

The Answer

SHELTERFORCE

Q: Can nonprofits get out the vote among their residents, clients, and staff?

A: Yes, and they should!

Nonprofits are often uncertain about what they can legally do leading up to an election and therefore hold back, but there's a lot that can be done.

For example, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations* can:

- Conduct nonpartisan voter registration drives.
- Conduct nonpartisan get-out-the-vote activities¹, such as handing out reminders, participating in phone banking, and organizing carpools.
- Get voters the information they need to vote—including election dates and times, polling places, details on how to vote, ID requirements² (or lack thereof), and voter rights (such as time off from work to vote³).
- Help residents, clients, and staff make a plan to vote.
- In states where identification is required, help eligible voters who don't have up-to-date ID secure or renew it.
- Give nonpartisan information about who is running, or host a candidate forum.
- Take a position on a ballot measure (subject to time and resource limits on lobbying⁴).

But can't:

"Participate in—or intervene in—any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for elective public office."

- This means your organization cannot endorse candidates, encourage people to vote a certain way, encourage people to register for a certain party, or only register those who identify with a certain party.
- You also should not interact on social media with accounts associated with campaigns or partisan organizations with endorsed candidates.

For more details and ideas about how to mobilize low-income voters, visit *Our Homes, Our Votes* at bit.ly/OurHomesOurVotes, and *Nonprofit Vote* at bit.ly/NonprofitVote.

*There are a few kinds of federal funding that come with further restrictions.

Go to bit.ly/PoliticalActivity for details.

¹ Our Homes, Our Votes, bit.ly/OurHomesOurVotes

² Voter Identification Requirements, National Conference of State Legislatures, bit.ly/2NU06KF

³ "You Can Take Time Off Work to Vote in 30 US States—But You're Out of Luck in the Rest," by Rachel Gillett, *Business Insider*, Nov. 6, 2017, read.bi/2Mb3sUN

⁴ Nonprofits—Yes You Can Advocate. And Now's The Time," by Miriam Axel-Lute, *Shelterforce*, Feb. 2, 2017, bit.ly/2oMzWLS

