

# Voter Registration Toolkit

Voting is a cornerstone of civic participation in a representative democracy. It is our fundamental right and part of our civic responsibility to raise our voice in shaping the kind of community we want to be.

In recent decades, voter participation has declined, in part because of voter suppression and intimidation, but also because of an increase in cynicism toward government and a lack of hope that individuals voices can truly make a difference. We know this decrease in participation is more likely to affect students, communities of color, low income urban and rural communities—the very communities most affected by issues like health care, paid leave, climate change, criminal justice reform, and more. We deserve better.

OFA believes in a fair democracy for everyone. Civic engagement is a personal responsibility, but it is also a national obligation for our country to ensure full participation and access to our democracy to everyone. Through OFA's voter registration and education efforts, volunteers will give people an opportunity to register to vote through a partnership with Vote.org. OFA members will use proven, multi-touch methods of engagement and relationship building to ensure people don't fall through the cracks in the voter registration process. Access to civic participation and education are crucial to shifting power away from donors, lobbyists, and special interests in Washington, D.C., and back towards bringing about tangible change within our communities.

## Goals

OFA launched a nationwide effort to bring voter registration to communities across the country through our partnership with Vote.org. OFA volunteers will be providing their friends and neighbors with the opportunity to register themselves to vote and begin a conversation on the issues that matter to them and their community.

Voting is a foundational step to become civically engaged. At OFA, we believe that by helping people access voter registration, we will help unlock people's power to change their community. We will focus on communities most vulnerable to low voter participation by building relationships and helping people access their own political power.

## What is Vote.org?

OFA has partnered with [Vote.org](https://www.vote.org) to use technology to simplify political engagement and strengthen democracy. Through this tool, people who want to register to vote, can begin the registration process, and in some states, complete their registration online. Once participants submit their information through Vote.org's portal, OFA will be able to track if participants actually made it onto the voter rolls. If they didn't, OFA can follow up with them to see what went wrong.

## Let's get started

We are asking our volunteers to host or co-host a voter registration event in high foot traffic areas to provide people with access to the Vote.org online tool, that will let them register themselves to vote. Host events can include tabling or walking around in a high foot-traffic area, such as a farmer's market, street fair, a busy park, your local square, your church, synagogue or mosque, a school event, or another similar location.

*Please note: You may need a permit for these locations, so check with the appropriate school administrator, local government, or property owner.*

### Goals

Your voter registration event should have the following goals in mind:

- Provide access to people so they can register themselves to vote through [Vote.org](https://www.vote.org)
- Have conversations with people about the issues they care about as a way to continue building relationships in your community

### Lock in logistics

**Where will you have your voter registration event?** As suggested above, high foot-traffic areas will be ideal for this day. Remember, this is just the beginning—there will be many more opportunities to provide people with a way to register themselves to vote, but it's important to get out there, start using the Vote.org tool, and meet some new people!

**What time will you host your event?** The best time for your event will likely depend on the location that you decide to have it. Be sure to give yourself enough time to set up a table (if needed). Don't forget, some locations may require a permit.

**Who will make up your team?** Organizers work best in teams. Think about people who can help you with your voter registration event. For example, if you are going to be in a location for a few hours, schedule shifts and make sure you have someone who is in charge of following up with people. Is there someone you can ask to be in charge of snacks and water and bringing tables and chairs (if applicable)?

### Be prepared

- Make sure you and your team are prepared by giving explicit instructions and guidance.
- Make sure everyone is well versed in our [voter registration dos and don'ts](#) and is clear on the key points.
- Bookmark [my.ofa.us/verify](https://my.ofa.us/verify) and [my.ofa.us/register](https://my.ofa.us/register) for quick access on your phone, tablet, or laptop.

- Be sure you have what you need:
  - Make sure all phones, tablets, and computers are charged and ready to go
  - Bring back up batteries or determine if there is access to an outlet at your location
  - Will you need table and chairs? Who is bringing them?
  - Have sign in sheets and pens for folks who would like to get involved with your chapter
  - Bring your OFA placards and wear your OFA gear!
    - Pro-tip: consider asking everyone on your team to wear the same color shirt on the day of your activity so that you can easily keep track of one another.
  - Snacks for your group! It's always great to have water bottles and some granola bars on hand to keep volunteers in high spirits.
  - If you have a permit, be sure to bring it with you in case you need it.

## Best practices

### Expectations

We'll usually find 1-2 participants per hour in high-traffic areas. Don't get discouraged if you don't have dozens of people approaching you to register to vote. If someone refuses to participate, be kind and thank them for their time. Treat people as you would want to be treated. Smile, stay positive, and just speak like regular person—get comfortable with the script below, so it comes naturally. And finally, don't take anything personally. If someone is rude, just move on—the next person is likely to make your day!

