

## A CALL TO ACTION Agencies' role in turnout

# VOTING is Social Work

### Voting IS Social Work!

Central to social work's values and social justice mission. Gives individuals and communities the power to voice their opinions and effect change.

Non-partisan voter registration, education and outreach are *legal, ethical and professional.*

#### VOTING = A Human Right

Strenuous efforts exist to restrict access to voting. Not unlike the old poll tax, they include strict voter ID laws, purging voter rolls and intimidation by political parties and even those in charge of elections.

Over 20 million people have felony convictions, nearly 6 million of which have unfairly lost the right to vote--disproportionately from communities of color (38%). In the 4 worst states, more than 1 in 5 African Americans have lost the right to vote.<sup>16</sup>

State by state rules have created widespread confusion with most assuming they cannot vote even when they can.

#### Voting rights are *protected* for many groups, including:

- Persons who are homeless;
- Victims of domestic violence;
- The disabled, including those with language and reading barriers; and
- Those in pre-trial detention.

#### VOTING = Better Outcomes

Individual and communities that vote report better health, employment and other important outcomes; receive more resources from elected officials; and develop stronger community connections.

*Voting builds power!* It maximizes the capacity to influence public policy and can offset some of the negative effects of oppression and discrimination.<sup>1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 14</sup>

#### Yet BARRIERS Still Exist

- Confusing registration and ID requirements;
- Not knowing where, when and how to vote;
- Lack of transportation;
- Long lines;
- Lack of information on candidates and issues;
- People believing their vote doesn't matter.<sup>12, 13</sup> ; and
- Wrongly thinking that voter registration is partisan, illegal, unethical and unprofessional.

#### 10 ways agencies can make a difference

1. Ask clients if they are registered to vote during in-take or check-in.
2. Help clients register online or via mail-in form.
3. Check voter registration status at **current** address, voter ID requirements and felony voting rights at [VOTE.ORG](http://VOTE.ORG).
4. Help clients sign up for text/email reminders to vote at [TURBOVOTE.ORG](http://TURBOVOTE.ORG).
5. Help clients look up who represents them and how to contact their elected officials.
6. Invite elected officials to your agency and encourage clients to attend candidate forums.
7. Reach out to local partners for candidate guides/resources.
8. Get copies of ballot at town clerk's office before the election.
9. Remind and encourage people to vote. *Many nonvoters have never been asked.*
10. Create a culture of voting in your agency and in your community!

*The Humphreys Institute is a proud partner of the*  
**NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK  
VOTER MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGN**

[www.VotingIsSocialWork.org](http://www.VotingIsSocialWork.org)

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## CASE STUDY

### Voter engagement at the Daily Planet

During the 1984 presidential elections, a social work student intern working at an organization that serviced the mentally disabled and homeless populations, chose to do a non-partisan voter registration project for her macro field assignment. She organized a group of consumers to go to the local Registrar of Voters, helped them to register, and on Election Day, she drove them to the polls to vote. During this time, the organization and intern realized that not only was it important to register voters and provide them with transportation to the polls, but it was critical to provide them with information about the candidates for whom they would be voting. After a court ruling that allowed homeless people to use the address of a local service provider to register to vote, the agency's address had hundreds of new voters listed in the voter rolls. Now candidates had an incentive to come to them! In the end, not only were consumers more informed voters, candidates learned about the issues facing the people they might one day represent. ■

## NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK VOTER MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGN

**Social workers** have understood the importance of voting to political action, community power and social justice dating back the Settlement House movement. Voter engagement is still central to social work values today! Evidence exists showing that voter engagement increases individual well-being, advances civic participation, and increases social justice.

### The Campaign seeks to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of voting to social work practice and social policy;
- Integrate voter engagement activities into field education for all micro and macro students;
- Provide voter mobilization skills and strategies for agencies, field instructors, students and faculty; and
- Ensure that all the people we serve have access to the vote.

### Organizational Endorsement (list in formation).

- Association for Community Organization and Social Action (ACOSA)
- Clinical Social Work Association (CSWA)
- Congressional Institute for Social Work and Policy (CRISP)
- Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)
- Influencing Social Policy (ISP)
- Latino Social Workers Organization
- Nancy A Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work
- National Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Directors (BPD)
- National Association of Deans and Directors (NADD)
- National Association of Perinatal Social Workers
- National Rural Social Work Caucus
- Network for Social Work Management (NSWM)
- New Social Worker
- North American Network of Field Educators and Directors (NANFED)
- Special Commission to Advance Macro Practice in Social Work
- #MacroSW Twitter Chat Collaborative

*The NASW's Code of Ethics & Council on Social Work Education Practice Standards support social action.*

[www.VotingIsSocialWork.org](http://www.VotingIsSocialWork.org)

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*For more information, including an annotated bibliography on the importance of voting, go to*

[VotingIsSocialWork.org](http://VotingIsSocialWork.org)