FROM HOUSING TO THE BALLOT

Maria Bruno
Civic Engagement Coordinator and Policy Analyst
Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO)
2020 ELECTION BASIC INFORMATION
2020 IMPORTANT DATES

• **Sept. 20-26**: National Voter Registration Week of Action
• **Oct. 5**: Deadline to register to vote in Ohio's Nov election.
• **Oct. 6**: Early voting starts
• **Nov. 3**: Election Day
WHAT’S ON THE BALLOT THIS YEAR?

Federal races:
- President
- ALL of US Representatives

Statewide races:
- ALL of State Representatives
- Some State Senators
- 2 Ohio Supreme Court Justices

Local races:
- Judges
- Prosecutors
- ballot issues & levies
- City-wide offices
- County-wide offices
- Miscellaneous other officials
VOTING OPTIONS

1. In person, early
2. In person, on Election Day
3. Via Vote by Mail (absentee voting)
• If you or your minor child are confined in a hospital as a result of an unforeseeable medical emergency, you may apply to the county board of elections to vote by absentee ballot. **You must submit this written absentee request by 3 p.m. on Election Day.**

• If you are hospitalized in a different county than the one in which you are registered to vote, you can request that your home county board of elections fax or email your absentee ballot to the county board of elections where you are hospitalized. If this happens, [contact Disability Rights Ohio](#) immediately.
HOW COVID19 AFFECTS THE 2020 ELECTION

• Precinct worker shortage
• Increased stress on mail-in voting
• Increased voter confusion over rules, dates, locations
• Potential short-notice changes to procedure or operations

HOW IT AFFECTS OHIO VOTES OPERATIONS

• Adapt to digital options for outreach
• Increased training to organizers
• Moving target for planning purposes
• Ride to polls – had to cancel for primary, likely cancel or heavily modify for general
CONFUSION OVER MAIL-IN VOTING

When to apply: Technically any time before Oct 31 technically, but THE SOONER THE BETTER!

When you get your ballot: Ballots are mailed to voters beginning early October

When you return your ballot: Must be postmarked by Monday, Nov 2 or dropped off at the Board of Elections by Nov 3

There may be drop boxes available in some counties, but to be determined.
VULNERABLE VOTERS NEED A LITTLE EXTRA HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT
REASONS LOW-INCOME OHIOANS DON’T VOTE

Why low-income Ohioans don’t vote

- Registration
- Exclusion
- Education
- Residency
- Transportation
- Resources
- Motivation
- Knowledge
- Convenience
WHY LOW-INCOME OHIOANS DON’T VOTE

**Registration:** “I never registered to vote”
- Registration opportunities

**Exclusion:** “They won’t let me vote” or “I have been turned away in the past”
- Election protection

**Education:** “I don’t even know who’s running or what’s on the ballot”
- Accessible voter education material

**Residency:** “I moved” or “I don’t have a permanent address”
- Opportunities to update address and educate nonprofits on rules around homeless voting

**Transportation:** “I don’t have a ride”
- Rides to the polls

**Resources:** “I don’t have an ID”
- Emphasize options of voting early or by absentee

**Motivation:** “This system doesn’t represent me so who cares?”
- Voter empowerment programming that increases voters’ knowledge of system and willingness to participate

**Knowledge:** I don’t know where or when to vote”
- Voter education directly and through partners

**Convenience:** “I don’t have time to vote/have to work, etc”
- Rides to polls, education on voting options
THIS WORK IS MEANINGFUL AND EFFECTIVE
501(C)3 VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE

WHY REGISTER VOTERS?

• Low-income communities are under-represented in election turnout

• Voter registration is the first step to creating a more active and engaged citizenry and community

• Registered voters are more likely to join neighborhood activities, contact elected officials and be active citizens

• Elected officials pay attention to communities that show up to vote - We want our communities to be valued

WHY NONPROFITS?

• Already a trusted organization embedded into the community

• No ulterior motives/partisan agendas

• In touch with the needs of under-represented populations
50% of all voters engaged by nonprofits in Ohio were earning less than $30,000 annually.