### Have a conversation

Registering to vote can be an intimidating process to some, so be sure to have a genuine conversation with potential participants. Ask questions and listen to the answer. Tailor your message to the individual. Find your own pitch. Experiment and figure out what works best for you. Connect voting to their lives and the issues they care about. Stress the importance of their voice and tell them why they should vote.

### Stay on message

You're not telling them who to vote for, just providing them with the access to register themselves to vote! Helping people gain access to participate in our democracy is a positive way to celebrate civic engagement and build long lasting relationships within your community.

### Follow up and be persistent

If you see folks again later on, make the ask: "Hey, were you able to get registered to vote?"

- "I'm already registered" is often a common excuse. Ask follow up questions:
  - "Are you registered at your current address?"
  - "Have you moved since last registering?"
  - "Do you want to use our verification system to make sure?"

### Ask everyone to register

Be sure to include everyone when recruiting participants to register themselves to vote. Don't be afraid to have a respectful and engaging conversation.

### **Ask everyone if they would like more info about OFA**

OFA (Organizing for Action) is a nonprofit organization of progressive organizers and community leaders who focus on building local power for change. Be sure to share information about OFA and our values. Invite them to your next action planning, chapter meeting or event.

## **The follow-up**

Be sure to bookmark OFA's partner link: [my.ofa.us/verify](https://my.ofa.us/verify). Using this link will allow OFA to track who made it onto the voter rolls and who did not. OFA members will then be able to follow up with those who were not able to complete their registration, find out why, and make sure they have an opportunity to complete the process. If you do not use this link, we will not be able to help anyone whose registration doesn't go through!

## **Report back**

Use [OFA's report back form](#) to tell us about your experience with [Vote.org](#) and what you are hearing while engaging in conversations about important issues with your neighbors.

If you have questions about the rules in your state, there are several sites with detailed information to help you navigate your state's specific laws:

- Vote.org has a [comprehensive list of state requirements](#) to register to vote.
- [Fair Elections Legal Network](#) has state specific guides covering a variety of topics
- The [National Voter Registration Day website](#) also has a state by state guide
- If you are ever in doubt, be sure to visit your Secretary of State's (SOS) website. There are links to each state's SOS website at the bottom of this document

If you experience problems with [OFA's Vote.org link](#) or have feedback or best practices you would like to share, please email us at [organizing@ofa.us](mailto:organizing@ofa.us) and we'll connect you with your Regional Organizing Manager.

If you have a legal question about your state's voter registration laws, including eligibility, please visit the websites listed above. OFA is not able to provide legal counsel.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **When is the last day to register to vote?**

Voter Registration deadlines vary by state. You can check out the resources from these partner organizations: Vote.org has a list of registration deadlines. Fair Elections Legal Network and National Voter Registration Day also have a host of resources. For comprehensive information on your state, check with your Secretary of State's website listed at the bottom of this document.

### **Do I need to be 18 in order to register to vote?**

The voter registration age requirement varies by state. Please check with your Secretary of State's website or visit these partner organizations: Fair Elections Legal Network and National Voter Registration Day.

**I am a student. Can I register to vote at my school address?**

It depends on what state you live in. Check with your Secretary of State's website.

**I was previously convicted of a felony. Can I register to vote?**

Voting rights for those convicted of a felony vary from state to state. Check with your Secretary of State.

**How do I know if my registration was accepted?**

You will receive a registration acknowledgment card in the mail from your local election officials. In most states, you can also check your registration status online at your state's statewide voter registration portal.

For more answers to your voting questions, checkout [Vote.org's help page](#).

## Resources

**Vote.org:** [Voter registration rules by state](#)

**Vote.org:** [Voter registration deadlines by state](#)

**Fair Elections Legal Network:** [Guides that summarize important registration and voting information for each state](#)

**National Voter Registration Day:** [Voter registration drive rules by state](#)

**US Vote Foundation:** [Voter registration deadlines by state](#)

**US Vote Foundation:** [Voting requirements and information by state](#)

**Nonprofit Vote:** [Find your state and local election clerk offices and contact information](#)

## For more information about registering to vote, visit your Secretary of State's website:

[Alabama](#) · [Alaska](#) · [Arizona](#) · [Arkansas](#) · [California](#) · [Colorado](#) · [Connecticut](#) · [Delaware](#) · [Florida](#) · [Georgia](#) · [Guam](#) · [Hawaii](#) · [Idaho](#) · [Illinois](#) · [Indiana](#) · [Iowa](#) · [Kansas](#) · [Kentucky](#) · [Louisiana](#) · [Maine](#) · [Maryland](#) · [Massachusetts](#) · [Michigan](#) · [Minnesota](#) · [Mississippi](#) · [Missouri](#) · [Montana](#) · [Nebraska](#) · [Nevada](#) · [New Hampshire](#) · [New Jersey](#) · [New Mexico](#) · [New York](#) · [North Carolina](#) · [North Dakota](#) · [Ohio](#) · [Oklahoma](#) · [Oregon](#) · [Pennsylvania](#) · [Puerto Rico](#) · [Rhode Island](#) · [South Carolina](#) · [South Dakota](#) · [Tennessee](#) · [Texas](#) · [Utah](#) · [Vermont](#) · [Virgin Islands](#) · [Virginia](#) · [Washington](#) · [West Virginia](#) · [Wisconsin](#) · [Wyoming](#)

# Helping participants register to vote:

## Step 1

Are You Registered to Vote?

