



## Get Out the Vote Toolkit

### Spring 2020

Direct voter contact is key to increasing voter turnout – especially among young people and first-time voters. While state and local Leagues have long invested in critical voter registration efforts in their communities, many have not incorporated direct get out the vote (GOTV), or voter contact, communications into their work. With interest growing across our organization and new challenges arising as a result of COVID-19, LWVEF is working to invest in innovative voter contact programs and equip all Leagues with the tools they need to conduct effective get out the vote activities!

### Enclosed you will find resources for:

- Incorporating GOTV into your registration activities
- Most effective GOTV methods
- New Tips for GOTV during COVID-19
- Sending postcard/texts/emails to new voters
- Organizing volunteer phonebanks

Multiple studies and registration programs have found that simply helping individuals register to vote is not enough; critical follow-up is needed to help new registrants become active, well-equipped voters. In fact, direct outreach from political candidates, parties and nonpartisan groups like the League has proven to have a direct increase in voter turnout, especially among young people. **In 2019, a pilot project between LWVEF and the LWV of New Jersey showed up to a full percent increase in turnout among primary voters who received contact communications directly from the League** – a huge increase in an off-year election! Subsequent programs in the 2019 General and 2020 primary elections showed similar, encouraging results.



What's more, investing in direct get out the vote activities helps us leverage our volunteer hours and hard-earned investments in powerful ways. We want our registration activities to be as effective as possible. We want to ensure that the critical information on [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) and in our voters' guides, resources we invest in at all levels of the League, get into the hands of voters who need it. We want to remain competitive and nimble as new organizations arise

and as many of our states' election systems evolve to adopt online and automatic voter registration. And, we want to provide new volunteers with tangible, timely, and effective opportunities to engage.

Direct voter outreach does just that. For example, in 2018, the LWV of Montgomery County, MD measured the effect on voting behavior of the direct distribution of its Voters' Guide to selected voters for primary and general elections. **The study demonstrated that voters who received an LWV Voters' Guide are more confident that they have sufficient information about the candidates and are more likely to vote in more of the contests on the ballot when compared to voters in general.**

By utilizing contact information gathered during League-sponsored voter registration drives, through partnerships, and by utilizing publicly-available voter file data, we can successfully increase voter turnout while also leveraging and building the League brand in our communities. This guide has steps to show you how!

### Top Tips for Getting Out the Vote

Regardless of the means of communications used for get out the vote, our aim is to empower newly registered voters so that they can feel connected and excited about the upcoming election! **Contact your new registrants right before the next election or key deadline by phone, mail, in person or email and share the following information:**

- **Remind them to vote** and invite them to voter education events/website resources like debates.
- **Ask them to visit [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org)** to find their polling place and learn what will be on their ballot.
- **Ask about their voting plan.** Research shows that by asking voters whether they have a voting plan (Will they take advantage of mail-in or absentee voting? If voting in person, how will they get to the polls? At what time?), you will increase their chances of participating.
- **Keep it brief** and friendly!
- **Be helpful.** Have voting dates, polling locations, key mail-in or absentee voting options and other information at your fingertips so that you can help address any questions.
- **Be responsive.** If you list a phone number or email address in your communications to voters, make sure someone is checking messages in the lead-up to Election Day!

### Key Questions to ask your League team:

- What are we currently doing to get out the vote?
- How can we directly reach more voters personally to ask them to vote?
- How are we measuring our effectiveness?
- What's holding us back?



For many Leagues, the global pandemic has severely impacted and altered the ability to register voters and incorporate GOTV activities. Although states are beginning to ease limitations, rules and regulations are rapidly changing to slow the spread of the virus and keep voters safe. Now more than ever, it is extremely important to keep voters informed and to get voters the timely and accurate information they need to cast their ballot.

Here are some ways to incorporate GOTV during times of physical distancing:

- **Promote VOTE411.org** as the source for the most trusted, up-to-date information! VOTE411.org can be used to connect voters to the information they need to successfully cast their ballot.
- **Use digital presentations** like our [Virtual High School Voter Registration Lesson](#) to register and inform voters. Customize your presentations to your audience and add information pertinent to your state or local area. You can share with your partners or host a webinar training of your own. Be sure to collect contact information and send a follow up email to participants with the presentation or recording and any additional resources they may need. As a best practice, if you are going to record, make sure that you state your intention at the beginning and receive consent from your participants.
- **Engage community partners** who have direct access to affected communities and underrepresented voters. Make sure they know that VOTE411.org has all the up to date information voters need!
- **Use social media platforms** to communicate any important or new information leading up to elections and in real time. Keep in mind the audience you are intending to reach and what platform would be best suited for engagement.
- **Phone banking** is a physically distant way of having the critical personal contact with voters before the upcoming election. Learn tips and see a sample script further below in this kit – or work with a partner who might already be planning nonpartisan phone banking around election time.
- **Mailings** and postcards are an effective GOTV method. See examples and learn more below!