Black voters who were engaged by nonprofits were 12% more likely to vote.

The lowest propensity voters who were engaged by nonprofits were 17% more likely to vote.

Source: https://www.nonprofitvote.org/engaging_new_voters/
WHAT IS

A voterization initiative of COHHIO (Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio)

Targets low-income and disenfranchised Ohio communities

Nonpartisan & 501(C)3 compliant
Direct Service Organizations

Voting Advocates

local organizations

Other states’ 501c3 Statewide programs

Ohio VOTES

Nonprofit VOTE
REGIONAL LIAISONS

Akron/Canton Metro Area  Akron Votes, Deb Lemire

Cincinnati Metro Area  Ohio Votes, Coby Williams

Cleveland Metro Area  Cleveland Votes, Jen Lumpkin

Columbus Metro Area  League of Women Voters of Metro Columbus, Elizabeth Greiser

Dayton Metro Area  Ohio Votes, Sarah Kuhns

Toledo/Bowling Green Metro Area  Ohio Votes, Liam Walsh

Youngstown Metro Area  League of Women Voters of Youngstown, Elizabeth Nalepa

Outside Major Metro Area (catch-all)  Ohio Votes, Jack Brandl
NONPARTISAN OHIO VOTER OUTREACH COMMITTEE (NOVOC)

- Initiative of Ohio Voter Rights Coalition (OVRC)
- Organizing circle for voter advocates and 501c3 organizations engaged in nonpartisan voter activities
- Centralize communications among 501c3 organizations doing voter engagement and minimizes duplicative work
- Work with people from other parts of the state on special issues
- Connect with local nonprofits also doing voter engagement work or willing to host events
- Provide engagement opportunities for volunteers looking to get involved
Nonpartisan Ohio Voter Outreach Committee
OHIO VOTES EDUCATIONAL & OUTREACH RESOURCES

• Organizer training
• One pagers on ID requirements, Registration rules, Voter Protection information, messaging strategies
• Swag – stickers, buttons, candy, pens
• Signage
• Peer-to-peer learning exchanges
• Localized support through regional liaisons
REGISTRATION TOOL IN THE FIELD
OHVOTES.ORG

- Domain Name - NOT Ohio spelled out, OHvotes.org

**What is it?**
- Ohio Votes’ voter portal

**Why use it?**
- Simple interface designed to easily and quickly load on smart devices
- Collects information so we can send voters updates and text voting reminders (if they opt-in)
- Allows us to track voting patterns for people who use our website to check their registration
- Cross references with the voter files as well as purge list
Identify existing points of contacts and add voter registration!

- Drive-thru
- Tabling
- Lit stuffing
- Newsletter announcements
- Posters and voter education materials
- Voter education events – remote or with social distancing
WE CAN HELP!

Community conversations
Right question institute curriculum
Candidate forum or issue education events
Staffing assistance
Supplies & mini-grants
REMINDER CARDS

Our reminder cards will be MAILED back to the VOTER during early voting. Essentially, people will be mailing themselves a voting reminder!

I WILL VOTE!

☐ By Mail
☐ I have submitted my Absentee Ballot Request Form or plan to before Nov. 2
☐ I have postage ready for my ballot
☐ I will postmark or drop off my Absentee Ballot to the Board of Elections by Nov. 4

☐ In Person
☐ Early In Person
☐ I know the last 4 digits of my SSN (No ID necessary)
☐ I will vote on __________________ at __________________

☐ On Election Day
☐ I will bring as ID (check one)
☐ Unexpired Ohio ID or License, or Military ID
☐ or an original or copy of a current ID* (check one)
☐ Utility Bill ☐ Bank Statement
☐ Paycheck ☐ Government check or document**
* Current ID means dated within the past 12 months
** Excludes voter registration confirmation postcard

Remind me via:
Phone:
Email:

I'm voting in 2019 because:

- I have submitted my Absentee Ballot Request Form or plan to before Nov. 2
- I have postage ready for my ballot
- I will postmark or drop off my Absentee Ballot to the Board of Elections by Nov. 4

OhioVotes is a nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) civic engagement initiative and not affiliated with any political party or candidate.
JOIN OUR STATEWIDE CELEBRATION!
PEOPLE’S POWER PARTY

• Register underserved communities to vote while educating and empowering them about the 2020 election
• Connect with local organizations doing the on-the-ground work
• Build relationships between underserved communities and voting advocates
WHY USE OHIO VOTES’ INTAKE PROCESS?

