

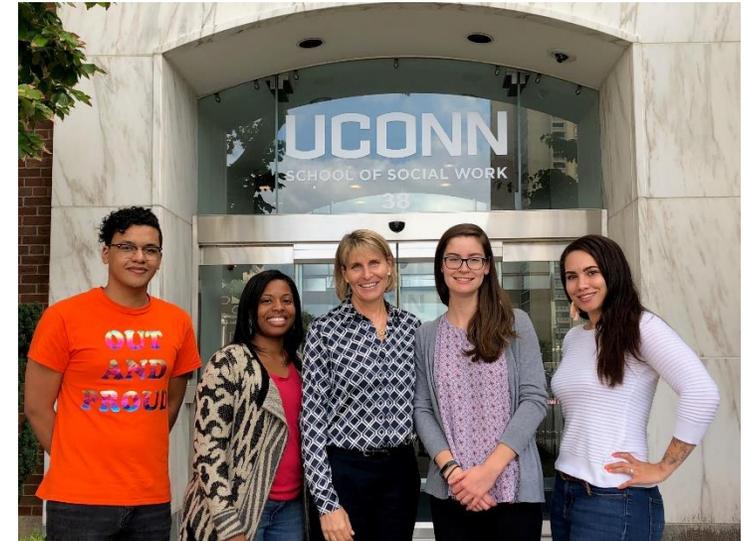
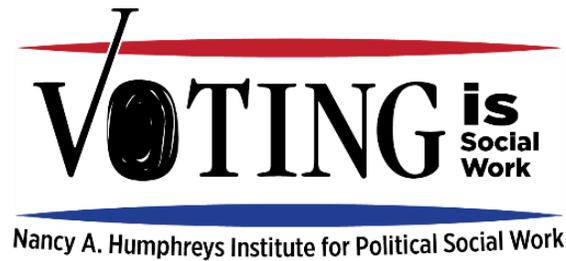
Voting as a social work intervention

UConn | SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

NANCY A. HUMPHREYS INSTITUTE FOR
POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK

Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work

Our Mission: To increase the political participation and power of all social workers and the communities we serve



“Politics is social work with power”
Senator Barbara Mikulski, MSW

Agenda

1. Why voting matters to healthy democracies
2. Nonpartisan voter engagement as a micro/mezzo /macro intervention
3. Integrating nonpartisan civic engagement into practice
4. Assignment for this class
5. National campaign and additional resources

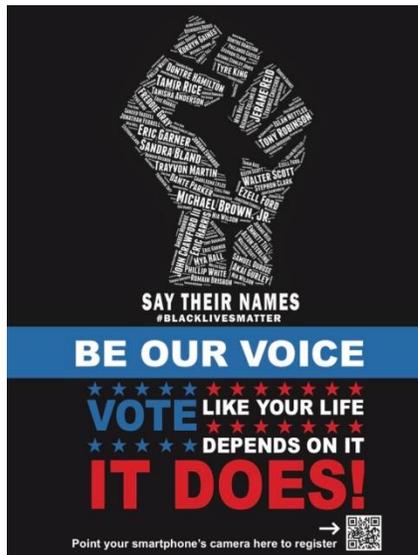




[The Voter Suppression Playbook](#)

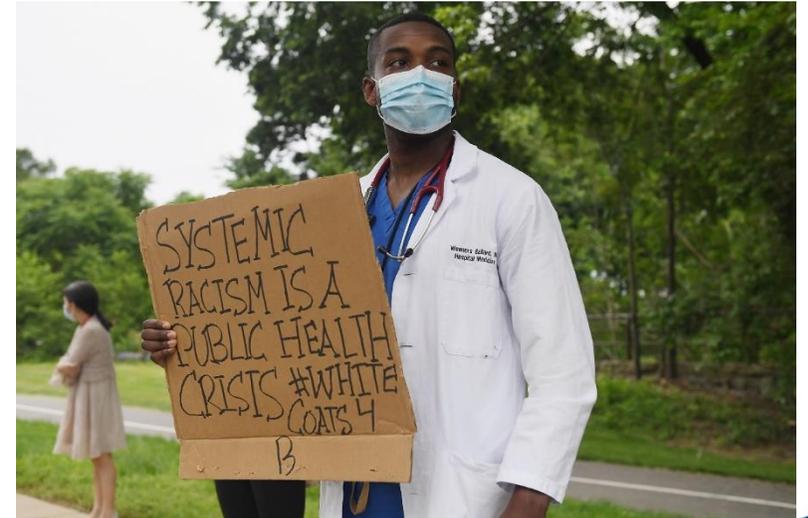
A Democracy in peril

- White supremacy and anti-Black racism were built into the foundation of our democracy and persist
- The pandemic has magnified the barriers is forcing many to choose between their health and their right to vote.
- All forms of disenfranchisement and suppression threaten the legitimacy of our democracy



