

TENANT TALK

Fall 2024 | Volume 15, Issue 2

Voting As Collective Action



Dear NLIHC Partners, Friends, Allies, and Supporters,

NLIHC celebrates our 50-year anniversary in 2024! Since being founded by Cushing Dolbeare in 1974, NLIHC has educated, organized, and advocated to ensure that people with the lowest incomes have access to decent, accessible, affordable housing. Throughout 2024, we are recognizing our 50th anniversary by looking back on our history and collective achievements, while also renewing our commitment to achieving housing justice.

Though much has changed in the past 50 years, our priorities remain much the same: bridging the gap between incomes and housing costs through rental assistance; expanding and preserving the supply of affordable rental homes; stabilizing low-income families and preventing evictions; and strengthening and enforcing renter protections. Join us this year in celebrating NLIHC's 50th anniversary by renewing your own commitment to our shared goal of 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.

Onward.



Diane Yentel
NLIHC President and CEO

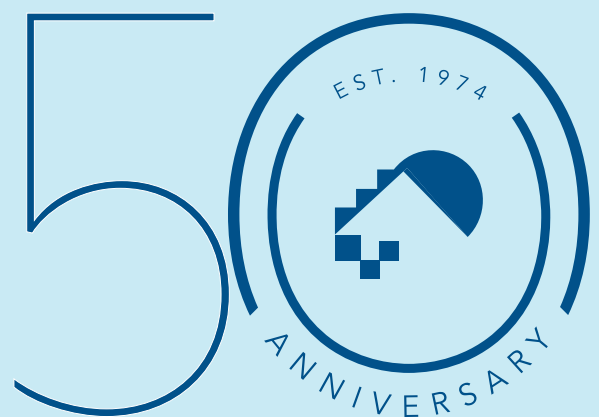


Table of Contents

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD	4
INTRODUCTION: THE LONG STRUGGLE FOR VOTING RIGHTS	5
WHY VOTING MATTERS	6
GET READY TO VOTE!	8
NONPARTISAN VOTER ENGAGEMENT 101: HOW TO REGISTER, EDUCATE, AND MOBILIZE VOTERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY	8
HOW TO ENGAGE CANDIDATES AS A TENANT OR RESIDENT	12
VOTING WHILE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS: MAKING UNHOUSED VOICES HEARD IN OUR DEMOCRACY	13
KEY RESOURCES FOR VOTERS	15
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BEYOND VOTING	17
PILOT COMMUNITIES SPOTLIGHTS	18
BECOME AN <i>OUR HOMES, OUR VOTES</i> AFFILIATE!	20
VOTER PERSPECTIVE: SHARON’S EXPERIENCE IN HOUSING ADVOCACY AND ELECTORAL ENGAGEMENT	20
VOTER PERSPECTIVE: MINNEAPOLIS HIGHRISE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL LEADERS GET OUT THE RENTER VOTE	22
POLICY UPDATES	23
STRENGTHENING VOTING RIGHTS THROUGH THE “UNHOUSED VOTE ACT”	26
RESEARCH UPDATES	27
FOLLOWING ROLLBACK OF CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS, RACIAL DISPARITIES IN VOTER TURNOUT GROW	29

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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.

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DEAR READERS,

Since the release of NLIHC's last election edition of *Tenant Talk*, "*Housing Is Built with Ballots*," significant events in the U.S. – such as the unjust Supreme Court ruling in *Grants Pass v. Johnson* – have made publications like *Tenant Talk* more important than ever. Low-income tenants have faced numerous challenges, including the increased criminalization of homelessness, rising housing costs, and funding cuts to federal housing programs. Yet even when reasons for hope seem scarce, we must use our voices to speak out – and there is no better time than the upcoming November 2024 elections.

Census data from the November 2022 elections reveal that low-income people register and vote at lower rates than those in higher income brackets. While 82% of people with household incomes above \$100,000 were registered to vote and 67% voted in the 2022 midterms, only 57% of people with incomes below \$20,000 were registered, and a mere 33% actually voted. This pattern persists due to longstanding barriers, such as difficulties taking time off from work to vote, obtaining legal identification, and accessing transportation to polling places. In addition, racial and other forms of discrimination, as well as increased exposure to misinformation about voting, further hinder voter participation. People experiencing homelessness, returning citizens, and survivors of disasters face especially tough barriers to voting. These challenges are exacerbated by efforts in some states to suppress the votes of low-income tenants, who are disproportionately people of color, young people, senior citizens, and people with disabilities.

This all raises a question that's more urgent than ever: *How can we ensure that policymakers prioritize the needs of low-income renters?* And we have an answer: higher voter turnout

among low-income households is essential for convincing policymakers to address the needs of the lowest-income tenants. But achieving the goal of higher turnout is challenging, and we cannot do it alone – we must act collectively!

NLIHC's nonpartisan *Our Homes, Our Votes* campaign is part of that collective action. The campaign's mission is to empower low-income renters to vote by providing low-income people and organizations serving low-income people with the resources to register, educate, and mobilize voters. Housing is often overlooked in elections, but with the help of tenants like yourself, we can build the political will to bring affordable housing to the forefront of elections at all levels – federal, state, and local.