Benefits to organizations

- Nonpartisan Resources -- Access to voter education and engagement resources and guidance
- Quality Control – We can help follow up with voters whose registrations are not successfully processed
- Performance tracking – Keep track of your own program’s success through knowing which and how many voters you are effectively reaching
- Network building -- Contribute to Ohio’s nonpartisan registration count, build relationships with other community organizations
- Increase your impact: Use data for future funding requests, learn more specific information about your audience’s demographics and voting habits
- Help Ohio Votes and local partners understand and improve their on-the-ground impact

Benefits to voters

- Nonpartisan Voting Reminders
- Extra confidence that their registration will be processed

Don’t worry! We DON’T:

- Share voter data with political parties
- Share voter data with any commercial entity
- Use data for campaigning
- Need voters’ SSN: If you don’t feel comfortable sharing social security numbers, feel free to put a sticky note over the SS/ID # prior to scanning
- Require sole custody of voter forms (you may use form copies for your own grant purposes, but not to political campaigns without voter’s consent.)

Voter data is used for research purposes only
NONPROFITS HAVE A ROLE IN HELPING VOTERS NAVIGATE THE ELECTION PROCESS
501(C)3 ORGANIZATIONS MAY:

• Register voters
• Educate voters
• Engage in issue-based advocacy
• Explain what it means to register with a party or as an independent
• Provide nonpartisan voter guides

501(C)3 ORGANIZATIONS MAY NOT:

• Endorse a specific candidate or party
• Host candidate forums without inviting all parties’ candidates
• Produce “scorecards” or other ranking of candidates
• SUPPORT OR OPPOSE A CANDIDATE for public office
• Endorse candidates or political parties
• Donate money or resources to candidates
• Rate candidates on single issues
Nonprofits who receive Community Service Block Grant funding (e.g. Community Action Agencies) and Head Start agencies may not:

- Use CSBG or Head Start funds to pay for staff or materials to conduct voter registration.
- Use CSBG or Head Start funds to provide rides to the polls.

AmeriCorps members cannot conduct voter registration during work hours.
RULES AROUND HELPING OTHERS TO VOTE
RULES FOR HELPING VOTERS VOTE

Can we pay for postage?
• This is an open question of law. We believe it is legal to provide a service that includes providing postage for correspondence to government offices and/or the Board of Elections, but others disagree

Can we mail or drop off ballots for voters?
• Anyone may return an absentee ballot request form, but only immediate family members may return absentee ballots

Can we provide a ride to vote?
• Yes!
REGISTERING OTHERS TO VOTE

Who can help others register to vote?

- Eligible voters other than those convicted of a felony after May 2, 2006.
- Minors
- Non-citizens
WHEN DOES THE HELPER HAVE TO PUT THEIR OWN NAME ON THE FORM?

- **VOTER** completes the registration form and signs it themselves
- **HELPER** completes the registration form and the **VOTER** signs the form themselves
- **HELPER** completes the registration form and **HELPER** signs the form on behalf of the voter

- **HELPER** completes the **HELPER** completes the
ONLY IF THE VOTER CANNOT SIGN THE FORM DOES THE HELPER HAVE TO PRINT THEIR NAME UNDERNEATH THE SIGNATURE.

EXAMPLE SIGNATURE BOX:
SOME OTHER IMPORTANT RULES AND BEST PRACTICES
WHAT ADDRESS SHOULD I USE?

