democratic participation year-round.

The Divine Nine/Black Fraternities and Sororities

The Divine Nine continues to serve our community through the power of community service and activism. Consider reaching out to a local chapter and their social action chairperson to conduct voter registration drives or forums. Cleveland VOTES has provided small grants to several of our local Divine Nine organizations over the past decade to help them with their voter engagement efforts.

Faith-Based Community

Cleveland has an extensive history of a powerful faith-based community. Consider using your faith-based community to help encourage your community to get registered to vote and host vote registration drives in your parking lot. Faith institutions can also be great neutral locations for civic events. In 2025, one of our local churches let us host a local candidate forum at their campus.



Food-Based Businesses + Health and Human Service Organizations

Food-based businesses, mutual aid groups, health organizations, and human service providers are often deeply trusted by the communities they serve. These spaces can help expand access to important civic information in accessible and community-centered ways.

Organizations and businesses can:

- Include nonpartisan voter information with takeout, delivery, or service materials
- Display election information in storefronts, waiting rooms, or community spaces
- Share reminders about voter registration deadlines and early voting
- Partner with local civic organizations to distribute trusted resources
- Encourage conversations about community needs and local issues

These organizations meet people where they already are, helping strengthen civic participation and community connections year round.

Hospitals + Healthcare Centers

Healthcare workers and institutions continue to play an important role in supporting healthy, informed, and civically engaged communities. While patient care, privacy, and accessibility remain top priorities, many healthcare providers across the country have found meaningful and nonpartisan ways to integrate civic engagement into their work.



Healthcare systems, clinics, and care providers can support civic participation by:

- Sharing trusted nonpartisan voter information with patients and staff
- Providing voter registration resources in waiting areas or community spaces
- Encouraging civic participation as part of overall community wellbeing
- Offering information about vote-by-mail, early voting, and Election Day resources
- Partnering with local civic organizations to increase access to information and engagement opportunities

Cleveland VOTES Example: In 2026, Cleveland VOTES along with partners hosted the People's Solutions Lab. The event was held at Care Alliance Health Center - Central Neighborhood Clinic.

CIVIC HEALTH RX
Civic Engagement Prescription
Powered by the partners of the People's Solutions Lab

Patient Name: _____
Prescription (pick one or more):

- ☐ Attend a local government meeting (maybe even provide a public comment!)
- ☐ Volunteer with a democracy organization
- ☐ Register to vote or verify your registration
- ☐ Contact an elected representative about an issue you care about
- ☐ Participate in a neighborhood event
- ☐ Learn about a local issue and discuss it with a friend
- ☐ Other: _____

Possible Side Effects: • Increased awareness • Meeting interesting neighbors • Feeling empowered to make change	Take With: ⊗ Curiosity ⊗ Respect ⊗ Community spirit
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No generic substitute available.

Follow up appointment _____ **GOTV! ELECTION DAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2026**

CLEVELAND FREEDOM DREAMS COALITION **D** Care Alliance CLEVELAND VOTES NAACP VOTING GUIDE

Organizations such as [Vot-ER](#) continue to provide tools and resources designed specifically for healthcare settings, helping provider

CASE STUDY: Vot-ER “Vote Like Our Health Depends On It”

In recent election cycles, healthcare workers across the country mobilized to support civic participation through initiatives like Vot-ER. Physicians, nurses, physician assistants, social workers, and healthcare staff found creative ways to safely encourage patients and families to access voter registration and election information.

Programs like the Vot-ER Democracy Health Kit provide healthcare facilities with practical tools to support nonpartisan civic engagement efforts while maintaining patient trust, safety, and accessibility. The growing connection between civic engagement and community health reminds us that healthy democracies and healthy communities are deeply interconnected.

Libraries

Libraries remain some of the most trusted civic spaces in our communities. Beyond serving as centers for learning and access to information, libraries can help residents navigate elections, understand civic processes, and connect to reliable resources.