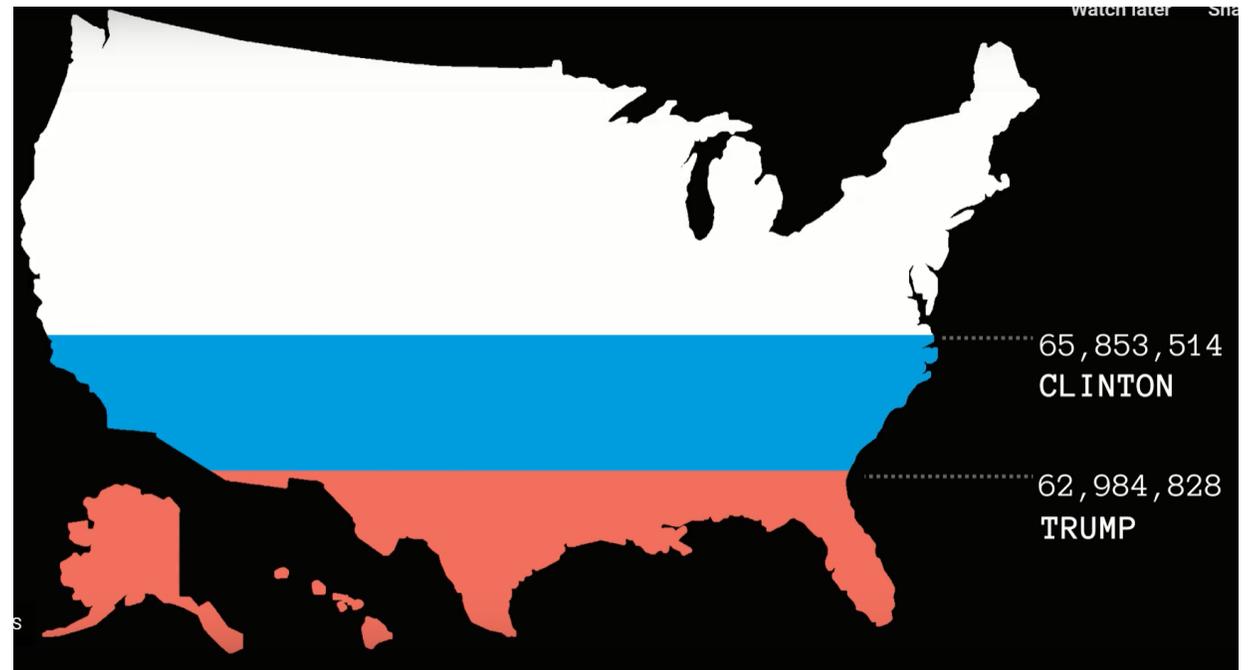
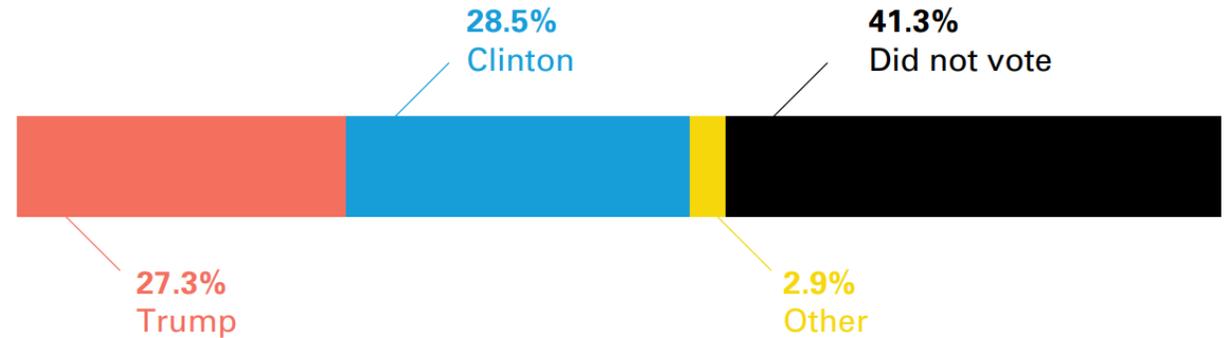
“The vote is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have.”

