

**OUR HOMES**

**OUR VOTES**

BECAUSE HOUSING IS BUILT WITH BALLOTS



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

**August 19, 2024**

# Agenda

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- Overview of nonpartisanship in candidate engagement
  - Courtney Cooperman, project manager, NLIHC
- Organizing tenant-led nonpartisan candidate forums
  - Arianna Bankler-Jukes, advocacy manager and organizer, Southern California Association of Nonprofit Housing
- Nonpartisan candidate questionnaires
  - Madeleine Hammerlund, housing campaign organizer, and Brian Muhs, communications and engagement associate, MHP
- National Tenants' Bill of Rights and candidate engagement
  - Kayla Laywell, housing policy analyst, NLIHC

# Housekeeping Items

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- This webinar is being recorded.
- Recording, slides, and links will be distributed in our Friday email newsletter, “The Connection,” and recording will be posted on NLIHC YouTube channel by the end of the week
- Closed captioning is enabled
- Use the Q&A feature to ask questions throughout the webinar
- Ensure respectful dialogue in the chat
- *Our Homes, Our Votes* is 100% nonpartisan

# Staying Nonpartisan for 501c3 Nonprofits

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## 501c3 nonprofits CAN...

- Register voters
- Educate voters
- Engage candidates on issues
- Host election-related public events
- Get voters to the polls
- Endorse ballot measures that align with their mission

*\*\*Exceptions: Legal Services Corporation, Americorps VISTAs, CSBG and Head Start funds (but can use other dollars)*

## 501c3 nonprofits CANNOT...

- Endorse political candidates
- Donate money, resources, or time to a particular candidate
- Use staff time, resources, or representation of the organization for partisan political activities
- Conduct registration, education, and mobilization activities in any way that seeks to benefit a particular candidate or party

# Best Practices

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**AN UNWAVERING  
PATH FORWARD TO  
HOUSING JUSTICE**  
NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

Democratic National Committee  
c/o Chair Jaime Harrison  
430 South Capitol St SE, #3  
Washington, DC  
20003

June 13, 2024

Dear Chair Harrison:

The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) is pleased to offer this statement to the Democratic National Committee.

The United States is facing a growing affordable housing and homelessness crisis. While millions of renters are impacted, the lowest-income and most marginalized households – including seniors, people with disabilities, low-wage workers, families with children, veterans, and more – are most severely harmed.

**AN UNWAVERING  
PATH FORWARD TO  
HOUSING JUSTICE**  
NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

Republican National Committee  
c/o Chair Michael Whatley  
310 First St SE  
Washington, DC  
20003

June 13, 2024

Dear Chair Whatley:

The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) is pleased to offer this statement to the Republican National Committee.

The United States is facing a growing affordable housing and homelessness crisis. While millions of renters are impacted, the lowest-income and most marginalized households – including seniors, people with disabilities, low-wage workers, families with children, veterans, and more – are most severely harmed.

- Robust, equal outreach to all candidates
- Avoid criticizing candidate statements
  - You can respond in a neutral tone to add perspective or correct the record
- Do not rank or rate candidates
  - Legislative scorecards that score incumbent voting records are permissible, but be cautious in an election year
- Do not alter candidates' responses to questionnaires

# More Information

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[Bolder Advocacy campaign:](https://afj.org/bolder-advocacy/)  
<https://afj.org/bolder-advocacy/>



**BOLDER ADVOCACY**

*An initiative of Alliance for Justice*

## 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:**

*Our Homes, Our Votes* resources:

<https://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/candidate-engagement>

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**Arianna Bankler-Jukes**

*Advocacy Manager and Organizer*

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**Madeleine Hammerlund**  
**Brian Muhs**

*Housing Campaign Organizer*  
*Communications and Engagement Associate*

**MHP**



# MHP's 2024 Candidate Housing Questionnaire

Brian Muhs, Communications & Engagement Associate  
Madeleine Hammerlund, Housing Campaign Organizer

2024 Questionnaire Co-hosted by:



# Long-term housing wins, and statewide housing solutions

## 2024 MN Election Cycle:

- 134 MN Representative Seats
- 1 MN Senate Special Election

## MHP Questionnaire Development Process:

- Step 1 – Draft 1 of 2024 Housing Questionnaire
- Step 2 – Partner Feedback and Revisions
- Step 3 – 2024 Candidate Questionnaire Resources: [link](#)
- Step 4 – Coordinated Outreach and Candidate Response Targeting



# Tracking and Coordinating Candidate Outreach

- Direct constituent outreach is always most powerful
- Designed copy+paste tools to make out-reach tools to make outreach as easy as possible.
- Coordinating collective action in person or digitally is important (Twitterstorm, integrating into candidate forum, etc)
- Weekly check-in meetings with partners
  - Important to track where responses are coming from in real time