Libraries may consider:

- Displaying voter registration and election information prominently
- Hosting civic education workshops or community conversations
- Sharing information about early voting, vote-by-mail, and polling locations
- Providing computer and internet access for voter registration or ballot tracking
- Creating resource tables focused on local democracy and civic engagement



Even small actions can help create a more informed and connected community.

Local Government

Local government plays a vital role in delivering services and improving the well-being of communities. Our local government agencies serve and interact with thousands of constituents on an annual basis. Civic engagement complements this role by allowing citizens to participate in decision-making and contribute to community development. Together, effective local government and active civic participation create a more responsive, democratic, and thriving society. Below you will find a few reasons why this is so important:

- Increases government accountability and transparency.
- Ensures that community needs and concerns are represented.
- Builds stronger, safer, and more connected communities.
- Encourages cooperation between citizens and local leaders.
- Helps create better public policies and services.

According to the [National League of Cities](#), “Municipalities are reimagining civic engagement by increasing opportunities to hear resident voices through deliberation, taking conversation outside of city hall, uplifting community-led conversations and thoughtfully deploying technology for greater reach and impact”. Some of these approaches include:

- Adopting Participatory Democracy Strategies
- Increasing Deliberation
- Engaging Outside City Hall
- Supporting Community-Led Dialogue
- Using Technology for Deeper Engagement

The [National Civic League](#) views engagement as more than presenting information or having people respond to questionnaires (though both are important)---instead, we promote efforts that seek to listen to, and learn from, residents in ongoing conversations and leverage those insights to shape the way programs are administered, designed and executed.



Nonprofit Organizations

In 2026, nonprofit organizations continue to play a critical role in strengthening democracy and civic participation. Across the country, nonprofit leaders and staff are helping ensure communities have access to trusted information, civic education, and opportunities to engage beyond Election Day. In fact, [a recent study](#) noted that, “Americans expressed strong support for nonprofit organizations facilitating civic engagement through activities like registering voters and educating communities about voting rights”.

Organizations can support democracy-building in many ways, including:

- Sharing nonpartisan voter information with staff, volunteers, and community members
- Encouraging voter registration and early voting
- Hosting civic education events or conversations
- Offering flexible scheduling on Election Day when possible
- Creating spaces for community dialogue, reflection, and action

Nonprofits are uniquely positioned to help build civic muscle by connecting people to the tools, relationships, and information needed to participate in community decision-making and democratic life.

Before launching any type of effort, we recommend discussing this with your Executive Director and Board of Directors. As a registered nonprofit organization, there are guidelines you must adhere to ensure your complying with IRS regulations.

Recommended Organizations!

- [Alliance for Justice - Bolder Advocacy](#)
- [Nonprofit Vote](#)



Other Recommendations

Election Protection

EVERY voter deserves an equitable, safe and smooth voting process. However, we know that is not always the case. Thankfully we have great resources that voters can access to report any challenges or issues.

Nationally, there is a nonpartisan [Election Protection](#) coalition that works year-round to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to vote and have that vote count. Made up of more than 100 local, state, and national partners, Election Protection uses a wide range of tools and activities to protect, advance, and defend the right to vote. Election Protection provides



Americans from coast to coast with comprehensive information and assistance at all stages of voting – from registration to absentee and early voting, to casting a vote at the polls, to overcoming obstacles to their participation. Election Protection helps voters make sure their vote is counted through a number of resources, including:

- English: 866-OUR-VOTE – Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
- Spanish/English: 888-VE-Y-VOTA – NALEO Educational Fund
- Arabic/English: 844-YALLA-US – Arab American Institute (AAI)
- Asian Languages/English: 888-API-VOTE – APIAVote & Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC)
- Voter protection field programs: legal – managed by the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and grassroots managed by Common Cause