[John Robert Lewis \(February 21, 1940 - July 17, 2020\)](#)



The nonvote wins

- 100 million eligible age voters stayed home in 2016; 43% of the eligible electorate
- Nonvoters are more likely to be lower income, less educated, non-white, and unmarried
- Systemic barriers to voting feed engagement barriers and the myth that voting doesn't matter
- Turnout for state and local elections— where policies like policing are made-- is far lower



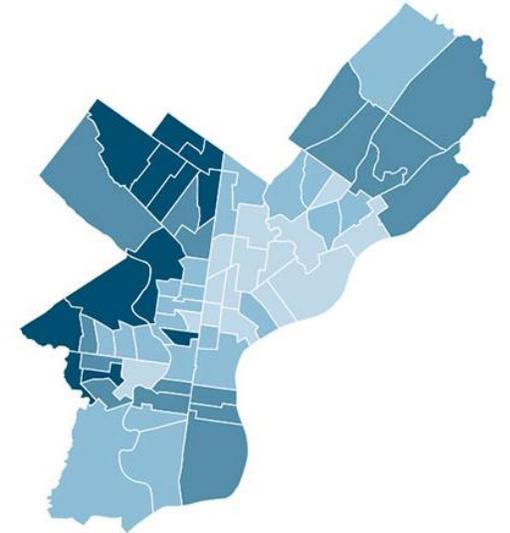
Knight Foundation: <https://the100million.org/>

The United States Election Project: <http://www.electproject.org/>



Clean Water • Schools
Elections • Housing • Policing
Transportation • Roads • Trash

1. More accessible (more accountable)
2. Low turnout can mean those who vote or turn out votes get too much power *Primaries critical in one-party areas*
3. Local policy can lead national change.

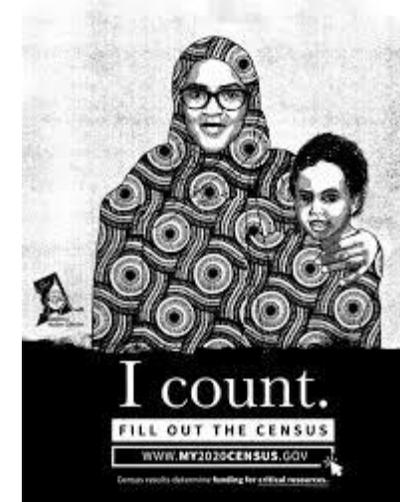




Representation and participation matter in a healthy, inclusive democracy

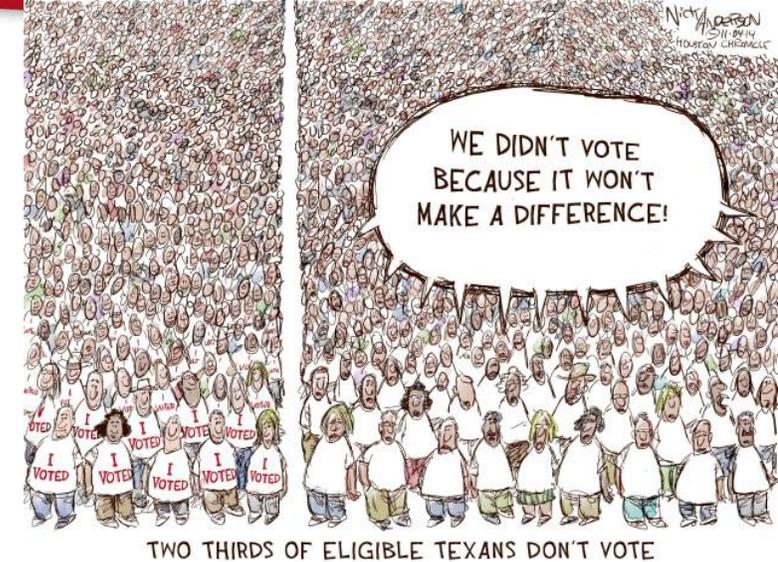
It is easier to spend a few months and some money electing the right people than to spend years and a lot of money trying to get the wrong people to do the right things.

—Senator Debbie Stabenow, MSW



Structural barriers that limit participation and support the intentional myth that voting doesn't matter

- Confusing and complicated rules, deadlines and processes;
- Laws such as felony voting restrictions were racist in their intent and continue to be racist in their impact;
- Suppression tactics include: felony voting laws, strict voter id rules, purging voter lists, challenging student registrations, reducing poll locations, strict absentee rules, allegations of voter fraud, etc.
- “Gerrymandering” is the process drawing districts so maximize political power. Creates “safe” districts which contributes to divided politics, weakens centrist candidates and suppresses turnout when “vote doesn't matter.”



Some reasons people don't vote?

- Don't like candidates or issues (25%)
- Not interested/vote doesn't matter (15%)
- Too busy/lack of time (14%)
- Illness/disability (12%)
- Out of town (8%)
- Registration problems (4%)
- Forgot to vote (3%)
- Transportation problems (3%)
- Inconvenient hours/polling places (2%)



López, G & Flores., A., "Dislike of candidates or campaign issues was most common reason for not voting in 2016," Pew Research Center , June 1, 2016, available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/01/dislike-of-candidates-or-campaign-issues-was-most-common-reason-for-not-voting-in-2016/>.

