

# TENANT TALK

SUMMER 2022 | VOLUME 13, ISSUE 2

# HOUSING

# *IS* BUILT

★ ★ ★ *WITH* ★ ★ ★

# BALLOTS



NATIONAL LOW INCOME  
HOUSING COALITION

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## TENANT TALK

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## ABOUT NLIHC

The National Low Income Housing Coalition is dedicated to achieving racially and socially equitable public policy that ensures people with the lowest incomes have quality homes that are accessible and affordable in communities of their choice.

A key part of our work is public education and engagement. NLIHC is committed to sharing resources and tools that help individuals become informed advocates. *Tenant Talk* is one of the many resources we provide to the public.

## BECOME A MEMBER

NLIHC relies heavily on the support of our members to fund our work and to guide our policy decisions. Members are our strength! Hundreds of low-income residents and resident organizations have joined the NLIHC community by becoming members.

We suggest an annual membership rate of only \$5 for a low-income individual membership, and \$15 for a low-income resident organization. Please consider becoming a member of NLIHC today at [nlihc.org/membership](http://nlihc.org/membership).

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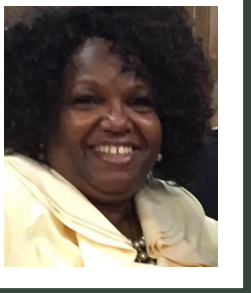
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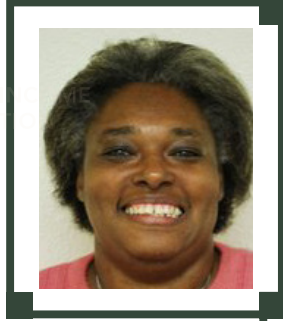
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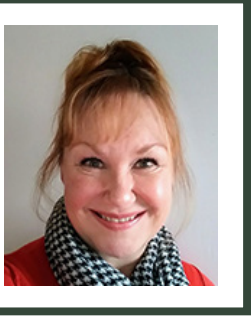
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# MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

## DEAR READERS,

**T**he last three years have presented many challenges for tenants and housing justice advocates. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a lasting impact around the world. Many systemic inequalities in the United States were magnified by the pandemic, including growing racial inequities. Low-income tenants have faced major rent increases across the country, making it harder to find affordable homes. Throughout its 2021-2022 session, Congress has worked to address these concerns by passing a budget reconciliation package. NLIHC in turn fought to ensure that any reconciliation bill included targeted housing investments in rental assistance, public housing, and the national Housing Trust Fund to support tenants. Meanwhile, as these advocacy efforts continue, the country is gearing up for one its busiest political seasons: the November 2022 election.

Many of us have asked ourselves for years: What will it take to persuade policymakers to prioritize the needs of low-income renters? When you look at voter turnout rates among these individuals, it's obvious what it will take: more votes. Historically, low-income tenants have shown up to the polls at lower rates than high-income people. In the 2020 general election, 83% of individuals with annual incomes above \$100,000 turned out to vote, compared to only 49% of those with incomes below \$20,000.

As we all know, low-income people face many barriers to voting, such as less-flexible work schedules that may not allow time off to vote; more difficulty obtaining legal identification; transportation impediments that make getting to the polls harder; and a greater likelihood of misinformation about their rights as voters. People experiencing homelessness, returning citizens, and survivors of natural disasters can face especially tough barriers to voting. These challenges are compounded by efforts in some states to suppress the votes of low-income tenants, who are disproportionately people of color, senior citizens, and people with disabilities. Low-income people have the power to reduce the gap in voter turnout by showing up to the polls.

NLIHC's nonpartisan Our Homes, Our Votes campaign aims to address these disparities by empowering low-income people to vote. The main purpose of the campaign is to give low-income renters and organizations serving low-income people the resources necessary to engage in voting, including resources to register, educate, and mobilize voters. Housing is an issue that is often overlooked in elections, but with the help of tenants like yourself, we can ensure that affordable housing is foregrounded in elections at every level.

We are stronger as a country when we all participate in the voting process. Affordable housing will only become a national priority when candidates and elected officials see low-income renters and affordable housing advocates as a large, active voting bloc. In this special issue of *Tenant Talk*, we provide you with the tools to make your voices heard and the resources to get out the vote in the 2022 election season. Now, let's get to the polls!

In Solidarity,

**THE EDITORIAL BOARD**

# HISTORY OF THE VOTING JUSTICE MOVEMENT AND THE FIGHT AGAINST VOTER SUPPRESSION

**T**he history of voting rights in the United States is littered with instances of systemic discrimination in which specific groups of people have been denied the right to vote based on their race, gender, religion, and other characteristics. Originally, the right to vote was limited to white, Protestant, land-owning men. Eventually, states were allowed to determine who could and could not vote in their jurisdictions. While some states, like New Jersey, expanded voting rights beyond property-owning white men temporarily, many states continued to uphold the federal standard barring Black people, women, Native Americans, and immigrants from the polls.

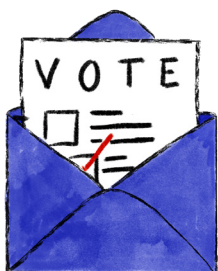
In 1870 – nearly 100 years after the United States was established as a nation – the 15th Amendment was ratified. The amendment stated that citizens could not be denied the right to vote based on their race, color, or previous condition of servitude and meant that Black men were now able to vote and hold political office. However, after two Black men became members of the U.S. Senate in 1870, states – especially in the South – began to find new ways to disenfranchise people. Literacy tests, poll taxes, and “grandfather clauses” denying people the right to vote if their ancestors had not voted prior to 1867 made it impossible for descendants of enslaved people to vote. These voter suppression and intimidation tactics reinforced white supremacy and prevented people of color from being able to fully exercise their civic duties.

Fifty years later, the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote. However, non-white women – including the descendants of slaves, immigrants, and Native Americans – still faced barriers that required them to continue fighting for their rights as citizens. Even after

the 24th Amendment, which outlawed poll taxes, was ratified in 1962, people of color in the South still faced tremendous obstacles to voting. These obstacles motivated the struggle for civil rights that commenced in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s. One of the most

widely known events in the fight for civil rights was the march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965. The march was led by activists Martin Luther King, Jr., Hosea Williams, and John Lewis, who were joined by hundreds of non-violent protestors. Even so, the marchers faced brutal violence. They were sprayed with tear gas and beaten by state police under the authority of Alabama Governor George Wallace, who demanded the march be stopped by any measures necessary. Because the march was televised, it drew national attention, and Americans across the country were able to witness what became known as “Bloody Sunday.” This crucial moment persuaded President Lyndon B. Johnson to sign the “Voting Rights Act” into law later that year. The act outlawed common voter suppression tactics, such as literacy tests, created federal oversight in states and localities with a history of voter discrimination, and extended federal voting protections to Black women, Native Americans, and immigrants. While the law was a major step forward for civil rights, its passage was far from marking the end of voter suppression.

Since the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, other protections have been passed to ensure all citizens can exercise their right to vote. These protections include the 26th Amendment, ratified in 1971, which changed the voting age from 21 to 18 in response to the draft that was instated during the Vietnam War. The Voting Rights Act was expanded in 1975 to cover those who spoke different languages,



# Why Do You Think Voting Is Important?

(Responses courtesy of the International Network of Street Papers (INSP) North America)

"Voting is important because we get to decide who represents us at every level of government in every election. The more people we put in office who care about our issues and represent our diverse identities, the better our country will be for all of us."

– Mande Seeley, Sisters, Oregon

"Voting helps to make sure that every voice is heard, especially for those on the streets and in low-income housing. It means helping shape our community and that we care enough to change it."

– Vicky Batcher, Nashville, Tennessee

"Our country has based its existence on the premise of a democracy, which means one person equals one vote. We do ourselves and our ancestors before us a disservice when we do not exercise that right to protect our voice as a collective against all that would harm that democratic process."

– Gina Owens, Seattle, Washington

"One cannot say anything, good or bad, about how things are run at any level of government if one does not give input by voting."

– Patrick Riley, Colorado Springs, Colorado

"With everything that's going on, with them overturning *Roe v. Wade*, it opens the door for them to overturn everything from voting rights to gay marriages. Anything that they did in the past, they can overturn. So, it's important for you to get out and vote. Express yourself, as they say!"

– Lee Holmes, Chicago, Illinois

"Voting is important because it's one of the few collective activities we share amongst ourselves. We need to 'vote' in our everyday life. People vote with their feet every day."

– Ken Parks, Ann Arbor, Michigan

"Voting is important because it allows me to choose a candidate who will uphold my beliefs, laws, rules, regulations, and standards as a true American citizen."

– Queenie Featherstone, Washington, D.C.

"We not only have rights, but we have accompanying responsibilities to be an informed citizen and act on that at the ballot box and in the public sphere."

– Geoff Lyon, Toledo, Ohio

"For change to happen, we have to act first. We must do our part... Get out there and register to vote if you haven't already."

