

2018

CIVIC POWER PACK

Your step-by-step guide to finding something constructive to do instead of yelling at your TV and getting caught up in the national political distractions from Washington.

Organizing for Action

Civic Power Pack

In our democracy, everyone, regardless of their interest in politics, holds office; every one of us is in a position of responsibility and are capable of making an impact in our communities. And the future of our democracy, the kind of government we get, the kinds of communities we build, depend on the actions we decide to take today. Progress doesn't just happen on it's own, it happens because ordinary people—people like you—with idealism, energy, and resilience—make it happen. That is what civic power is all about.

So, instead of getting distracted by the circus of the national media, OFA volunteers will be staying engaged, organizing, and building community relationships to lay the groundwork for a successful 2018.

In person and online, OFA volunteers will be launching an #IWillVote grassroots campaign in their communities, where we'll ask our friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors—especially those who live in the 34 Rubber Stamp Rep districts around the country—to commit to making their voices heard and to holding their elected officials accountable.

Using this toolkit

This toolkit is meant to help you prepare for hosting successful community organizing events and to help you start taking positive action for organizing in 2018 and beyond. It lays out the steps you'll need and provides a few key resources to help along the way.

I. Getting started

While the 24-hour news cycle offers plenty of distractions, we're asking OFA volunteers to stay focused on organizing -- building relationships in their communities and raising awareness around voter registration and the issues that matter. This is how we will work towards a more fair, more accessible, and more participatory democracy.

If you're ready to host a Civic Power action event, check out some of these ways you can start mobilizing your neighbors to the polls in 2018. The options below are just a few ideas for actions you could take. Keep reading through the sections on the following pages for more details on each one.



**Our team is here to answer any questions along the way.
Reach out to us at organizing@ofa.us**

OPTION 1

Get 5 friends to #CommitToVote

This is a simple way to make sure your immediate network understands the importance of participating in the democratic process. We all know someone who doesn't exercise their voice, even during elections, so let's start those conversations now by calling 5 friends and asking them to commit to vote.

SEE DETAILS BELOW

OPTION 2

#CommitToVote tabling events

If you're ready to get out in your community, one of the best ways for you to start making an immediate impact is to do a commit-to-vote drive. These events will give you a good excuse to meet your neighbors and begin the conversations about issues that you both care about. This a great activity to do with a couple friends!

SEE DETAILS BELOW

OPTION 3

Voter registration

You can help expand access to our democracy while building relationships in your own community. Go canvassing door-to-door with a friend, set up a table in a high foot traffic area, or work with a local business or organization to get your neighbors to register and/or commit to vote this year.

SEE DETAILS BELOW

➤ Be sure to [set up your event on Action Network](#) and see the sections below for more details.

Setting goals

What do you want to accomplish with your event? Who can you work with in your community—are there other neighborhood organizations, faith groups, or educational institutions that could be supportive—and what issues are most important to you?

It may seem simple, but being able to articulate exactly what you want to accomplish is always the best way to start an effective plan. So spend some time thinking about what you want to achieve. Your goals for may include something similar to the following:

1. Get 5 people in your network to commit to vote. If you are feeling confident, make it 10!
2. If you are doing a tabling event, you may want to set a goal of talking to at least 10 people so you can understand what they care about and why they are motivated to be civically engaged. But feel free to challenge yourself to do 20, 30, or more.
3. Providing a useful outlet for people to channel their energy (or anxiety!) in a positive way.

Your goals will drive your planning decisions, so be sure they're the right ones for your audience, your community, and your event. Everything you do from here on out should be designed to help you achieve them.

Collaborating with community partners

There are probably a number of local groups in your community who also care about building a fairer democracy. Identify them, reach out to them, and try to understand how you might be able to help each other.

Partnering with recognized community groups—such as faith groups, neighborhood organizations, small businesses—can help you reach people that may be outside of your own network, but who are similarly committed to civic engagement. They can help you build new relationships which is ultimately what we need to do if we are going to create a more participatory and accessible democracy for the long term.