Frint, H., "Young residents cite variety of reasons for not voting," Bowling Green Daily News, May 26, 2018, available at http://www.bgdailynews.com/news/young-residentscite-variety-of-reasons-for-not-voting/article_956b7e5caab6-5239-b8b5-721e930a2123.html.

Voting as a social work intervention

Micro: Individuals need easy ways to register, information about how/when/where to vote, information on candidates and the encouragement to vote

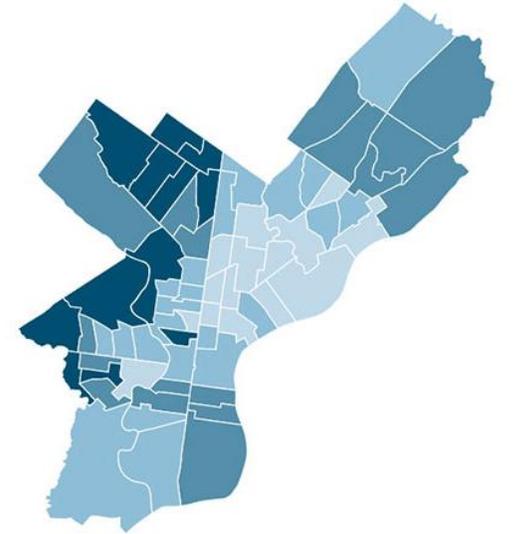
Mezzo -- community: Voting leads to collective power in communities; relational and social behavior

Macro--fixing the systemic barriers: Voting is different in all 50 states; collective narrative that voting doesn't matter and/or rigged; Advocate for voting rights and access; participate as election officials, poll workers and poll monitors.



Voting central to social work's mission, professional mandate and impact

- **Social determinant of health.** Individuals and communities who vote are better off.
- **Human right.** Systemic barriers, voter suppression, felony disenfranchisement & gerrymandering designed by and for people in power
- **Empowerment practice.** Voting is an act of power, individually and collectively.



Elected officials and candidates pay attention to people and communities that vote.

Ballard, Hoyt & Pachucki, 2018; Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement [CIRCLE], 2011; Kansas Health Foundation, Civic Health Index, 2016; Klar & Kasser, 2009; Leighley & Nagler, 2013; Martin, 2003; Martin & Claibourn, 2013; National Conference on Citizenship, Civic Health & Unemployment, 2011; Sanders, 2001.

VotingIsSocialWork.org for citations

The Role of Clinical Social Workers on Voter Engagement Efforts



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THE ROLE OF CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKERS on Voter Engagement Efforts

CHERYL AGUILAR, LICSW, LCSW-C

Social workers are at the forefront of issues that affect community members from all walks of life. Whether engaged in micro, mezzo, or macro work or in academia, social workers move the needle to help individuals, groups, and communities rise above their challenges and toward desired goals.

The diverse force of social workers in the United States touches every possible societal problem—from addressing homelessness to behavioral challenges, to environmental issues to immigration, to health disparities to poverty, and on and on.

Although social workers interact with society at all levels, there has been a documented lack of voter engagement efforts from social workers and the agencies that employ them, particularly among social workers in micro practice, due to factors such as perceiving voter engagement work separate from their micro sphere (Abramovitz et al., 2019).

This article explores common misconceptions that may prevent clinical social workers from active voter engagement work within or outside of their individual and agency-level practices. It presents ideas on how clinical social workers can ethically participate in voter engagement efforts while honoring clients' self-determination and agency and attending to limitations within their roles and practice.

Let's begin by defining the term *clinical social work*.

NASW defines *clinical social work* as "a specialty practice area of social work which focuses on the assessment,



HOPE
 CENTER FOR WELLNESS

Incorporating Voter Engagement into Field Education: Example Practice Activities

The Nine Competencies:

- C1: Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior
- C2: Engage diversity and difference in practice
- C3: Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice
- C4: Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice
- C5: Engage in policy practice
- C6: Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- C7: Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- C8: Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- C9: Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