– John

"I vote because ... I want to make my voice known. Few will know that I have voted, but being anonymous does not equate with being invisible or not making a difference."

– Lorna

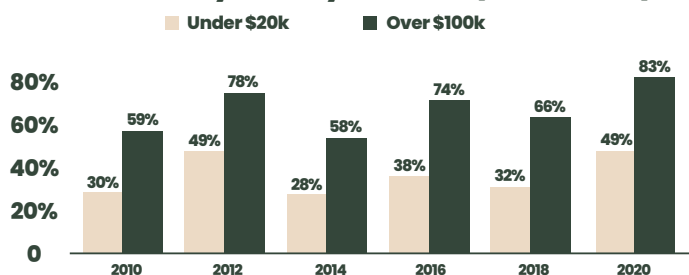
and two decades later, Congress passed the "[National Voter Registration Act of 1993](#)," allowing people to register to vote while applying for a driver's license, through the mail, and at designated offices.

Despite these efforts, voter suppression persists. In *Shelby County v. Holder*, the United States Supreme Court effectively [undermined the Voting Rights Act](#) by ruling unconstitutional the provision requiring federal oversight of jurisdictions with histories of voter discrimination. Since that ruling, delivered in 2013, voter suppression efforts, including strict photo identification laws and limitations to mail-in voting, have only increased.

[In 2021 alone](#), 18 states enacted 34 new laws that restricted access to voting – the greatest number of restrictions enacted in any year in the past decade. In [2022](#), legislators are continuing to attempt to restrict voter access. Over half of these new laws aim to restrict mail-in voting in response to the [2020 election](#), for example by adding barriers to applying for mail ballots and limitations on who can vote by mail. (You can read more about these voting restrictions in the next article.)

While the fight for voting rights has been long and at some points violent, the United States still has a long way to go to ensure all Americans are able to exercise their civil right to vote, free of suppression and intimidation. Organizers and advocates across the country are working together on the local, state, and national levels to ensure historically oppressed and disenfranchised groups know their rights, can register to vote, and can make it to the polls.

## U.S. Citizens Who Reported Voting in National Elections by Family Income (2010–2020)



Source: November 2010-2020 Current Population Survey data.

# THE STATE OF VOTER SUPPRESSION LAWS

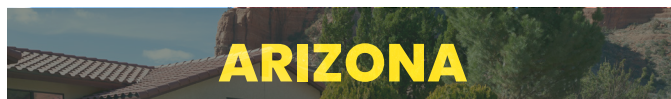
NOTE: THE INFORMATION IN THIS ARTICLE REFLECTS LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY AS OF JULY 2022.

**T**he right to vote is fundamental to democracy. Groups that were historically excluded from voting – including women, Black Americans, and young adults – fought hard to win this right. Many communities that face obstacles to voting – such as people with disabilities, people with limited English proficiency, returning citizens, Black and Indigenous people, and other people of color – continue to push for equal access to the ballot. Between 2010 and 2019, 25 states enacted new barriers to voting, including voter purges – a practice in which voter lists are “cleaned” that can be harmful to groups historically excluded from voting since they are more likely to be wrongfully removed from voter rolls. Other restrictions include strict voter ID requirements, polling place closures, limits on early voting, and obstacles to voter registration. Following the 2020 election, which saw record-level voter turnout, states have taken steps to limit access to the ballot.

Below are summaries of recently passed laws that will make it harder to vote. Please note that this list is not comprehensive. Information is drawn from the Brennan Center for Justice’s May 2022 Voting Laws Roundup and December 2021 Voting Laws Roundup, as well as Voting Rights Lab’s State Voting Rights Tracker, accessible at tracker.votingrightslab.org.



House Bill 285, enacted in May 2021, prohibits curbside or outdoor voting, including the process by which poll workers deliver ballots to voters outside the polling place.



House Bill 2492, signed by Governor Doug Ducey in March 2022, requires election workers to verify documentation of citizenship for voters in federal elections. The law also requires newly registered voters to provide a proof of address, which will create barriers for students, Native Americans, low-income voters, and elderly voters who no longer have a driver’s license. Many legal experts believe that the law is unconstitutional, and voting rights organizations are already challenging the law in federal court. Senate Bill 1485, enacted in May 2021, effectively eliminates the state’s permanent early voting list and will limit access to mail-in voting for hundreds of thousands of Arizonans, disproportionately impacting Independent voters and voters of color. House Bill 2905, enacted in July 2021, prohibits elected

officials from delivering a mail-in ballot to a voter who has not requested one, unless the voter is on the active early voting list, or an election is explicitly authorized to occur by mail. House Bill 2243, enacted in July 2022, implements voter list maintenance procedures that require election officials to investigate registered voters using data sources not intended to determine voter eligibility. These new procedures increase the risk that voters will have their registrations cancelled without notice.



House Bill 1112 and House Bill 1244, signed by Governor Asa Hutchinson in March 2021, created harsh voter ID requirements. HB 1112 requires a photo ID to verify a provisional ballot and no longer allows voters without proper ID to ensure their ballots are counted by signing their name. HB 1244 establishes that non-photo IDs are no longer valid for voter identification. The governor also signed House Bill 1715, which reduces the number of mail-in ballots that a person can possess from 10 to four and therefore limits the assistance they can provide to other voters. The bill bans county clerks and other designated election officials from distributing mail-in



ballot applications or ballots to voters who had not requested them and requires election officials to verify the signature of a voter's mail-in ballot application with their voter registration application. If the signatures do not match, a mail-in ballot will not be sent out. In addition, Arkansas enacted [Senate Bill 643](#), which shortens the window to apply for mail-in ballots, moves forward the deadline to return mail-in ballots, and prohibits ballot drop boxes.

A banner for Florida featuring a palm tree and a building, with the word "FLORIDA" in large yellow letters.

[Senate Bill 90](#), signed by Governor Ron DeSantis in April 2021, makes it harder for Florida voters to register and cast a ballot. The law [requires](#) voters to provide a state ID number or the last four digits of a Social Security number to receive a mail-in ballot and strictly limits the availability of ballot drop boxes. The law also limits voter registration drives and bans distributing food and water to voters waiting in line at their polling places. Voters will also be removed from the vote-by-mail list more frequently, so they will not automatically receive mail-in ballots in future elections. Although a federal district court judge struck down the law's most harmful provisions in April 2022, the appellate court blocked the decision and allowed the law to go into effect for the August 2022 primary elections. Florida also enacted [Senate Bill 524](#) in April 2022, which includes new requirements for voter list maintenance, creates an Office of Election Crimes and Security within the Department of State, criminalizes collecting more than two mail-in ballots other than a voter's own ballot and that of an immediate family member, and moves the deadline for requesting supervised voting in an assisted living facility to an earlier date (28 days versus 21 days) before the election, among other restrictive provisions.

A banner for Georgia featuring a mountain landscape, with the word "GEORGIA" in large yellow letters.

[Senate Bill 202](#), signed by Governor Brian Kemp in March 2021, contains a suite of measures that make it harder to vote. The law bans distributing food and water to voters waiting in line – a discriminatory provision because people of color are [more likely to wait in long lines](#) at polling places. The law also strictly limits ballot drop boxes, applies voter ID requirements to vote-by-mail

applications, shortens the window to apply for a mail-in ballot, and increases the state legislature's power to overturn local election results.

A banner for Idaho featuring a cityscape and mountains, with the word "IDAHO" in large yellow letters.

[House Bill 290](#), signed by Governor Brad Little in April 2021, enacts stricter restrictions on mail-in ballots. The bill requires that the county clerk verify voter signatures to ensure that the voter's signature on an absentee ballot matches the signature on a voter's registration form.

A banner for Indiana featuring a city street scene, with the word "INDIANA" in large yellow letters.

[Senate Bill 398](#), signed by Governor Eric Holcomb in April 2021, [establishes](#) restrictive rules for fixing errors on mail-in ballots, particularly where the signature on the envelope is questionable. The bill also requires that mail-in ballot drop boxes are under the physical control and supervision of election officials, which significantly limits the availability of drop boxes.

A banner for Iowa featuring a city skyline at night, with the word "IOWA" in large yellow letters.

Governor Kim Reynolds signed far-reaching legislation to restrict voting – [Senate File \(SF\) 413](#) and [SF 568](#) – in spring 2021. The legislation contains [provisions](#) that forbid auditors from sending mail-in ballot request forms to voters unless the voter explicitly asks, severely restrict anyone other than the individual voter from returning a mail-in ballot, and limit satellite early voting locations. The new voting laws reduce the early voting period from 29 to 20 days before Election Day and shorten the mail-in ballot request period. SF 413 marks voters as inactive every time they miss a federal election, requires Iowa to use U.S. Postal Service change-of-address data for list maintenance, and threatens county auditors with criminal prosecution if they do not follow voter roll purge practices – all practices which significantly increase the risk of flawed purges that wrongfully remove voters from the rolls. Finally, Iowa's polling places will close an hour earlier, and employees are only required to provide two hours of paid time off work to vote, rather than the three hours they were previously required to provide.

