



GET OUT THE VOTE:

A GOTV GUIDE FOR ADVOCATES

AN ADVOCATE'S GUIDE TO TAKING ACTION

THE COALITION TO END RELATIONSHIP ABUSE



VIOLENCE FREE
MINNESOTA



GET OUT THE VOTE: A GOTV GUIDE FOR ADVOCATES

ELECTION DAY IS TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2020

As nonprofits serving victim-survivors of domestic violence it is important that we have our voices heard at the polls in an election that sets up power and policy priorities in our state.

As 501c3 nonprofits your organization may engage in nonpartisan election activities including:

- Voter registration
- Voter education
- Get out the vote activities

However 501c3 nonprofits **may not**:

- Support or oppose specific candidates for office
- Support or oppose political parties

EARLY VOTING FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION

September 18, 2020 - November 2, 2020

All voters have at least one location where they can vote early in person with an absentee ballot – [at your county election office](#). Depending where you live, there may be additional locations. You can also vote early by mail (absentee).

For more information on early voting click here: <https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/other-ways-to-vote/>

REGISTER TO VOTE

The state of Minnesota provides many options for registering to vote. You can check your registration, register online, and even register on Election Day. For more information: <https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/register-to-vote/>

REGISTER TO VOTE CONFIDENTIALLY

Your name and address are public when you register to vote. However, if you or the victims/survivors you work with have safety or privacy concerns, there are ways to register and vote without making your information public. Survivors of domestic violence with address confidentially needs can register in two ways:



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REGISTER TO VOTE CONFIDENTIALLY (CONTINUED)

· Enroll in the Safe At Home Program, Minnesota's address confidentiality program, and vote by absentee ballot. For more information, click here:

<https://www.sos.state.mn.us/safe-at-home/about-safe-at-home/>

Additional options:

· You can ask to keep your information private by sending a Request to Withhold Voter Information from Public Information to your [county election office](#). Your name and address will still appear on the list of voters at the polling place on Election Day, but will not be available to members of the public.

As an additional safety measure, you can send a Request to Inactivate Vote Record to your county election office. This will prevent election officials from seeing the information in the private database of voters, unless they are specifically looking for your voter record. Once you inactivate your record, you must re-register before voting again.

· If you register on Election Day, you can ask to keep your information private and inactivate your record in one step. Bring copies of both the above letters to attach to your registration application. Your information will be entered in the state's voter database after the election only as long as needed to verify your voting address, but will be marked as private from its entry. To verify the address, a county election official will send a postcard to ensure it can be delivered to the address. When it is determined the postcard has been delivered to the address, the election official will inactivate the record.

VICTIM/SURVIVORS RESIDING IN SHELTER

A staff person can go with a victim/survivor to the polling place to confirm their address on Election Day. For more information click here:

<https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/register-to-vote/im-in-a-residential-facility/>



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WHAT'S ON THE 2020 BALLOT?

All voters will have these races on their general election ballot:

- U.S. President
- U.S. Senator
- U.S. Representative
- State Senator
- State Representative
- Judicial seats

Voters may also have one or more of these races on their ballot:

- County Officials
- City Officers
- School Board Members
- Township Officers
- Local ballot questions

CANDIDATE FORUMS

Candidate forums can provide helpful insight into a candidate's perspective of intimate partner violence and the concerns of victim/survivors. We strongly encourage attending a candidate forum to ask questions about domestic violence and the impact it has on people in our communities. We recommend asking candidates the following questions at forums:

- 1.** What is your personal experience with intimate partner violence? Have you known a victim/survivor of intimate partner violence? Based on that experience, what did you learn about the resources – or lack of resources – available to victim/survivors?
- 2. For Federal Representatives and Senators:** Domestic and sexual violence programs in Minnesota depend on VOCA (Victims of Crime Act) dollars to provide critical services to survivors and their families. VOCA is funded by the money gathered from federal criminal fines. Over the past few years, there has been a significant reduction of federal criminal fines. If nothing changes with regard to the VOCA fund, it is anticipated that these funds will be reduced, perhaps by as much as 30-60%. The lack of VOCA dollars could have a devastating impact on victims and their children in communities across Minnesota. What will you do to ensure that the VOCA fund is sustained so domestic/sexual violence programs can give victim/survivors the resources they desperately need?
- 3. For candidates for state legislature:** A big topic at the state legislature has centered around criminal justice reform and alternatives to incarceration. Yet, legislators have been unwilling to invest in programs and interventions that address transforming behaviors to eliminate violence. If elected, what role would you play in addressing these issues?

The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits' [forum calendar](#) lists candidate forums occurring throughout the state. **Can't attend a candidate forum?** Conduct independent candidate research at www.votesmart.org

For questions contact Katie Kramer at kkramer@vfmn.org

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SAMPLE “VOTE” EMAIL FROM ED’S TO STAFF AND BEYOND

The following was adapted by the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and developed by Nonprofit Vote:

An email from a nonprofit’s executive director sends an important message to staff about how much the organization values voting and civic participation. It reminds staff of the importance of voting and provides helpful election information. Below are two sample emails that your organization can use.