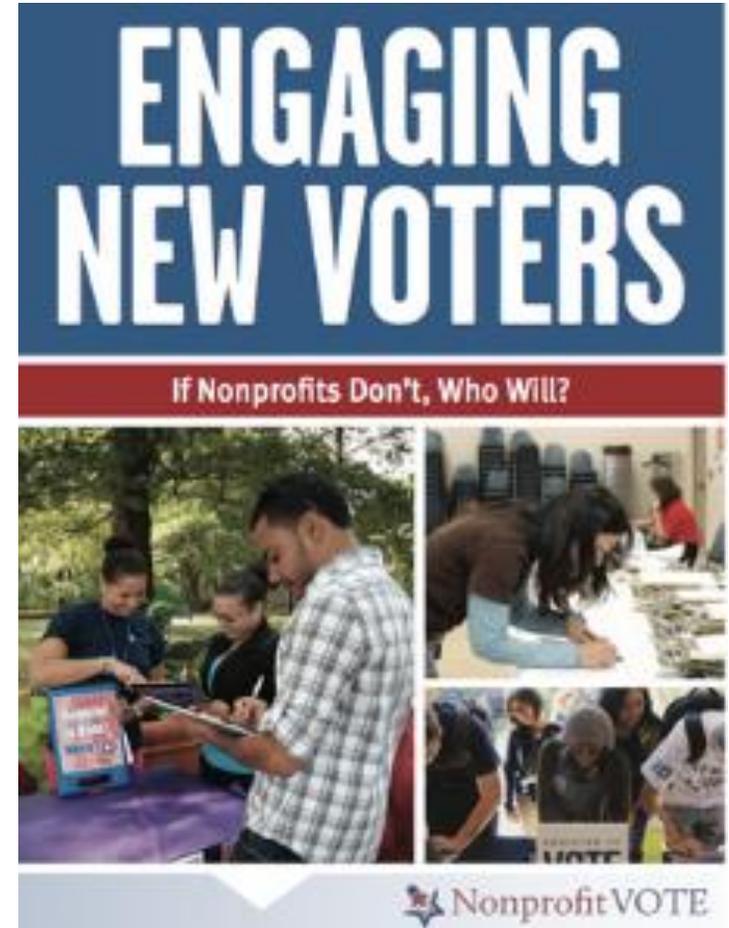
Example Practice Activity	Alignment with core competencies								
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9
Research allowable nonpartisan voter activities for 501(c)(3) organizations and/or requirements for nonprofits in the 1993 National Voter Registration Act.	✓		✓		✓				
Discuss ethical implications of not supporting clients and communities to vote in social work practice	✓	✓	✓						
Share information on voting and elections with clients, staff and/or communities	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			
Integrate voter registration into agency services (e.g., add question to intake form)	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Assess the differential impact of voting policies on diverse populations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Run voter registration drive at agency or event		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	

Example Practice Activity	Alignment with core competencies								
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9
Invite elected officials to agency for meetings or forum focused on advancing human rights issues			✓		✓				
Help people with a prior felony conviction to register and vote (if eligible in your state) through public awareness and individual outreach in service delivery		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Implement/change/advocate for voter engagement activity policy in field agency or community			✓		✓				
Promote the importance of Census 2020 in your agency and/or community			✓			✓			
Assess political power of community through voter turnout statistics by district				✓		✓	✓		
Partner with the census task force in your region/town				✓		✓	✓	✓	
Identify elected officials on the local, state, and federal level. Share contact list with agency staff and/or clients	✓		✓		✓				
Train clients/staff on advocacy, government systems, and the importance of voting			✓		✓	✓		✓	
Use supervision to discuss and determine what policies may deter voter turnout			✓		✓	✓	✓		
Use supervision to discuss and determine strategies to engage organizations and communities in voting					✓	✓			
Encourage clients to participate in the census						✓		✓	
Use strategic planning objectives to measure effectiveness of agency voter registration drives					✓				✓
Identify measurable outcomes of voter pledge card drives (e.g. compare against public records)					✓				✓

Voting activities connect to all 9 CSWE core competencies and connect micro and macro practice

Why don't more organizations encourage people to vote?

- Concerns about partisanship, violating rules and/or funding loss
- Too busy
- Discomfort with politics
- Lack of training
- Don't see voting as form of empowerment
- Don't know that it's legal (and in some cases required by law)



Nonpartisan voter engagement is legal, ethical and professional and in some cases, mandated by law.

Nonprofits may conduct nonpartisan voter engagement activities designed to educate the public and help them participate in elections

A 501(c)(3) MAY NOT:

- Make an endorsement
- Donate money or resources
- Rate/rank candidates on their positions

Organizations who sign people up for federal benefits may be required by law to provide voter registration opportunity (see 1993 Voter Registration Act).

