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FUND**

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International Foundation
for Electoral Systems
1620 I St. NW, Suite 611
Washington, D.C. 20006**

**GETTING
OUT
THE
VOTE**

**A GUIDE FOR RUNNING
REGISTRATION AND VOTING DRIVES**

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This handbook is designed for organizations, associations and interest groups that are committed to increasing the participation of citizens in their government through the electoral process. The techniques described can be used effectively by all organizations seeking to register voters, but special guidelines for nonprofit, nonpartisan organizations that do not support or oppose candidates are included.

The handbook was prepared by the League of Women Voters Education Fund, aided by the experience of the more than 1,300 state and local Leagues that are well known and respected in their communities and throughout the nation for providing voters with information and assistance. The preparation and initial printing of this handbook was made possible by a contribution from the National Council of Health Goals (NCHC). The NCHC is distributing this guide to its members, long-term care facilities nationwide.

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INTRODUCTION

Voting is the basic political act in a democratic society—a way to select public officials and to ensure that those officials will be responsive and accountable once they take office. That is one of the reasons why many Americans have long been concerned about the low rate of voter registration and participation in this country. Even officials elected by large margins often take office with the support of only a minority of the potential electorate.

In response, more and more organizations are working to register voters and get them to the polls. Such groups are targeting their members, employees, clients, supporters, the citizens they represent and the general public. Their purposes range from an interest in the more effective functioning of our democratic government to support for particular issues or candidates. Organizations have learned that in order to register voters and bring them to the polls it is essential to emphasize the value and effectiveness of voting. Citizens need information about candidates, their qualifications and stands on issues. They must be aware that their vote does make a difference.

In all states except one, voting involves a two-step process. First, potential voters must register. Usually this must be done by a certain deadline before elections (the range is 10 to 50 days). The second step for the voter is actually casting a ballot. Citizens need information and assistance to accomplish both steps of this most basic act of citizenship.

To register large numbers of citizens and get them out to vote requires an organized effort, planned well ahead of election day. It requires accurate and comprehensive knowledge about state election laws and local practices, the cooperation and assistance of local election officials and other organizations, the mobilization of volunteers, effective targeting and publicity, good record keeping and follow-up efforts, dedication and hard work.

PLANNING THE DRIVE

Before planning a registration and get-out-the-vote drive, your organization must decide on its goals, the scope and extent of its drive and the level of resources it can commit to the effort. Decisions must be made about whether to target members, employees and clients or to reach out to a larger constituency; whether to include extensive voter information and get-out-the-vote components or concentrate on registration; whether your organization will work alone or try to

form or join a coalition of other organizations committed to the same goal (see box, page 3).

National organizations can give direction, training and technical assistance to their local affiliates on registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns. They can provide an overall title or theme for the drive, a logo or other graphics, general materials and national publicity. But to be effective, actual activities must be planned and carried out at the local level. State laws and local practices vary widely; even in a national election, registration and voting are very much local activities.

When: Defining objectives and limits at the beginning of a drive is essential. You can use your resources to the best advantage if a time frame is set—whether it's a week or a month or more—for your registration drive. To coincide with peak citizen interest in an election, it is most effective to end a registration drive on the deadline for close of registration before the next election. (See Easy Does It)* You should make preliminary plans for the get-out-the-vote component of your drive at the same time that plans are being formulated for the registration drive so that the time between the registration deadline and election day can be used to remind new registrants to vote and to provide them with information about candidates and issues.

Where: A geographic limit is also useful. Your organization should focus its drive on those areas where it has facilities or affiliates or wherever there is the greatest need.

Who: Within a locality, targeting efforts toward those citizens who are generally underrepresented in the electorate is a reasonable way to use resources efficiently. Researchers who have studied voting behavior report that often those least likely to vote are minority citizens, the young and the poor. The elderly, the disabled and those who speak languages other than English are also underrepresented at the polls, as are citizens with less than average education.

You can obtain information about voting rates in states, localities and census tracts from the U.S. Census Bureau and from state and local election officials. If your drive is aimed at any particular group—women, minority citizens, the young, the elderly—information about where they are located and what the past voting rates have been in the locality will help your organization concentrate its efforts most effectively. In most jurisdictions, registration and voting lists are public records and may be inspected at the elections office. However, elections offices may legitimately charge a fee for providing copies of lists or other records, but such lists may be copied by hand at no cost.

After your group has determined the scope and extent of your

*The wall poster, Easy Does It (Pub #522, \$1.00), published by the League of Women Voters Education Fund, provides information about registration and absentee voter regulations in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia and serves as an excellent planning tool.

Working With Coalitions

Working with coalitions in a registration and voting drive offers many advantages. Joining with other organizations that share the same goals brings the opportunity to share expertise, pool resources, increase the volunteer force and avoid duplication of effort. Different groups bring different assets to a drive. Some offer knowledge of election laws and procedures; some will offer access to office equipment and staff or phone banks, and some can supply large numbers of volunteers. Other valuable organizational resources include well established relationships with election officials, good contacts with the local media, or access to the potential voters you may wish to reach.