Vang Family, St. Paul MN

# Candidate Responses as an Advocacy Tool

- Lawmaker Accountability and Partnership
  - Elevate housing solutions as a priority in the 2024 election
  - Commitments addressing housing barriers of Minnesotans
  - Buoy the good work lawmakers realize during the legislative session
  - Support partners and Minnesotans advocate for housing wins in all districts

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**Kayla Laywell**

*Housing Policy Analyst*

**NLIHC**

# National Tenants Bill of Rights

Kayla Laywell, MSW (she/her)

Housing Policy Analyst

National Low Income Housing Coalition

[Klaywell@nlihc.org](mailto:Klaywell@nlihc.org)

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# National Tenants Bill of Rights - Overview



AN UNWAVERING  
PATH FORWARD TO  
HOUSING JUSTICE  
NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

- A bold, legislative framework to enshrine tenants' rights throughout their tenancy
- Written with direct input from tenant leaders, people with lived experience of housing instability, housing law experts, and advocates
- Would cover all 114 million tenants nationwide

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# National Tenants Bill of Rights - Contents



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1. The Right to a Fair application
2. The Right to a Fair lease
3. The Right to Freedom from Discrimination and Harassment
4. The Right to a Habitable Home
5. The Right to Reasonable Rent and Costs
6. The Right to Organize
7. The Right to Safeguards Against Evictions

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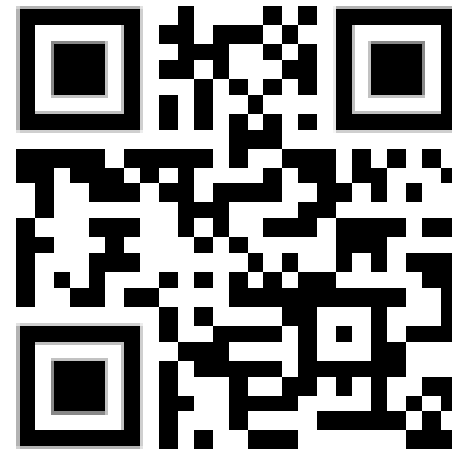
TUF



# National Tenants Bill of Rights



- Endorse the National Tenants Bill of Rights!
  - Use this link or QR code <https://p2a.co/g19d6fg>
  - QR Code also takes you to this page
- Individuals, organizations, elected officials, or candidates can endorse



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Open to Feedback! Email [KLaywell@nlihc.org](mailto:KLaywell@nlihc.org)

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# 1. Right to a Fair Application



- Regulates how landlords screen applicants
  - Only relevant information to be consistent with fair housing
  - Make the application process more transparent
  - Remove unnecessary barriers, like application fees
- Strengthens regulations of tenant screening companies

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## 2. Right to a Fair Lease



- Requires a clear lease that provides critical information to tenants
  - Plain language
  - Landlord's contact information
  - Mandatory disclosures: rent v. required non-rent fees, how habitability issues are handled
- Requires a lease to be free from unreasonable terms
  - No waivers of existing tenant rights under state law
  - No abusive terms that reset tenant rights

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# 3. Right to Freedom from Discrimination & Harassment



- Strengthen fair housing protections for tenants
  - Increase investments of funding, staff, and other resources for civil rights enforcement, including the right to accessible housing
  - Ensure that tenants can defend themselves in eviction courts by asserting fair housing violations by landlords
- Protect tenants from harassment by landlords
  - Private right of action, affirmative defense, right to attorney fees
  - Clear regulations over a landlord's right to access

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# 4. Right to A Habitable Home



- Ensure that tenants have a practical means of enforcing their right
  - Minimum standards across jurisdictions
  - Access to information, such as maintenance history and neighborhood-level risks
  - Right to repair and deduce + sanctions for owners who don't comply
  - Eviction defense of breach of warranty of habitability
- Increase transparency about landlords and properties
  - State and local rental registries
  - National database of federally subsidize housing

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# 5. Right to Reasonable Rents and Costs



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- Regulate rent to prevent unreasonable rent increases
- Regulate non-rent fees and charges
  - Examples: security deposits, late fees, utilities, rental insurance

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## 6. Right to Organize



- Strengthen right to organize in the federal housing programs, including the Housing Choice Voucher program and LIHTC
- Establish a federal right to organize in the private rental market
  - Protected activities
  - Protection from retaliation
  - Remedies
  - Funding
  - Oversight of buildings by tenant associations
- Establish tenant opportunity to purchase policies

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# 7. Right to Safeguards Against Evictions