501(c)(3) Permissible Activities Checklist

A 501(c)(3) organization may not conduct partisan activities to support or oppose any candidate for public office, including -

- Endorse a candidate
- Make a campaign contribution to or an expenditure for a candidate
- Rate candidates on who is most favorable to their issue
- Let candidates use any of its facilities or resources, unless those resources are made equally available to all candidates at their fair market value

“Charities are allowed to conduct nonpartisan activities that educate the public and help them participate in the electoral process (such as) voter education, voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives and candidate forums.”
—IRS office of Exempt Organizations

Resources

To learn more go to -

- Nonprofits, Voting and Elections: A guide to nonpartisan voter engagement for 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. This guide is available on our website in the following formats:
 - » Online Guide
 - » Narrated Slide Presentation
 - » PDF in English or Spanish
- Alliance for Justice, “Election resources for nonprofits”, www.ajf.org
- IRS, Election Year Activities for Section 501(c)(3) Organizations, February 2006

Activities 501(c)(3) Organizations Can Do On a Nonpartisan Basis

There is a wide range of nonpartisan activities a nonprofit may engage in to encourage voter participation and promote voter education. Among the most common are to:

- Educate Voters on the Process of Voting
- Encourage and Remind People to Vote
- Participate in Get-Out-the-Vote Activities
- Conduct or Promote Voter Registration*
- Become a Poll Worker or Volunteer at the Polls
- Distribute Nonpartisan Sample Ballots, Candidate Questionnaires or Voter Guides
- Sponsor a Candidate Forum
- Educate the Candidates on Your Issues
- Advocate for Your Issues During an Election
- Support or Oppose Ballot Measures as a Lobbying Activity

* Subject to restrictions of funding sources. For example, the federal government sometimes prohibits use of federal funds for voter registration.

NonprofitVOTE
www.nonprofitvote.org

Simple ways you can Amplify the Vote:

1) Encourage people to respond to the census

Why respond to the census?

💰 for your family and our community.

The census determines how much we will get for needed services (schools, roads, Medicaid, food assistance, healthcare, housing and more) as well as our political power to shape our future.

How can my family be counted in the census?

- ✓ **Online** at www.2020Census.gov and fill it out online. Many languages available!
- ✓ **Or Call 844-330-2020** and someone will help you.
- ✓ **Or By mail** if you received a paper survey to your home.

Is it safe to respond to the census?

Yes! By law, your answers to the census are protected and private and cannot be used for any reason by any government agency or tribunal—not the FBI, CIA, DCF, DHS, nor ICE.

Where can I get help if I have questions?

- **Census Protection Hotline** (888) COUNT20 or (888) 268-6820
- **Arab American Institute:** (833) 333-6864
- **Asian Americans Advancing Justice:** (844) 2020-API or (844) 202-0274
Available in English, Mandarin (普通话), Cantonese (廣東話), Korean (한국어), Vietnamese (tiếng Việt), Tagalog, Urdu (اردو), Hindi (हिंदी), and Bengali/Bangla (বাংলা).
- **Hágase Contar:** (877)-EL-CENSO or (877) 352-3676



Shape
your future
START HERE >

United States®
**Census
2020**

Todos Contamos!



¿Por qué responder al Censo?

💰 por su familia y nuestra comunidad.
El censo es nuestra oportunidad de contribuir para que haya un mejor futuro en nuestra comunidad.

Los datos del censo determinan cómo se distribuyen los fondos federales en nuestras comunidades como: Medicaid, clínicas de salud, centros recreativos, construcción de carreteras, Vivienda Sección 8, programas de almuerzos, escolares, y mucho más.

¿Cómo participar en el censo?

- ✓ **En línea** a www.2020Census.gov/es
- ✓ **O llame 1-844-468-2020** (español) / 844-330-2020 (inglés)
- ✓ **O Por correo**, llenar el formulario impreso que se envió a su hogar y devolverlo por correo postal

¿Mis respuestas al censo están seguras y a salvo?

La Oficina del Censo está obligada por ley a proteger toda la información personal que se recopile y a mantenerla en estricta confidencialidad. La Oficina del Censo puede usar sus respuestas solo para producir estadísticas. De hecho, cada uno de los empleados de la Oficina del Censo presta un juramento para proteger su información personal de por vida. Sus respuestas no se pueden usar para fines del cumplimiento de la ley o para determinar su elegibilidad personal para beneficios del gobierno.

Por ley, sus respuestas al censo no pueden ser usadas en su contra de ninguna manera por ninguna agencia del gobierno ni tribunal—ni por el FBI, ni CIA, ni DCF, ni DHS, ni ICE.

¿Todavía tienen preguntas?

Las personas pueden llamar al 877-EL-CENSO (877-352-3676) para más información o texto censo a 9779

Dale forma
a tu futuro
EMPÍZALA AQUÍ >



2) Register voters!