This will take 30 seconds

First Name\*

Last Name\*

Street Address\*

City\*

State\*

Ask the participant to grab their phone, tablet or computer. Ask them to go to [my.ofa.us/verify](https://my.ofa.us/verify) —they will fill out the information to check registration.

## Step 2

Are You Registered to Vote in IL?

Almost done. Is this your address?

321 S State St Apt 44  
Chicago, IL 60606

Confirm →

← Back

The form will ask the participant to confirm their address. If correct, they will hit "Confirm."

## Step 3a

Are You Registered to Vote in Illinois?

You are registered to vote!

321 S State St Apt 44  
Chicago, IL 60606

Help your friends find out if they are registered to

If they see their address is correct and they're already registered, then they are done!

OR

## Step 3b

Are You Registered to Vote in Illinois?

You are NOT registered to vote.

Our records show that Jane Smith born Jan 1, 1984 is NOT registered to vote at 321 S State St Apt 44 Chicago, IL 60606

Register to vote

OR

Check directly with your state

If they are not registered or their address is incorrect, they will move to the next step to register themselves to vote.

## Step 4

Register to Vote

This will take 2 minutes

First Name\*

Last Name\*

Home Address\*

City\*

State\*

The participant will go to [my.ofa.us/register](https://my.ofa.us/register) and fill out the fields on the registration form.

## Step 5a

Illinois

Illinois has online voter registration.

You can register to vote directly with your state if you have a(n) Illinois drivers license. We recommend this option.

I have a IL driver's license

or

If you don't have a(n) Illinois license, we can help you prepare a paper form.

I don't have a driver's license

A state ID is required to submit the form online. If the participant does not have a state ID, or lives in a state without online registration, they will need to complete, download, and mail in their registration form.

## Step 5b

ZIP Code\*

I have a different mailing address

Recent changes

I used to be registered to vote at another address

I used to be registered to vote under a different name

Identification

ID Number\*

Provide your North Carolina drivers license number, or North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles ID number. If you do not have a drivers license, then provide the last four digits of your social security number.

## Step 6

Register to Vote in Illinois

Almost done. You still need to print and mail your completed form.

Download your form

Share with your friends

28.8K

f t +

The participant will need to download and print the completed form and mail it to the address listed on the form.

Ability to submit forms online varies state by state. Please follow the instructions on [Vote.org](https://Vote.org), or consult your Secretary of State's office.

## Sample script

You can adopt this script as you approach someone to ask them if they have registered to vote.

Hi there! How are you doing today? My name is [YOUR NAME] and I am volunteering with OFA (Organizing for Action). We are here to talk to you about the issues you care about and help people get registered to vote.

Are you currently registered to vote?

- **If yes:** That's great! Have you moved or changed your name since the last time you voted? *[Ask them to use the link [my.ofa.us/verify](https://my.ofa.us/verify)]*

**If they haven't moved or changed names:** *[Use this opportunity to start a conversation]*  
That's great! What's the issue you care about most? *[Remember: Our goal is to engage and listen, not persuade him or her to support a particular candidate or policy platform.]*

**If they have moved or changed names:** OK, then make sure to update your voter registration. It only takes a minute. Do you have a smart phone or tablet?

**If they have their own phone/tablet:** Great, just type in [my.ofa.us/register](https://my.ofa.us/register) on your phone and fill out the fields.

**If they do not have their own phone or tablet and you are comfortable sharing your phone/tablet/computer:** OK, the link is [my.ofa.us/register](https://my.ofa.us/register). You can use my phone/tablet/computer to fill out the form and submit all of the information. *[As the volunteer, you cannot fill out any portion of the form or hit the submit button for the participant.]*

- **If they are not registered to vote, or aren't sure:** "Let's check!" *[Use [my.ofa.us/verify](https://my.ofa.us/verify) and ask them to type in their information. Depending on whether your state has online registration or not will determine the choices they will be given. See the step-by-step graphic on the following page for details.]*

**Closing:** Alright, you should be all set—thanks! Just remember to verify your registration status within the next few weeks to make sure that you are on the voter rolls. Oh, and if you're interested in getting more involved in upcoming local OFA activities, you can sign up right here! *[Hand them an [OFA sign-up sheet](#).]*