### Key Questions for helping voters during COVID-19:

- How are we currently reaching voters in the digital space?
- Which partners should we work with?
- What platform(s) can we use to best reach our target audience?
- How do we incorporate a DEI lens to reach the most new voters?
- What message or information do new voters need **right now**?

### Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive GOTV Activities

Many new voters or potential voters may be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and limited in-person services. Proactively anticipating and addressing these challenges can provide critical support to ensure voters successfully cast their ballots. Discuss how voters can vote by mail or absentee if they are

unable to go to the polls or would like to keep themselves safe during this time. Troubleshoot and anticipate challenges voters may have with registering online or absentee and mail-in voting options and include solutions. Some states may only offer online voter registration for residents with a government-issued photo ID, so include solutions for voters that may not have access to a printer or mailing supplies or may need other support in overcoming barriers.

Questions to ask:

- What services will be limited or altered due to COVID-19?
- Who will be most impacted by the absence or shift in these services?
- How do we reach those most impacted and provide opportunities and solutions?
- How can we encourage elections officials to better serve voters? See this blog post, [10 Things Election Officials Can Do to Safeguard Our Elections this Spring, Summer, and Fall](#), written by Jeanette Senecal, our Senior Director of Mission Impact.

[Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Policy](#) acts as a framework to all of our work. No matter the activities you organize for GOTV, you have the opportunity to strengthen your work and impact by applying a DEI lens. A DEI lens is a way of looking at your League work in a way that addresses long-term and short-term goals of building trust in our communities, deepening our engagement with new communities and leveraging our position to build power.

To learn more about how your League can strengthen your impact, explore the [DEI Lens Questions](#).

### Incorporating GOTV into your Voter Registration Activities

*Adapted from the [Empowering the Voters of Tomorrow](#) training manual*

Many effective get out the vote efforts start by collecting contact information at voter registration events – either in-person or online. Strategic record-keeping will allow you to follow-up directly with the people you help register to vote. Evidence shows that newly registered voters who receive follow-up communications are more likely to turn out to vote. What’s more, collecting and tracking basic information will enable you to show the world—including your partners and supporters—that your voter registration drive made a difference and will give your team tangible results!

Consider taking the following steps to ensure you will have the opportunity to remind new registrants to vote as Election Day approaches:

#### Keys to making a plan:

- Know the rules of your state!
- Designate person(s) to collect information
- Anticipate barriers to collecting information
- Stay committed to GOTV efforts

## Learn the contact rules for your state and make a plan.

Because voter registration lists are a matter of public record, most states allow independent registration groups to collect specific information from completed voter registration forms before they are turned in to the appropriate elections official.

- Some states have restrictions against copying or retaining certain information (for example, private data such as a birth date, driver's license number or social security number). To find out the rules for your state, visit your Secretary of State's website. Additional guidance for most states is available at [Fair Elections Center](#).
- If you are unable to photocopy or otherwise collect information directly from the voter registration form, consider utilizing a pledge card\* or sign-in sheet (see below) at your registration drives (OR ONLINE!) to collect voters' email and cell phone information or direct them to use the voter registration tool at [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org), after which they'll receive election reminders.<sup>1</sup>
- Designate an organized person or small team to take the lead on collecting all completed registration forms, copying the legally-allowed information and/or retaining information from pledge cards and sign in sheets, and promptly turning the original forms in to the appropriate elections official, keeping in mind that there might be a time requirement for turning in registration forms in your state.
- Please note: IRS rules stipulate that it is allowable to contact new registrants with election-related information such as what has been outlined here. However, it is illegal to use information from a



voter registration form to send unsolicited communications about non-election items such as fundraising, action alerts, etc. Before engaging registrants on anything that is not related to educating them about the election process, you must ask registrants (in person or electronically) to "opt-in" to your email list to receive future news and updates. This way, you will be able to foster longer-term contact and encourage them to get involved in your organization.

**Use the following pages of resources to customize your approach! Do you have a GOTV success story or tactic to share? Email Morgan Murray at [mmurray@lww.org](mailto:mmurray@lww.org).**

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<sup>1</sup>According to [Nonprofit Vote's](#) 2019 report, nonprofit voters who signed a pledge-to-vote card turned out to vote at a rate 14.1 percentage points higher than comparable registered voters. You may also choose to use the [federal voter registration form](#) if restrictions associated with your state or local form hamper your efforts

## Getting Out the Vote with OutreachCircle

As we know, direct voter contact is key to increasing voter turnout, especially among newly registered voters. Typically, we rely on voter file databases, housing updated contact information, for this critical direct voter follow-up. However, because every single League member, volunteer, and supporter has a personal network, OutreachCircle will tap into personal networks directly and expand our impact and power.