## HOUSING IS BUILT WITH BALLOTS



[House Bill 2332](#) banned the distribution of mail-in ballot applications by out-of-state groups and criminalized the mailing of advance mail-in ballot applications personalized with the voter's name, address, and other information, even if the voter provided that information and specifically requested an advance mail-in ballot application. The Kansas legislature passed the bill in April 2021 and overrode Governor Laura Kelly's veto, but a federal district judge [blocked](#) certain provisions of the law from taking effect. [House Bill 2183](#) requires the voter's written authorization for another person to deliver an advance ballot on their behalf and limits to 10 the number of ballots someone can deliver for other voters. The legislation also requires election officials to match signatures on advance ballots with the signature on file for the ballot to count. The Kansas legislature passed the bill in May 2021 over Governor Kelly's veto. A lower court [declined](#) to block the implementation of this bill, but further litigation is still proceeding.



[House Bill 574](#), signed by Governor Andy Beshear in April 2021, shortens the window to apply for a mail-in ballot, restricts assistance that voters can receive with returning their mail-in ballot, and expands the ability of state election officials to carry out faulty voter purges. Fortunately, the bill does [include](#) certain expansions in voter rights, such as implementing early in-person voting and expanding access to mail-in ballot drop boxes.



[Senate Bill 144](#), signed by Governor John Bel Edwards in June 2022, requires that mail-in ballots be delivered to the parish registrar's office or early voting sites during polling place hours, effectively prohibiting ballot drop boxes.



[House Bill 1510](#), signed by Governor Tate Reeves in April 2022, requires that local election officials confirm

a voter's citizenship before they are registered to vote if their citizenship status cannot be confirmed in the state's Department of Public Safety database or the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service database. However, these databases [have been found to be unreliable](#), increasing the likelihood that the law will result in wrongful voter purges.



[House Bill 1878](#), signed by Governor Mike Parson in June 2022, requires voters who do not have mandatory photo ID to vote on a provisional ballot. To have their ballot counted, the voter must return before the polling place closes with a required photo ID or confirm their identity with signature matching between a signed affidavit and the voter file. The bill also prohibits the use of drop boxes to return mail-in ballots, tightens eligibility for mail-in voting, and limits third party assistance with mail-in ballots. Fortunately, the bill also includes some provisions to make voting more accessible, such as the establishment of early in-person voting.



[House Bill 176](#) and [Senate Bill 169](#), signed by Governor Greg Gianforte in April 2021, eliminate same-day voter registration and impose new voter ID requirements. The end of same-day voter registration will have a disproportionate impact on Native American voters, who make up nearly 7% of Montana's population, because they can no longer make a single long-distance trip to register and cast their ballots. HB 176 and SB 169 are being challenged in court, but they remain in effect as of June 2022. Montana also enacted [Senate Bill 196](#), which allows jurisdictions with fewer than 400 registered voters who intend to vote in-person to move their opening time from 7 am to as late as noon. Montana also passed [House Bill 530](#), an election security bill that jeopardizes ballot collection efforts on Native reservations. A Montana state trial court judge [temporarily blocked](#) this measure from going into effect in April 2022.



[House Bill 523](#), signed into law by Governor Chris Sununu in July 2021, [requires](#) voters who do not have

an ID to be photographed when registering to vote on Election Day. Governor Sununu also signed [Senate Bill 31](#), which requires the Secretary of State to [confirm](#) that people who vote in New Hampshire but previously voted in another state are removed from their former state's checklist. [Senate Bill 418](#), signed into law by Governor Sununu in June 2022, [requires](#) voters who register on Election Day without a valid photo ID to vote on a separate affidavit ballot. To have their ballots counted, these voters must mail documentation to the secretary of state's office within seven days. The law will take effect in January of 2023.



[Senate Bill 264](#), signed by former Governor Andrew Cuomo in July 2021, shortens the window during which a voter can apply for a mail-in ballot.



[House Bill 2663](#), signed by Governor Kevin Stitt in May 2021, shortens the timeframe in which voters can request a mail-in ballot. Fortunately, the bill adds an extra day to the in-person early voting period. [House Bill 3364](#), enacted in May 2022, [requires](#) voters to include an ID number in their application for a mail-in ballot that matches the ID number on their voter registration.



[Senate Bill 1](#), signed by Texas Governor Greg Abbott in September 2021, limits the types of assistance that voter engagement organizations, election officials, and election workers can provide to voters. Although the federal Voting Rights Act requires that voters with disabilities and voters with limited English proficiency receive assistance while voting, this law narrows the definition so that assistants cannot answer a clarifying question or help navigate a polling place. The law bans in-person drive-thru voting, bans 24-hour voting options, prevents election administrators from sending out mail-in ballots unless they are specifically requested, and establishes new voter ID requirements for mail-in voting.

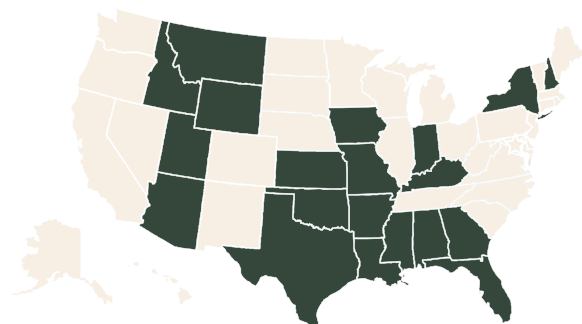


[House Bill 12](#), enacted in March 2021, increases the likelihood of wrongful voter purges by requiring cross-referencing of death certificates against voter registration rolls without providing notice to the voters being removed from the voter rolls, auditing the source data, or using matching criteria. Utah also enacted [House Bill 197](#), which requires voters to update their political affiliation by March 31 of an even-numbered year if they wish to participate in the primary election for a party with which they are not currently affiliated.



[House Bill 75](#), signed by Governor Mark Gordon in April 2021, [requires](#) Wyoming voters to present specific kinds of photo identification when they cast ballots in person.

## RESTRICTIVE VOTING LAWS ENACTED IN 2022



Passed restrictive voting laws in 2022

This article features restrictive voter laws enacted in 20 states between January 2021 and July 2022.

# HOW STATES ARE VOTING

STATE OR TERRITORY	VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE	VOTE BY MAIL: EXCUSE NEEDED?	MAIL BALLOT APPLICATION DEADLINE	MAIL BALLOT DEADLINE	EARLY VOTING?	POLLS OPEN
Alabama	Oct. 24	Yes	Nov. 3 in person Nov. 1 by mail	Nov. 8, 12 pm (received)	No	7am-7pm
Alaska	Oct. 9	No	Oct. 29	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	7am-8pm
American Samoa	Oct. 11	Yes	Nov. 7, 4:30 pm	Nov. 8, 1:30 pm	Yes	6am-6pm
Arizona	Oct. 11	No	Oct. 28, 5 pm	Nov. 8, 7 pm (received)	Yes	6am-7pm
Arkansas	Oct. 11	Yes	Nov. 4 in person Nov. 1 by mail	Nov. 8, 7:30 pm (received)	Yes	7:30am-7:30pm
California	Oct. 24 by mail or online; Nov. 8 in person	No	None (sent automatically)	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	7am-8pm
Colorado	Oct. 31 by mail or online; Nov. 8 in person	No	None (sent automatically)	Nov. 8, 7 pm (received)	Yes	7am-7pm
Connecticut	Nov. 1 by mail or online; Nov. 8 in person	Yes	Nov. 7	Nov. 8, 8 pm (received)	No	6am-8pm
Delaware	Nov. 8	No	Nov. 4 by mail or online. Nov. 7, 12 pm in person	Nov. 8, 8 pm (received)	Yes	7am-8pm
District of Columbia	Oct. 18 by mail; Nov. 8 in person	No	None (sent automatically)	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	7am-8pm
Florida	Oct. 11	No	Oct. 29, 5 pm	Nov. 8, 7 pm (received)	Yes	7am-7pm
Georgia	Oct. 11	No	Oct. 28	Nov. 8, 7 pm (received)	Yes	7am-7pm
Guam	Oct. 28	Yes	Nov. 5, off-island	Nov. 8 (postmarked); Nov. 23, 5 pm (received)	Yes	7am-8pm
Hawaii	Oct. 31 by mail or online; Nov. 8 in person	No	None (sent automatically)	Nov. 8, 7 pm (received)	Yes	7am-7pm

Specific voter guidelines vary by state. If you have questions about specific voting guidelines in your state, please reach out to [ourhomes@nlihc.org](mailto:ourhomes@nlihc.org). For more information about voting in your state, visit the following resources: [www.rockthevote.org](http://www.rockthevote.org) [www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org)