It takes time to organize any coalition effort. Ideally, initial meetings should focus on building enthusiasm, sharing ideas and learning about varied areas of expertise. Subsequent meetings can deal with overall planning, progress reports, information sharing and evaluation. Once a steering committee is formed, it can handle detailed planning and supervision. Although this committee should be representative of the groups in the coalition, it also should be small enough to work effectively.

Some cautions: A coalition may include groups that are nonprofit and nonpartisan and groups that support certain issues or candidates. Any such "mixed" coalition must make sure that registration drive materials and activities are strictly nonpartisan, must make registration available to any citizen who seeks to register, and must refrain from supporting or opposing any candidate or party. (See Chapter 4, Nonpartisanship.) Arrangements for approving materials and press releases should be determined in advance. Clear understandings about sharing publicity and credit for success should also be worked out ahead of time. The coalition will work more effectively if common goals and ground rules are established early and on the basis of mutual agreement.

If a coalition effort is not advisable, it still may be possible for organizations conducting registration and get-out-the-vote drives in the same community to exchange information on election laws, areas and populations targeted, problems encountered, scheduled activities and successful and unsuccessful techniques and experiences.

registration and get-out-the-vote drive based on your goals and needs, it is time to make detailed plans. Every drive—at the national level, and especially at the local level—will need a director or coordinator. A steering committee (which can include representa-

tives of cooperating organizations) can assist and advise the director. Steering committee members should be chosen on the basis of the expertise and resources they can bring to the drive and on their reliability in following through on assignments and carrying their share of the responsibilities. Committee members or subcommittees may be given responsibility for the following functions:

- **Information:** research on election laws and procedures, registration statistics, precinct maps, directories, voter lists, location and voting rates of targeted groups;
- **Finance:** fund raising, budgeting, bookkeeping;
- **Public Relations:** contacts with media, press releases, posters, promotional materials;
- **Volunteers:** recruitment, training, assignment, supervision, coffee and snacks, thanks;
- **Registration and Get-Out-The-Vote Activities:** registration at special sites, door-to-door and telephone canvassing, deputization, follow-up vote reminders;
- **Voters Service:** transportation to registration sites and polling places, child-care services, speakers bureau.

2 REGISTRATION

Motivation

In order to vote, citizens must first be registered. In most states, registration must take place at least 30 days before the election, although many states have registration deadlines closer to the election (See Easy Does It). Therefore, potential voters must be convinced of the importance and the necessity of registering to vote before they may have given much thought to the upcoming election. The end of the registration period coincides with the beginning of peak voter interest in a campaign and is therefore a good time to intensify a registration effort.

If you are trying to bring nonvoting citizens into the electorate, you must do more than just send reminders to register before a certain date. You must make the case that voting is important, that it does make a difference. You must convince citizens that voting is more than civic duty—voting is empowerment. In a nonpartisan drive, you cannot endorse candidates or take sides on issues, but you can help potential voters understand that elected public officials make decisions that affect the vital interests of the people—including those who

don't vote.

Information

A citizen must know when, where and how to register to vote. If your organization is going to register voters, you must make sure that such practical information is available or provide it yourself. Registration laws differ from state to state (Easy Does It will give you the basics) and since state laws often allow local election officials considerable discretion in administering the law, local practices may vary from county to county or city to city. You can provide such information in a brochure or flyer (see box, page 8).

Registration Techniques

Five basic registration procedures are used in the United States. Many communities use combinations or variations of these procedures:

- **Centralized registration** requires all registrants to register at one location, such as the courthouse or the county clerk's office.
- **Branch registration** allows multiple registration sites. These may be fixed (libraries, community centers and so on) or mobile (vans, different shopping center locations).
- **Deputy registration** enables the local board of elections to authorize additional persons (deputy registrars) to sign up new voters. Different states and localities have different standards for eligibility of deputy registrars.
- **Registration by mail** allows citizens to mail in their registration forms. More than half of all Americans of voting age now live in states that allow general mail registration; procedures vary from state to state, with some states permitting wider distribution of applications than others.
- **Election-day registration** (in effect in four states—Minnesota, Wisconsin, Oregon and Maine) allows citizens to register up to and including the actual day of an election.

North Dakota has no registration requirement for voting.

The first step in conducting a registration drive is to find out the facts. Visit your local election officials. Tell them that you are planning a registration drive. Ask for their cooperation and assistance. Get answers to the following questions and make this information available to every participant in your registration drive:

- What are the residency requirements for registration and voting? What kind of identification, if any, is required when a person goes to register?
- May 17-year-olds register if they will be 18 by election day? May

Check List for Registration Supplies

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ___ Identifying sign or poster ___ Name tags for registrars ___ Pens, pencils ___ Pads of paper, envelopes ___ Forms for recording names and addresses of registrants ___ Information on absentee voting ___ Polling place list ___ List of other registration sites and schedules ___ Street directory ___ Directions to elections office ___ Change for telephone (to call elections office with inquiries) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ___ Stamps (if necessary to mail forms) ___ Phone numbers of registration offices in adjacent jurisdictions |
|---|--|

Official Forms

- ___ Registration form
- ___ Change-of-address form
- ___ Change-of-name form
- ___ Change-of-party-affiliation form (if there is party registration)
- ___ Registration forms for neighboring jurisdictions (if permissible)
- ___ Applications for absentee ballots

Make sure registrars are familiar with all the necessary forms. If the jurisdiction is covered under the language requirements of the Voting Rights Act,* registration applications, signs and all other materials must be printed in both English and the specified minority language.

