



NATIONAL LOW INCOME
HOUSING COALITION

WEBINAR

Understanding and Overcoming the Challenges of Voter Registration

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Agenda



1. Introduction to the Voterization Project and the Issue of Voter Suppression
2. Restrictions and Considerations for 501(c)(3) Organizations
3. Overview of NLIHC's 2016 Voterization Plan
4. Best Practices in Voter Registration Drives
5. Survey of Additional Resources
6. Q&A

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What is Voterization?

Voterization is a term that encompasses the three part process of effective voter engagement:

1. Registration
2. Education
3. Mobilization



Why Should We Care About *Voterization*?



- The Voterization Project is a direct response of low voter turnout among our constituents.
- When our constituents do not vote, they lose the opportunity to have a voice in the policies that affect them!
- Put simply, low turnout from our constituents leads to unfavorable housing policy decisions, something we want to avoid.



Who Are We Targeting?



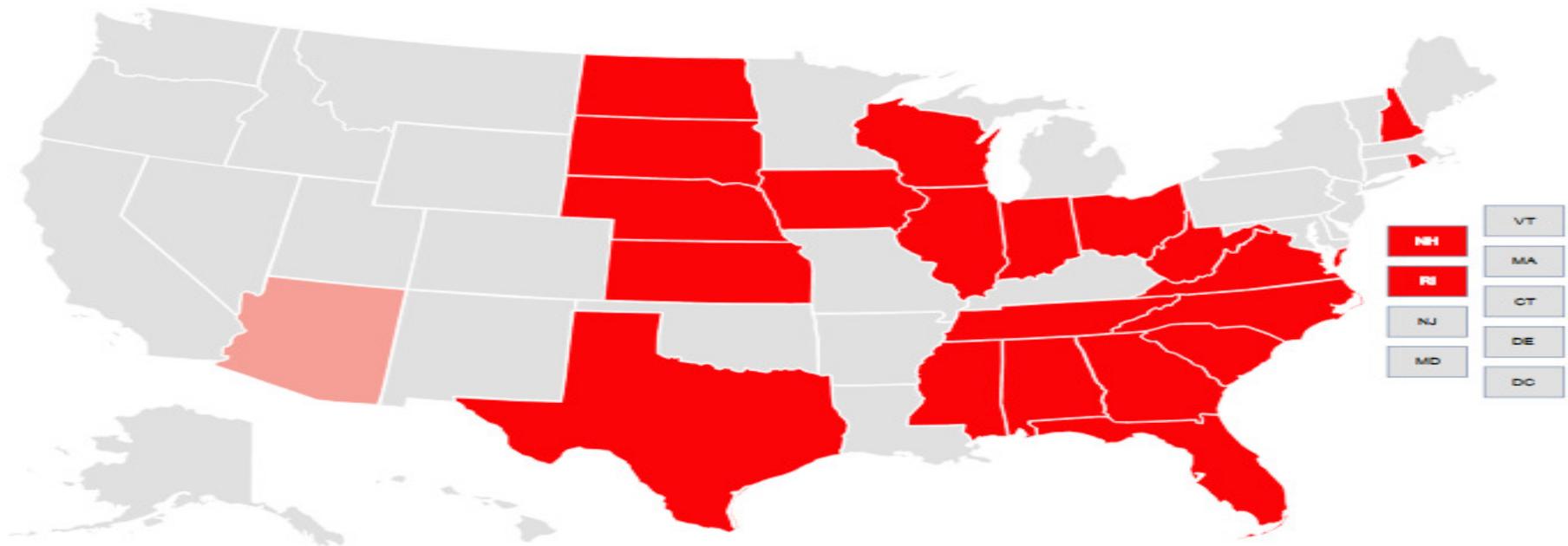
- Our constituents are predominantly renters and low income households.
- The percentage of renters who voted in 2014 was 51%, far below homeowners who turned out at 70%.
- While 75% of people with incomes over \$100,000 were registered to vote in 2014 and 53% voted, just 48% of people with incomes below \$20,000 were registered, and only 26% actually voted.

