Voting Matters: How to Increase Voter Engagement Among Low-Income Housing Residents
Presentations

- **Tori Bourret**, National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)
- **Melissa Bondi**, Enterprise Community Partners
- **Cristelle Brown**, Spread the Vote
- **Jose Quinonez**, Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH)
- **Teresa Santalucia**, Klein Hornig
- **Kim Phillip**, NAACP, Arlington Chapter
NLIHC Voter Engagement Efforts

Presented by Tori Bourret
National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)
Our Mission:
The National Low Income Housing Coalition is dedicated solely to achieving socially just public policy that ensures people with the lowest incomes in the United States have affordable and decent homes.
• **The Our Homes Our Votes Voter Engagement Campaign** aims to address low voter turnout among low income renters.

• When renters do not vote, they lose the opportunity to have a voice in the policies that affect them!

• Simply put, low turnout from our constituents leads to unfavorable housing policy decisions, something we want to avoid.
Who Are We Targeting?

U.S. Citizens Who Reported Being Registered to Vote (2008 to 2016)

- **Homeowners**
  - 2008: 75%
  - 2010: 70%
  - 2012: 75%
  - 2014: 70%
  - 2016: 74%

- **Renters**
  - 2008: 61%
  - 2010: 53%
  - 2012: 61%
  - 2014: 51%
  - 2016: 61%

Source: November 2008-2016 Current Population Survey data
Who Are We Targeting?

U.S. Citizens Who Reported Voting in National Elections by Housing Tenure (2008 to 2016)
### What are some examples?

- Voter ID Laws
- Targeting Specific Communities with Misinformation
- Efforts to Curtail Early and Absentee Voting Opportunities
- Reducing or Relocating Polling Places
- “Voter Caging” (challenging registration status at the polls)

### Who is targeted?

- Low-income people
- Members of racial or ethnic minorities
- Students
- Senior citizens
- Persons with disabilities
Voter Suppression

Voting Restrictions in America

Status Key:
- Red: Restriction in place for first time in presidential election in 2016
- Pink: Restriction in place for 2012 presidential election
- Black: States with restrictive laws since the 2016 election

This map has been updated to reflect legislation discussed in the May 10, 2017 Voting Laws Roundup. View a PDF version here.

Map from the Brennan Center for Justice:
https://www.brennancenter.org/new-voting-restrictions-america
Opportunity to Encourage Non Profit Voter Engagement Efforts

Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio’s Voter Engagement Efforts

• Motivated by election protection and upcoming races
• Focusing on getting partners to participate in all three aspects of voter engagement
• Providing mini grants to fund partners’ voter engagement efforts

Florida Housing Coalition’s Voter Engagement Efforts

• Creating voter engagement work group this year
  • To fight funding cuts to Housing Trust Fund
• Will partner with realtor groups to organize housing candidate forums
• Challenges include fear of losing 501c3 status, mission drift, lack of organizing capacity
Organizations’ Wish Lists

Ability to Lead Voter Engagement Efforts

- Supports for internal organizational capacity building
- Concrete tools and strategies
- Legal analysis and support
- Development and monitoring of outcomes and metrics
- Partnerships with community organizers or voter mobilization groups
- Guidance for embedding voter engagement in organizational mission
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Overview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OHOV introduction</td>
<td>Provides an overview of OHOV campaign and various ways to engage voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Advocates’ Imperative</td>
<td>Makes the case for why housing nonprofits MUST do voter engagement and will share case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legally Speaking</td>
<td>Explains what non profits can do around voter engagement and will link to specific resources/non profits that provide guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter Education</td>
<td>Explains what voter education is and will share case studies and core resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter Registration</td>
<td>Explains why registering voters matters and will provide tactics and check lists for mobilizing voters, as well as case studies and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter Mobilization</td>
<td>Makes the case for mobilizing voters and will provide a check list, case studies and core resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Interactions</td>
<td>Provides tips on conducting effective candidate forums and surveys</td>
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</table>
The Our Homes, Our Votes Engagement Plan is a step-by-step model for launching a campaign to register, educate, and mobilize voters.