With the help of this publication, the *Our Homes, Our Votes* campaign, and your collective action, we can create a stronger country where everyone, including low-income renters, participates in the democratic process. It's important that we *all* vote, because when we vote, we make choices that shape the lives of our families, community members, and others across the country. We hope this issue of *Tenant Talk* will provide you with the tools and resources you need to get involved in the 2024 election season. **LET'S GET OUT THE VOTE!**

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THE EDITORIAL
BOARD

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Introduction:

The Long Struggle for Voting Rights

The history of voting rights in the U.S. has never been a story of linear development, but rather, a back-and-forth between progress and regression. In the early days of the U.S., only white, Protestant, landowning men had the right to vote. Voting rights were considered a state issue, meaning each state determined who could and could not vote. States like New Jersey expanded voting rights beyond property-owning white men [temporarily](#), while other states continued to uphold a federal standard barring Black Americans, women, and Native Americans from the polls.

In 1870 - nearly 100 years after the U.S. 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, which meant that Black men were now able to vote and hold political office. Black Americans finally had the right to political participation, and [two Black men even became members of the U.S. Senate](#) in 1870. The growing political power of Black Americans produced a backlash, and upon the end of Reconstruction, 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 rights of democratic citizenship.

Fifty years later, in 1920, the 19th Amendment was passed, giving white women the right to vote, but many non-white women were still disenfranchised. Even after the signing in 1962 of the 24th Amendment, which outlawed poll taxes, people of color in the South still faced huge obstacles to voting. These obstacles motivated the struggle for civil rights that accelerated in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including the [Freedom Summer Project](#). The Council of Federated Organizations, a broad-based civil rights coalition, organized thousands of volunteers in Mississippi during the summer of 1964. One of the project's activities was a voter registration campaign to mobilize disenfranchised Black voters in the state. The campaign was met with violent backlash from local officials and other Mississippians. Over a thousand volunteers were arrested, dozens of volunteers were beaten, Black homes, businesses, and churches were bombed and burned, and at least seven people were murdered. The Freedom Summer Project was a pivotal moment that raised nationwide awareness of voter disenfranchisement and the need for civil rights, which catalyzed passage of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* and the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*.

Since the passage of the *Voting Rights Act*, other protections have been enacted to ensure all citizens can exercise their right

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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 speak different languages, 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.

Yet despite these efforts, voter suppression persists. In *Shelby County v. Holder*, the U.S. 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.

Why Voting Matters



- 1 The right to vote is not a right that we can take for granted.** Landmark voting rights protections for marginalized communities - including the 15th Amendment granting Black men the right to vote, the 19th Amendment granting some women the right to vote, and the *Voting Rights Act of 1965* outlawing racial discrimination in voting - were the product of extensive organizing and sacrifice.
- 2 When we exercise the right to vote, we have the power to enact real change.** Voting is often perceived as a symbolic gesture and not an important action. The act of voting is meaningful, intentional, and empowers not only you but also those in

[In 2023](#), some states passed laws that expanded access to voting, while other states passed laws restricting access to voting. In total, 23 states enacted 53 expansive voting laws, while 14 states enacted 17 restrictive voting laws. In 2024, voters in 27 states will face restrictive voting laws that they have not yet experienced during a presidential election.

While the struggle for voting rights has been long and hard fought, the U.S. still has miles to go before 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. ■

your community. By voting regularly and for offices up and down the ballot, you can vote for a fair democracy and a just housing system that provides more resources and support to the lowest-income renters and people experiencing homelessness.

- 3 Elections affect our daily lives.** In every election, you vote for issues or people who will affect your life as a low-income renter. For example, the people we elect at the federal level set the budget for public housing, which determines whether our



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buildings get the repairs they need. They decide whether to increase spending on Housing Choice Vouchers, which can enable more people to get off the waitlist. State lawmakers can also pass laws that protect people who are at risk of eviction. Local elected officials can make zoning decisions that pave the way for building more affordable homes in a wider range of neighborhoods.

- 4 Voting is about more than just the presidential and congressional elections.** Depending on where you live, your state's governor, your city's mayor, your local school board members, or other offices may be on the ballot. These races might not get as much attention in the news as the presidential election, but they are just as important. State and local elected officials make decisions about many issues that directly affect your community - including schools, parks, public transit, and of course housing!
- 5 Your vote can make *the* difference.** Some elections, especially local elections with low turnout rates, are decided by only a couple votes. State legislative races are often won by only a few hundred votes, and these legislators have the power to greatly impact the lives of low-income renters. Because voter turnout is usually lower in state and local elections, the electorate is even more skewed towards higher-income voters and homeowners, so it's especially important for renters to make their voices heard and ensure that their state and local elected officials represent their priorities.
- 6 Voting builds your community's power.** When voter turnout is higher in your building or neighborhood, candidates will real-

ize the voting power of your community and will feel more motivated to advocate in support of low-income housing and tenants' rights.

