

READER. VOTER. READY.

DEMOCRACY IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS.

Voters count on libraries for information about and access to local, state, and federal elections so that everyone is **Reader. Voter. Ready.**

The vast majority of Americans agree that participation in voting is important to being a good member of society. Yet, turnout in American elections consistently lags behind that of many other democracies.

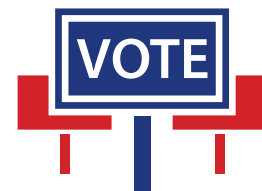
Libraries are nonpartisan, but they are not indifferent. As institutions that provide access to information, resources, programs, and public spaces for all members of a community, libraries are cornerstones for civic engagement. With a long history of working with election officials and community leaders, libraries have an important role to play in ensuring that voters are prepared to participate in local, state, and national elections. What does that look like in practice?

Across the country, many libraries:

- provide information about voting and voter registration.
- offer services for voters and registrants, such as hosting polling places.
- convene candidate forums and debates.
- deliver resources and educational programs that increase civic and information literacy.

This guide provides information and examples of how libraries of any type, in any community, can meet their communities' needs for information related to voting and encourage full participation in our democratic processes.

GET STARTED



State and local voting laws vary considerably across the United States. Can your library host a voter registration event, polling location, or ballot drop-off site? It depends on your local laws.

This guide presents ideas that can be used by many types of libraries, but not every idea may be appropriate for your community. As best practice before undertaking activities related to voting, we recommend that you:

- check your local voting laws. A good place to start is Nonprofit Vote's state-by-state resource: nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state.
- ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of local voting laws as they relate to library activities, and keep your board/administration apprised of programs and activities.
- communicate with your local election authorities. They may be able to advise or partner with you. To find your state or local election office, visit usa.gov/election-office.
- coordinate with local nonpartisan civic engagement organizations, such as the League of Women Voters. They may be able to share information about other activities in the community or contribute to the library's efforts.

TIMELINE

Nationally, the United States general election will take place on November 5, 2024. In many places, important deadlines and activities take place well prior to November. There are many opportunities for libraries to inform and serve voters throughout the year. Here are some key deadlines that may apply in your state:

Election Day: November 5, 2024.

Primary elections: Many states will hold primary elections in early and mid-2024. To vote in these elections, voters must have met applicable registration deadlines and requirements.

Voter registration: Many states have deadlines to register to vote or update a voter registration (e.g. if a previously registered voter has moved, changed their name, or regained eligibility to vote). To vote in the 2024 general elections, these deadlines are generally in early October.

National Voter Registration Day is a civic holiday that takes place on a Tuesday in September when many communities and organizations promote voter registration. ALA is pleased to partner with National Voter Registration Day to encourage libraries to support voter registration efforts in states where that is allowed. Sign-up to host voter registration at your library: bit.ly/NVRD24-ALA. Learn more at: nationalvoterregistrationday.org.



Participating in NVRD allows our library to not only increase the number of informed and registered voters, but also to celebrate the fact that voting allows us to enact positive change in our communities.

—Anna Maxwell Snyder,
Wayne County Public
Library, NC



Visit vote.org's state-by-state list of deadlines:

vote.org/voter-registration-deadlines

Absentee voting: In some places, there is a deadline to request an absentee or mail ballot if the voter will need one.

Early and mail-in voting: Many states offer some form of early, absentee, or mail-in voting, which begins in some places more than a month prior to Election Day.

Election Day: November 5, 2024.

HOW LIBRARIES CAN SUPPORT VOTER ENGAGEMENT

Publish Virtual Resources

Link to your local and state election offices from the library's home page and include reminders of key dates on the home page banner.

Curate an electronic collection of resources on voting, democracy, or key campaign issues.

Create a LibGuide or website that connects your community to key voter information such as registration information, candidate pages, news outlets, and election dates and locations. Be sure to include early and regular voting sites, as well as documentation requirements for registration and for voting.

Develop a community resource page that links to local organizations working on voter engagement.

Use social media to keep your community informed about key dates and events, and to encourage voter participation.



“Springfield City Library is a welcoming hub where we build community and discuss ideas in open discourse. Our Meet the Candidates nights are a prime example: attendees can register to vote and hear directly from candidates in a free, non-partisan, one-stop-shopping event.”

—Jean Canosa Albano, Springfield City Library, MA



Create Displays

Create a voter information hub in your library and publicize its availability to the community. Include information from local election agencies and nonpartisan organizations, and post key dates such as voter registration deadlines, primary elections, early voting, and general election.

