



2022 Election Program

Nonpartisan Statewide Election Activities for Nonprofits

July 19, 2022

The stakes are high for community nonprofits this election season. On November 8, Connecticut will hold elections for all statewide constitutional offices, the legislature as well as federal representation in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. These officials will shape state and federal policy for the coming years.

Before new candidates are sworn into office and others are re-elected, it is imperative that community nonprofits engage with candidates to highlight the important work that you do and the issues that impact you and the people you serve.

Election related activities are part of a larger continuum of civic engagement for many in the nonprofit community. By engaging voters and candidates this election season, nonprofits will further their missions, have a positive impact on communities, build relationships with potential and current elected officials, and increase the general understanding of policy issues important to community nonprofits.

You can engage candidates in-person, virtually or both. You can also make sure your staff and people you serve vote. The Alliance encourages you to organize one or more of the following activities:

- **Host a Legislative Candidate Forum.** You can also attend one hosted by another organization and ask a question on behalf of your organization.
- **Invite Candidates to an Organizational Event** (Board of Directors, staff meeting, ribbon-cutting, etc.);
- **Host a Voter Registration and/or Pledge to Vote Drives;**

Below is additional information on how to plan these types of events, engage candidates and voters, and comply with election laws and public health guidance throughout the process. Please [share your plans with us](#) so we can support your efforts!

As you plan for these activities, keep the following [key dates](#) in mind for 2022:

- **July 19:** Absentee Ballots for Primary Election Available
- **August 9:** Primary Election Day
- **September 20:** National Voter Registration Day
- **October 7:** Absentee Ballots Available
- **November 1:** Voter Registration Deadline* (General Election)
- **November 8:** Election Day



*For further detail on registration deadlines (absentee, in-person, etc.), [click here](#).

1. Host a Legislative Candidate Forum

Hosting a legislative candidate forum is an excellent way for candidates to hear about issues that impact your organization. Depending on your focus, the forum can serve to increase awareness about your organization and the community that you support, or address critical policy issues and funding needs. **If you are interested in hosting a legislative candidate forum, please [contact The Alliance](#). The Alliance would like to help members across the State host or co-host their own legislative candidate forums.**

A “Town Hall” format allows your staff, the people you serve, and other community members to ask candidates questions about issues that are important to them. One thing to keep in mind, all candidate forums must remain nonpartisan so each candidate must get equal time to speak/respond. More on that below in “Nonpartisan Rules to Follow.”

Finally, *attending* a candidate forum is also a good way for you, your staff, people you serve or volunteers to learn about candidates. You may also be able to ask a question to the candidates to better understanding their policy positions and/or familiarity with community nonprofits.

Please note: Alliance staff are happy to provide technical assistance and answer any questions about these nonpartisan election activities.

2. Invite Candidates to Organizational Meetings or Events

An easy way to engage candidates is to invite them to your next Board or staff meeting or organization event. Whether they are running for the first time or have served for years, it is important for them to learn about the work that you do, meet your Board members, staff, even people you serve as appropriate, and hear how you fit into the fabric of your community and our state. You will likely want to make arrangements beforehand for candidates to participate at different times so they are comfortable speaking freely.

3. Host Voter Registration & Pledge to Vote Drives

Voter engagement is an essential activity for community nonprofits. You can support these efforts by encouraging and educating staff, clients and others to vote. Voter registration and pledge to vote efforts have a significant impact on voter participation, and as long as you [remain nonpartisan](#), you can engage in this work.

Research by Nonprofit VOTE demonstrates that when community nonprofits talk to and assist the people they serve with registering to vote, people are much more likely to vote and more likely to talk to their friends and family about voting.

Voter Registration Drives

In-Person Drives: All you need are masks, a few laptops or tablets and a stack of “N” coded voter registration forms (which can be requested through the Office of the Secretary of the State or The Alliance). It may also be helpful to have pledge to vote cards, which people registering to vote can also complete, that will allow you to remind them of important voting deadlines and their polling location.

Some creative formats for in-person voter registration drives have occurred outside, such “Drive-Thru” events where people fill-out voter registration forms and pledge to vote cards.

Virtual Drives: Use a virtual meeting platform (e.g., Zoom) to remind staff and/or volunteers to register to vote, **especially if anyone moved recently. Voter registration does not move with you!** You can review key voting dates and deadlines (listed on Page 1) as well as direct people to use The Alliance’s unique URL for registering to vote using Connecticut’s online voter registration system:

Online Voter Registration

Registering to vote in Connecticut is usually as easy as a few clicks. In partnership with the Office of the Secretary of the State, The Alliance established a unique online voter registration link for nonprofits in Connecticut’s online voter registration system. By using this unique URL

(<https://voterregistration.ct.gov/OLVR/department.do?nvraCode=OP>), we will be able to track how many people registered to vote through nonprofit voter engagement events and activities at the conclusion of the election! You just need a driver’s license to use the portal.

Below are step-by-step instructions for using the unique URL and adding it to your website and communications.

Add The Logo & Link To Your Website Homepage

To maximize awareness and consistency, please add the official “Nonprofits – REGISTER to Vote Here” logo and button to your website homepage or in your email communications, linked to the URL.



You or your website manager can copy and paste this HTML code to embed the logo with a link:

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<a href="https://voterregistration.ct.gov/OLVR/department.do?nvraCode=OP" target="_blank">
```

When you register people to vote or promote voter registration, use this link!

<https://voterregistration.ct.gov/OLVR/department.do?nvraCode=OP>

Pledge to Vote

When trying to register people to vote, you may come across people who are already registered to vote. That’s okay! First, **ask them if they have moved recently, because their voter registration does not move with them.** Second, ask if they will pledge to vote and have them complete a pledge to vote card which you can use to count voter engagement and send them a reminder to vote close to Election Day.

Nonpartisan Rules to Follow

As long as you **maintain strict nonpartisanship, do not explicitly or implicitly endorse a candidate and provide all sides with equal access and opportunity**, the IRS allows 501(c)(3) organizations to engage in

election work. By following a few easy steps, you can educate candidates and engage your constituents in the political process.

Candidate Appearances: Educating current and potential elected officials about what you do is essential to your advocacy efforts. If you are planning to host candidates at your organization, follow these simple rules and guidelines:

- You must invite all candidates for a particular office. They don't all have to attend, but **they must be invited**.
- For both a candidate forum or a site visit/tour, we recommend **hosting opposing candidates on different dates or times**. This will ensure a productive conversation and may result in better attendance from each candidate.
- You must **give each candidate equal opportunity** and provide a similar venue, time and presentation format for each event.
- You may also invite elected officials who are candidates to appear in their official capacity. If you do so, make sure that the candidate is chosen to speak solely for reasons other than their candidacy. While you can't control what they say, take steps to ensure that the atmosphere of the event is kept free of campaign activity.
- Finally, candidates are free to arrive uninvited to a public event you host. If that occurs, take care that there is no actual or implied endorsement.

Additional Resources

Connecticut Voter Resources:

- [CT Secretary of the State Voter Information Page](#)
- [Register to Vote Online](#) (requires ID from DMV)
- [English Language Voter Registration Form](#)
- [Spanish Language Voter Registration Form](#)
- Election Day Voter Registration Locations by Town (available TBA)
- [Voting by Absentee Ballot](#)
- [Voting with a Disability Fact Sheet](#)
- [Restoration of Voting Rights](#)



For more information, please contact Jeff Shaw, jshaw@ctnonprofitalliance.org