You have the right to vote even if you are homeless or don’t have a permanent address

- Voter registration forms require an address
- State law defines home as the place you intend to return to live
- Voters can use the address of a homeless shelter or other agency where they can receive mail

College Students and others with both a permanent address and temporary address elsewhere in Ohio may use either address

- While students should not need additional proof of residence, it can be helpful to bring proof of address just in case their residence is in question
- Students in dorms may request an address verification from their university
- Students from outside another state may register to vote in Ohio using their Ohio address, but may not be registered in multiple states

**The address on your State ID DOES NOT need to match your voter registration address**
CAN I VOTE WITH A FELONY CONVICTION?
ANYONE OTHERWISE ELIGIBLE AND NOT CURRENTLY INCARCERATED FOR A FELONY CONVICTION MAY VOTE.

If you have been convicted of a crime, you still have the right to vote.

- If you have been convicted of a misdemeanor, you have the right to vote, even if you are incarcerated.
- If you have been arrested for a felony but have not been convicted, you still have the right to vote.
- If you have been convicted of a felony, you may not vote while incarcerated. Once you are out of prison or jail, you must re-register to vote, even if you were previously registered. You have the right to vote.
- If you live in a halfway house, are on house arrest or any sort of correctional control that does not involve a jail term, you have the right to vote.
- If you are on parole, or probation for a felony that does not involve a jail term, you have the right to vote.

For more information on voting rights, visit www.acluohio.org/vote
Within 20 business days after receiving your properly completed voter registration form, your county board of elections must register you to vote and promptly notify you by mail of your precinct, polling location and the identification requirements for voting.
MOST COMMON ERRORS

• Incomplete registration form
• Illegible handwriting
• Invalid or outdated registration (wrong address, former name, purged from the rolls)
• Wrongly believe they are registered but they are not
• Wrongly believe requesting an absentee ballot registers them to vote
  • For example, in 2016, 15-21% of low-income voters in Cuyahoga County who requested a mail-in ballot were not properly registered, significantly higher than other income brackets
Voters most often SKIP the boxes marked by purple circles or MIX UP the boxes connected by green arrows.
VOTER FORMS AND ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Check registration PRIOR TO providing absentee ballot request form, even if they say they are registered.

Absentee ballot request forms may be submitted AT THE SAME TIME as submitting voter registration forms.
FORMS MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF ELECTIONS WITHIN 10 DAYS OF COMPLETION.

AT A MINIMUM, DO A WEEKLY SWEEP OF FORMS TO AVOID RUNNING INTO 10 DAY DEADLINE.
ELECTION PROTECTION RESOURCES
Nonpartisan Voter Hotline: Provides nonpartisan information about registration status, polling location, and voter rights, and has an intake process for voter rights violations

1-866-OUR-VOTE (English)
1-888-VE-Y-VOTA (Spanish)
1-888-API-VOTE (Chinese)
Disability Rights Ohio operates a voter hotline every Election Day while polls are open. On every other business day, intake department is open from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m., though you can leave a message 24 hours a day and someone will return your call.

CALL 1-800-282-9181 for disability assistance

**MOBILITY:**
- Handicap accessible location
- Curbside voting

**BALLOT COMPLETION:**
- Bring someone to help you (other than employer, union agent, or candidate)
- Request help from two precinct election officials

NOTE: Precinct MUST have blind accessible voting machines
League of Women Voters’ website generates voter-specific voter guides. Reach out to your local league to get local voter guides.

GOOGLE IS YOUR FRIEND! Look for:

- Local write-ups of elections, ballot issues, and candidates
- Campaign websites for candidates and parties
- Find an interest group you trust, and find out their support or opposition to ballot issues or specific campaign positions
QUESTIONS?

Contact Us

MariaBruno@cohhio.org
OhioVotes@cohhio.org

Regional Liaisons: Check our website!

More information about

• Ohio Votes: https://cohhio.org/advocacy/ohio-votes/
• Ohio Voter Rights Coalition: https://ohiovoterrights.org
• Election Rules and Procedures: VoteOhio.gov