II. Civic power in action—the nitty gritty

Option 1: Get five friends to #CommitToVote

One of the best, and most effective ways we can make an impact as organizers is with our own personal networks. These are your family, your friends, and your coworkers—the people you know best. These are the folks who you already have an established relationship with, so it makes sense that these are also the ones you can have the most influence on. Here are some suggestions of what you can do.

1. **Write down a list of 15 friends** in your network that you feel comfortable reaching out to about why they need to make sure they vote this year. Build a bigger list, just in case you are unable to reach some of them.
2. **Call, text, or tag 5 of them** in social media and ask directly if they'll join you and commit to vote this year. Your message can be as simple as one of the examples below.

I'm not sitting on the sidelines anymore and you shouldn't either. Will you #CommitToVote with me this year, [NAME]? <http://www.ofa.us/vote-2018>

[NAME], we can spend this year getting frustrated about what's happening, OR we can take this time to organize. You with me? #CommitToVote <http://www.ofa.us/vote-2018>

3. **Keep the ball rolling.** Once you've gotten your friends to #CommitToVote, ask them if they can get 5 more of their friends, family members, or colleagues to make the pledge too. With thousands of OFA volunteers and supporters across the country, just imagine the number of commitments we can get if we can keep this momentum going!
4. **Take it even further and gather some friends.** You can meet up, nosh on some snacks, order some pizza, and put together a new playlist—whatever you do, make sure the group you've assembled together is ready to #CommitToVote. Then you can all start calling, texting, or tagging 5 additional friends or family members. And so on and so on. Now you've got the ball rolling!
5. **Highlight your organizing on social media.** Don't be selfish and keep all your great organizing to yourself, be proud—you're trying to make a positive impact in your community after all. So share how many friends you got to commit to vote on social media! Remember to use #OFAAction and #CommitToVote to let other organizers around the country know that you're part of this movement too.
 - See the Best Practices section below for more details on using social media to highlight your work.

6. **Bonus:** Telling the story of why you're committing to civic engagement is a powerful motivating tool that can help inspire folks in your network to start getting involved as well. Practice telling your personal story—either in person or online—of why this work matters to you so you can more easily approach folks in your community and connect over shared values.

This is an easy way to make sure your immediate network is bought into staying involved in 2018. If you have any questions along the way, feel free to reach out to us at organizing@ofa.us.

Option 2: Commit-to-vote events

If you're ready to get out in your community and start meeting your neighbors, one of the best ways for you to make an immediate impact is to do a commit-to-vote drive. These events will give you a good excuse to meet your neighbors and begin conversations about issues that you both care about.

How do I get started? Focus on a high traffic area. Set yourself up for a successful outreach event by going to an area where lots of people pass by or congregate (i.e. a place with high foot traffic). This will give you a way to have more conversations in a shorter amount of time. Think places like a farmer's market, a street fair, a busy park, a local community center, a religious institution, or another similar location.

This is a great event to do with a partner, so grab a friend, print some materials, set up a table, and start introducing yourselves to your neighbors and offer them a way to either register themselves to vote or commit to vote if they're already registered.

Note: Some locations will let you set up a table, but you may need a permit, check with the venue or your local city hall for more information.

1. **Have your commit-to-vote pledge cards ready.** You can either [print them yourself](#) or email us at organizing@ofa.us. It's a simple way to get commitments down in writing and collect contact info so we can follow up with key dates and registration deadlines.
 - See the Best Practices section below for more details on using the voter pledge cards in your community outreach events
 - **Check to see if someone is registered to vote.** Use [OFA's vote.org link](#) to check to see if someone is already registered to vote. Either way, it's a great opportunity to then ask them if they will be willing to commit to vote at all levels of government in 2018.
2. **Highlight your organizing on social media.** You're trying to make a positive impact in your community, so be proud and share your civic engagement for the world to see! Remember to use #OFAAction and #CommitToVote to let other organizers around the country know that you're part of this movement too.

If you're trying to get folks to commit to vote online, rather than in-person, remember to use the link "<http://www.ofa.us/vote-2018>" in your posts.

- See the Best Practices section below for more details on using social media to highlight your work.