- ✓ Paper forms
- ✓ Digitally... text link to online registration system in your state or use a platform like **Vot-ER (Turbovote)**
- ✓ Send links in zoom chats and include in your email

Tanya Rhodes Smith ([She/her](#))

Instructor in Residence, Director

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University of Connecticut School of Social Work

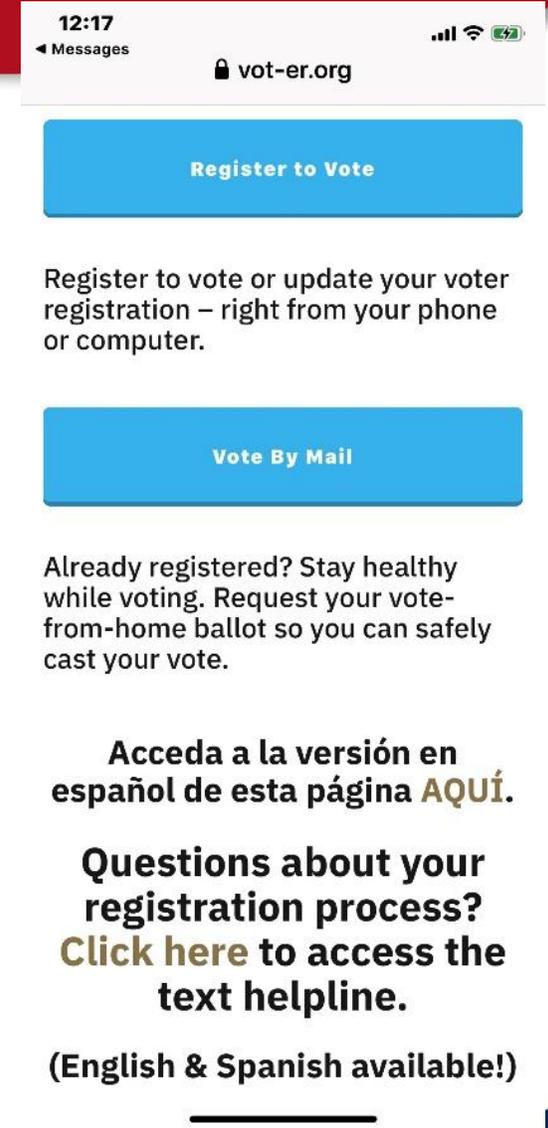
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"The vote is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have." [John Lewis \(February 21, 1940 - July 17, 2020\)](#)

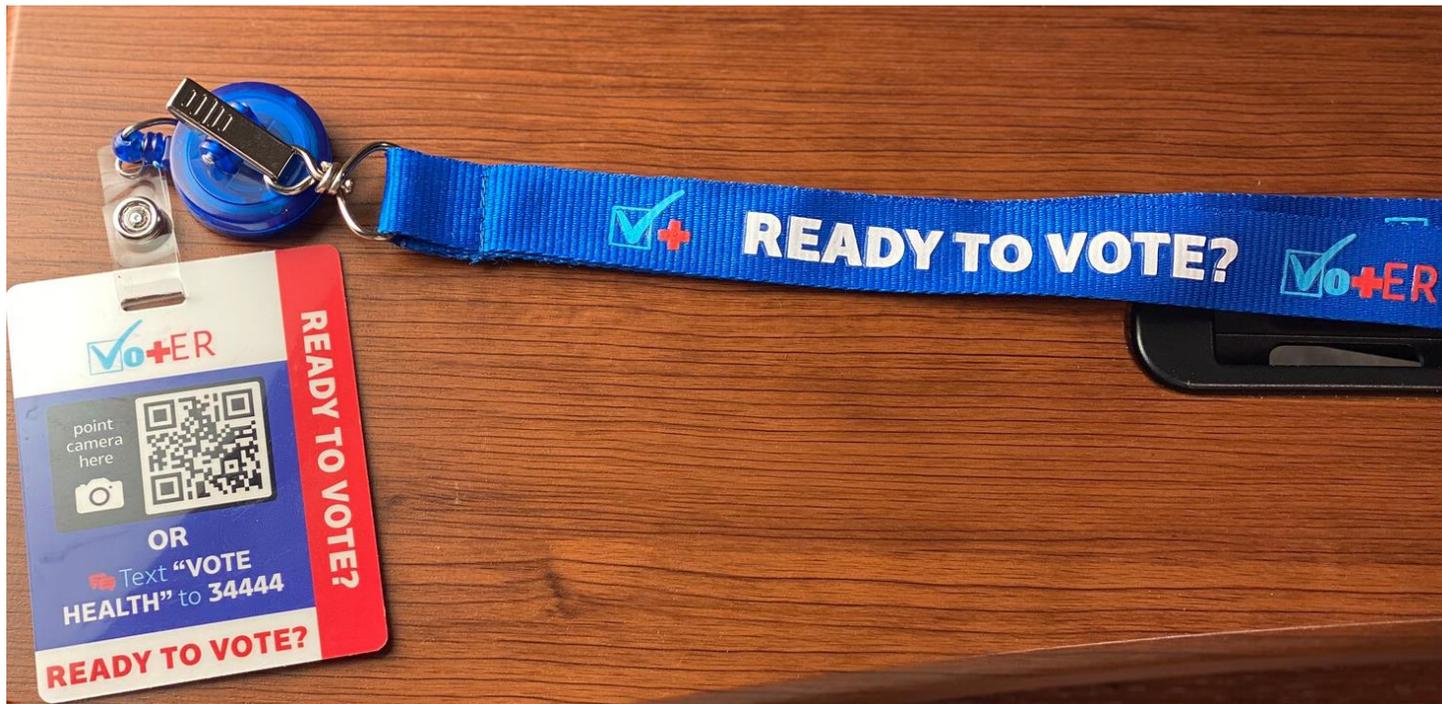
[* Check your voter registration *](#) [Register to vote](#) * [Request an absentee ballot](#) * [Respond to the 2020 census!](#)