And in Ohio, we’re fortunate to have our own Voting Rights Coalition that serves as the lead year-round. [The Ohio Voting Rights Coalition \(OVR\)](#) work is motivated by the firm belief that our democracy is strongest when it includes us all. Accordingly, we prioritize supporting communities that are most likely to experience barriers to voting — young voters (18-35), low-income, Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), as well as voters with disabilities, rural voters who may lack access to broadband or transportation, unhoused voters, and citizens for whom English is not a first language. OVR also advocates for increased fairness and transparency throughout government to ensure that when we vote, our elections are meaningful. That means pushing to shine a light on the dark money that distorts our elections, and advocating for campaign finance, ethics, and redistricting reform to ensure our elected officials are accountable first and foremost to their constituents.

Poll Workers

Poll Workers are an essential part of ensuring that we have fair and equitable elections. We highly encourage community members to consider applying for these seasonal roles.

To work at the polls, you must be:

- 17 years of age by Election Day
- Registered to vote
- Complete Poll Worker training, which you will be paid to attend

On Election Day, you will:

- Help voters sign in and find their voting location
- Make sure voting machines are working properly
- Help enforce the rules that maintain the fairness and security of the day's election
- Work from 6 a.m. until your polling place finishes tallying votes, which would be sometime after 8p.m.

[Sign up to be a Poll Worker.](#)



Closing Reflections

Cleveland VOTES is proud to work alongside an incredible network of people and organizations across Ohio who are committed to strengthening democracy. We are members of this community, and we are dedicated to creating positive change. We also know that this work cannot be done alone. Every day, we are inspired by the community members and partners we have built strong, genuine relationships with over the years. Their curiosity, creativity, courage, resilience, and determination remind us that a fair and equal democracy is possible. Because of them, we remain hopeful that together we can create the change our communities deserve.

It is clear that democracy is facing serious challenges across our state and in the country. While today's political divisions may feel especially strong, this is not the first time our nation has struggled to live up to the promise of a fair and equal democracy. The challenges we see today are connected to our country's long and complicated history. Building a stronger democracy requires honesty about our past and a willingness to learn from it. When we fail to recognize the root causes of inequality, racial injustice and unequal access to power continue to affect our communities.

Even with these challenges, we believe in the power of people to come together and make a difference. Holding on to hope is more important than ever, especially after everything our country, our state, and our city have been through. We are grateful to work with DEDICATED and CREATIVE partners—including you—who are committed to building a more fair and inclusive democracy for everyone in our community. As you work to build a better democracy in your communities, remember to have fun. And remember that you are not building alone!



Credits:

Cleveland VOTES is incredibly grateful to the [Joyce Foundation](#) for their investment in both our democracy building work at-large, as well as our creative activism strategy. Their investment allowed our organization to engage the immensely talented illustrator, Alesha Williams which allowed us to reimagine a creative way to re-introduce this toolkit.

Alesha Williams is an illustrator, Designer, and Educator from Cleveland, Ohio. She earned her BFA in Illustration from Columbus College of Art and Design and her MFA in Visual Communication Design from Kent State University. Alesha is an advocate for Diversity and Inclusion, and she combines her many interests in her research, which focuses on character design and the representation of marginalized and minority characters in comic books. Her research examines how minority identities are constructed and characterized in comic books, and which methods are used to create more effective representations of marginalized characters. Alesha has taught at Kent State University, Columbus College of Art and Design, and many youth art programs around Ohio. Organizations she designed include Cleveland Magazine, Uhuru Magazine, Kent Cycle, Compass Consulting Services LLC, Daniels Family Incubator, Western New York Comic Arts, and Sequential Potential LLC.

Currently, Alesha is an assistant professor at Rochester Institute of Technology and is writing and illustrating her comic series called God Don't Listen to the Blues. Check out her work at aleshamakesart.com

We are also grateful to the following funders for their investments in our equitable civic engagement strategies: [Cleveland Foundation](#), [Saint Luke's Foundation](#), [The George Gund Foundation](#), and [The Nord Family Foundation](#)