- 7 Many state and local elections include ballot measures, which give voters the opportunity to weigh in on policy and make decisions directly.** Communities have successfully used ballot measures to pass bold policies that improve the lives of the lowest-income renters. In the past few years alone, voters have approved billions of dollars for affordable homes and passed some of the country's most ambitious measures to strengthen tenant protections, such as rent stabilization ordinances, just cause eviction laws, and the right to counsel in eviction court. Voting on a ballot measure is a powerful way to directly shape the future of your community. In many cases, community members can even craft the text of a ballot initiative themselves and collect petition signatures to place the measure on the ballot. If an issue you care about is not on the ballot this year, consider organizing to put it on the ballot in the next election!
- 8 You can encourage candidates to prioritize the issues that matter to your community.** If you feel the candidates on your ballot don't understand the issues that affect low-income renters, take the opportunity to educate them! Remember, when elected officials are on the campaign trail, they are competing to win your vote, so they have a stake in listening to your concerns and taking your priorities seriously. See page 12 for suggestions on ways for tenant leaders and resident-led groups to engage with candidates. ■

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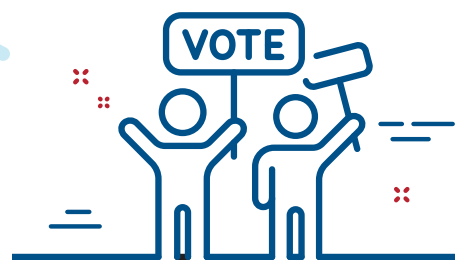
Get Ready to Vote!

Voting is a powerful way for tenants to make their voices heard for housing justice. To make voter registration and election information more accessible, NLIHC recently launched its nonpartisan online TurboVote platform. [TurboVote](#) is a one-stop shop where you can register to vote or update your voter registration, check your registration status, sign up for election reminders, and learn about upcoming elections in your community.

[TurboVote](#) is available in both English and Spanish. The platform provides a seamless voter registration experience that empowers voters to participate in elections at every level.

Voters can also use TurboVote to learn about deadlines for voter registration, rules regarding mail-in voting and early voting in their state, where to vote in-person, and other key information.

To check it out, scan the QR code below or visit: ourhomes.turbovote.org/



Nonpartisan Voter Engagement 101: How to Register, Educate, and Mobilize Voters in Your Community

Many tenant leaders are excited to turn out voters in their community but not exactly sure where to begin! Fortunately, you don't need to start from scratch. This roadmap will walk you through every

stage of planning a nonpartisan voter engagement campaign that incorporates voter registration, education, mobilization, and protection.



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PHASE 1: GETTING STARTED

- **Call or visit your state or local election office website** to confirm the voter registration deadlines for your state and the rules for conducting voter registration drives. Ask whether anyone can register voters in your state, or whether a person must first become authorized to register voters.
- **Set voter registration and turnout goals.** How will you choose which voters to target? Will you target young voters who recently became eligible to vote? Will you identify new residents who just moved into the building? Will you partner with residents in other buildings and launch a broader

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registration effort in your neighborhood? Request the voter rolls for your community, so you will know who in your community is already registered. Voter rolls can help you track who is registered and who should be the target of your outreach.

- **Connect with other organizations or associations** that may be interested in partnering. Developing nonpartisan partnerships can increase your capacity to reach voters in your community.

- **Offer nonpartisan 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.

Key Resource: Our Homes, Our Votes Pledge Card

Voter pledge cards allow volunteers to collect contact information and follow up with newly registered voters, while reminding them of their commitment to vote and providing key information about upcoming elections. *Our Homes, Our Votes* has a voter pledge card in English and Spanish that you can use in your voter engagement campaigns. Visit www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/voter-registration to find the pledge card and accompanying user guide.

PHASE 2: NONPARTISAN VOTER REGISTRATION

Renters and low-income people are less likely to be registered to vote than homeowners and high-income people. Boosting registration rates is the first step to closing the voter turnout gap. Here are some tips for building enthusiasm about voter registration and increasing the number of registered voters in your community.

- **Meet potential voters where they are - both physically and emotionally.** Not all community members will actively seek out information about voter registration. If voter registration opportunities are made visible and accessible in places that residents frequently visit, like building lobbies or community events, they are more likely to engage in conversations about voting and take the steps to register. Don't get frustrated if someone isn't immediately enthusiastic about registering to vote. It

may take a few conversations to build trust, learn about the concerns that people have, and discuss the connections between voting and the issues affecting their daily lives.

- **Organize a door-to-door voter nonpartisan registration 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 all the people in their building or on their floor. As a resident, you

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are a trusted messenger that 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.

- **Integrate nonpartisan voter registration into events and activities.** Table at social

events, like block parties, to encourage residents to register to vote. Consider hosting an event for [National Voter Registration Day](#) on September 17, 2024. 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.



Positive Messaging Matters!

Many residents may not be registered to vote because they feel that elected officials do not have their interests in mind. To encourage voter registration, 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. Remind voters that elections aren't just about the president - state and local offices, which make decisions about their housing, schools, parks, roads, and other priorities, are also on the ballot.

If you are registering voters in public or subsidized housing, 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 homes.



PHASE 3: VOTER EDUCATION

Tenant and resident leaders can also play a role in voter education or ensuring that their community members understand the **who, what, when, where, why, and how** of elections.