*Jurisdictions in which (a) more than 5 percent of the voting age population are members of a single language minority group—Native American, Asian American, Alaskan native, Spanish heritage—and the group's illiteracy rate is higher than the national illiteracy rate, or (b) a single language minority group comprises more than 5 percent of the population; The 1972 presidential election was conducted in English and the total voter registration turnout for that election was less than 50 percent.

they vote in a primary at 17, if they will be 18 by the general election day?

- o What registration procedures are permitted by state law?
- o If there is centralized registration, where do voters register? What hours and days are the site open? Are there special extended hours before an election deadline? Are there evening and/or Saturday hours?
- o If there is branch registration, where are the sites located? Are they well marked? What hours are registrars on duty?

- If there are deputy registrars, are they officially employed and compensated, or are they volunteers? Are both systems used? What are the qualifications for deputy registrars? Must they be trained? Where and when? How long is deputization valid?
- If there is mobile registration, are schedules available? Is door-to-door registration permitted? Must there be approval by or notification of election officials in advance?
- If there is registration by mail, is the voter's signature testifying that all statements are true sufficient for registration, or is notarization required? Can anyone distribute forms? How many forms may volunteers get? Where and how? Must the voter affix postage? Is the voter notified that registration is complete? Is information about when and where to vote provided?
- If there is registration at special sites must an official registrar be present? Is approval of a site by the elections office required? How far in advance? Are there only certain days and hours when registration may take place?
- Is absentee registration permitted? For what categories of people?
- Are voters removed from registration lists for nonvoting? If so, how often? How are they notified? How may they re-register?

Working with Election Officials

Election officials are an essential source of information about local laws, practices and trends. Moreover, their cooperation can make the difference between a smooth-running drive and a drive beset with obstacles. It is important to inform election officials of your planned registration activities early and to keep them informed throughout the drive. When you visit your local election officials, try to evaluate their attitudes toward the registration process and toward your planned drive. In jurisdictions that do not permit volunteer deputy registrars, local election officials are truly key, because you will need paid registrars to do the actual registering.

You may want to enlist the support of local groups when you seek the cooperation of election officials. Groups such as the League of Women Voters that have developed good relationships with officials and worked with them over the years may be able to introduce your group and its goals. If you are working with a coalition, let election officials know what groups are included.

Discuss potential problems with officials openly and in advance. It is the responsibility of election officials to ensure the integrity of the registration process and they may express concerns that could adversely affect your efforts. Such concerns include:

- the procedures and care required in handling registration documents;
- the work involved in processing unexpectedly large numbers of

registrations, particularly near the deadline—if you give officials due notice, they will have the opportunity to schedule extra workers as needed.

Cooperation with election officials is a two-way process. You must assure that registration forms are complete, legible and accounted for, and that they are submitted to the elections office well before deadlines. If you do your job accurately and carefully, you will be well prepared to make your case if problems do arise. Election

Basic Information for a Registration Brochure

**INCLUDE YOUR LOGO AND
MOTIVATIONAL MESSAGE**

WHO can register

- U.S. citizens, 18 years old and above* (except, in most states, convicted felons and those adjudged mentally incompetent).
- Residents of the jurisdiction.
- *Include information if your state law permits 17-year-olds to register if they will be 18 by election day.

WHERE to register

- Board of Elections address and phone number; include 24-hour message number, if office has one.
- Decentralized sites, with addresses and phone numbers.
- Mobile units, if any, with schedules.

WHAT identification is required

- Birth certificate?
- Proof of naturalization?
- Driver's license?
- Other?

WHEN to register

- Hours.

- Days of the week.
- Registration deadline.

WHEN to re-register or notify elections office of changes

- After a name change or an address change (notification of change may be required, even if re-registration is not).
- After a name is removed from the list.

HOW to register by mail (if possible in your state)

- Where forms are available.
- Where to send them.
- Phone numbers to call to request forms, including your organization's, if permitted.

YOUR OFFICE PHONE NUMBER, ADDRESS AND HOURS.

Consider whether you might have a single brochure that includes information on both registration and voting.

Note: This basic information may be already prepared and available from your local election office. Ask before you print your own.

officials generally will not prevent you from carrying out your planned activities if you observe the law and exercise care, but in some places they may delay or deter your efforts. For example, some officials make it difficult to get volunteers deputized as registrars, even when permitted by law, or are unduly restrictive about the number of registration forms that volunteers can get. In jurisdictions where there is no deputization of volunteers, officials may refuse to authorize additional hours or sites for registration. In many cases these problems can be worked out through negotiation.

However, if you are unable to achieve a good working relationship with local officials, you can seek assistance from other local or state officials, the Secretary of State or state elections director (in most states, the Secretary of State is the chief state elections official, but actual election administration may be carried out by the state elections director or office). In 1984, the National Association of Secretaries of State stated its commitment to outreach registration efforts. Another option is to use the local news media to focus attention on the problem.