OutreachCircle is a supporter management, relational organizing, and peer-to-peer texting platform. OutreachCircle makes it simple to recruit, engage, and activate LWV members and supporters while being able to track and manage their efforts every step of the way! Here are three key features that take GOTV efforts to new heights!

### **Relational Organizing with OutreachCircle**

*Highlights: Filter & Segment Lists, 2-Way VAN Integration, Automated Data Entry*

With OutreachCircle, LWV members and supporters can directly reach out to their friends and family all in one place. Supporters can quickly text, email, or post on social media with personalized or preloaded get out the vote messages to everyone in their contacts or from a designated LWV list.

### **OutreachCircle's Action Hub**

*Highlights: Assigned Actions to Supporters, Social Sharing, Automated Data Entry*

OutreachCircle's Action Hub makes it easy to recruit, engage, and activate LWV supporters by allowing LWV to coordinate all their supporters' activities in one place. Through OutreachCircle's Action Hub, Leagues can share ongoing engagement opportunities-like voter registration events or advocacy opportunities- and election-related information in seconds to all LWV supporters. Additionally, OutreachCircle makes it easy to recruit new supporters in a variety of ways,



such as by providing in-person flyers, recruitment links and/or QR codes that allow the public to get a more profound sense of the League work, brand, and ways to get involved.

### **Affinity P2P Texting**

*Highlights: Privacy Wall Technology, Preloaded Text Messaging, Users Use Own Phone Number*

With OutreachCircle, you can implement neighbor or local League texting programs that are efficient and effective. Assign designated League members and volunteers a list of voters to "canvas" via texting. Unlike traditional GOTV texting, affinity texts come from the user's phone number, which means the voter knows they are speaking with a real, local person, which enables a deeper connection with the potential for long term engagement.

Ready to take your LWV GOTV efforts to new heights? Need more information? Contact LWVUS Organizing Team at [organizing@lww.org](mailto:organizing@lww.org) or check out our [Organizing Resource Page](#).



## Printable Voter Pledge Cards

Print and cut out these cards (or place a simple form on your website!) to collect voters' information and remind them to vote.

**I will vote this Election Day to stand up for what matters most to me, my family and my community.**

I, \_\_\_\_\_pledge to vote this year.

Please send me reminders about upcoming elections:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_



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Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_



## Sample Get Out The Vote Postcards

Mailed reminders to vote are shown to be among the most effective get out the vote methods. Order these and other LWV brand items at: <https://lwv.ordercompanion.com/>

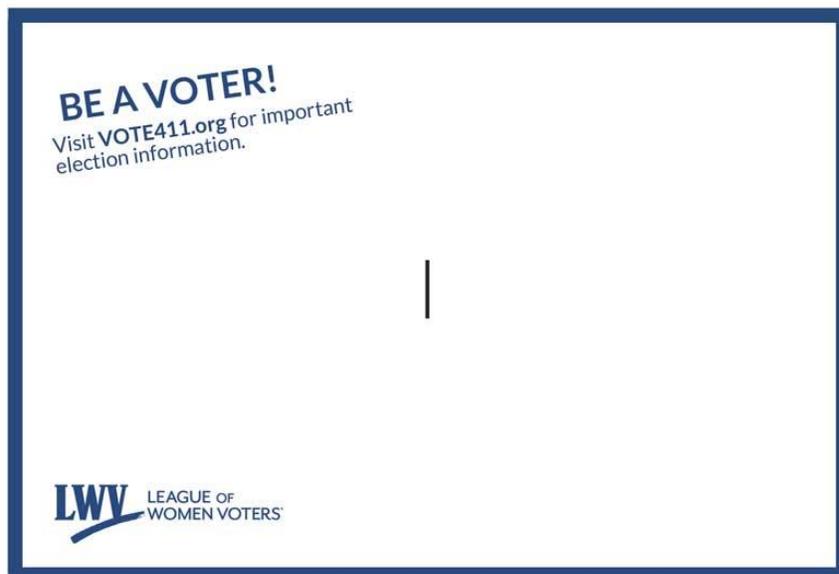
[FRONT]



- Nationwide candidate info
- Polling place locations
- Online voter registration tool
- ID requirements
- Absentee ballot info
- Ballot measure info
- Early voting options
- Election dates



[BACK]



## **Live Phone Calls to Voters**

We highly recommend calling voters, either one on one or via a phonebanking platform, to remind them to vote. Try using this sample script:

### **Sample GOTV Phone Script**

(Best if made starting a few days before or up until the night before the Election)

Hello, is [VOTER NAME] there?

Hi! This is [CALLER NAME] calling from the League of Women Voters of [CITY/STATE].

You might remember we helped you register to vote at [venue/your school] back in [September/October].

We wanted to thank you again for registering and wanted to remind you about the election on [DATE].