STATE OR TERRITORY	VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE	VOTE BY MAIL: EXCUSE NEEDED?	MAIL BALLOT APPLICATION DEADLINE	MAIL BALLOT DEADLINE	EARLY VOTING?	POLLS OPEN
Idaho	Oct. 14 by mail or online; Nov. 8 in person	No	Oct. 28, 5 pm by mail or online	Nov. 8, 8 pm (received)	Yes	8am-8pm
Illinois	Oct. 11 by mail; . Oct. 23 online; Nov. 8 in person	No	Nov. 3 by mail or online. Nov. 7 in person	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	6am-7pm
Indiana	Oct. 11	Yes	Oct. 27	Nov. 8, 6 pm (received)	Yes	6am-6pm
Iowa	Oct. 24 by mail or online; Nov. 8 in person	No	Oct. 24, 5 pm by mail. Nov. 7 in person	Nov. 8, 8 pm (received)	Yes	7am-8pm
Kansas	Oct. 18	No	Nov. 1	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	7am-7pm
Kentucky	Oct. 10	Yes	Oct. 25	Nov. 8, 6 pm (received)	Yes	6am-6pm
Louisiana	Oct. 10 by mail or in person; Oct. 18 online	Yes	Nov. 4, 4:30 pm	Nov. 7, 4:30 pm (received)	Yes	6am-8pm
Maine	Oct. 24 by mail; Nov. 8 in person	No	Nov. 3	Nov. 8, 8 pm (received)	Yes	6am-8pm
Maryland	Oct. 18. online; Nov. 8 in person	No	Oct. 25 by mail or online. Nov. 8 in person	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	7am-8pm
Massachusetts	Oct. 19	No	Nov. 4 by mail. Nov. 7 in person	Nov 8 (received)	Yes	7am-8pm
Michigan	Oct. 24 by mail or online; Nov. 8 in person	No	Nov. 4 by mail or online . Nov. 7, 4 pm in person	Nov. 8	Yes	7am-8pm
Minnesota	Oct. 18 by mail; Nov. 8 in person	No	Nov. 7	Nov. 8	Yes	7am-8pm
Mississippi	Oct. 11	Yes	None (recommend early submission to ensure enough time to vote)	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	No	7am-7pm
Missouri	Oct. 12	Yes	Oct. 26, 5 pm by mail. Nov. 7, 5 pm in person	Nov. 8, 7 pm (received)	No	6am-7pm

# HOUSING IS BUILT WITH BALLOTS

STATE OR TERRITORY	VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE	VOTE BY MAIL: EXCUSE NEEDED?	MAIL BALLOT APPLICATION DEADLINE	MAIL BALLOT DEADLINE	EARLY VOTING?	POLLS OPEN
Montana	Oct. 11 by mail; Nov. 7, 12 pm in person	No	Nov. 7, 12 pm	Nov. 8, 8 pm (received)	Yes	7am-8pm
Nebraska	Oct. 21 by mail and online; Oct. 28 in person	No	Oct. 28	Nov. 8, 8 pm (received)	Yes	8am-8pm
Nevada	Oct. 11 by mail; Nov. 3 online; Nov. 8 in person	No	None (sent automatically)	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	7am-7pm
New Hampshire	Oct. 26 by mail; Nov. 8 in person	Yes	None	Nov. 8, 5 pm (received)	No	Varies, before 11am to after 7pm
New Jersey	Oct. 18	No	Nov. 7, 3 pm in person. Nov. 1 by mail	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	6am-8pm
New Mexico	Oct. 11 by mail and online; Nov. 5 in person	No	Nov. 3	Nov. 8, 7 pm (received)	Yes	7am-7pm
New York	Oct. 14	Yes	Nov. 3 Oct. 24 by mail or online. Nov. 7 in person	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	6am-9pm
North Carolina	Oct. 14 by mail and online; Nov. 5 in person	No	Nov. 1 at 5 pm	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	6:30am-7:30pm
North Dakota	No registration needed	No	None	Nov. 7 (postmarked)	Yes	7am-9am and 7pm-9pm
Northern Mariana Islands	Sept. 9	Yes	Oct. 14 by mail. Nov. 7 in person	Nov. 7	No	7am-7pm
Ohio	Oct. 11	No	Nov. 5, 12 pm	Nov. 7 (postmarked)	Yes	6:30am-7:30pm
Oklahoma	Oct. 14	No	Oct. 24, 5 pm	Nov. 8, 7 pm (received)	Yes	7am-7pm
Oregon	Oct. 18	No	None (sent automatically)	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	Varies-8pm
Pennsylvania	Oct. 24	No	Nov. 1	Nov. 8, 8 pm (received)	Yes	7am-8pm

STATE OR TERRITORY	VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE	VOTE BY MAIL: EXCUSE NEEDED?	MAIL BALLOT APPLICATION DEADLINE	MAIL BALLOT DEADLINE	EARLY VOTING?	POLLS OPEN
Puerto Rico	No elections in 2022	---	---	---	---	---
Rhode Island	Oct. 9	No	Oct. 18, 4 pm	Nov. 8, 8 pm (received)	Yes	7am-8pm
South Carolina	Oct. 7 in person; Oct. 9 online; Oct. 11 by mail	Yes	Nov. 4, 5 pm by mail. Nov. 7, 5 pm in person	Nov. 8, 7 pm (received)	Yes	7am-7pm
South Dakota	Oct. 24	No	Nov. 7, 5 pm	Nov. 8 (received)	Yes	7am-7pm
Tennessee	Oct. 11	Yes	Nov. 1	Nov. 8 (received)	Yes	Varies-8pm ET/7pm CT
Texas	Oct. 11	Yes	Oct. 28	Nov. 8, 7 pm (postmarked)	Yes	7am-7pm
Utah	Oct. 28 by mail; Nov. 8 in person	No	None (sent automatically)	Nov. 7 (postmarked)	Yes	7am-8pm
Vermont	Nov. 8	No	None (sent automatically)	Nov. 7	Yes	5am-7pm
Virgin Islands	Oct. 9	Yes	Oct. 11	Nov. 18	Yes	7am-7pm
Virginia	Oct. 17	No	Oct. 28, 5 pm	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	6am-7pm
Washington	Oct. 31 by mail; Nov. 8 in person	No	None (sent automatically)	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	Varies-8pm
West Virginia	Oct. 18	Yes	Nov. 2	Nov. 8 (postmarked)	Yes	6:30am-7:30pm
Wisconsin	Oct. 19 by mail; Nov. 8 in person	No	Nov. 3 by mail or online. Nov. 6 in person	Nov. 8, 8 pm	Yes	7am-8pm
Wyoming	Oct. 25 by mail; Nov. 8 in person	No	Nov. 8	Nov. 8, 7 pm	Yes	7am-7pm

# REGISTERING AND MOBILIZING VOTERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

**T**o cast your ballot during election season, it's important that you are registered to vote at your current address. Because voters need to re-register when they move to new homes, and renters move more frequently than homeowners, renters are less likely to be registered to vote. The disparity is even greater between low-income and high-income citizens.

Registering voters in your community is a powerful way to close the voter registration gap and make sure that residents' voices are heard in elections. **Here are some tips for effective voter registration efforts:**



**1. Set goals.** Define who you want to register, and how many people you hope to register. How will you choose which voters to target? Will you target young voters who recently became eligible to vote? How will you identify new residents who just moved into the building? Will you partner with residents in other buildings and launch a broader registration effort in your neighborhood? Request the voter rolls for your community, so you will know who in your community is already registered. Voter lists may cost a small fee, but they are essential to track who is registered and who should be the target of your outreach.



**2. Familiarize yourself with voter registration rules.** Your local Board of Elections or County Clerk can offer a wealth of information for your voter registration efforts. 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 authorized to register voters or meet other requirements. Learn about identification requirements for registration and voting. You can partner with organizations like Voteriders or Spread the Vote if any community members need to resolve voter ID issues before registering. Explore whether online voter registration is an option – this might allow your voter registration drive to be done on tablets or smartphones. Request enough voter registration forms to meet your registration goals, and make sure you have materials available in multiple languages if members of your community primarily speak languages other than English.



**3. Offer registration trainings.** Residents who plan to register voters will benefit from receiving training on the process. You may want to bring in someone from the local Board of Elections or County Clerk's office who can explain the state's registration requirements and how voter registration forms must be filled out, whether online or on paper. It is also helpful to practice voter registration updates for renters who have recently moved.



**4. Organize a door-to-door campaign.** Resident leaders can volunteer to receive training and serve as "building captains" or "floor captains." Captains take on responsibility for registering, keeping registration records, and then turning out to vote all the people in their building or on their floor. As a resident, you are a trusted messenger who can answer your neighbors' questions and get them excited to vote! Be sure that captains keep well-organized records of all the voters they register so that they can reach out again and help them make a voting plan.



**5. Integrate voter registration into events and activities.** Hold social events, like block parties, at which residents are encouraged to register to vote. Consider hosting an event for National Voter Registration Day on September 20, 2022. Ensure that events are accessible to families by making the events kid-friendly or providing childcare. To boost attendance, offer food so that residents will not need to plan their meal schedules around the event.