Designate a kiosk or computer station where voters can confirm that they are registered to vote. Position near the voter information hub, if possible.

Create a voting timeline that includes major milestones in U.S. voting history, such as the drafting of the Constitution, ratification of the 19th Amendment, passage of the Voting Rights Act, and the change in voting age.

Build a display of books by candidates or books about voting, our democratic system, or major issues in the election.

Host In-Person or Virtual Events

If your state and local laws allow, host voter registration at the library.

In schools, offer voter registration during open houses or parent teacher conferences.

Host a candidate forum. Be sure that all candidates on the ballot are invited and a nonpartisan facilitator is selected.

Host a debate or forum about a local or national issue and include speakers on all sides of the issue.

Invite a local expert to give a talk on voting, elections, or local issues. Include a question-and-answer session after the talk.

Host an event for community members or students to watch a campaign debate. Follow with a facilitated discussion.

Plan a movie night featuring a film about U.S. politics and invite a local expert to moderate a discussion.

Sponsor a mock election for youth who are not yet eligible to vote. In school settings, partner with a social studies teacher and precede the vote with a debate.

Live stream events on Zoom, Facebook, YouTube, or another platform so that they are accessible to an even wider audience.

Make sure that voting information is visible and available during other library events.

Spread the Word

Educate library staff and volunteers about issues that will impact libraries and encourage them to ask questions of candidates about those issues.

Have one of your library champions (director, trustee, volunteer) write a letter to the editor about the resources the library offers, and how important libraries are to an informed and engaged electorate.

Create a bookmark or postcard that includes key dates and highlights the library's election-related programs and resources.

Work with local or student news outlets to publicize events and resources.

Partner with Other Organizations

Many opportunities exist to collaborate with national and local organizations to register voters, educate the community about issues and candidates, host events, and share information. Reach out to nonpartisan groups such as the League of Women Voters, Rotary, chamber of commerce, student government, Parent Teacher Association, and others. Some have national websites that offer resources and can connect you with local affiliates.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Community Conversations

ala.org/ltc > ALA's Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC) website offers a variety of free dialogue and deliberation training and resources to help libraries engage their communities.

lww.org/elections/educating-voters > The League of Women Voters partners with organizations across the country to educate voters via forums, debates, and other programs.

Voter Registration and Information

fvap.gov > For service members and Americans living overseas, the Federal Voting Assistance Program provides critical information for voting absentee.

nonprofitvote.org > The parent organization of NVRD, Nonprofit VOTE offers a wealth of resources to support non-partisan voter engagement.

vote411.org > A project of the League of Women Voters, Vote 411 offers voter registration information, including deadlines, and allows voters to see what will appear on their ballot.

voteriders.org > VoteRiders assists individuals and organizations to ensure that eligible voters have the identification necessary to register and to vote. Libraries can order free state-specific voter ID information cards to distribute to patrons.

Candidate and Election Information

fec.gov > The Federal Elections Commission includes campaign filing information for candidates as well as a searchable database for voters.

opensecrets.org > Open Secrets is a non-partisan organization that tracks political spending in federal elections.

Fact Checking Tools

factcheck.org > Fact Check is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center and focuses on national politics.

politifact.com > Founded by the Tampa Bay Times and now operated by the Poynter Institute, PolitiFact is a nonpartisan fact checking organization that focuses on national political figures.



For Students and Young Voters

bensguide.gpo.gov > Sponsored by the Government Printing Office and an official partner of AASL, this resource is dedicated to educating children of different age levels about the workings of federal government.



campusvoteproject.org > A project of the Fair Elections Center, Campus Vote Project works with faculty and students at colleges and universities to increase voter registration and participation.

civicinfluencers.org > Formerly CampusElect, Civic Influencers is a nonpartisan organization that harnesses data to educate and build voting and civic power among youth, particularly BIYoC.

rockthevote.org > A nonprofit founded by members of the recording industry, Rock the Vote is geared towards younger voters and includes information on issues and voting, as well as Democracy Class—an ALA partner that offers lesson plans for teachers and education partners working with high school students.

whenweallvote.org > When We All Vote is focused on increasing participation in elections at every level of government, particularly among young voters.



godort.libguides.com/votingtoolkit > ALA's Government Documents Roundtable offers a state-by-state voting and elections guide, created by librarians for librarians.