Can we count on you to go vote on [DATE]?

IF YES:

Great! We've been calling other voters and it sounds like a lot of people in [COMMUNITY] will be voting this year. It's an important election, and we're so excited that you'll have the chance to stand up for our community by casting a vote.

How do you plan to vote? [Offer options for your state – mail, absentee, etc.]

[IF VOTING IN PERSON]: Do you know when you might go to vote on Tuesday? In the morning, afternoon, evening? Do you have a plan for getting there?

You can go to our website, [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org), to see who is on your ballot and all the other information about the election.

IF NO/MAYBE:

OK, what other information can I provide to you to help make voting a little easier? I'd be happy to tell you a little more about how COVID has affected our voting options here [have polling place hours, key deadlines handy].

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Can I answer any questions about voting?

Great! Again, thank you for your promise to vote this year.

## Things to Consider When Launching a Phonebank

Some Leagues work with partners and/or through the VAN (Voter Activation Network) to phonebank voters utilizing available voter file data. LWVEF has also engaged in some phonebanking pilot projects in partnership with state and local Leagues. *If your state League already has VAN access and wants ideas about how to use it effectively, contact Morgan Murray (mmurray@lww.org).* Whether you're interested in launching a phonebank or making phone calls to voters you've registered, consider these tips:

### Who should we call?

We recommend calling likely underrepresented voters in your community. For example, in the 2019 primary election in New Jersey, LWVEF and LWVNJ called registered voters under the age of 45 who had previously voted in an off-year election. We do not recommend targeting voters by political party.

### When should we call voters?

We recommend running phonebanks only in the few days/over the weekend leading up to Election Day or a key voting deadline, when the election is most likely to be in voters' minds. We recommend asking volunteers to spend at least one hour making calls during the evening (5-8pm) or over the weekend just before the election.

### What do I say to voters on the phone?

We've provided a script for your phone calls (see above)! The key is to keep it simple, encourage the voter to turn out to vote, and refer them to VOTE411 to find more information about the candidates and the process of voting.

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## Sample Text Messaging Script

Many organizations are utilizing mass text messaging platforms to get out the vote, though research does not yet definitely indicate that texting increases voter turnout.

If you launch a mass texting campaign, please be sure to check any state and federal rules related to such communications.

Here is a sample script adapted from an LWVEF texting pilot run in 2018:



Hello from the League of Women Voters. Election Day is coming, and we hope we can count on you to vote on [DATE]! Please go to [VOTE411.org](https://www.vote411.org) to find the election info you need.

[If additional capability exists]:

What time would you like a text reminder to vote/drop off your ballot, if applicable on [DATE]? (for example 7am est, 6pm pst)

User texts: 8am est

Response: Perfect, your reminder text is set.

Response: SEND TEXT AT SPECIFIED TIME: Happy Election Day! This is an important election. Find your personalized voting info here: <http://www.vote411.org> Now it's time to get to the polls!

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### **Sample Get out the Vote Email Script:**

While email is not shown to be an effective method of boosting turnout, it does provide a cheap and easy way to communicate with voters. Thus, we do recommend sending election reminder emails to new registrants and/or community members who have joined your email list. Here's a sample:

#### ***Subject Line: Important Information before you Vote***

Hi [NAME],

Election Day is almost here! Are you ready to vote?

You may remember that we helped you register to vote at [venue/your school] back in [September/October]. Now we're reaching out to share some important tips for Election Day.

This may be the most important election of our lifetime. Election Day, [November X], is your chance to take control for your community and weigh in on the issues that matter most to you and your family. As voters, we all have an equal say in determining our future. That's why it is so important to go cast a vote!

#### **Here are a few important tips:**

- If you need to find information about how, when and where to vote, please visit [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org) and enter your address.
- [STATE] has implemented NEW options for voting this year, including [any COVID-related options for voters to vote by mail, etc.]
- For those voting in person, polling places are open in from XX am to XX pm. We recommend social distancing and following CDC guidance for staying safe.
- [IF required in your state] At the polls, you'll be required to show [an ID/utility bill/etc.].

The leaders we elect will make decisions that affect your everyday life — your job, health care, the economy and more. So please join your friends and neighbors by being a voter on [DATE]!

If we can help answer any questions you have about the election process, please feel free to contact us at [LEAGUE CONTACT INFO]

Thank you for voting!

YOUR NAME

## Additional LWVEF Resources

Sign up for the biweekly League Update email to receive the latest announcements, resources and grant opportunities! [http://participate.lwv.org/signup\\_page/league-update](http://participate.lwv.org/signup_page/league-update)

Training resources available at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) include:

- [COVID-19 Response Page](#)
- [Empowering The Voters Of Tomorrow](#) (High schools)
- [Naturalization ceremonies toolkit](#)
- [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org)
- [Guide to LWVUS Services for Leagues](#)