- **Who:** Candidates for local, state, and federal offices
- **What:** State or local ballot measures, if applicable
- **When:** Deadlines for voter registration, dates for early voting and Election Day, mail-in ballot submission deadlines, polling place hours
- **Where:** Polling places and/or ballot drop boxes
- **How:** In-person and mail-in voting options; voter ID requirements
- **Why:** Key issues at play in the election and what's at stake in the community

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PHASE 4: VOTER MOBILIZATION AND PROTECTION


The final phase of a nonpartisan voter engagement campaign is voter mobilization, commonly known as get-out-the-vote or GOTV! This phase should also include voter protection - that is, ensuring that voters know their rights so they can cast their ballots with confidence. Here are some GOTV and voter protection activities to consider:

- **Provide rides to and from polling locations.** Recruit volunteers with cars, or fundraise to rent vans for Election Day, so that residents with limited transportation options can cast their ballots. Consider partnering with an external, nonpartisan organization, like Rideshare2Vote Aware, to offer rides to the polls. If your building is walking distance from a polling place, consider organizing group walks to the polls.
- **Become a polling location.** Tenant 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.
- **Encourage vote-by-mail and early voting.** Rather than turning out the vote all on one day, encourage eligible 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. 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 \(October 29, 2024\)](#), which educates voters about early voting options and builds enthusiasm for early voting.
- **Ask voters to make a plan.** Contact voters, especially newly registered voters, in the weeks leading up to Election Day to ask them how and when they plan to vote, and how they plan to get to their polling place. People are more likely to vote when they have talked through their voting plan. Asking voters to express this plan also allows organizers to verify their polling location details and work through transportation obstacles.
- **Ensure that voters know their rights and what to do if their right to vote is challenged.** Distribute information about the Election Protection Hotline (866-OUR-VOTE). Voters can call this number if their right to vote is being challenged, if they face voter intimidation, or if they see voter misinformation.



Key Resource: Sample Voter Guide

To convey all the essential information about elections in one place, consider developing and distributing a voter guide. You can use the sample voter guide at www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/voter-education as a starting place.



For even more tips and templates to assist with your voter registration and mobilization efforts, you can refer to the *Our Homes, Our Votes* website, which can be found at ourhomes-ourvotes.org.



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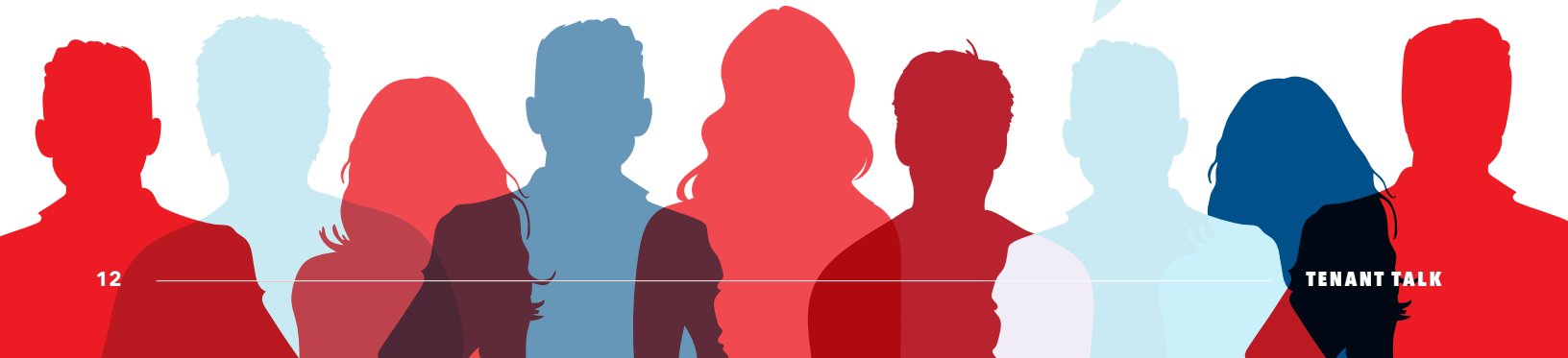
How to Engage Candidates as a Tenant or Resident

Elected officials work for the people they serve. For this reason, it is important for tenants to engage with candidates on the campaign trail and make their priorities known. Tenants should engage with candidates for two main reasons: 1) to make their concerns heard and hold candidates accountable to prioritize housing justice; and 2) to understand candidates' plans so that voters can make informed decisions.

Getting candidates on the record will make it easier to hold them accountable if they are elected. For example, if a candidate promises to increase funding for rental assistance, you can mention that promise to their office when advocating for legislation that expands Housing Choice Vouchers to all households. Nonpartisan candidate engagement can also build voter knowledge and enthusiasm. If candidates are showing up at community events and talking about the issues that affect your neighbors' lives, those neighbors are more

likely to feel heard and to have a vested interest in casting their ballots. Hearing from candidates who have different visions for housing policy can make the stakes of the election more concrete and motivate people to vote.

Tenant and resident-led groups can organize nonpartisan candidate forums and town halls or invite candidates to events like community meetings and block parties. These events will create a space where residents can directly make their voices heard to candidates and will give residents the opportunity to learn where the candidates stand on key issues. As a tenant, you are the expert in your own community's needs. By inviting the candidates to an event in your building or neighborhood, you can educate your candidates and push them to adopt policy platforms that will make a difference for your community. If you cannot plan an event yourself, consider attending candidate events that other organizations are hosting.



