



Getting Politically Involved

Alliance members have asked how they can become more politically involved leading up to the election in 2024 and beyond. Regardless of political party, there are several ways to get involved! Nonprofit leaders might view personally getting involved in local politics similarly to getting involved in your local Rotary Club or Chamber of Commerce; your personal investment of time can lead to better relationships with important stakeholders to your organization's success.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, your organization is prohibited by federal law from participating in activities that support or oppose candidates for office or other partisan politics. But as an individual, you have a constitutional right to participate in electoral politics, even to run for office yourself!

Below are steps that can be taken for anyone interested in getting politically involved.

1. Register to vote with a political party

The first and easiest way to get involved is to make sure you are registered to vote. You can register to vote [online](#).

Even if you know that you are registered to vote, check your voting affiliation. The nature of our political system means that most of the mechanism of local politics revolve around the Democratic and Republican parties. As such, it is easier to be involved in the political process if you are registered with one of the two major political parties versus being an unaffiliated voter. By changing your voting registration to be one of the major political parties, you will be able to vote in primary elections as well.

2. Attend local meetings and events

Each town and city in Connecticut has a different form of local government. You may have a mayor and town council system, or a town manager overseen by a town council or board of selectman, or any variation in between. Familiarize with your town or city government by checking out your town website. There you can also search for agendas and meetings dates for local town meetings.

Getting to know the issues in your town and who the key players are will better inform you on the local issues in your town and be a steppingstone to connecting you to the broader political apparatus in town.

3. Join a Democratic or Republican Town Committee

Every town in Connecticut has a Democratic Town Committee (DTC) and a Republican Town Committee (RTC). This structure feeds into a larger state party organization. Outside of each

candidate's own political operation, the Town Committees should be how the work of elections get done in each community. Members volunteer to talk to voters, raise money, and help in other ways to get their candidates elected.

Each town varies with requirements on how to join the committee and how robust and active their committees are. While a small minority of town committees have competition for their seats, most are excited for newcomers and are happy to have more people willing to help. Even if there aren't any current vacancies on the committee or you aren't ready to fully commit to be a member, the meetings of these committees are public. You do not need to be a member to come and listen and even participate at the meeting.

Attending these meetings will give you updates on political activities in your town. Local and state officials typically join these meetings to discuss updates at town hall or the Capitol. It is a great way to hear about current events and a great opportunity to ask elected officials questions important to you and your organization.

The town committee is also a great way to forge relationships with state and local elected officials and any new candidates who may be running for office. The biggest "official" responsibility the town committee has is the nominating process for all offices in the state. Each town committee is responsible for nominating candidates directly and for sending delegates to conventions for all candidates that represent more than one town, including statewide offices. Being a delegate and having a vote at the conventions gives you an opportunity to speak directly to candidates who are vying for your support and vote. It also gives you the opportunity to ask the candidates questions and gauge their support for issues important to you and your organization and create a relationship and dialogue that can continue after the election.

Lastly, the town committee will be the hub for volunteer activities for political candidates. Especially during an election year, volunteers are sought for door knocking, making phone calls, sending text messages, or writing op-eds to the local paper and do not need to be members of the committee. Giving even a couple hours one weekend for a candidate and having a conversation with them, will begin to build the steps to a relationship that you can lean on in the future.

If you would like to get involved, please see a list of [DTC chairs](#) or [RTC chairs](#) and reach out to the one in your town that matches your party affiliation.

4. Fundraising and Donations

Another way to get involved is to attend fundraisers and donate to political candidates and local party committees. Even if you are not currently involved in your local politics, if you have formed a relationship with your legislators through your advocacy every session, you may be asked to make a financial contribution to their campaigns.

As a person who works for a nonprofit, your personal political activity is not governed by your 501(c)(3) status, but if your organization receives funding from the State, several rules apply. In general, if you are a "principal" of your organization and your organization receives state funding, you are prohibited from making financial contributions to candidates for state office, any DTCs or RTCs, or any state Political Action Committees (PACs).

This prohibition is for state candidates only and you may contribute to candidates for federal or local office. It also only governs financial contributions and does not prohibit you from hosting a fundraising event in your home (unless you are also a registered lobbyist). Members of your board are not considered principals.

Please review [this memo](#) that outlines the rules regarding financial contributions for nonprofits, their boards, executives and staff in Connecticut.

5. **Statewide and Federal Political Involvement**

Statewide elected officials such as the Governor and Lt. Governor are politically active through the state party organization. The CT Democratic Party and the CT Republican Party have staff that support federal and statewide candidates and all the local town committees to the extent that they need them.

During election years, the state parties organize many events throughout the state. You can join their email lists and check the websites for events in or near your town. Attending these events can get you face to face with our federal delegation to get updates on issues at the federal level and to ask about issues important to you and your organization.

Federal candidates also hold extensive campaign events every election, including a multitude of small fundraisers at the homes of local supporters. Attending these events is a great opportunity to form relationships with candidates for federal office.