The Our Homes, Our Votes Engagement Guide is a companion piece to explain steps in the voter engagement process.

And of Course – The NLIHC Field Team!
Case Study on Voter Mobilization

Presented by Melissa Bondi
Enterprise Community Partners
With permission of NPH
2016 Bay Area Ballot Measure Wins
Bay Area Voters Approve New Investment in Affordability

Nearly $2.5 billion in new investment via four county-level measures, 2015-16

Prop A, 2015 – 74%
GO Bond $310M

Measure K, 2016 – 70%
Sales Tax Ext., $25+M/yr

Measure A, 2016 – 68%
GO Bond $950M

Measure A1, 2016 – 70%
GO Bond $580M
Turnout Varies. Turnout Matters!

Registered Voter Turnout in California Elections, 2010-2016

Support for County Housing Bonds

Very frequent voters
Infrequent voters

% Yes, Approve

Alameda County
Santa Clara County

Sources:
Alameda: EMC, June 2016
Santa Clara: EMC, April 2016
Santa Clara County measure a $950 million homeless & housing bond

**Affordable Housing Residents a Key Voting Bloc**

*Database of registered affordable housing residents assists outreach*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes – 67.88%</td>
<td>454,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>214,968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margin of Victory</td>
<td>8,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Registration - June</td>
<td>12,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Registration – Nov.</td>
<td>15,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Turnout – Nov.</td>
<td>10,346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ms. Irma Ortiz  
Credit: LifeSTEPS 2016
In short...

- Create community consensus first
- Choose best election
- Build coalitions & partnerships
- Secure adequate resources for campaigns
- Tech-savvy voter targeting and engagement
- Follow strict message discipline
  - Talk about the need, not the money
Spread the Vote

Presented by Cristelle Brown

Spread the Vote
SPREAD THE VOTE
21 MILLION
Eligible voters in America do not have photo ID.

ID = LIFE
You need an ID to work, find housing, open a bank account, for some shelters and food banks, and in 20 states, to VOTE.
It takes time, money, transportation, and a lot of paperwork to get an ID. Not everyone can do this alone. That's where Spread The Vote comes in.
**STEP 1:** Spread The Vote creates hyper-local community chapters and turns our local volunteers into ID experts.
STEP 2:
We create partnerships with amazing local service orgs like shelters, food banks, free clinics, and more.
STEP 3: Our local volunteers connect with eligible voters in our partners' communities who need IDs.
STEP 4: Each voter is paired with a volunteer who works with them to get everything they need to get an ID. Spread The Vote covers all required fees.
STEP 5:
Our voters get an ID! They can use this ID to obtain jobs, find housing, get medical care, and more.
It's time to vote!
When an election day rolls around, we educate our voters on everything they need to know to feel empowered at the polls and we give them a ride!
What Landlords Can Do to Get Out the Vote

Presented by Jose Quinonez
Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing
Adapted from Project Vote
The History of Voter Registration

A selection of key dates in the history of voting rights:

- **1787**: The US Constitution gives white, male, property owners age 21 and over the right to vote.
- **1848**: The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ends the Mexican-American War and grants citizenship to Mexicans living in the newly acquired territories. English language requirements block their ability to vote.
- **1869**: Congress passes the 15th Amendment, giving black men the right to vote.
- **1920**: The 19th Amendment gives women age 21 and over the right to vote.
- **1940**: Only 3% of eligible African Americans in the South are registered to vote.
- **1965**: The Voting Rights Act is passed, which bars any practices that deny the right to vote on account of race.
- **1971**: The 26th Amendment changes the voting age to 18 years old.
- **1993**: The National Voter Registration Act is passed.
What factors affect voter registration?