Option 3: Voter registration

For volunteers who have participated in OFA's voter registration trainings and are comfortable doing events that focus on voter registration, this is the time! While the other side is talking, we're taking every opportunity to get our networks more civically engaged. These kinds of outreach events are organizing opportunities to harness the energy of people who are ready to take action.

Here are a couple of ways that you can help people get themselves registered to vote—you can use OFA's commit to vote materials here, too.

Tabling event. This is a great tactic to use in high foot traffic areas in your community—such as farmers markets, busy community centers, libraries, college campuses, etc. Not only is it an efficient way to have a lot of conversations in a short amount of time, but it will help you refine your pitch to passerby.

When looking for a good high-traffic area, use the tips below to set yourself up for success:

1. **Your table is your base, not your fortress:** People who need to be registered to vote will rarely self-identify – you need to meet them where they are. If you are using a table, get out from behind it and stay active and energetic. Use a table as a central place to meet, train volunteers, and hold supplies.
2. **Steady not crowded:** It's counterintuitive, but very crowded places are not always the best. Once someone declines to register to vote in a crowded location, the other onlookers are more likely to ignore you as well. Try to find a location where there is a steady stream of traffic, but not too crowded.

Door-to-door canvassing. Another great activity to do with a partner. All you'll need to do is [print off some materials](#) to hand out (i.e. Commit-to-Vote Cards and any materials you may have about your chapter) and build up the confidence to start knocking on your neighbors' doors. If you plan on using this tactic to offer your neighbors a way to register themselves to vote, be sure to have a smartphone available so you can direct them to the vote.org platform (my.ofa.us/register). This tactic can seem scary, but if your niece can do it to sell boxes of candy, then you can do it build a stronger democracy.

Partner outreach. As mentioned above, there are likely plenty of local organizations or groups in your community that would love to support your effort to bring the community together and build a fairer, more accessible democracy. You could also try reaching out to a popular local retail business to see if they'd be willing to let you pass out materials in their shop or leave some flyers for interested patrons to take with them.

Check out [OFA's Voter Registration Toolkit](#) for a full step-by-step guide (including a sample script) for hosting an event that's focused around voter registration. If you'd rather do a commit-to-vote drive, you can still use the same toolkit for guidance, but just use the Commit-To-Vote Pledge & Business Cards (below) instead of using the vote.org tool.

If you'd like help promoting your community outreach event or just need someone to talk you through the process, be sure to enter your event into [Action Network](#) and someone from OFA will follow up with you.

III. Best practices

Using the commit-to-vote & voting info cards

Recent election cycles have shown that getting people to commit to vote increases the likelihood that they'll actually follow with it. These simple cards will help OFA volunteers get those commitments in writing and will us help collect the contact information we'll need to follow up with helpful information like key voter registration dates and deadlines in your state.

Step 1: [Print off](#) a reasonable amount of commit-to-vote card and info card sheets.

Step 2: **Cut along the lines.** Turn those sheets into cards you can pass out.

Step 3: **Get those commitments in writing.** Ask your friends, family, and/or neighbors to fill out the commit-to-vote cards with their contact info and which issues they care about most.

Step 4: **Pass out an Info Card** for folks to take with them as a reminder of when election day is and where they can go for more information.

Step 5: **Ask for a picture.** This is civic engagement—be proud to participate in our democracy. Ask the folks who made a commitment to vote if they'd be willing to take a picture with you so you can highlight it on your social media.

Step 6: **Tweet about it!** Brag about your organizing so both the folks in your own digital network as well as other organizers across the country can see the great work you're doing and help lift it up by giving it a like or a share. Remember to use #OFAAction, #CommitToVote, or #FairDemocracy so we can find your posts.

Step 7: **Data entry.** After your event is over and you've collected the commit cards, remember to enter the contact information into [OFA's commit-to-vote data entry page](#) so we can follow up with folks about key voter registration dates and deadlines.

**DOWNLOAD AND PRINT:
COMMIT-TO-VOTE CARDS**

**DOWNLOAD AND PRINT:
VOTING INFO CARDS**

Digital Guidance

Social media are great resources for organizers. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter can function as ready-made tools for expanding the reach and impact of the work OFA volunteers are already doing in their communities. To get started, or even just to brush up on your social media skills, check out the mini-toolkits below.