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When inviting candidates to your community, be mindful that you must invite ALL candidates who are running for a position and make an equal effort to get all candidates to attend. You should also invite candidates far in advance of the date of the event, which makes it more likely that they will have room in their schedule.

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 by reading the letters to the editor page of the newspaper. This platform can be used to share your experiences and communicate the need for candidates to prioritize affordable homes.

To learn more about candidates' views and make them aware of your priorities, you can circulate a nonpartisan candidate questionnaire that asks the candidates to describe their stances on key policy issues. Questionnaires must go to ALL candidates and should be publicly posted with clear instructions and information on how the responses will be used. Once candidates have completed the questionnaire, share their responses with your community so they can learn more about each candidate and make an informed choice at the ballot box.

For more information and guidance about nonpartisan candidate engagement, including a sample candidate questionnaire, visit www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/candidate-engagement. ■

Voting while Experiencing Homelessness: Making Unhoused Voices Heard in Our Democracy

People experiencing homelessness feel the impact of our housing policies most acutely. They understand what it will take to end and prevent homelessness. Too often, however, people experiencing homelessness face barriers to casting their ballots and making their voices heard in the democratic process.

Many individuals experiencing homelessness and service providers do not realize that people without a permanent address have the right to vote. Research on voting rates among people experiencing homelessness is limited, but the best available estimates suggest that

only 10% of unhoused people vote in a typical federal election. Restrictive voter ID laws, felony disenfranchisement, voter purges, and other voter suppression tactics disproportionately affect people experiencing homelessness. Because of structural racism in the housing market, Black Americans, Native Americans, and other people of color are more likely to experience homelessness, and therefore more likely to face these challenges.



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Fortunately, people experiencing homelessness can access information that will guide them through the process of registering and casting their ballots. The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness maintains a [voter checklist](#) for people experiencing homelessness. Nonpartisan organizations like the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) and National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) also provide guidance and resources.

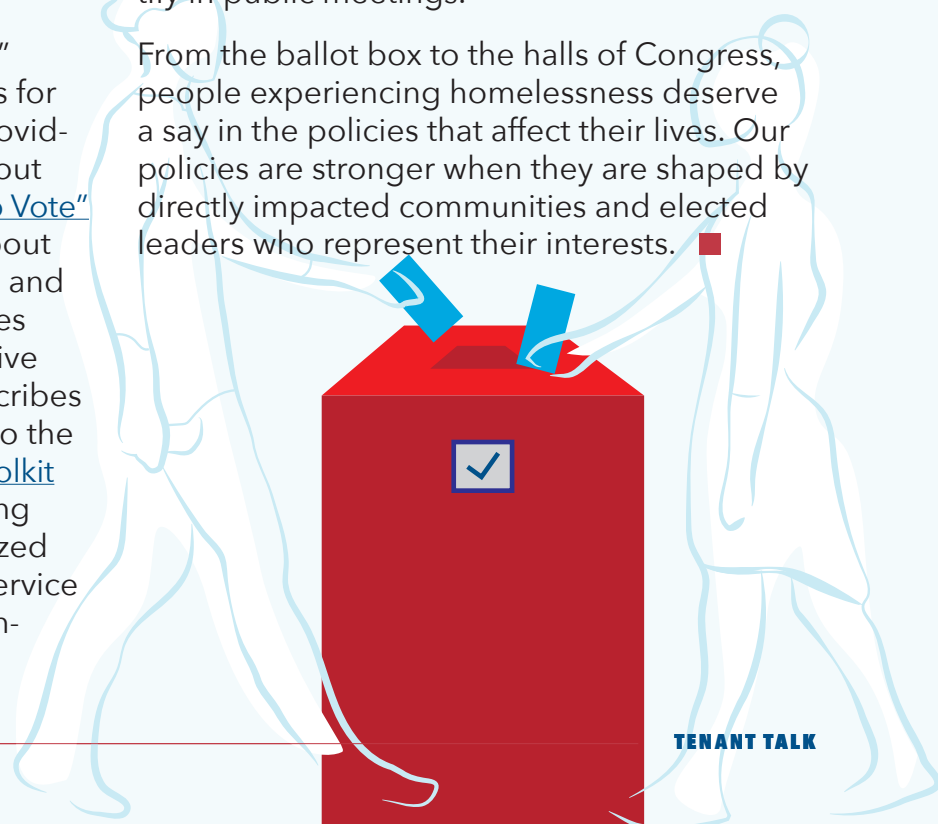
Advocates and service providers can empower unhoused people to participate in the democratic process. First, find information about the process of registering and casting a ballot without a permanent residential address in your state. NCH maintains a state-by-state database of requirements for voting without an address, which you can access at: national-homeless.org/voting. Contacting your state or local election office is also a good way to find this information. Then, determine how you can best encourage voter registration and participation in the communities you serve and which nonpartisan election activities to prioritize.