National Voter Registration by Race/Ethnicity, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>% Registered to Vote Nationally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other race</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recent Voter Turnout in National Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Voter Turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016 Presidential Election</td>
<td>58% of eligible voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 Midterm Election</td>
<td>36.4% of eligible voters (lowest since WWII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 Presidential Election</td>
<td>57.2% of eligible voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 Midterm Election</td>
<td>36.7% of eligible voters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In most states, social/human services agencies are required to offer voter registration by the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA).

Since 1995, 11.9 million people registered to vote through public assistance agencies.

Important lessons from the NVRA:
- Providing meaningful assistance
- Tracking voter registrations
Through voter registration, you can...

Make Voting More Accessible

- Low-income citizens face many barriers to registering to vote, including technology and information obstacles.
- Nonprofits and civic partners are uniquely positioned to help residents overcome these issues.
- Curbside voting helps make voting more accessible for disabled residents.

Build Strong Communities

- Low-income and minority voters are often the most affected by government policies.
- Voter registration creates avenues for greater impact, enabling low-income and minority voters to change or advocate for policies that affect them.

Empower and Improve Outcomes

- Civic engagement, including registering to vote and voting, makes people feel more powerful and more connected to their community and country.
- Research shows that community engagement can improve health outcomes.
Voter registration cannot affect access to services

The decision about voter registration is voluntary.

Political affiliation will not affect eligibility to receive services that your organization offers.

Everyone should be asked to register

Don’t make assumptions.

Consistency is critical in creating a successful voter registration system.

Only U.S. citizens are eligible to register.

When talking to non-citizens, remember:

• Many people are eligible to apply for citizenship but have not.
• You can encourage the client to check eligibility and consider applying for citizenship.
• Once naturalized, they can register and vote.

Communication is key:

• Deadlines for registration are very important.
• Explain that they must register on or before the close of registration for a given election.

Make the ask personal:

• Connect the dots between the services your organization offers and voter registration.
• Don’t be afraid to let them know that it’s important to you and that you want them to be open to the conversation.
Start Early

- Remind your residents to submit their absentee ballots on time.
- Alert when election day is at least one month away.
- Educate on early voting, if available.
- Share maps and information where residents will vote.

Continual Reminders

- Inform on what time polls will open and close.
- Post notices and contact numbers for rides to the polls.
- Share a sample ballot to inform on the issues.
- Remind your residents one week before election day.
On Election Day

In Virginia, the deadline to register to vote or update your existing registration is **October 15**.

In Virginia, General Election Day is **November 6, 2018**, or the first Tuesday of November.

- Place “Voting Today!” posters, balloons, and other information around your site.
- Post maps with addresses and hours of local precincts.
- Make Ride-to-Polls opportunities visible and well-known.
- Remind residents to bring photo ID to the polls.
On Election Day
Place "Vote Today!" posters, balloons and other information around your site. Post maps with address and hours of the local precincts. Make ride to polls opportunity visible and well-known.

Tell residents to bring photo ID to the polls.

VOTER REGISTRATION
Registrese para Votar

If you are not registered or have changed your address, REGISTER NOW!

Si usted no está registrado o ha cambiado su dirección, REGISTRESE AHORA!

A volunteer will be going door to door on______________ to help you register to vote.
Un voluntario irá de puerta en puerta______________ para ayudarle a registrarse para votar.

EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE

Make your voice heard on November 7th
Encuentra tu voz el 7 de noviembre

DEMOCRATS can get a RIDE to the polls (transporte para votar) by calling 703-528-8588

REPUBLICANS can get a RIDE to the polls (transporte para votar) by calling 703-877-8217
Advocacy – Get Out The Vote (GOTV)

Presented by Teresa M. Santalucia
Klein Hornig LLP
**Purpose**: To provide 101 level training housing advocates regarding GOTV requirements as lobbying, advocacy and political activity as it pertain to nonprofits exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of IRC.

**Disclaimer**: The information in this presentation is meant for educational purposes only and not intended or offered as legal advice.
NPO/501(c)(3)

- Typically a corporation
- Created under state nonprofit corporation law by filing Articles of Organization
- Run by Board of Directors pursuant to Bylaws
- Exempt purpose under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code
Internal Revenue Code

§§501(a) – 501(c)(3)

• **IRC § 501(a):** Exemption from Taxation: An organization described in subsection (c)... shall be exempt from taxation....