Hi Mary. With everything that's been going on, I'm reaching out to people to make sure they have everything they need to vote safely in November. You can register to vote or request an absentee ballot application by texting 'vote sw' to **34444**



VotER: Lanyards and Badgebackers



- Free
- Track # of registrations as provider type
 - Social workers, physicians, medical students
- Track overall number of mail-in ballots requested

3) Educate and Engage

Election Protection Hotline: **866-OUR-VOTE**; or
The Latino Protect the Vote Hotline: **888-VE-Y-VOTA**.

- **The power of information:**
 - ✓ When and where to vote (don't forget primaries!)
 - ✓ How to vote, including by absentee ballot
 - ✓ Who is on the ballot (copy of the ballot, links to candidate information, who represents them) and ballot issues
 - ✓ The rules for special populations such as those experiencing homelessness, with a felony conviction, a survivor of violence, residents in long-term care, etc.
 - ✓ Know the facts and dispel myths around voter fraud.
- **The power of being asked...**



4) Remind and promote all elections – federal, state and local

- Being a trusted voice amplifies your effect:
 - ✓ Text/call your networks
 - ✓ Post online – websites, social media, blogs, letters to the editor
 - ✓ Send email reminders, include in your email signature
 - ✓ Promote in waiting rooms, chat rooms, visible spaces
 - ✓ Encourage people to **make a plan** for voting

Hey Sarah! I am reaching out to make sure that your vote and your voice are counted this election! If you stay home, so does our power for change. Make sure your registration is up to date by texting VOTE SW to 34444. You can also request an absentee ballot application! Let me know if you have any questions! Tanya



5) Advocate for voting rights and access in your town/state and push Congress to reinstate preclearance (“section 5”) in the Voting Rights Act



BRENNAN
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE

at New York University School of Law



6) Change the culture: Integrate voter engagement to your practice, agency and community

- Health care settings
- Schools
- Shelters
- Libraries
- Outpatient clinics
- After school programs
- Food pantries
- VAs

6) Change the culture: Integrate voter engagement to your practice, agency and community

1. Using the provided “Organizational Assessment: Supporting clients and communities to vote, develop a plan for your field agency* to integrate nonpartisan voter engagement into the services and culture of your nonprofit, agency, organization, or school.

** Notes: Think about this as a working document for your agency. You may submit this completed form as your plan. Include details as well as open questions that come up. **If you are not in field, choose an agency or organization with which you have personal or professional experience.** If you are in field, share with your supervisor and discuss.*

2. Register at least three (3) people to vote. *Note: You are not required to register people at your agency. You may choose any three people to register, including people in your personal network.* **OPTIONAL:** Contact five (5) people to encourage them to participate in the 2020 census.
3. Write and submit a short reflection on this experience. **Go to VotingIsSocialWork.org for more information and resources.**

Inclusive democracy, better outcomes

Social workers & agencies support voting as indicator of health



Social workers & agencies register voters & address barriers



Voter turnout increases



More candidates, more accountability, better leaders, better policy



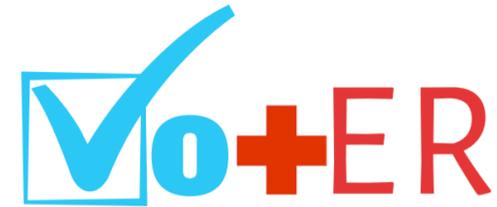
Better outcomes for communities



www.VotingIsSocialWork.org

VOTING is Social Work

Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work



Thank you!

For voting resources and information: go to www.VotingIsSocialWork.org or contact me directly

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