NCH's "You Don't Need a Home to Vote" campaign and NAEH's "Every One Votes" campaign provide nonpartisan resources for advocates, shelters, and other service providers to register unhoused voters and get out the vote. The "[You Don't Need a Home to Vote](#)" [Voting Rights Manual](#) addresses FAQs about voting while experiencing homelessness and permissible nonpartisan activities, outlines steps for planning a voter registration drive and conducting voter outreach, and describes ways to incorporate voter registration into the intake process. The "[Every One Votes](#)" toolkit includes step-by-step guidance for getting unhoused citizens registered and mobilized to vote and pulls out best practices for service providers. For example, the toolkit recom-

mends that providers establish procedures for collecting mail on behalf of clients, which can satisfy the mailing address requirement for voter registration, and waive curfew or waiting-in-line practices on Election Day so people do not need to choose between casting their ballots and having a place to stay. Providers should also contact their local election office to ask about hosting a polling place or ballot drop box at their site.

To ensure that people experiencing homelessness are represented in our democracy, advocates and service providers must look beyond turning out voters on Election Day and strive to create a culture of civic empowerment. As a starting place, this means that people experiencing homelessness should have consistent access to information about democratic participation and year-round voter registration opportunities. Integrating voter registration into the intake process is one way to achieve this goal. Unhoused people should also have opportunities to connect with their elected officials, advocate for policy change, and testify in public meetings.

From the ballot box to the halls of Congress, people experiencing homelessness deserve a say in the policies that affect their lives. Our policies are stronger when they are shaped by directly impacted communities and elected leaders who represent their interests. ■



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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 ballots and have your votes be counted:



TURBOVOTE

TurboVote: TurboVote is an online, nonpartisan voter registration and information platform where you can register to vote, update your registration, sign up for election reminders, and find key deadlines, state-specific rules, and other election information for your community. TurboVote is available in both English and Spanish. For more information, visit: <https://ourhomes.turbovote.org/>



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. Election Protection offers a multilingual suite of voter hotlines and opportunities to get help from trained volunteers. For more information, visit: <https://www.lawyerscommittee.org/project/election-protection/>



Rideshare2Vote AWARE: Rideshare2Vote AWARE is a nonpartisan organization that provides barrier-free rides to the polls in 13 states and counting. Visit the website or call 888-858-3421 to request a ride. If you already have transportation to the polls, consider volunteering with Rideshare2Vote AWARE and supporting other voters in your community! For more information, visit: <https://rideshare2voteaware.org/>



VoteRiders: VoteRiders educates voters about voter ID laws and helps citizens secure the IDs they need. 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/>



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/>

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Every One Votes, a campaign of the National Alliance to End Homelessness:

Every One Votes is an initiative to ensure that people who are experiencing homelessness are registered to vote and able to exercise their right to vote. Providers can access resources and tools that provide guidance and strategies to support clients and consumers to register to vote and to encourage voter turnout. For more information, visit: <https://endhomelessness.org/every-one-votes-you-have-a-stake-in-elections/>



[HTTPS://NATIONALHOMELESS.ORG/VOTING](https://nationalhomeless.org/voting)

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>



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.

For more information, visit: <https://www.aapd.com/about-rev-up/>



Patient Voting, a program of VOT-ER: Patient Voting collects and publicizes state-specific information about the process of voting for people who are unexpectedly hospitalized in the days or weeks prior to an election. The organization creates a nationwide network of healthcare workers and other partners dedicated to sharing this information and helping patients vote. For more information, visit:

<https://www.patientvoting.com/>



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 \(September 17, 2024\)](#) is the country's largest single-day voter registration drive. [National Voter Education Week \(October 7-11, 2024\)](#) 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 \(October 29, 2024\)](#) 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 \(November 4, 2024\)](#) 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/> ■

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Civic Engagement beyond Voting

Civic engagement is a practice that looks different for each person. Civic engagement is not just about casting a ballot for local, state, and federal elections. Not everyone in our country has the right to vote, but everyone has the right to be civically engaged. Citizens and non-citizens alike have opportunities to be civically engaged. Citizens can vote for candidates up and down the ballot that will legislate to support low-income renters, but they can also become poll workers, register others to vote, and run for office themselves. Those who are not citizens, are too young to vote, or can't vote for other reasons can advocate for legislation, attend protests, get involved with ballot measure campaigns, participate in candidate forums, and participate in other forms of activism. Both inside and outside the voting booth, low-income renters have immense political power. While voting is one way for low-income renters to have a say in policy issues that affect their lives, voting will have a greater impact when done in conjunction with other

civic engagement activities that hold elected officials accountable.

“ **Not everyone in our country has the right to vote, but everyone has the right to be civically engaged.** ”

One way to participate in our democracy beyond voting is to serve as a poll worker. While many states require poll workers to be registered voters, [44 states](#) and the District of Columbia have youth poll worker programs, so teenagers younger than 18 can participate in elections. This opportunity gives young people the opportunity to engage in democracy and help their community. Becoming a poll worker is a powerful way to make our elections run smoothly and help others make their voices heard.

If you are eligible to cast a ballot, you can also run for offices like your city council or state legislature. If you don't see elected officials representing you and your community, you can be the change you want to see and run for office!