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Voter Suppression

States With New Voting Restrictions Since the 2010 Election



Last updated February 4, 2016. [View a PDF version here.](#)

Status Key:

- RESTRICTION IN PLACE
- RESTRICTION PASSED BEFORE 2010, OR A BALLOT MEASURE

Voter Suppression



What are some examples?

- Voter ID Laws
- Targeting Specific Communities with Misinformation
- Efforts to Curtail Early and Absentee Voting Opportunities
- Reducing or Relocating Polling Places
- “Voter Caging” (challenging registration status at the polls)

Who is targeted?

- Low income people
- Members of racial or ethnic minorities
- Students
- Senior citizens
- Persons with disabilities

Significant overlap with our constituents!

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Nonprofits: The Do's and Don'ts of Voter Registration & Outreach



Nonprofits CAN

- Conduct voter registration
- Conduct voter education and mobilizing efforts
 - Conduct candidate engagement efforts

As long as all efforts and activities remain NON-PARTISAN!

Nonprofits CANNOT

- Make endorsements for any political candidates.
- Donate money, resources, or time to any particular candidate.
- Staff engaged in partisan political activities should do so without representing the organization.

501(c)(3) organizations ARE allowed to participate in voter registration efforts!

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Federally Funded Organizations: The Do's and Don'ts of Voter Registration



Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) CAN participate in voter registration activities!

- PHAs can provide registration materials as well as help residents fill out registration forms.
- Resident Councils or Resident Advisory Boards can be a great resource for organizing renter-to-renter registration efforts.
- PHA newsletters can and should contain information about registration and voting.
 - Public housing buildings should display registration information in common areas such as bulletin boards near elevators or in community rooms, etc.

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Federally Funded Organizations: The Do's and Don'ts of Voter Registration



Federal Funds Do Put Restrictions on Certain Organizations:

- Staff who are paid through AmeriCorps or HeadStart funding cannot participate in voter registration activities.
- Legal Services groups cannot participate in any election activity, even if nonpartisan.
- Recipients of Community Services Block Grant funding can participate in voter registration, but CSBG funds cannot be used.
- More information on federal funds and voter registration restrictions can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1lnQxh7>

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Questions?



Any Questions so far? Please post them in the question chat box!

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NLIHC's Tools & Resources



**VOTERIZATION:
2016 Voterization
Narrative Guide and Plan**

This guide accompanies the National Low Income Housing Coalition's Voterization Plan, and is designed to help you through the steps of planning your agency's Voterization work. NLIHC's Voterization materials offer resources for organizations seeking to engage traditionally underrepresented people in the civic process.

Our *Voterization Plan* takes you through all of the steps you need to implement a campaign to integrate registration, education, mobilization, and voter protection without overtaxing your staff or resources, while staying within legal guidelines for nonprofits. Start by printing out the plan template, and then use other resources described in the plan to determine your next steps.

Our plan presents a menu of activities for your group to consider. Your organization may or may not be able to undertake all of the suggested activities; plan according to available resources. If this is your first voter engagement project, remember to think long-term. It is usually best to start small and build your project over several election cycles.

Please let us know that you are conducting a Voterization effort. Call NLIHC's Field Team at 202-662-1530, or email us at outreach@nlihc.org.

WHY BECOME VOTERIZED?

Raising housing on the national agenda will happen only when candidates for elected office understand that the issue of affordable housing is important to voters. At the same time, it is vital that low income voters understand how the decisions made by federal elected officials directly affect their lives; know how to register to vote; and, know how to get to the polls on Election Day.

Census data confirm that low income voters are registered and vote at lower rates than higher income citizens. While 75% of people with incomes over \$100,000 were registered to vote in 2014 and 53% voted, just 48% of people with incomes below \$20,000 were registered, and only 26% actually voted. (U.S. Census Bureau. *Voting and Registration*

in the Election of November 2014. July 2015.)