• **IRC § 501(c)(3):** Corporations, and any community chest, fund, or foundation, organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, testing for public safety, literary, or educational purposes, or to foster national or international amateur sports competition (but only if no part of its activities involve the provision of athletic facilities or equipment), or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals....
IRC §501(c)(3): *...no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual, no substantial part of the activities of which is carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation (except as otherwise provided in subsection (h)), and which does not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.*
Internal Revenue Code §501(c)(3) Restrictions:

- No private benefit
- No substantial lobbying
- No political campaign activities
Three Rules:

1. **Advocacy** – Permitted as educational activity

2. **Lobbying** – Cannot be a substantial activity of NPO

3. **Political Campaign Activity** – prohibited
Advocacy

• Encouraging people to participate in the electoral process in a non-biased, neutral manner

• Provide information

• Influence public opinion on issues

• Influence non-legislative governing bodies

• Encourage voter participation
  • Voter registration/Get Out the Vote
Advocacy - IRS

Can a section 501(c)(3) organization conduct voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives?

Yes, if they are conducted in a neutral non-partisan manner, for example, without reference to any candidate or political party. However, voter education or registration activities conducted in a biased manner that favors (or opposes) one or more candidates is prohibited.

Permissible Advocacy – GOTV

• Nonpartisan information about process rather than support of a particular candidate

• Register/educate member, staff, board, volunteers, and clients

• Have registration forms available at office/events/meetings

• Set up tables or work in community to register voters
Permissible Advocacy – GOTV Nonpartisan Language

Sample Language:
“*These voter registration services are available without regard to the voter’s political preference. Information and other assistance regarding registering or voting, including transportation and other services offered, shall not be withheld or refused on the basis of support for or opposition to particular candidates or a particular party.*”
Permissible Advocacy – GOTV Tips

• Target areas in which NPO serves
• Do not only target areas in an attempt to support particular candidate
• Do not suggest support of or joining particular party
• Be cautious of partnering with political organizations/501(c)(4) advocacy groups
GOTV Activities for 501(c)(3) NPO Entities

Permissible Advocacy – GOTV “VOTE FOR”

• Keep Issue Related
• Keep Non-partisan

√ Can say: Vote for Affordable Housing.

✗ Can’t say: Vote for Candidate X and Support Affordable Housing
Permissible Advocacy – GOTV Rides to Polls

• Provide information regarding nonpartisan groups offering rides to polls.

• Provide contact information to candidates or parties offering rider.
  • Must have information for all candidates/parties so nonpartisan.

• Provide transportation itself - no partisan stickers or signs on or in the vehicle.
Voter Registration

• Every state except North Dakota requires citizens to register if they want to become voters.
• Depending on your state, the registration deadline could be as much as a month before an election.
• Check: [https://www.usa.gov/election-office](https://www.usa.gov/election-office) for information about registration deadlines and ways to vote (Absentee/Apps/Vote by Mail)
• [https://www.nass.org/can-i-vote](https://www.nass.org/can-i-vote)
Voter ID Requirements

• Make sure you know the Voter ID requirements in your area and communicate this information.
• If you have clients, help them get necessary ID well in advance.
• If you’re giving rides to the polls, make sure people have proper ID with them.
Example:

Give a HOOT, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) based in Florida that educates the public on affordable housing issues. Candidate Bea is running for the state legislature and a big part of her platform is challenging the housing policies of her incumbent Candidate Muckle.