Using social media before, during, & after your event

People learn best through stories. Share yours and those of your neighbors on social media. [Here's how to show off your organizing work](#) before, during, and after an event using social media.

Using #Hashtags & @Handles

Don't just post your content into the void—make sure you're plugging into the right conversations with the right folks. Amplify your message by [using hashtags and handles](#) the right way. For these events, we'll be using #OFAAction, #CommitToVote, or #FairDemocracy.

Photography tips for organizers

You don't need to be a professional photographer with a fancy camera to capture your events. Your camera phone should be able to do the job well enough to [capture excellent photos](#).

Story collection

Our personal stories—what motivates our activism, why we care about specific issues, and who we are fighting for—are some of the most powerful tools we have as organizers in relating to others and conveying a sense of our shared values. People typically don't make an emotional connection with facts, charts, and numbers. They do, however, connect with similar experiences and shared values. The trick is being able to effectively and succinctly tell our stories in a way that resonates with others. That's also why asking for and collecting the personal stories of those you meet is a really important way to establish relationships and build on that connection from a point of mutual understanding.

Step 1: Make sure you know your own personal story. What do you care about? Why do you care about it? Was there a moment or experience in your life that comes to mind when you think about this issue? These are all questions your personal story should try to answer in a super succinct way (less than 2 min). As an organizer, you should feel very practiced and comfortable sharing your personal story with others.

Step 2: Ask for & collect stories from others. You should feel comfortable asking folks what issues they care about and why. Getting to the heart of their motivation is an important way to discover what's motivating their interest in civic engagement and revealing shared values.

Step 3: Let OFA know about great stories. If you're meeting some really great people in your community who are interested in getting more involved, let OFA know about them. If they have a really compelling or inspirational story, and you've gotten their consent to share it, there are a few ways you can help lift up their story:

- [Email OFA](#) with a brief or not-so-brief write-up of their story at organizing@ofa.us
- [Have them fill out this form](#). If you're not comfortable emailing their story or rephrasing it in your own words, ask them if they'll share their story with this short form on our website.



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- Post it on social media. Some of the best content on social media comes from organizers and volunteers sharing the personal stories of the incredible people they meet in their community during their organizing work. If they're comfortable with it, ask them if you can share their story on Twitter or Facebook—consider asking them to take a picture as well. Try to rephrase their story in a concise way and post it to social media with the hashtag #OFAAction.

Promoting Your Event

If you're hosting a community event for the general public, it's a good idea to promote the event within your community. Here are a few suggestions for ways to boost turnout:

- **Personally invite people you know.** One of the most effective strategies in organizing is leaning on your own network. Make a list of friends, family, colleagues, and other individuals who might be interested in getting more civically engaged or working towards a more fair democracy. Reach out to them through whichever medium you feel most comfortable (direct emails, over the phone, text or social media messages, etc.).
- **Create an event on Facebook.** If you have Facebook, then you already have a built-in network of friends and family members to reach out to for your event. After you create an event on [Action Network](#), create an event on Facebook as well and invite those in your network who you think would be interested. Be sure to include the link to your Action Network event on the Facebook page as well.
- **Post on social media.** Since tweets and Facebook posts are easy to miss as they flow through their news feeds, you should feel comfortable posting about your event multiple times. Encourage your co-hosts and any other attendees to post too, and make it easy for them by sending examples of what to write. For more helpful with using social media before, during, and after your event, check out this helpful [toolkit](#).

Sample Facebook post

Don't just sit on the sidelines and yell at your TV in 2018. Let's take action and #CommitToVote. Join me and a few friends. RSVP here: [LINK]



Sample Twitter post

Hey friends, I'm having a few folks get together to talk about taking 2018 by the horns. Join us and RSVP here: [LINK]



IV. Print-at-home materials

[Commit-to-vote pledge cards](#)

[Voting info cards](#)

Enter voter contact information into [this entry form](#).

V. Guides and toolkits

[Using social media for an event](#)

[Share your story collection form](#)

[Photography tips for organizers](#)



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