Doing Your Own Registering

If the law permits volunteers to act as deputy registrars or to distribute applications for mail registration, your organization can bring registration to citizens directly. You can make the most of this opportunity if you plan carefully, use well-trained and motivated volunteers, and secure all necessary permissions from election officials and those in charge of all facilities where registration will take place.

- **Set up booths or tables in public places.** Go where people congregate—to shopping centers, churches or synagogues, college campuses, football games or concerts. Catch people at office buildings, factories, insurance companies, hospitals or on city street corners at lunch time.
- **Go where your target population is.** Bring the registration opportunity to the places that people go for public services—food stamp distribution centers, libraries, motor vehicle registration and license offices. Sign people up as they stand in line for unemployment benefits or register for university classes. Go to nursing homes, senior citizen centers, clinics and child-care centers.
- **Piggy-back on neighborhood meetings or local gatherings.** Set up booths at fairs and bazaars. Bring the registration opportunity to PTA meetings and candidate debates.
- **Use a votemobile.** Consider transforming a car, van or truck into a “votemobile” and driving it in parades, around the city, to factories and schools. The votemobile makes your drive highly visible and can be used to register voters, provide information and remind citizens to vote.

- **Go canvassing door-to-door.** This technique works best if large numbers of unregistered people live in certain neighborhoods. Use precinct registration lists to guide you, but remember that in neighborhoods with high rates of mobility, these lists are quickly outdated. Send volunteer registrars out in pairs—for example, a trained and experienced registrar with a newly recruited neighborhood resident. Provide volunteers with identifying badges and a brief script introducing themselves and their mission.

Some tips for doing your own registering

- Do advance work. Check out sites beforehand. Put up posters and use the media to let people know when you are coming.

- If you set up a registration site outside a factory or office building, operate it during lunch hour or at the beginning of a shift, not when employees are rushing to get home. Get permission from management and the cooperation of unions or employee organizations.

- Give volunteer registrars a comprehensive briefing, including any official training sessions required by election officials.

- Provide sufficient supplies (see Registration Desk Check List on page 6). Make sure registrars are comfortable. Provide a table and chairs and light refreshments for long sessions. Whenever possible, have at least two volunteers working together.

- If possible, sign up registrants on the spot; don't let them take applications home. If permitted, have volunteer registrars deliver or mail completed applications directly to the elections office.

- Check all forms for completeness and accuracy before the registrant leaves the registration area, and then get the forms to the elections office promptly for processing. In the past, some volunteer drives have delayed getting registration forms to the elections office by the deadline, thus disenfranchising citizens who believed they were registered. This kind of mismanagement could defeat your purpose and give your group a bad name.

- Set up a record-keeping procedure and keep lists of the names and addresses of all the voters registered. These lists make it possible to check that the registrations are properly processed and that registrants' names will appear on the voters' list. They also are essential for directing get-out-the-vote efforts at the new registrants and for evaluating your drive by checking whether those you registered actually voted (make sure election laws permit this). To assist your get-out-the-vote efforts, make sure that you have each registrant's precinct and telephone number recorded as well.

If you cannot do your own registering

If the law in your community does not permit deputy or mail registration, you can use many of the above techniques to let citizens know where and when to register, to distribute flyers and answer questions. Provide transportation to registration sites and assistance in filling out forms. Work with your local registrar to establish more convenient

branch registration sites and hours.

Getting the Message Out

If you are planning to bring registration information and opportunities to citizens where they live, work, congregate or go to school, you should let them know you are coming. Make your arrangements early enough so that there will be plenty of time to get the word out. If registration is possible only at centralized or branch sites, it becomes essential to let people know where, when and how to register. These messages should be short and snappy. They should grab attention, deliver a quick motivational message and provide basic how-to information (see box, page 8). If your drive has a logo or title, it should become so familiar to your audience that it delivers your message with few, if any, additional words.

Use your media contacts to get newspaper, radio and TV coverage. Write a letter to the editor. Sponsor a poster contest and put up the winners where your targeted audience will see them. If you have the resources, distribute bumper stickers and buttons with your drive's logo. Buy newspaper ads. Use billboards. Get radio and TV stations to run your public service announcements.

Be Prepared!

The mobility of today's population can complicate your registration task. For example, people may reside in one jurisdiction but be registered to vote in another... or they may be uncertain which jurisdiction they live in or where they are registered. Also, many state laws require that in order to register voters in a jurisdiction you must yourself be a registered voter there. Inquire about state laws concerning cross-jurisdictional registration and, where possible:

- Have registration forms available from neighboring jurisdictions;
- If there is doubt, check addresses in a street directory for proper jurisdiction;
- Refer questions to the elections office.

Some people may not know whether or not they are registered. If there is a question:

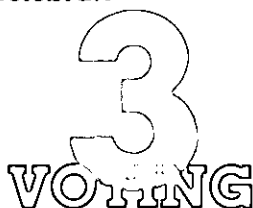
- Check official registration list;
- Check with the elections office;
- If in doubt, err on the side of duplicate registration—it is better than no registration. (You may want to alert the elections office that there is potential duplication by clipping a note on the registration form.)