Shortly before the election HOOT Inc. sets up a telephone bank to call registered voters in the district in which Candidate Bea is running. In the phone conversation, Roy, a volunteer for HOOT, Inc. asks questions about the views on affordable housing issues. If the voter appears to favor Candidate Muckle’s stance, Roy thanks the voter and ends the call. If the voter appears to favor Candidate Bea, then Roy reminds the voter about the upcoming election, and even offers transport to the polls.
Use a script and keep the message simple:

1. Your polling location is ________.
2. The polls will be open from ________ to ______.
3. You will need to bring _____ with you to the polls.
4. Do you need a ride to the polls on election day?
5. Would you like to see any information we have put together about affordable housing issues in your area?
6. Would you like to volunteer with our voter mobilization effort?
Printed Material, Websites & Social Media

• NPOs cannot publicize or distribute statements supporting or opposing a candidate for public office. Includes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facebook/Instagram/Twitter</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Webpage</td>
<td>Blog</td>
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</table>

• Materials should be nonpartisan with intent to educate regarding voter process.

• NPOs may link to candidate-related material – if the link serves as a purpose related to the organization’s charitable mission.
NAACP GOTV in Affordable Housing

Presented by Kim Phillip
NAACP Arlington Branch 7047
Challenges and Solutions for GOTV in Affordable Housing

• Not registered
  • Citizenship
  • Rights need to be restored

• Don’t have the time to vote
  • Distribute information about absentee voting

• Not aware of the election
  • Create events to raise awareness
  • Post signs
• 4. **Language Barriers**
  - Carry voter registration forms in multiple languages
  - Use translation software for signs and election information
  - Recruit volunteers who speak other languages

• 5. **State ID requirements**
  - Share information on how to get a free ID
  - Partner with groups that help residents get IDs -- Spread the Vote ([www.spreadthecvote.org/virginia](http://www.spreadthecvote.org/virginia), contact [cristelle@spreadthecvote.org](mailto:cristelle@spreadthecvote.org))
  - Arrange for registrar to come to the property
Challenges and Solutions

• Unable to get to the polls due to lack of transportation or disability
  • Rides to polls
  • Curbside voting
  • In-poll aides

• Voter Apathy
  • Polarization helps and hurts
  • Every vote counts (give recent examples in Virginia)
  • Continued engagement after election
Case Study: NAACP Voter Registration at Affordable Housing Properties
Strategies

• Arrange best time/place with property manager
  • Consecutive days
  • Special events
  • Times with most traffic

• Learn which languages predominate
  • Recruit volunteers who speak relevant languages

• Ask manager to advertise events
  • Provide signs in relevant languages for laundry rooms, elevators, etc.
  • Provide announcement for websites
Strategies

• Bring appropriate materials to events
  • Information on absentee voting, online registration, upcoming elections, polling places, state ID requirements, how to get an ID, etc
  • Applications for restoration of rights
  • Translations of voter registration forms

• Closer to election, provide the property with educational materials
  • VOTE NOW (availability of absentee voting)
  • Exercise Your Right to Vote (with numbers to call for rides)
VOTER REGISTRATION
Registrese para Votar

If you are not registered or have changed your address,
REGISTER NOW!

Si usted no está registrado o ha cambiado su dirección,
REGISTRESE AHORA!

A volunteer will be going door to door on _______________ to help
you register to vote

Un voluntario irá de puerta en puerta _______________ para
ayudarle a registrarse para votar
**Best Practices for Voter Registration**

**PRO TIP:**
If someone seems like they’re on the fence (but eligible to vote), don’t wait to give you a definitive “YES!” before you hand them the voter registration form. Instead, go ahead and put the form in their hands. This can help speed up the process.
State information – connects to local jurisdictions

- Virginia Department of Elections
  - Web: https://www.elections.virginia.gov/
  - Phone: 800-552-9745
  - TTY: 711
  - Email: info@elections.Virginia.gov

Non-partisan Organizations – a starting point

- NAACP National Headquarters
  - Web: http://www.naacp.org/
  - Phone: 877-NAACP-98

- League of Women Voters National Headquarters
  - Web: https://www.lwv.org/
  - Phone: 202-429-1965

- Voto Latino National Headquarters
  - Web: https://www.lwp.org/
  - Phone: 202-386-6374
  - Email: info@votolatino.org
Questions?
Panelists Contact Information

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