Those not eligible to cast a ballot can still be civically engaged in their community. They can participate in media advocacy, like starting letter-writing campaigns to representatives of the district or state they live in, or starting a social media campaign to educate their net-



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work about policy issues they care about. They can remind eligible voters in their families, schools, houses of worship, or other social networks about the importance of registration and voting. Looking beyond the electoral process, voters and non-voters alike can volunteer with civic organizations, get involved in a tenant association, participate in a mutual aid group, and organize around other causes.

Fortunately, some communities are even working to expand the right to vote for historically disenfranchised people. A handful of municipi-

palities in California, Maryland, and Vermont, as well as the District of Columbia, allow for noncitizen voting in local elections. In those same three states, there are localities that have lowered the voting age to 16 for either all local elections or just school board elections.

No matter your voting eligibility, to be civically engaged goes beyond voting every four years – it means consistently engaging your community in the democratic process and holding elected officials accountable. ■

Pilot Communities Spotlights

Housing advocates and tenant leaders are canvassing their communities, making tens of thousands of phone calls, and crisscrossing their states to host events that will get low-income renters registered and ready to vote in the 2024 elections. To support these nonpartisan activities, *Our Homes, Our Votes* launched its 2024 Pilot Communities initiative. Five of NLIHC’s State and Tribal Partners are participating in the Pilot Communities initiative, which provides grant funding, technical assistance, a peer learning cohort, swag, and other resources to support nonpartisan voter engagement activities.

Each Pilot Community partner is working with subsidized housing providers and tenant leaders in its region to strategically reach renters at every stage of the electoral process – from voter registration to education to mobilization – and boost voter turnout in subsidized properties. Pilot Community partners are also using new digital tools, including TurboVote, to enhance their voter engagement activities and understand the impact of their work. Takeaways from the Pilot Communities initiative will enable *Our Homes, Our Votes* to provide

even more useful insights, template materials, and other tools in future election cycles.

Learn more about each of our Pilot Community partners below! If you live or work in one of the states where our Pilot Community



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partners are active, reach out to get connected and explore how you can collaborate on nonpartisan voter engagement.



Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania

[The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania](#) is providing technical assistance, materials, trainings, stipends, and other resources to support nearly 50 local partner organizations in promoting voter participation among their constituents, staff, and local communities.



[Georgia Advancing Communities Together, Inc. \(Georgia ACT\)](#) is collaborating with local organizations in the metro Atlanta area on voter registration, voter education, voter ID assistance, and other aspects of nonpartisan voter engagement.



[The Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness \(MCAH\)](#) is expanding partnerships with housing providers, tenant and resident leaders, and shelter providers to host voter registration events, organize tenant town halls, and conduct housing position surveys with Michigan state candidates.



HOUSING NETWORK OF RHODE ISLAND

Through its member network and multisector coalition, [Housing Network of Rhode Island](#) is providing renters in five Rhode Island communities with the tools and resources to educate and mobilize voters through activities including community outreach, rental development canvassing, and social media.

SCANPH

Southern California Association of Non Profit Housing



[The Southern California Association of Nonprofit Housing \(SCANPH\)](#) is empowering leaders in the [Residents United Network \(RUN\)](#) to engage and educate other low-income residents through voter engagement efforts held at affordable housing properties, a tenant-led candidate questionnaire, and media speaking opportunities. ■



VOTE VOTE VOTE

Become an *Our Homes, Our Votes* Affiliate!

The *Our Homes, Our Votes* Affiliates Network provides support for state-, local-, and neighborhood-level civic engagement activities. Any nonpartisan organization that is committed to boosting voter turnout in its community can become an affiliate. Many tenant associations and other resident-led groups participate in the *Our Homes, Our Votes* Affiliates Network. To find a complete list of affiliates and sign up your organization, visit www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/affiliates.

By becoming an affiliate, your organization will join a nationwide network of partners that are registering, educating, and mobilizing voters in this election cycle. All affiliates are invited to join a Google Groups email listserv where *Our Homes, Our Votes* shares new resources and upcoming opportunities to get involved with the campaign and affiliates pose questions or



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exchange ideas with each other. Affiliates also receive enhanced access to *Our Homes, Our Votes* tools and communications materials, including permission to use the *Our Homes, Our Votes* logos and images on co-branded materials.

Our Homes, Our Votes hosts biweekly, virtual office hours on Fridays from 1 to 3 pm ET where affiliates can drop by to brainstorm or workshop their voter and candidate engagement plans. *Our Homes, Our Votes* also seeks to highlight our affiliates' activities in our newsletter, on webinars, and on social media. After the election, *Our Homes, Our Votes* will host a virtual celebration to thank our affiliates for their hard work to get out the vote in this election cycle and strategize for future years. ■

VOTER PERSPECTIVE:

Sharon's Experience in Housing Advocacy and Electoral Engagement

Sharon Underwood's journey into housing advocacy began when she moved from her home into apartments where she witnessed rampant tenant abuse and legal violations. Many of her neighbors were unaware of their rights and lived in fear. Motivated to make a change, Sharon reached out to the Texas Tenants Union (TTU), leading to her involvement with the organization Texas Housers and her eventual role as a Fellow

with the Houser Academy in 2022. Sharon's dedication led her to assist tenants in filing code violations and actively working to improve their living conditions. Her experiences included eye-opening trips to Montgomery, Alabama, and Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she drew parallels between historical injustices and the contemporary struggles of tenants.