Be extra careful in your handling of the registration form; it represents a citizen's access to the electoral process.

Working With Volunteers

A registration effort requires the recruitment, assignment and supervision of many workers. Many different factors motivate people to volunteer their time and effort, including belief in the cause, a wish to be helpful, a need for social contacts and a desire to do useful work. You must consider these needs and motivations when you work with volunteers. Some guidelines:

- Ask volunteers to work for reasonable, limited periods of time. A two-to-three hour shift is a good standard.
- If possible, have two or more volunteers work together.
- Suit the job to the volunteer. Some people like detailed work; others work well with the public. Some volunteers prefer to work from home or at the project office.
- If you can, reimburse volunteers for travel, child-care and other out-of-pocket expenses.
- Make sure volunteers know exactly what they are expected to do. Supply them with written instructions and sample scripts. Provide identification tags or buttons.
- Provide volunteers with all the supplies and equipment they will need. Make sure they know where to get more materials if necessary.
- Make sure volunteers are comfortable. Supply them with tables and chairs and snacks and coffee for long working stretches.
- Check back midway through the shift to evaluate progress, answer questions and deal with problems. Offer praise and encouragement.
- Make volunteers part of the planning process. Ask for advice and suggestions. As on-the-spot participants, they will have good ideas.
- Express immediate thanks. A card or phone call to express appreciation is well worth the time and effort and positively reinforces a volunteer's motivation to participate.
- Have a party. After the drive is over, get everyone together, announce the results and celebrate.



Registration means nothing unless a citizen actually casts a vote. More than 80 percent of those who are registered do vote. Your challenge is to reach those millions of citizens who do not make it to the polls. (More than 25 million registered voters reported in Census Bureau surveys that they did not vote in the 1982 election.) Groups

Sample Letter to a New Registrant

Congratulations! You are now registered to vote. We want to urge you to take the very important next step—to cast your ballot. The next election will be on [date], a [primary/general] election to select [offices to be filled] and/or decide [issues on ballot] (see the enclosed sample ballot).

As a registered voter in precinct number [], your polling place is located at [place plus address]. You can get there on bus number []. If you drive, parking is available at [lots or streets] (see enclosed map and/or bus schedule).

The polls will open at [time] and close at [time].

In this county, we vote by [voting machine/punchcard ballot/written ballot/other] (see enclosed instructions). You can see a demonstration of how to vote at [time] at [place and address] (or at the polls before you vote).

Please call the Voter Registration Project [phone number] if you need transportation to the polls, child care, or care for elderly or disabled dependents while you vote. If you or someone you know will be unable to vote in person on election day, call the Board of Elections [phone number] for an application for an absentee ballot. Application deadline is [date].

The Voter Registration Project [phone number] will be happy to answer your questions about voting. Staff will be available [hours] on weekdays and [hours] on weekends and evenings at our office [address and directions].

At other times, you can leave a message on our answering machine and we will get back to you. You can also call the Board of Elections [phone number] for further information or assistance with absentee voting.

Remember, your vote is important. Now that you are registered, use your right to vote to make your voice heard on election day, [date].

Sincerely,

Director, Voter Registration
Project

that register large numbers of people have learned that following up registration efforts with get-out-the-vote reminders, information and other services for voters makes a very significant difference in how many of those registered turn out to vote.

It is important to begin plans for a get-out-the-vote drive before or during your registration drive. Careful organization and record keeping will make follow up easier. Contacts with voters should be made far enough before the election so any special arrangements can be made, including application for absentee ballots. (Check Easy Does It for information on deadlines for absentee ballot applications.) Make plans for the preparation of materials and distribution of information about voting to citizens.

After the deadline for registration is past, announce your results to the press, throw a party for your volunteers and celebrate, but don't disband your organization or consider your work finished. The next step is getting out the vote. The more successful your registration drive has been, the more work you will have to do to ensure that all of those you registered actually vote.

Getting the Facts Straight

To begin, find out what information is provided by your elections office about the locations and hours for polling places and the requirements and procedures for absentee voting. Does your election office send a pre-election mailing to registered voters? Is information available about the mechanics of voting? It is especially important for new voters to have the opportunity to learn how a vote is cast (or for all voters if the system has recently been changed). Step by step directions with simple drawings or cartoons can help make the process easy. A demonstration of the equipment used for voting is even more helpful, if it can be arranged. Fill in the gaps of official information with your own information and make sure this kind of practical knowledge gets to those whom you registered. Send it with voting reminders or distribute it at sites where you conducted your registration efforts.

Getting the Message Out

You can use the same techniques to get out the vote message that proved successful in getting out the registration message. Use radio, television and newspaper ads and spot announcements to remind citizens to vote. Get your organization's leaders on talk shows to report on the results of your registration drive and to push voting. Write guest editorials for your local newspaper. Put up posters in those places where you signed up voters—in stores, social service agencies, workplaces, colleges and nursing homes. Plan ahead to get grocery stores to put the "vote" message on bags and get utility

Script for House-to-House Canvassing or Phone Contact

Hello, my name is [name] and I am a volunteer for the Voter Registration Project. I want to congratulate you for registering to vote and remind you that the election is on [date]. This is a [primary/general] election to select [offices to be filled] and/or decide [issues on the ballot] (if possible distribute or offer to send nonpartisan sample ballot).