**6. Positive messaging matters.** Many residents may not be registered to vote because they feel that elected officials do not have their interests in mind. Research shows that positive messages can help voters overcome their detachment to the voting process. Connect an individual’s personal experience to the democratic process and the potential for social change. Be prepared to share reminders of very close elections where a small number of voters determined the difference. If someone is frustrated with the political process, you might tell them that you share the same concern, which is why you are registering voters to elect new leaders.



**7. Explain what’s at stake.** If you are organizing in public housing or registering low-income renters in subsidized properties, you should encourage them to protect their housing program by voting. Remind them that it’s important to vote for leaders who will maintain or increase the budget for subsidized housing programs so they can make needed repairs and increase the number of community members who have access to affordable housing.

Of course, registration is just the first step. To elect politicians who will prioritize housing solutions, renters need to get out the vote! Many renters, however, face logistical challenges that prevent them from getting to the polls on Election Day. Less-flexible work schedules, more difficulty obtaining legal identification, mobility challenges, and exposure to misinformation campaigns can all combine to suppress voter turnout in low-income communities.

**Here are tips for mobilizing renters during election season and overcoming obstacles to voting:**

**Encourage vote-by-mail and early voting.** Rather than turning out the vote all on one day, encourage voters to request mail-in ballots. Check your state’s laws to determine which voters are eligible to vote by mail. Keep a list of mail-in voters in your network and contact them at least 10 days before Election Day to be sure that ballots are being put in the mail in time to be counted. If your community allows it, it can be effective to allow volunteers to collect and deliver the ballots themselves. In states where it is available, encourage early voting, which offers more opportunities for people with inflexible schedules or limited transportation options. Consider participating in Vote Early Day (October 28), which educates voters about early voting options and builds enthusiasm for early voting.

**Ask voters to make a plan.**

Contact voters in the days leading up to Election Day to ask them how and when they plan to vote, and how they plan on getting to their polling place. Asking voters to express this plan allows organizers to verify their polling location details and work through transportation obstacles.

**Educate voters on what to bring with them.**

Make sure people know what is and is not acceptable voter identification in your community. Share information about what to bring to the polls in your voter mobilization efforts leading up to Election Day.

**Provide childcare on Election Day.**

Consider recruiting volunteers to provide childcare for residents who need flexibility to get to polls and cast their ballot.

**Provide rides to and from polling locations.**

Recruit volunteers with cars, or perhaps fundraise to rent vans for Election Day, so that residents with limited transportation options can cast their ballots.

**Become a polling location.**

Resident leaders may work with building managers to connect with their local Board of Elections to begin the process of becoming a polling location. Voting will be more accessible to renters if they can vote in the community rooms of their buildings.

**Organize group voting.**

Many voters are more likely to make it to the polls if they are joined by their neighbors. Resident councils and other peer organizing efforts should consider selecting times when groups of residents can walk or ride to the polls together, making it a community activity. People are more likely to vote when there are others expecting them to do so.

# HOW TO ENGAGE CANDIDATES AS A TENANT OR RESIDENT

**E**lections provide an important opportunity to raise housing as a key issue that voters care about. There are two main reasons why tenants and renters should engage with candidates: to make their concerns heard, and to learn how candidates plan to address affordable housing issues, so tenants can make informed decisions at the voting booth. Tenants and renters can effectively engage and educate candidates through community events, letters to the editor, factsheets, and candidate questionnaires.

## EVENTS

Inviting candidates to interact with you and your neighbors through events at your building or in your community creates a space for resident voices to be heard. These events can range from neighborhood block parties or coffee with the candidates to candidate forums or town hall meetings. Regardless of the type of event, be sure to (1) choose an accessible location; (2) invite all candidates and make an equal effort to get all candidates to attend; (3) offer enough time for the candidates to discuss their visions and campaigns; and (4) conduct outreach ahead of time to ensure a good turnout.

When hosting a forum or town hall meeting, you can further ensure your event is a success by (1) choosing a skilled moderator; (2) setting time limits for responses to questions and giving all candidates a chance to respond; (3) screening audience questions ahead of time, if possible, to get diverse views; (4) setting participation rules for the audience at the start of the event; and (5) offering voter registration forms to attendees.

If you cannot host a meeting yourself, consider attending candidate forums and town hall meetings in your community. Forums tend to be moderator-led discussions, while town halls allow for larger audience participation. Be sure to submit a question in advance, and share your question on social media before the event using the #OurHomesOurVotes hashtag. Try to sit near the microphone, and ask direct questions while including facts. Record the question and answer, and share the exchange on social media using the #OurHomesOurVotes hashtag.



## WRITTEN MATERIALS

Another powerful way to engage candidates is through written materials such as letters to the editor, factsheets, and questionnaires. Candidates often learn what issues are important to voters in the community by reading the Letters to the Editor page of the newspaper. This platform can be used to share your experience with affordable housing issues and communicate the urgent need to prioritize affordable housing. Sharing factsheets about affordable housing issues in your community is another way to educate candidates.



Finally, asking candidates to fill out a questionnaire is a useful way to learn more about candidates' views and to make them aware of the issues that renters and tenants are facing and want to see addressed. Candidate questionnaires should go to all candidates and be publicly posted. Provide clear instructions for the word limit, deadline, and how to submit, and share how answers will be used. Keep the survey brief, and use open-ended questions to solicit the candidates' opinions on a range of issues.

# VOTING AS A PERSON EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

**V**oter suppression laws and tactics are rapidly increasing (see “The State of Voter Suppression Laws,” above). These practices affect an especially marginalized group that is already underserved, unheard, and facing unique barriers when it comes to participating in elections: people experiencing homelessness. Low-income voters, especially those experiencing homelessness, are consistently underrepresented at the polls, which limits their voice in our democracy. An estimated 10% of people who are experiencing homelessness vote, compared to the 60% of the homeless population eligible to vote and the record 67% of the general voting-age population that voted in the 2020 election.

People experiencing homelessness face systemic barriers to voting in each state, such as lack of identification and difficulties getting to the polls. The unprecedented voter suppression legislation passed in 2021 will undoubtedly further hinder access to the polls for people experiencing homelessness. A study conducted by researchers at the University of California, San Diego found “that strict photo identification laws have a differentially negative impact on the turnout of Hispanics, Blacks, and mixed-race Americans in primaries and general elections.” The groups that are negatively impacted by voter suppression laws are also overrepresented in the homeless population.

A significant obstacle for people experiencing homelessness is the lack of information available to educate and inform these individuals about their rights and how they may vote while living without homes. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) released a [voter guide](#) for people experiencing homelessness outlining seven steps to ensure people have the tools they need to exercise their fundamental right to vote. USICH also released an [election guide for homeless service providers](#) who can assist people who do not have a permanent address. Both guides are available in English, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, and Tagalog. USICH released the guides as part of the Biden administration’s effort to empower “all eligible Americans – regardless of their housing status – to fully participate in our democracy.”

A research project conducted by Street Sense Media made five primary recommendations for organizations and advocates aiming to encourage voter participation among low-income and homeless individuals:

1. Collaborating with other organizations increases access to scarce resources. Working together is free and helps social service organizations coordinate services such as registration, voting, and transportation services for homeless citizens.
2. Utilizing technology helps social service providers effectively communicate with homeless voters and solve misinformation and miscommunication problems.
3. Providing a mail address service can help homeless voters receive mail ballots and vote by mail. The mail address service also eliminates the impediment people without homes face in not having a mailing address, which is a barrier to registering to vote.
4. Providing homeless voters with transportation to the polls, such as vouchers for public transportation or rideshare services, can solve the limited mobility and disability barrier that many homeless voters have.
5. Running voter registration drives increases registration numbers and voter participation.

# KEY RESOURCES FOR VOTERS

As a voter, you may run into tricky questions about voter registration, local voting options, and how to protect your voting rights. Below is a list of essential resources that will help you and your community members ensure that you can cast your ballot and have your vote be counted:



## **VOTE411.org, a resource of the League of Women**

**Voters:** VOTE411.org is an online voter education resource of the League of Women Voters and a “one-stop-shop” for election-related information. The site provides a voter registration tool, a nationwide polling place lookup, and ballot guides for voters in every state. For more information, visit: <http://vote411.org>



**Election Protection Coalition:** The Election Protection Coalition, a project of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, is a national, nonpartisan initiative that works year-round to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to vote and have their votes counted. The project provides comprehensive information and assistance at all stages of voting and offers a multilingual suite of voter hotlines and opportunities to get voting help from trained volunteers. For more information, visit: <https://www.lawyerscommittee.org/project/election-protection/>



**Spread the Vote:** Spread the Vote obtains voter identification for eligible voters in states with strict voter ID laws, creates election guides and educational tools, assists incarcerated voters with mail-in voting, and helps voters make and carry out voting plans. For more information, visit: <https://www.spreadthevote.org/>



**REV UP:** The REV UP Campaign, launched by the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), is a nonpartisan initiative that coordinates with national, state, and local organizations to increase the political power of the disability community while also engaging candidates and the media on disability issues. REV UP stands for Register! Educate! Vote! Use your Power! REV UP produces an election accessibility toolkit that can be accessed [here](https://www.aapd.com/advocacy/voting/join-rev-up/). For more information, visit: <https://www.aapd.com/advocacy/voting/join-rev-up/>



**VoteRiders:** VoteRiders educates voters about voter ID laws and helps citizens secure the IDs they need. The organization maintains a state-by-state map of voter ID requirements and details about each state’s policy. VoteRiders operates a helpline to answer voters’ questions and provides practical, legal, and financial assistance for voters who need to obtain their documents. For more information, visit: <https://www.voteriders.org/>

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**CIVIC HOLIDAYS:** Civic Holidays are nonpartisan days of action to strengthen and encourage participation in American democracy. They bring together a nationwide network of organizations and offer occasions to celebrate political engagement.