Low income people face several challenges to voting such less-flexible work schedules that may not allow time off to vote; more difficulty obtaining legal identification; transportation impediments that may make getting to the polls more difficult; and, a greater likelihood of misinformation about their rights as voters that may make people shy away from voting. People experiencing homelessness, ex-offenders, and survivors of a natural disaster may face especially tough barriers to voting.

Nonprofit organizations, which benefit from close ties with their clients, are a natural fit in helping people overcome these challenges. Nonprofits that have implemented Voterization projects have identified several benefits of doing so:

- Residents engage in civic life and learn how decisions of elected officials affect their lives.
- Elected officials become educated on low income housing issues and on how their decisions affect residents.
- Influence is built with elected officials.
- Residents develop leadership skills.
- Assists residents in meeting community service requirements, if applicable.
- Positive press is earned for the program or project.

LEGALLY SPEAKING

Nonprofit organizations can, and should, engage in nonpartisan election-related activity, including voter registration, education, and mobilization. The basic rule is that 501(c)(3) organizations cannot in any way support or oppose particular candidates. For detailed legal guidance, you may want to consult:

- 1 -

The **Voterization Plan** is a step-by-step model for launching a campaign to register, educate, and mobilize voters.



The **Voterization Narrative** is a companion piece to explain steps in the Voterization process.

**VOTERIZATION:
2016 Voterization Plan**

Completing a Voterization plan for your agency will help you assess how best to incorporate voter registration, education, and mobilization into your agency's work. This plan template presents a menu of activities that your organization may want to consider.

Please let us know you are participating! Contact NLIHC's Field Team at 202-662-1530 or outreach@nlihc.org with a description of your project.

WHY BECOME VOTERIZED?

Below are some reasons that organizations have undertaken Voterization projects. Check those that apply to your organization, and add any others that apply.

- Engage residents in civic participation and help them become familiar with how decisions of elected officials affect their lives.
- Educate elected officials on low income housing issues and on how their decisions affect residents.
- Build influence with elected officials.
- Help develop residents' leadership skills.
- Assist residents in meeting community service requirements, if applicable.
- Earn positive press for your program or project.
- Other _____

LEGALLY SPEAKING

501(c)(3) organizations can, and should, engage in nonpartisan election-related activity, including voter registration, education, and mobilization. 501(c)(3)s cannot in any way support or oppose particular candidates. For detailed information on these issues:

- Contact the Office of the Secretary of State or Board of Elections in your state to learn your state's rules for third-party voter registration.
- Take a look at the Permissible Activities Checklist put together by Nonprofit VOTE at: www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2010/09/501c3-activities-en.pdf
- Visit the League of Women Voters at www.vote411.org for the latest information on voting in your state.
- Read and review Nonprofits, Voting & Elections produced by Nonprofit VOTE at: <http://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2010/11/nonprofits-voting-and-elections.pdf>

And of Course – The NLIHC Field Team!

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Getting Started – Goals and Roles



REGISTERING VOTERS

Setting Goals for Registering Voters

- A. How many residents/clients does your agency serve _____
- B. What percentage of your clients will you register? What number? _____
- C. Will your agency also register other low income members of the community, beyond your clients? If so, how many? _____
- D. What is your agency's total goal for new registrants (B+C)? _____
- E. How many weeks do you have until the deadline to register voters? _____
- F. How many people must you register on average per week to meet your goal? _____

Assigning Responsibilities

- A. What staff person will ultimately be responsible for meeting registration goals? _____
- B. What resident leaders will have responsibility for meeting registration goals? _____

First – Know the Law!



Preparing To Register Voters

Your local Board of Elections can be a valuable source of information as you plan to register clients to vote. You will want to check in with them to:

- Learn the registration deadline for the general election in your state.
- Ask whether anyone can register voters in your state, or whether a person must first become deputized or meet other requirements.
- Request the voter rolls for your locality. There may be a small charge for this, but it's important; you will use this list to determine which of your residents and clients are already registered, and which need to change their official voting address.
- Request enough voter registration forms to meet your registration goals.