Your polling place is at [place and address]. It is open from [hours]. Do you need any help getting there? (Give directions, offer to send map or arrange for transportation as needed.) Do you need anyone to look after your children or anyone else while you vote?

Will you or anyone you know be unable to get to the polls on [date]? (Provide information on absentee voting or send an application as needed.) Do you have any questions about voting? I would be happy to send you information about using the [voting machine, punchcard ballot, other].

If you or anyone you know has any further questions, you can call us at the Voter Registration Project [phone number] or drop in [address] between [hours].

Please remember to vote on [date]. It is so very important for you and our [country/community]. Thank you.

companies to insert it with their bills.

You may find it useful to set up a special phone line for voting (or registration) information and assistance. An answering machine will help provide round-the-clock service. Publicize the phone and the hours it is staffed on your get-out-the-vote materials. You may get questions about voting in other jurisdictions, so be sure your staff is prepared with Easy Does It and the phone numbers of neighboring registrars. The phone will become increasingly busy as election day nears and calls come in from those who need assistance, transportation or child care in order to vote. If possible, make arrangements ahead of time for extra lines and extra staff for election day and the few hectic days just before (extra lines are expensive but election day questions can't be deferred until another day).

It also is important to help voters get information about candidates and issues. Publicize opportunities to see and hear the candidates in person or on radio and television. Distribute nonpartisan voters guides containing information about candidates' qualifications and stands on issues. Help voters learn about and understand ballot questions. Make a special effort to get this information to those sites or precincts where you registered voters. If you wish, make your list of newly registered voters available to all interested party or campaign staffs so that voters will receive information directly from candidates. You may do this even in a nonpartisan drive if you offer your

lists to all parties or candidates for a particular office. Remember that information about candidates and issues as well as about the procedures and mechanics of voting should be bilingual where appropriate.

Motivating Potential Voters

The most effective way to motivate people to vote is by personal contact. If at all possible, have your volunteers get in touch with each of the citizens you registered to remind them to vote. If you want to contact other voters personally as well, get lists of registered voters from your elections office (see Registration chapter). If those lists include information about when registrants last voted, you can target your efforts toward infrequent voters. You may find it more efficient to limit your outreach efforts to those precincts or wards where most of your new registrants live.

If you are going door-to-door, use the same canvassing techniques suggested earlier. Have volunteers work in pairs and provide them with identification and name tags. This kind of personal contact is time-consuming, but it is very effective. The next best contact is by phone. A phone-bank arrangement provides a good working atmosphere, although some volunteers may prefer to work from home. In any case, volunteers should have a written script and a form for reporting feedback.

Volunteers will need a list of polling places for each precinct. They should have information available on the location of polling places, how to get there by car or public transportation, where to park and what hours the polls are open. The elections office may be able to supply computerized lists of registered voters by street address and precincts. Directories that list residents by street address are very helpful when used with a map of precincts.

Provide volunteers with detailed accurate information about the requirements, deadlines and procedures for absentee voting. Have them ask about other registered voters in the household and whether they need applications for absentee voting or other assistance. If there are any questions the volunteer cannot answer, don't rely on the voter to call the elections office. The volunteer should get the necessary information and then call back.

Getting Out the Vote

Find out if there is any way your group can assist voters in getting to the polls. Make arrangements for transportation, child care, or staying with an elderly relative so that the voter can go to the polls. For disabled or elderly voters, find out if there are special arrangements that can be made (for example, transfer to a more accessible polling place, curb-side voting or a special van).

Federal Laws that Provide for Absentee Registration and Voting

The 1955 Federal Voting Assistance Act (as amended in 1968 and 1972) requires that states give absentee voting and registration rights to:

— members of the U.S. Armed Forces while in active service, members of the U.S. Merchant Marine, and their spouses and dependents;

— U.S. citizens temporarily living outside the territorial limits of the United States.

These persons may apply for registration (and for absentee ballots) by filling out the Federal Post Card Application for Absentee Ballot (FPCA) and mailing it to their local election officials. Military personnel can get forms from military base voting assistance officers in the United States or abroad; civilians abroad should contact U.S. consulates and embassies. Actual procedures may vary from state to state.

The Overseas Citizens Voting Rights Act of 1975 provides that all citizens residing abroad can register and vote in federal elections (presidential and congressional) as long as they meet the usual voting qualifications in their home state. Overseas citizens should ask for absentee registration and voting forms from the election officials in their home counties— the counties in which they were last domiciled.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (as amended) enables citizens who might otherwise be disenfranchised by a change of residence or by being away from home during a presidential election period to register and vote absentee in presidential elections. A citizen who will be away from home on election day or is registered to vote in one jurisdiction but has moved to another too late to register there for the presidential election can:

— request an absentee ballot, at least seven days before the presidential election, from the previous jurisdiction in which he/she lived and return the ballot to that jurisdiction by the time polls close on election day; or

— vote in person in his/her old jurisdiction, if that is more convenient.