Timing: Send an email in advance of the election, Tuesday, November 3, 2020.

SAMPLE #1: Provides Helpful Information

Subject line: General Election on Tuesday, November 3!

As you may know, the General Election is on Tuesday, November 6. As a nonpartisan nonprofit organization, we want to ensure employees have access to the information in order to be a voter in the election.

[why voting is important – for example]

- 2020 is an important election year in Minnesota and across the country. It is essential that we are showing up to help shape policies that affect the entire community.
- Voting is the heart of our democracy and it is essential that we are all doing our part to participate in the election.
- Decisions are made by those who show up and it is critical that we all show up to the polls on Election Day.

[provide voting information – for example]

- Polling places are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. If you need help finding your poll, use the Secretary of State’s polling place finder: <https://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>
- If you are unable to make it to the polls on Tuesday, November 3, you can vote by mail or in person from September 18 through November 2. [Learn more here.](#)
- Get information about registering to vote [here.](#)
- Know who’s on your ballot by viewing a [sample ballot.](#)

Thanks again being a voter!
Signed,





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SAMPLE “VOTE” EMAIL FROM ED’S TO STAFF AND BEYOND

SAMPLE #2: Reminder of your policy on Time Off to Vote

Subject line: Election on Tuesday, November 3!

As you may know, the General Election is on Tuesday, November 3. As a nonpartisan nonprofit organization, we want to ensure employees have access to the information in order to be a voter in the election.

To demonstrate our organization’s commitment to civic participation, here is a reminder of our time off to vote policy:

[Copy your organization’s time off to vote policy here – Note: employers are required by law to pay employees for the time they need to vote if it falls within employees scheduled work time. Find more information here]

[provide voting information – for example]

- Polling places are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. If you need help finding your poll, use the Secretary of State’s polling place finder: <https://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>
- If you are unable to make it to the polls on Tuesday, November 3, you can vote by mail or in person from September 18 through November 2. Learn more [here](#).
- Get information about registering to vote [here](#).
- Know who’s on your ballot by viewing a sample ballot: <https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/whats-on-my-ballot/>

Thanks again being a voter!

Signed,

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Lobbying vs. Advocacy

Generally speaking, the IRS defines lobbying as the attempt to influence the passage, defeat, introduction or amendment of legislation, including bills introduced by a federal, state or local legislative body, bond issues, referenda, constitutional amendments, and Senate confirmation votes on Executive branch nominees. In sum, lobbying is any attempt to influence any specific legislation, and can be direct (expressing directly to your legislator that they should support a specific bill), or grassroots (asking the general public to contact their legislators to support a specific bill). Non-profit organizations can do nominal lobbying but just cannot use any government dollars to fund that work.

Just having a conversation with a legislator is not automatically lobbying. Talking with legislators, educating them about who you are, what you do, how funding cuts impact your services is **NOT** lobbying. Advocacy includes educating policymakers and the public about broad social issues, encouraging people to register to vote, organizing communities, educating voters about candidate positions, litigating, and many other activities; these are not lobbying.

With the exception of legislation specific lobbying and supporting a specific candidate or political party, all of the forms of advocacy listed above are unrestricted and unlimited for 501(c)(3) public charities. Provided are some examples of activities 501(c)(3) organizations CAN and CANNOT do.

If you are uncertain whether your program can do a certain activity, you can always check with Katie Kramer at Violence Free Minnesota, kkramer@vfmn.org.

Things you CAN do as a 501(c)(3):

- Conduct voter registrations and nonpartisan get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts. These efforts must be designed to educate the public about the importance of voting.
- You can target low-income populations or communities—this may include communities of color or student populated areas. Your effort can not be biased, meaning you cannot support or oppose any one candidate or party.
- Educate the public on issues and encourage participation in the political process.
- Educate all candidates and political parties on your specific issues.
- Conduct or participate in a nonpartisan candidate forum. It must be open to all candidates for a particular office, it must be run in a “balanced” way, and include a broad range of nonpartisan candidates.
- Make presentations on your organizations’ issues to create a community platform, campaign candidates, media, and the general public.
- Work on behalf of a ballot measure.
- Rent or sell mailing lists to candidates at fair market value if made available to all parties.

Things you CANNOT do as a 501(c)(3):

- Endorse or oppose a candidate for public office implicitly or explicitly.
- Contribute money or time for a particular candidate.
- Coordinate activities with a candidate.
- Restrict rental of your mailing lists and facilities to certain candidates.
- Set up, fund, or manage a Political Action Committee (PAC), established under section 527 of the tax code mainly for electoral activity.