**National Voter Registration Day** (September 20) is the country's largest single-day voter registration drive.



**National Voter Education Week** (October 3-7) provides voters with the tools, information, and confidence they need to cast their ballots by helping them find their polling locations, understand their ballots, and develop their voting plans.



**Vote Early Day** (October 28) makes it easier for voters to cast their ballots prior to Election Day by raising awareness about early voting options and celebrating the act of voting early.



**Election Hero Day** (November 7) honors the contributions of poll workers, election administration teams, and all those who help elections run smoothly across the nation.

For more information or to sign up as a partner organization, visit: <https://civicholidays.org/>



**Fair Elections Legal Network (FELN):** The Fair Elections Legal Network (FELN) is a national, nonpartisan voting rights, legal support, and election reform organization whose mission is to remove barriers to registration and voting for traditionally underrepresented constituencies. FELN works to improve overall election administration and to provide legal and technical assistance to voter mobilization organizations. For more information, visit: <http://fairelectionsnetwork.com>



**Nonprofit VOTE:** Nonprofit VOTE partners with America's nonprofits to help the people they serve participate and vote. It is the largest source of nonpartisan resources to help nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services. For more information, visit: <http://nonprofitvote.org>



**You Don't Need a Home to Vote, a campaign of the National Coalition for the Homeless:** The You Don't Need a Home to Vote campaign seeks to promote voting access by specifically engaging people experiencing homelessness in the democratic process. For more information, visit: <http://nationalhomeless.org/campaigns/voting>



# ENGAGING VOTERS THROUGH THE *OUR HOMES, OUR VOTES* CAMPAIGN

## ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNER SPOTLIGHTS

Housing and homelessness organizations across the country are working hard to make voting accessible to everyone in their communities. Here are two *Our Homes, Our Votes* partner organizations that play a central role in educating voters and strengthening voting rights.



This summer, the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH) provided trainings to people experiencing homelessness and service providers on navigating two new voting systems in Alaska – open primaries and ranked-choice voting – which will be used to elect the state’s new congressional representative. “Our goal is to aid and empower those with lived homelessness experience to use their voice and vote for systems change,” says Owen Hutchinson, director of external relations for ACEH.

*Group advocates at a training provided by the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH)*



Advocates from the Housing Network of Rhode Island joined the Rhode Island Voting Access Coalition to push for enactment of the “Let RI Vote Act,” which removes barriers to voting that disproportionately affect low-income renters. By supporting the coalition’s digital organizing efforts, story sharing, and providing testimony and data, they helped pass the Let RI Vote Act in the state legislature. (The act was signed into law in June.) “Housing is undeniably interconnected to voter access and engagement,” says Cristin Langworthy, community engagement and government relations coordinator with the Housing Network of Rhode Island.

## THE HOUSING PROVIDERS COUNCIL

The Housing Providers Council is a large coalition of property managers and developers across the country who are directly connected to more than 600,000 low-income renter households. NLIHC convenes the council monthly to share best practices for getting residents registered to vote, educated about ballot issues, and mobilized on Election Day. Jonathan Rose Companies, a leader in the Housing Providers Council, is one of the country’s largest developers and investors in sustainable, affordable, and mixed-income multifamily real estate, with 15,000 units owned in 19 states and the District of Columbia. Committed to the civic engagement and empowerment of its residents, the organization incorporates voter registration into its leasing process and provides leadership and support for other housing providers to follow suit.



# BECOME AN *OUR HOMES, OUR VOTES* AFFILIATE!

**S**tate, local, and tenant groups are invited to become a part of *Our Homes, Our Votes* as affiliate organizations. Joining *Our Homes, Our Votes* will strengthen our movement and tie together nonpartisan local and national voter engagement initiatives across the country.

*Our Homes, Our Votes* affiliates receive guidance and assistance from NLIHC staff in developing and administering local efforts and have opportunities for peer learning. Affiliates help us increase our awareness of local- and state-level organizing throughout the nation, identify which organizations can potentially benefit from campaign support, and raise the profile of housing and homelessness organizations' election work.

Affiliates have permission to use the *Our Homes, Our Votes* logos and images on co-branded materials, and the efforts of affiliate organizations may be featured in the biweekly *Our Homes, Our Votes* newsletters that describe important local work of tenant associations, housing providers, community organizations, and national partners. Best of all, affiliates can request swag: free t-shirts, stickers, and posters are available!



Members of the Rhode Island Voting Access Coalition and members of the Rhode Island legislature on the steps of the Rhode Island capitol with signs for their "Let RI Vote" campaign

Any organization is welcome to participate, and there is **no cost** for being an affiliate. Affiliate organizations need only:

Commit to advancing housing issues in the election.

Work to promote voter registration and turnout among low-income voters.

Keep all activities nonpartisan and not endorse candidates for office. Note that endorsing ballot measures is acceptable nonpartisan activity.

## JOINING COULDN'T BE EASIER.

To become an affiliate, visit: <https://bit.ly/3NNSd5i>

# RENTER PERSPECTIVE WITH SAMATHA ANDERSON

**R**enters' stories can show the important intersections between housing justice and voter engagement. Advocacy informed by renters' lived experiences points directly to the needs of community members and can mobilize people to participate in the push for equity and affordable homes across the country.

Samatha, a renter in Washington State, demonstrates this commitment in her neighborhood. A graduate of Washington State Low Income Housing Alliance's (WLIHA) Emerging Advocates program, Samatha is active in voter education on voting rights in her community. Samatha speaks passionately about her desire to see more residents register to vote and participate in the upcoming election. Samatha is also a district lead for WLIHA and the Washington State Domestic Violence Coalition, as well as a member of King County Housing Authority's Residents Committee, a lived experience expert for Residents Action Project (RAP), a supporter of the National Network for Youth, and a survivor of intimate partner violence.



Samatha Anderson

## **In your experience, what are the most prominent barriers to tenant and resident engagement in housing justice and voter engagement initiatives?**

■ "I think just general perception and lack of education. When you talk about housing these days, people assume it's all paid for. But I think there's a lack of understanding about [how voting impacts your] housing." Samatha also spoke about people having fears of participating caused by voter apathy. "Education on how voting impacts their everyday lives is important...it affects your housing."

## **What would be helpful actionable next steps?**

■ "If housing providers could include voter registration with their move-in paperwork, it would make it easier. [It also would help] people vote [because] they would have a place of residence to receive mail and send in their ballots."

## **How accessible do you feel voting is in your state?**

■ "I think it's very accessible. But it's a matter of getting housing providers up to par with what's available. I think incorporating the process of registering to vote into housing systems should be built in and a given."

## **How did you become passionate about and active in this conversation around voter engagement?**

■ "I was a product of multiple different systems personally, including the juvenile justice system. Someone sent me a flyer about the Emerging Advocates program, which got me involved...Two years ago, I moved into subsidized housing...I've spent a lot of time supporting folks [in return]."

## **What do you think renters would need to become more engaged in voting? And what would you say to folks who want to get involved in voting?**

■ "You can get on vote.gov and register to vote. I think, fundamentally, having the paperwork available when tenants move-in would be the biggest step. I think getting residents registered is the biggest hurdle."

## **What do you think advocates can do to encourage renters to vote?**

■ "Striking up conversations, listening and paying attention to where local events are being held or taking place. You have to really think outside of the box and the standard. In order for those connections to be more sincere, you have to build relationships first."

## **Is there anything else we haven't spoken about that you feel is important to capture in this conversation?**

■ "I think, as a tenant, I have tried to reach out as much as I can. But I think it's important for people to know there are so many great organizations and coalitions and non-profits who can help with voter engagement."

# RESIDENT PERSPECTIVE: ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS!

BY HEATHER HOGAN (FROM MIDDLEBORO, MA)

**M**y name is Heather Hogan. I am a daughter, sister, mother, employee, neighbor, friend, and active community member. I am just like you! As members of a community – be it a family, housing complex, neighborhood, town, state, country – we have certain duties and obligations for each community we are a part of. Sometimes we are a rule-maker and sometimes a rule-breaker, but regardless of our role or the community, we hold an important role. We are the voice of our needs. At times, we are the voice for our children, or our elderly family members. Our voice is what makes sure our needs are met. Our voice may help us ensure that we live in safe homes or communities, or that we get proper health care or fix a problem, such as loss of electricity, need for food, or help with transportation.

