

**OUR HOMES**

**OUR VOTES**

BECAUSE HOUSING IS BUILT WITH BALLOTS



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**Getting Candidates on the Record on  
Housing and Homelessness**

# Agenda

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- Tools and Best Practices for Getting Candidates on the Record about Housing and Homelessness
  - Lisa Chapman, director of public policy, Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness
- Directly Impacted Communities and Candidate Engagement
  - Israel Bayer, director, International Network of Street Papers North America
- *Our Homes, Our Votes* Announcements & Opportunities
  - Courtney Cooperman, housing advocacy organizer, NLIHC

# Welcome

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# Tools and Best Practices for Getting Candidates on the Record about Housing and Homelessness

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***Lisa Chapman***

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# Candidate Engagement

JULY 22, 2022



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**“The vote is precious.  
It is almost sacred.  
It is the most powerful  
non-violent tool we  
have in a democracy.”**

— John Lewis, US Congressman in  
a 2019 Commonwealth Interview-



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# Candidate Engagement

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Survey sent out- State House and Senate, Gov, AG, SOS, Congress

How info disseminated- MCAH website, summaries, stats

Local Opportunities

Info after Primary with races

Ballot Issues

# Partner with us!

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Events- in person connect events

Town Halls or Roundtables

Webinars, videos

Resources, guidance, posters, etc.



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# Social

#OurHomesOurVotes22

@OurHomesVotes

@MIHomeless



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# Resources

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MCAH webpage for elections

MCAH resource sheet

MI SOS website

USICH Election Guide tool for service providers of unhoused persons

NLIHC Our Homes, Our Votes toolkit



MICHIGAN COALITION  
AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

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**VOTE.**  
**YOUR**  
**VOICE**  
**MATTERS.**

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THANK YOU!

# Directly Impacted Communities and Candidate Engagement

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Director

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# Our Homes, Our Votes Announcements & Opportunities

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# Candidate Engagement Resources

Visit

<https://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/resource-library>

for more!

## CANDIDATE ENGAGEMENT & TOWN HALLS

### OVERVIEW OF CANDIDATE ENGAGEMENT |

Elections are a fantastic opportunity to get decision-makers thinking about housing issues. Too often, affordable homes are ignored in the public debate leading up to elections. 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—and to do that, advocates must educate and engage.

Candidate engagement can take many forms: candidate forums, town hall meetings, candidate surveys, and candidate fact sheets. There are also opportunities to invite candidates to interact with residents or community members through meetings and site visits.

Asking candidates to fill out a questionnaire or inviting them to your agency can be a way to learn more about them while making them aware of your organization and the issues that are important to renters. You may also want to report the number of new voters your organization has been able to register and demonstrate the strength of your constituency. Candidates also learn what issues are key to voters by reading the letters to the editor page of the newspaper. Consider having clients write letters about issues that are important to them; letters can often be published as a response to a story in which candidates have discussed poverty issues.

**When educating candidates, be sure to stay nonpartisan. To do this, remember:**

#### I. NEVER CRITICIZE CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

- But you can add perspective or correct the record

#### II. DO NOT RANK OR RATE CANDIDATES

- Constitutes an endorsement

#### III. LEGISLATIVE SCORECARDS

- Only for incumbent legislators
- These are distinct from voter guides

#### IV. WHAT ABOUT NONPARTISAN CANDIDATE ELECTIONS?

- It's still not okay to endorse candidates or coordinate with campaigns

## QUICK TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE FORUMS |

- I. Keep it nonpartisan:** This means inviting all the candidates for an elected position, and not just the Democrat and the Republican. Inviting only the major parties shows partisan preference to those two groups.
- II. Build a coalition:** You can generate a larger audience and guarantee more candidates accept your invitation by having more groups involved in hosting the event. Caution: one issue with having too many groups involved in hosting is you might not have enough time to focus specifically on housing.
- III. Bring the cameras:** Do your best to get commitments from media outlets to broadcast the event or cover it in their publications. Use live-streaming options such as Facebook or consider posting recordings to your website or your blog. Let the candidates know the media has been invited.
- IV. Follow-ups are essential:** Be sure to have a sign-in table where you can collect contact information of attendees. This table should also have voter registration forms for people who have not yet registered.
- V. Materials and factsheets:** Provide information to attendees and candidates in advance so that the conversation starts from an informed perspective with the most recent data available about the housing shortage and homelessness in your community.
- VI. Curate the questions:** A fully open Q&A can often get off topic or even unruly. Ask attendees to write their questions on note cards as they arrive. Arrange for some of your volunteers to go through the cards to pick the ones that are most interesting, relevant, and timely.
- VII. Give the candidates time:** The candidates for office are making time available during their very busy campaign schedule. Be sure to offer them time at both the beginning and end of the forum to discuss their vision and campaign in their own terms.

## TIPS FOR PARTICIPATING IN A TOWN HALL |

### Town Hall Meetings: Asking the Best Question

- Submit a question in advance
- Tweet your question before the event. Use the #OurHomesOurVotes hashtag.
- Sit near the microphone
- Ask direct questions
- Consider a question with two parts:
  - » A Yes/No aspect in the beginning
  - » An opportunity for the candidate to offer additional thoughts
- Include facts in a question
- Videotape the question and answer, and send it to [outreach@nihc.org](mailto:outreach@nihc.org) to be included in the [www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org](http://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org) website cataloging all candidate comments on affordable housing. Share the video via social media using the #OurHomesOurVotes hashtag.

### EXAMPLE QUESTION:

"In our community, more than one-quarter of all renters have an eviction on their record. Do you support a new law guaranteeing the right to an attorney for all renters facing eviction? Also, what will you do to decrease the rapidly increasing evictions in our neighborhoods?"

Be Inspired.  
Be Engaged.  
Go Vote!



## Become an Affiliate!

- Join a national network
- Get campaign swag
- Use logos and images
- Receive guidance from NLIHC staff
- Be featured in the newsletter
- And more!



# Follow the Campaign!

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**Twitter: @OurHomesVotes**

**Facebook @OHOV2022**

**Email: [ourhomes@nlihc.org](mailto:ourhomes@nlihc.org)**

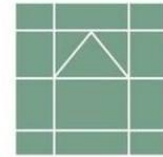
**Website: [ourhomes-ourvotes.org](http://ourhomes-ourvotes.org)**

## Monday, August 8: Voter Education— The What, When, Where, Why, and How

Registered voters need information to exercise their rights with confidence. A successful voter education campaign should ensure that voters have the logistical details they need to show up at the polls or vote by mail. The webinar will cover best practices for educating voters about polling locations, mail-in voting, ID requirements, provisional ballots, navigating new voting procedures, and knowing their voting rights. Panelists will also discuss opportunities to educate voters on the candidates' policy positions and what to expect on their ballots.

The panel will feature Cristin Langworthy, community engagement & government relations coordinator at the Housing Network of Rhode Island; Santra Denis, executive director of the Miami Workers Center; and Owen Hutchinson, director of external relations at the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness.

H O U S I N G



N E T W O R K



ANCHORAGE COALITION TO  
**END HOMELESSNESS**

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