The new jurisdiction may permit a person who has moved after the state's registration deadline has passed to vote a "short ballot" for President and Vice-President only, even though the voter does not meet registration requirements for other offices. Be sure to ask your elections office what its practice is so that you can advise prospective voters accurately.

Personal visits or calls, if possible, should be made well ahead of election day so that any special arrangements can be made. Early visits should then be followed up immediately before election day. Last-minute reminders can be very effective. A phone call, including information on what special arrangements, if any, have been made ("Your mother will be picked up by our van at 2:00 p.m. and the Girl Scouts are expecting your children at the gym at 2:15 p.m.") can be made just before election day. A personalized letter is also effective. At a minimum, follow up your original personal contact with a form letter or flyer to remind the voter where and when to vote. (See sample letter, p.13).

Your organization or coalition should be ready for election day so that you can make good your promises. Have transportation and child-care arrangements set up. Ask radio and television stations to broadcast voting reminders and polling hours. Use a sound truck to remind voters that the polls are open. Have volunteers outside polling places in key locations to answer questions from first-time voters and direct voters who have come to the wrong polling place. You may want to request permission to have poll watchers monitor election procedures.

Remember, the success of your drive will not be measured by the number of new names that are added to the voter lists, but by how many of those voters cast a ballot.

4 NONPARTISANSHIP

Registration and get-out-the-vote drives are conducted by many different groups, both partisan and nonpartisan. While the political parties and campaign organizations supporting candidates obviously are partisan, other organizations take great care to keep their drives nonpartisan, either because it is required by law, or because it enhances the public credibility of the drive—or both.

The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended, requires that any registration drive conducted or sponsored by a corporation, labor union or trade association must be nonpartisan (or held in conjunction with a nonpartisan organization).^{*} The Internal Revenue Code mandates the strict nonpartisanship of all registration and get-out-the-vote activities by organizations eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions under Section 501(c)(3) of the code.

^{*}Under federal law, any materials produced for use in connection with a registration or get-out-the-vote drive aimed at the general public (as opposed to an organization's employees or members) must contain the names of all sponsors of that drive.

A nonpartisan organization does not support, oppose or provide aid to any candidate for public office or to any political party. Nonpartisan registration and get-out-the-vote drives may be aimed either at the general public or at a generally defined population group such as young adults or minority citizens. In a nonpartisan drive, registration and voting assistance, information or materials must be offered and made available to all. Such a drive may not be aimed only at those known to support one candidate or political party.

Nonpartisan organizations that take stands on issues (even though they do not support or oppose candidates or parties) should take care to separate their advocacy issues from their registration and get-out-the-vote efforts. They should not, for example, distribute information about their positions on issues at the same time and place where they are registering voters. The separation becomes increasingly important as the election approaches and candidates become identified with certain stands on issues.

With special care, issues can be used effectively and in a nonpartisan way to motivate citizens to register and vote. A voter education effort that alerts citizens to the importance of taking part in governmental decisions directly affecting their lives gives voters a personal stake in voting. If you are registering voters in a food stamp line, for example, you might point to the federal government's responsibility for providing or withholding funds for social services. Efforts aimed at senior citizens could stress the importance of issues such as Social Security and health care benefits. To preserve nonpartisanship, however, these issues must not be identified with the policies or positions of any parties or candidates, including incumbents.

Special sensitivities are needed when you are working with a coalition. Groups working together should be aware of the constraints on organizations that wish to or must remain nonpartisan. Coalition leaders should not be personally or publicly identified with any candidate or political party. Organizations should issue clear directives and guidelines to guard against overzealous or misguided efforts by local groups or individuals, efforts that may cross the fine line between nonpartisan activities and what may be embarrassing or illegal. Volunteers should be instructed that they must not wear campaign buttons or make their personal views about candidates, parties and issues known in any way while they are engaged in nonpartisan registration or get-out-the-vote activities. Any campaign materials or literature should be removed from an area where nonpartisan registration is taking place. Volunteers providing transportation or child-care services for voters during a nonpartisan get-out-the-vote drive should refrain from indicating their views on any candidate or party. If voters request information about candidates, you can offer them nonpartisan voter guides or official sample ballots issued by election officials, or you can refer them to campaign or party headquarters.

Registration and get-out-the-vote drives that are funded by private, tax-deductible foundations must meet certain conditions under the Internal Revenue Code. In this case, and if there are any other major legal questions, the funder and/or the groups conducting the drive should seek legal advice.

Generally, requirements for nonpartisanship should be seen not as impediments to an effective drive but as an opportunity to stress the importance of voting for each citizen and for the preservation of our democratic society.

5 LOOKING AHEAD

After election day, once the results are in, take the time to evaluate your registration and get-out-the-vote drives. In addition, you may want to plan to work together with your group or coalition to assess and secure reform of election procedures and laws. In short, do everything you can to make it easier for future registration drives to get voters enrolled and get them out to vote.