We use our words to communicate our needs and learn to collaborate and compromise. That is how we resolve our needs at home. How do we do it at larger levels? At our schools, in our communities, in our state, and in our country? We are blessed to live in a country where we have the opportunity to participate and have our voices heard. In each of our communities, we have a responsibility to participate and to make sure our needs as community members are met. How do you do this? Voting is an opportunity to model for your children active participation in your community!

As a society, we have taken our voices to places that can feel good in the moment, but are they impactful? Venting on social media can feel good, but is it helpful? We have so many ways to be involved, and

the first way is to register to vote! Voting in school committee races, town elections, state elections, and national elections is such an important way for your voice to be heard. I know – it can be very frustrating to have an elected official not follow through on the promises made and to lose heart in those who don't speak for their constituents. We need to remember how powerful we are as citizens.

We need to raise our voices around affordable housing, affordable health care, education, environment, workforce, community safety, and academic standards, which we can start doing using our power of voting and the power of words in emails and letters to decisionmakers. Without our voices, our communities, states, and country are not ours. I challenge you to learn about candidates, learn about ballot questions, and call or write to those representing you. Every elected official is in a role to be a voice for their people. The people have the power. Start today by registering to vote!



*Heather Hogan (at left) and another advocate at a voter registration table*

# BIDEN ADMINISTRATION UNVEILS EQUITY ACTION PLANS TO ADDRESS SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

**O**n his first day in office, President Biden signed an historic executive order, “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government,” directing the federal government to advance an ambitious equity and racial justice agenda. The White House then held a virtual convening on April 14 to announce the release of its racial justice and equity plan, and more than 90 federal agencies have now released their own first-ever Equity Action Plans, as called for by the executive order.

The Equity Action Plans developed by members of President Biden’s cabinet – including U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Marcia L. Fudge – provide concrete strategies and articulate clear commitments to address the systemic barriers in policies and programs that hold too many people in underserved communities back from prosperity, dignity, and equality.

HUD’s department-wide plan includes actions to reduce the racial homeownership gap and center equity in the delivery of services to people experiencing homelessness. The plan emphasizes the differences in the ways homelessness is experienced in cities, suburbs, rural areas, and tribal lands; across races and ethnicities; by families and individuals, young and old; and among male, female, transgender, and gender non-conforming people. Even within homeless populations, some groups are less likely to have safe access to homeless shelters, and some are likely to experience homelessness for longer periods.

“Equity is central to HUD’s founding principles and the daily work we do as a department,” said Secretary Fudge. “We are excited to take this opportunity to join the rest of the federal government in emphasizing our commitment to making equity a leading compass within this administration.”

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) also released an equity action plan. The plan focuses on four values: racial equity, Housing First, decriminalization, and inclusion. The plan also identifies several actions that will be undertaken by USICH in pursuit of racial equity, including (1) centering racial equity in its upcoming Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, (2) engaging tribal nations and re-establishing the Interagency Working Group on Native American Homelessness, and (3) assessing internal USICH policies and employees’ views of racial equity within the organization.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) equity action plan establishes an Equity Commission within USDA that will conduct a review and provide recommendations to the Secretary “for how the Department can take action to advance equity.”

The equity action plans released by HUD and other agencies will expand federal investments in and support for communities and groups that have been locked out of opportunities for too long, including communities of color, tribal communities, rural communities, LGBTQI+ communities, disability communities, communities of faith, women and girls, and communities impacted by persistent poverty. Officials have stated that President Biden’s agenda is not a “one-year project” but “an important step forward” in line with a “generational commitment.”



# POLICY UPDATES

*Note: Given the fast-changing nature of the legislative process, some information in this article may be outdated by the time of publication.*

## UPDATE ON BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Congressional Democrats passed and President Biden signed into law a large social spending and economic recovery bill, the “Inflation Reduction Act of 2022” – formerly the “Build Back Better Act” – using a process called “budget reconciliation.” Budget reconciliation allows a bill to pass the Senate with a simple majority of 51 votes, rather than the 60 votes typically required in the chamber. Even when using budget reconciliation, in an evenly divided Senate (50 Republicans and 50 Democrats) every Democratic senator needed to vote in favor of the bill to see it enacted.

The “Inflation Reduction Act” includes roughly \$433 billion in new spending over the next 10 years on climate, energy, and healthcare. However, the bill excludes the targeted affordable housing investments needed to address skyrocketing rents and the severe shortage of affordable, accessible homes available to renters with the lowest incomes. The cost of housing is the single largest component of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), a key measure of inflation, and addressing the cost of housing is vital to decreasing inflationary pressure on households, especially in the long term.

The \$1.75 trillion “Build Back Better Act” stalled in the Senate last year after West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin – the lone Democratic holdout in the Senate – announced he would not support the bill as it was written. The bill included \$150 billion in affordable housing investments, including significant funding for NLIHC’s HoUsed campaign’s top priorities:

1

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\$25 billion to expand housing vouchers to more than 300,000 households with low incomes.

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2

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\$65 billion to make desperately needed repairs to public housing and improve living conditions for its 2.5 million residents.

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3

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\$15 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund to build and preserve over 150,000 affordable, accessible homes for households with the lowest incomes.

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Senator Manchin instead insisted on a significantly smaller package focused on increasing federal revenues by changing the tax code and using new revenue to fight inflation, address climate change, draw down the federal deficit, and reduce the cost of prescription drugs. With drastic increases in rents across the country, homelessness on the rise, and households struggling to make ends meet, Congress missed an historic opportunity to make bold investments in affordable housing programs targeted to households with the lowest incomes.



## UPDATE ON FISCAL YEAR 2023 APPROPRIATIONS

The annual appropriations process is an essential task completed by Congress every year to ensure the federal government and all its vital programs – including affordable housing and homelessness programs – continue to operate. Congress is tasked with enacting a new budget by October 1, which marks the beginning of the new federal fiscal year, but it rarely meets this deadline. Instead, Congress typically enacts a short-term continuing resolution (CR), which briefly extends funding for the federal government at its current level, buying Congress more time to finalize its spending bill for the new fiscal year.

The fiscal year (FY) 2022 budget process was delayed almost six months. Long-term delays in the budget process create funding problems for affordable housing and community development programs, which rely on increased funding every year to maintain the number of households being served by vital federal housing programs. However, with both Senate Appropriations Chair Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Ranking Member Richard Shelby (R-AL) expected to retire after this term, congressional appropriators are particularly motivated to wrap up the FY23 spending bills before the end of the year.

Appropriations leaders in the House and Senate have met a few times over the last couple months to find an agreement on topline spending numbers, which set an overall limit for how much each appropriations subcommittee can allocate for the various programs under its jurisdiction. However, when these negotiations stalled, the House and Senate moved forward with their draft FY23

spending bills in June and July. The House bill proposes to fund HUD's affordable housing, homelessness, and community development programs at \$62.7 billion, an increase of \$9 billion over FY22 levels, and \$1.1 billion above the president's FY23 budget request. The Senate bill would provide HUD with \$3 billion less than the House bill, and \$1.9 billion less than President Biden's FY23 budget request.

Because congressional leaders are not expected to reach an agreement on spending soon, it is likely that Congress will enact a CR to keep the government open after the start of the fiscal year on October 1, pushing off decisions about final spending bills until later this year.

You can add your organization to a sign-on letter urging Congress to invest in affordable housing and community development programs in fiscal year 2023. For more information, contact Kim Johnson, senior policy analyst, at [kjohnson@nlihc.org](mailto:kjohnson@nlihc.org)



Photo by Caleb  
MG Willis

# THE OUR HOMES, OUR VOTES ACT

Voters must update their registration each time they move to a new home. Because renters move more often than homeowners, they must re-register to vote more often. This obstacle is one reason why high-income homeowners register and vote at higher rates than renters.

But what if updating your voter registration were automatically connected with the move-in process? If you've applied for a driver's license or updated your information at your local Department of Motor Vehicles, you've seen what this seamless integration can look like. The "National Voter Registration Act of 1993," better known as the "Motor Voter Law," requires state motor vehicle authorities to treat driver's license applications and other paperwork as simultaneous voter registration applications for eligible voters. When applying for a driver's license, voter registration is as simple as checking a few extra boxes on a piece of paperwork you were already planning to submit. The motor vehicle authority is then required to send voter registration forms to the state election agency within 10 days.

The "Our Homes, Our Votes Act" (H.R. 2215) would add public housing agencies (PHAs) to the Motor Voter Law. The bill would make voter registration less time-consuming for tenants because PHAs would facilitate voter registration with information that they and PHA-assisted owners already collect from tenants. Owners of PHA-assisted units would be required to (1) integrate voter registration when residents sign their leases and during the annual income recertification process; and (2) transmit voter registration forms to the PHA within 10 days. The PHA would then be required to (3) transmit registration information to the state elections office. The Our Homes, Our Votes Act would also treat private owners of federally assisted housing as voter registration agencies, requiring them to offer voter registration forms, assist applicants as they fill out their forms, and collect completed applications to send to the state elections office.