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- Right to security of tenure
  - Just cause
  - Notice and right to cure lease violations
  - Early termination in specific situations
- Due process in eviction court
  - Pre-filing eviction diversion
  - Right to counsel, meaningful hearing on the merits
- Right to be free from unlawful self-help evictions

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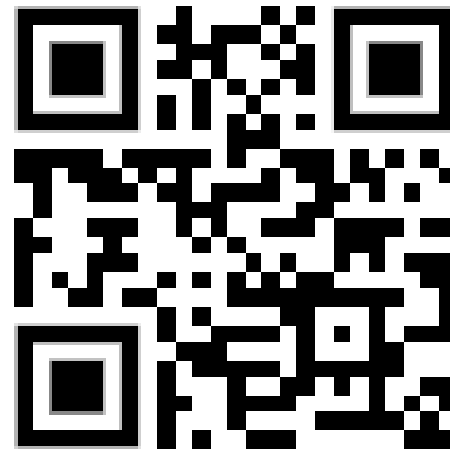


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# Questions?



# Affiliates Network

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- Open to all nonpartisan organizations that share campaign's goals
- Regular office hours, email listserv, and post-election virtual gathering
  - Office hours this Friday, July 19, from 1-3pm ET
- Enhanced access to *Our Homes*, *Our Votes* tools and resources
- Sign up: [www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/affiliates](http://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/affiliates)

# OurHomes.TurboVote.Org

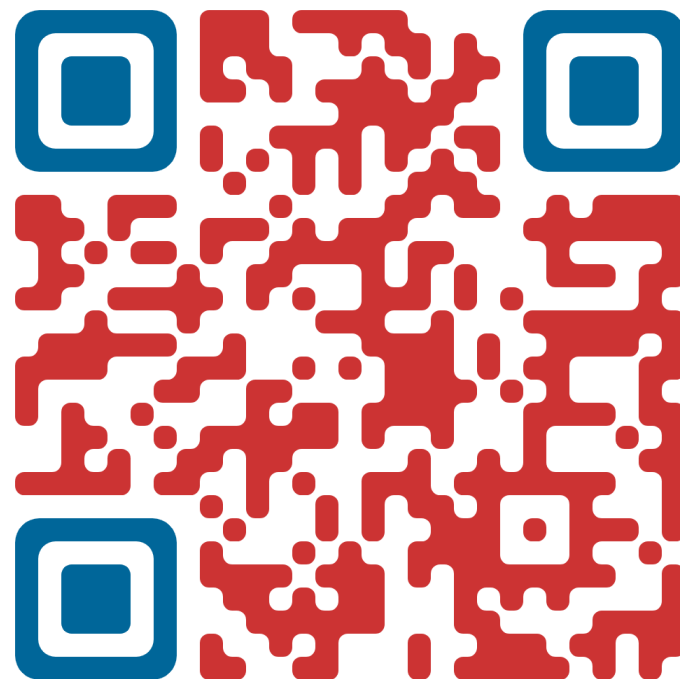
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Register to vote and update your voter registration, check your voter registration status, find election information for your community, and sign up for election reminders!



# *Our Homes, Our Votes* Educational Resources

- Comprehensive online resource library
  - Visit: <https://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/resources>

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# National Voter Registration Day

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- Save the date: Tuesday, September 17, 2024
- Sign up to become a community partner
  - <https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/2024-partner-sign-up/?partner=nlihc24&source24=pp>
- Benefits of community partnership
  - Posters, stickers, and other swag
  - Digital assets including posters and toolkits, state-by-state guides, and webinars
- Expectations
  - Stay nonpartisan
  - Host voter registration activities in your community





# Next Webinar: Celebrating the Civic Holidays

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*Civic Holidays are nationwide, nonpartisan days of action to strengthen and celebrate our country's democracy. Thousands of nonprofits, schools, businesses, local governments, and other organizations unite each year to promote civic participation through the four Civic Holidays: National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, Vote Early Day, and Election Hero Day. This webinar will cover how to plan an effective Civic Holidays activation and the resources available from national partners to support this work.*

# Preview: Full Webinar Series

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- **Tuesday, September 3** – Celebrating the Civic Holidays
- **Monday, September 16** – Voter Education: The Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How
- **Monday, September 30** – Voter Education: Combating Misinformation and Disinformation
- **Monday, October 7** – Knowing Your Rights: Voter Protection During Election Season
- **Monday, October 21** – Countdown to Election Day: Getting Out the Vote!
- **Monday, November 4** – Overcoming Voter Suppression and Boosting Election Day Voter Turnout
- **Monday, November 18** – A Look Ahead: Next Steps for Civic Engagement and the Housing Justice Movement