Evaluating Your Results

You can get a general idea of the effectiveness of your drive by looking at overall voter turnout figures, but a more accurate estimate will come from looking at turnout for the groups of voters you targeted. Your local elections office or newspaper can help you get the necessary statistics.

- In targeted precincts (where most of your targeted voters live), compare present voter turnout figures with voter turnout in the last few comparable elections.
- Look at turnout figures for nontargeted precincts for these same election years. Can you spot a trend? Is it comparable to the trend in the targeted precincts?

Census Bureau surveys estimate voting and registration statistics by specific age groups as well as by race and gender within states. It may take as long as two years to obtain these figures, but they can help you evaluate your success in the long run. You must keep in mind, however, that many factors influence voter turnout, including weather, other registration and get-out-the-vote efforts, ease of registering and voting and the political climate in your community during the drive. Nevertheless, careful analysis can help you determine if you used your resources wisely, if a narrower or wider focus would have been more productive, or if outside events affected the turnout.

Compiling a Final Report

Plan to meet with your co-workers, volunteers and coalition partners after the election to review the techniques that worked best and the sites that were most successful. Find out why they worked. If possible, check the list of those citizens you registered against the list of voters to see how many of your new registrants voted. Consider interviewing some registrants to find out why they didn't vote and what assistance or information you could have provided.

All of this information, plus written accounts of your working relationships with election officials and other groups, will form the core of a final report—a legacy for future drives. Include:

- Lists of targeted precincts and/or registration sites;
- Names, addresses and phone numbers of volunteers, the kind of work they preferred and the hours they worked;
- The information on election laws and procedures that you researched and used;
- Samples of letters, written materials, scripts, press releases and advertisements.

Compile these in a large looseleaf binder or other container to guard against components being lost.

Working for Change

Conducting a registration and get-out-the-vote drive offers a unique opportunity to observe and review the electoral process in your community. From your effort, you will have learned firsthand those procedures that open up the process and make access to registration and voting easy for citizens and those that serve as obstacles. You will be able to evaluate how the system assists or impedes groups seeking to register voters.

If you found problems or obstacles, the time between elections is the best time to bring about changes in laws or procedures. A study of the state election code will help you determine which practices can be changed through negotiations with local officials and which will require changes in state law. Much can be accomplished by administrative change. You may be able to persuade local election officials to make more registration forms available or allow more volunteers to act as deputy registrars, for example, especially if you approach them after the hectic election period is over. But other reforms, such as moving registration deadlines closer to election day or providing registration by mail, will require action by your state legislature. Try for such changes in an "off-year"; legislatures are usually reluctant to enact election law changes in an election year.

Your experience, your reports and records and your work for election reform will set the stage for continued drives to register more voters and get them to the polls. Each successful drive will bring our country closer to the ideal of full citizen participation.

For more information. . . .

The League of Women Voters Education Fund has developed the following election-related materials (order from the address below):

Easy Does It. Comprehensive, easy-to-read poster (19" x 24") detailing voter registration procedures and absentee ballot requirements by state, updated for the 1984 election. Essential for any organization doing voter registration, for student groups and election officials. 1984, Pub. #522, \$1.00 (75¢ for members).

Choosing the President 1984. Explains the presidential nomination and election process, and provides an unbiased, nonpartisan perspective that goes beneath the political surface to let you see—and understand—how America elects a President. 1984, Pub. #420, \$5.95 (\$3.00 for members).

Pick A Candidate. A citizen's guide for evaluating candidates at all levels of office, for identifying personal issue priorities and for spotting campaign tactics that distort issues or attempt to build false images. Handy envelope size for easy mailing. Useful for mass distribution by groups working with campaigns, doing voter registration and emphasizing voter education. 1984, Pub. #259, 10/\$1.50 (minimum order).

The Women's Vote: Beyond the Nineteenth Amendment. Ideal for providing background on the contemporary electoral scene, for raising public consciousness about the women's vote and for stimulating discussion among opinion leaders, media representatives and voters. 1983, Pub. #425, \$1.75 (\$1.25 for members).

Election Check-Up: Monitoring Registration and Voting. How-to's of monitoring, with sample checklists easily tailored to any citizen group's effort. 1973, Pub. #270, 35¢.

Administrative Obstacles to Voting. Findings of an LWVEF survey in 251 communities and recommendations for improvements. 1972, Pub. #206, 25¢.

Removing Administrative Obstacles to Voting. Strategies for community action. 1972, Pub. #151, 15¢.

Make an Election a Real-World Lab. Perfect tool for teachers interested in a primary-source approach to elections and politics. Offers practical teaching materials for use in classrooms at all levels. 1979, Pub. #485, \$1.25 (75¢ for members).

Vote Poster. 14" x 17". Red letters, black checkmark. One version (#397) has large VOTE logo and "League of Women Voters." One version (#232) also has room for your own message. \$1 each, 10/\$5, 100/\$40.

"Go Register Yourself" buttons. White letters on 1 1/2" black metal button. 25/\$3.00, 100/\$10.

Make check or money order payable to the League of Women Voters of the United States. (Include 50¢ handling charge per order.) All orders must be prepaid.

Order from:

League of Women Voters of the United States, 1730 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