Jesús G. "Chuy" García delivered a special message on the Our Homes, Our Votes Act for the Our Homes, Our Votes: 2022 kickoff webinar in April 2022.

Grow voter turnout among low-income renters

OUR HOMES  
OUR VOTES  
BECAUSE HOUSING IS BUILT WITH BALLOTS  
☆☆☆☆☆

Tell Congress to pass legislation that would further engage low-income renters as voters.

TAKE ACTION →

Representative Jesús G. "Chuy" García (D-IL-4) is the lead sponsor of the Our Homes, Our Votes Act. He spoke about the urgency of this legislation during the kickoff of the *Our Homes, Our Votes: 2022* webinar series.

"Tenants in public and affordable housing have already verified their identity and their address to local authorities – the exact information they need to register to vote," Rep. García said on the call. "By removing unnecessary barriers that eligible tenants in affordable housing face to register to vote, this bill takes a small step towards equal access at the ballot box. Renters need a voice in our democracy. Tenants in public housing need a voice in our democracy. Let's make it easier, not harder, for them to vote."

If you agree with Rep. García, reach out to your members of Congress and ask them to support the Our Homes, Our Votes Act! You can find an [email template](#) in NLIHC's Legislative Action Center at <https://nlihc.org/take-action>

# RESEARCH UPDATES

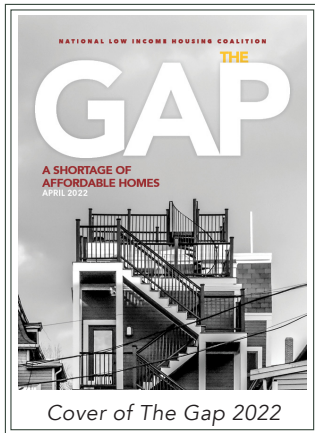
## DOCUMENTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEEDS

**N**LIHC's research highlights the need for more public investment in affordable rental housing and provides policy recommendations to ensure those investments target households with the greatest needs.

*Out of Reach* is an annual report that estimates the "housing wage" – the hourly wage that a full-time worker needs to earn to afford a modest rental home in their community. This year's report, released in July, found that the 2022 national housing wage is \$21.25 for a one-bedroom rental home and \$25.82 for a two-bedroom rental home. Both wages are much higher than the typical earnings of low-wage workers. The report also highlights recent nationwide rent increases. Between the first quarter of 2021 and the first quarter of 2022, the median rent for a two-bedroom apartment increased almost 18%. These increases have been driven by multiple factors, including record high inflation, increased demand for rental housing, and increased investor purchases of apartment buildings. The report incorporates tenant stories to speak to the realities faced by low-income renters in accessing and affording rental homes.



Cover of *Out of Reach* 2022



Cover of *The Gap* 2022

*The Gap* is an annual report that documents the shortage of rental homes affordable and available to renters with extremely low incomes for each state and large metropolitan area. In this year's report, released in April, we estimated a national shortage of 7 million affordable and available rental homes for extremely low-income renters. There are only 36 rental homes affordable and available for every 100 extremely low-income renter households, and no state was found to have an adequate supply. NLIHC will release updated editions of *The Gap* and *Out of Reach* in 2023.

## HOUSING PRESERVATION AND LOW-INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDITS

NLIHC also continues to publish research and manage data on the preservation of the country's existing supply of affordable homes. NLIHC manages the National Housing Preservation Database in partnership with the Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation. This regularly updated database consolidates information on all federally assisted housing properties in one place and can be sorted by state, city, county, congressional district, and census tract. The database includes property information on inspection scores, number of units, type of subsidy, when subsidies or affordability restrictions expire, and more.

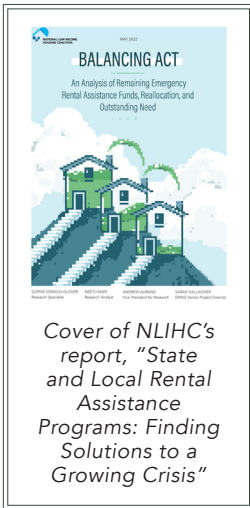
The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) faces unique preservation challenges, as properties financed by LIHTC age and begin to reach the end of their affordability requirements. The LIHTC program gives federal tax credits to state housing finance agencies (HFAs) to fund the construction, rehabilitation, or preservation of affordable homes for low-income renters. Federal law requires that LIHTC properties remain affordable for 30 years, and some states require longer affordability periods. In some instances, though, owners may eliminate the affordability restrictions after 15 years. Given the age of the program, LIHTC properties are for the first time approaching the 30-year mark and the possible end of their affordability restrictions. Some of these affordable housing properties may be lost from communities in high-demand areas where owners have incentives to raise rents to market rates. The loss of affordability can lead LIHTC tenants to experience rent increases and possibly displacement.

As part of NLIHC's LIHTC research effort, the team is currently working on a project to better understand how HFAs maintain and share property-level LIHTC data, such as information on affordability restriction end dates, as well as the ability of properties to be lost from the affordability stock after year 15. Having better data is essential for advocates to identify LIHTC properties at risk of being lost from the affordable housing stock and to organize efforts to prevent tenant displacement. The research team intends to publish a report on its findings in fall 2022.

## INSIGHTS FROM THE EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

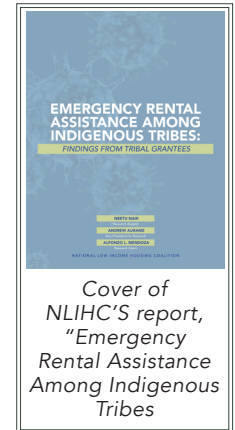
Throughout the pandemic, NLIHC has tracked state and local emergency rental assistance (ERA) programs implemented to help renters who have fallen behind on their rent. Households can find an ERA program near them





using NLIHC's searchable database, which tracks more than 500 U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury) ERA programs. As of March 2022, Treasury's ERA programs had spent \$28.5 billion and made nearly 5.6 million payments to households. As programs begin to run out of funds, some have begun shutting down their portals. As of June 2022, 130 state and local programs were not accepting new applicants.

NLIHC also posts research to its ERA Resource Hub that highlights best practices to ensure that ERA reaches renters with the greatest needs. Recent reports available through the Resource Hub provide information on how ERA programs operate for Indigenous tribes, how programs are reducing documentation barriers through use of fact-specific proxy, and on the current status of ERA spending and reallocation. NLIHC, in partnership with the Housing Initiative at Penn and the NYU Furman Center, also published a paper in the journal *Housing Policy Debate* addressing whether ERA programs were implemented in ways that helped meet the primary program goal of preventing homelessness. The paper found that while 89% of programs identified preventing homelessness as a goal, ERA programs were rarely made accessible to those renters most at risk of homelessness.



In fall 2022, NLIHC's research team will begin evaluating the outcomes of select ERA programs by conducting surveys and focus groups with renter applicants.

# A SAFE HOME MEANS A STRONGER DEMOCRACY

BY GILLIAN SLEE

*Eviction Lab researcher and PhD candidate in sociology and social policy*



Registering to vote takes about one month in 22 states. Filing an eviction, on the other hand, requires no more than one week in 39 states. The eviction process is fast and can make it difficult for voters to re-register and participate in future elections.

When American renters are evicted from their homes, they must address urgent concerns about shelter and employment. Voter registration and turnout often require identification or proof of address. Likewise, voters often rely on help from their social networks to vote – a neighbor's encouragement, for example, or a ride to the polls – but these networks can be lost following a forced move. Evictions thus threaten to lower democratic participation in the United States.

In a recent study that I conducted with my colleague Matthew Desmond, we found that eviction significantly decreased communities' voter turnout in the 2016 presidential election. Fewer people turned out to vote in communities affected by the forced displacement of renters. Our findings applied widely – to neighborhoods located in urban as well as rural areas, in those with new voting requirements or uncompetitive races, and in those with low as well as high exposures to eviction. On the other hand, the effect of eviction on voter turnout was minimal in neighborhoods located in states with same-day or Election Day registration and in swing states.

An investment in renters' housing security is an investment in democracy: if we want people to vote, we should keep renters in their homes by any means possible, from supporting the civil right to counsel to expanding access to rental assistance. Implementing same-day or Election Day registration may help, too. Community organizers can support renters' stability while also motivating neighborhoods' political participation by targeting their efforts to those who are at especially high risk of eviction.





Tenants in public and affordable housing have already verified their identity and their address to local authorities - the exact information they need to register to vote. By removing unnecessary barriers that eligible tenants in affordable housing face to register to vote, this bill takes a small step towards equal access at the ballot box.

Representative Jesus "Chuy" Garcia (D-IL-4) on the "Our Homes, Our Votes Act."



*Representative Jesús G. "Chuy" García standing with advocates*