Are there special requirements someone must meet before registering voters? _____

Who will obtain the county voter list and pick up the voter registration forms? _____

Are there special requirements someone must meet before registering voters? _____

Who will obtain the county voter list and pick up the voter registration forms? _____

Register Voters!



REGISTRATION CHECKLIST

For each section, check those ways in which your agency will register voters. In the space after the activity, list the staff or resident(s) who will carry out the activity, and the timeframe for carrying it out.

Fitting Voter Registration Into Your Agency's Regular Contact With Residents

- Add voter registration to the client intake process. Specifically, ask people to register and assist them in completing the form; don't just provide the form.
- Register clients when they come in to receive your services.
- Train all staff and volunteers who work directly with clients to be able to answer questions and assist with registration forms.
- Add a voter registration component to all job training, computer, or other classes offered by your agency.
- Other: _____

Planning Specific Voter Registration Activities

- Hold a social or other event at which voter registration is an activity.
- Host an event for National Voter Registration Day (September 27, 2016), <http://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/>
- Other: _____

Organizing A Door-To-Door Campaign

- Train residents, staff, and other volunteers who are already registered to go door-to-door to register low income renters. Use the county voter list to determine who needs to be registered and whose registration needs to be updated.
- Appoint residents as building captains, floor captains, etc. Ensure they are trained on the rules in your state, and make them responsible for registration (and turnout) where they live.
- For locked buildings where you have not recruited a resident captain, approach landlords to ask if they will allow door-to-door registration or a registration table in the lobby.
- Consider offering public recognition to those who register the most new voters or the highest percentage of their area.

Reaching Out To the Community

- Have your registrars reach out into the community to register other low income, homeless or underrepresented people.
- Provide a voter registration and information table at neighborhood events.
- Make sure everyone on the staff and board is registered!

Register Voters!



KEEPING RECORDS

Keeping records of the people you register to vote helps both with determining whether you have met your registration goals and with planning Get Out The Vote activities. NLIHC has a sample database that you can use for recordkeeping at the end of this document.

Where allowable by law, one easy way to gather the information for your list is to collect voter registration forms from new registrants, then photocopy the forms or portions of forms before mailing them in. You can also have new registrants fill out a two-part pledge card. They will keep the half of the card that reminds them of their pledge to vote; you will keep the half with their contact information.

Who will be responsible for keeping records of who becomes registered to vote? _____

- Keeping a voter list on hand can help with updating addresses for people who have moved, and can be used to verify who is already registered.
- Developing a list of new registrants is essential. This list can be used for Get Out the Vote efforts and follow up for voter education activities.

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Tips for a Successful Registration Drive



Get to Know Local Election Officials

- Registration forms, processes, and timelines will be coordinated by local authorities.
- Local authorities will give the best information on required training voter registration volunteers.

Build a Coalition

- Seek help and collaboration from a state or local partner with expertise and experience in conducting voter engagement activities.
 - This will help prevent overlapping registration efforts.
- Participate in organized events like National Voter Registration Day, September 27, 2016
 - More information on National Voter Registration Day:
<http://nationalvoterregistrationday.org>

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More Helpful Tips for a Successful Registration Drive



It's never too EARLY to start planning!

- A study conducted by NonprofitVOTE showed that organizations who were most successful in their registration drives began planning in June or earlier with implementation beginning in the July before the election.

Recruit Volunteers and Staff

- A huge component to having a successful registration drive is to make sure your staff are knowledgeable and dedicated to the voter outreach efforts. Make sure everyone on your staff is registered to vote as well.
- Volunteers are a great way to get the community involved with your organization and it's efforts. It's also a good way to recruit volunteers and interns for your organization as a whole.
- Make registration materials available at ALL meetings, events, and facilities.

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More Helpful Tips for a Successful Registration Drive



Incorporate “Active Tabling”

- A study conducted by NonprofitVOTE showed that “Active Tabling” was the most effective way to engage during a registration drive.
- Involves simply using your table as a base and moving around the room/area with clipboards to engage more people.
- NonprofitVOTE has a great how-to guide on active tabling that can be found [here](#).

Common Obstacles



Homeless Voters

- Various court decisions have affirmed that homeless people cannot be denied voting rights simply for not having an address.
- Homeless people can use a shelter or a park as an address when registering, though state laws regarding proof of residency vary widely.

Voter Apathy

- Non-voters are often concerned that nothing will change because they vote. Registration staff and volunteers should be trained to connect housing and neighborhood policy issues to the lives of the voters. Nonprofits have a unique position in the community because they garner more trust from members of the communities they serve.
- Point out that registering to vote does not require a person to vote, but just provides the option.

Formerly Incarcerated Voters

- In most states, voters with prior felony convictions can legally register as long as the parole or probation periods of the sentence have been completed.
- This varies by state. To find out the rules in your state, see this map from the ACLU: <http://bit.ly/1u5i2jm>

More Helpful Resources



Beyond our 2016 Voterization Plan, there are some other great resources for voter registration.

1. Fair Elections Legal Network's (FELN) State-By-State Resources
2. Housing Preservation Database
3. Online Voter Registration Tools
4. NonprofitVOTE's Resources

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Resources—Knowing the Law



Fair Elections Legal Network

- Information about voter suppression efforts.
- Election reform campaign resources.
- Essential: State-by-State registration and voting guides.
 - <http://fairelectionsnetwork.com/state-guides/>

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Housing Preservation Database



National Housing Preservation Database

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Database Overview](#) | [Using the Data](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Data Access \(Login Required\)](#)

The *National Housing Preservation Database* was created by the Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation (PAHRC) and the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) in an effort to provide communities with the information they need to effectively preserve their stock of public and affordable housing. The *National Housing Preservation Database* incorporates all available data on federally subsidized housing properties and includes nine separate funding streams. The *National Housing Preservation Database* is not only searchable, but it also provides downloadable data extracts. Users can customize their searches by location, funding stream, or 'at risk of loss' status, in addition to other characteristics.

Log-in to the 'Research' tool to see our *newly updated* data!



Research Tool

The 'Research' tool provides a customizable grid to filter, display, and download data. It also allows users familiar with large datasets to download entire pre-fabricated datasets, and add local housing data. Users please note that the former 'Preservation' tool is now incorporated into the 'Research' tool.



Mapping Tool

The 'Mapping' tool displays all federally subsidized housing properties by type on an interactive map. It allows users to view the assisted housing portfolio in user specified areas.

[Housing Preservation Database](#)

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Online Voter Registration Tool



Online registration is the simplest approach to building a bigger base of voters.

- 33 states now have online registration including: AL, AK, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, DC, GA, HI, IL, IN, IA, KS, LA, MD, MA, MN, MO, NE, NV, NM, NY, OR, PA, SC, UT, VT, VA, WA, and WV.
 - Oklahoma and Florida have passed legislation, it just hasn't been implemented yet!
- [Registration Tool](#)

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NonprofitVOTE Resources



NonprofitVOTE has resources that can be beneficial when thinking about organizing voter engagement efforts.

- [NonprofitVOTE Resources Webpage](#)

Key Highlights:

- State-by-State resources
- Nonprofits, Voting, & Elections, a 501(c)3 Guide
- Permissible Activities Checklist
- Voter Participation Starter Kit

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Questions?



Any more questions? Please post them in the question chat box!

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Mark Your Calendars!



More Webinars Coming Soon!

Monday, April 18th – Educating Voters

Thursday, September 15th – Mobilizing Voters – Get Out the Vote!

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Thank You for Joining!

For more information or to find out how to get involved,
please contact NLIHC's field team!

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