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Sharon firmly believes in the power of elections to drive change in housing policies. She remembers hearing about Georgia having a ban on giving voters food and water in polling lines. In Texas, the existence of legislation hostile to tenants' rights underscores the need for renters to vote out landlord-friendly politicians. For Sharon, elections are a crucial avenue for tenants to voice their concerns and push for tenant-friendly laws.

Encouraging electoral engagement among tenants has been challenging. Having grown up in a politically active household, Sharon naturally values voting, but she recognizes that many renters feel disenfranchised. She cites a study by Apartment List that highlights the underrepresentation of renters in American politics and shows that only 49% of renters voted in the 2016 presidential election compared to 67% of homeowners. Renters constitute about 34% of the U.S. population, and their collective voting power could significantly influence housing policies. Despite this potential, many renters do not vote, often feeling their votes don't matter.

Sharon argues that if renter votes were insignificant, there wouldn't be efforts to suppress them. Historically, discriminatory laws have suppressed the votes of marginalized communities to keep them from exercising their power. Sharon saw a discriminatory voting test for African Americans displayed at the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama, that included questions that were impossible to answer, like "how many bubbles are in a bar of soap." If African-Americans during the era of segregation couldn't answer this question, they weren't allowed to register to vote. Sharon argues that modern voter suppression of renters and low-income communities parallel this historical disenfranchisement,

“ Sharon argues that if renter votes were insignificant, there wouldn't be efforts to suppress them. ”

keeping these communities from expressing their political will. This is proof of the power of voting.

Education is key to overcoming these challenges. Sharon stresses the need to inform tenants about their voting rights and the importance of their participation in elections. She employs various strategies to encourage tenant voting, including personal reminders, assistance with vote-by-mail applications, transportation assistance, and social media to highlight the significance of voting. The continuous rise in rents and the lack of supportive policies should galvanize renters to vote. To strengthen renters' rights, it is essential to elect officials who align with tenant values and beliefs. Sharon believes in the power of a united renter electorate to bring about necessary changes in housing policies and advocates for bold and vigilant participation in elections. By organizing and encouraging tenants to vote, Sharon continues to fight for housing justice and electoral engagement, believing that every renter's vote counts and can drive significant policy changes. ■



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Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council Leaders Get Out the Renter Vote

A recent webinar in the *Our Homes, Our Votes*: 2024 webinar series, “Tenant Organizing and Elections: Getting Out the Renter Vote,” showcased the essential role of tenant leaders in mobilizing their communities for electoral participation. The webinar provided a platform for five resident leaders from the Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council, which represents 42 public housing highrises and over 5,000 residents, to share their insights and strategies on nonpartisan voter registration and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) activities. Courtney Cooperman, project manager of the *Our Homes, Our Votes* campaign, facilitated the webinar.

Resident leaders Shirley Brown, Gloria Coles, Mattie Henderson, Mary McGovern, and Tamir Mohamud shared various methods they employ to increase electoral turnout. These strategies include voter registration tabling, serving as election judges, and maintaining a record of new residents to ensure continuous voter registration efforts. They stressed the importance of showing skeptical neighbors how voting directly impacts their living conditions and communities, highlighting that low-income housing is often government-funded and significantly influenced by federal and local policies.

Addressing the skepticism surrounding the democratic process, the leaders advised giving tangible examples of how voting can bring about change in their buildings and communities. They stressed that if voting is perceived as unimportant by the residents, resident concerns will also be deemed unimportant by elected officials. They cited the historical sig-

nificance of the right to vote, noting that many have fought and died for this right, making it a powerful expression of collective power, particularly for low-income tenants. The leaders highlighted the importance of holding officials accountable post-election by attending public meetings and monitoring the actions of elected representatives. They spoke of the importance of reassuring tenants that their votes do count and that voters can use tools such as their respective state’s Secretary of State website to verify that their vote has been counted.

For advocates pursuing voter engagement, the leaders advised maintaining a nonpartisan stance to avoid alienating any community members. They encouraged sharing all available information about voting, providing sample ballots, and demonstrating the importance of the right to vote through personal experiences and historical context. Engaging bilingual communities was noted as particularly vital, as exemplified by Mohamud’s efforts with Somali voters. Visibility and partnerships were identified as key strategies for GOTV efforts in scattered communities. Making oneself highly visible, collaborating with neighborhood associations and social workers, encouraging mail-in ballots, and coordinating rides to the polls were all suggested as effective methods to boost turnout.

The webinar provided practical strategies to support nonpartisan voter engagement efforts and underscored the essential role of resident leaders in the electoral process.

Visit www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/webinars-2024 to watch the webinar or stay up to date on other *Our Homes, Our Votes* webinars. ■

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.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET

The U.S. Congress is responsible for enacting a budget by the time the new fiscal year (FY) begins on October 1, 2024. As of the time of writing, Congress will likely need to pass a stopgap funding extension (also known as a “continuing resolution”) in September because appropriations bills will not be completed by October.

The U.S. House of Representatives’ Committee on Appropriations reviewed and passed its draft FY25 spending bill for HUD programs on July 10 by a party-line vote, with 31 Republicans supporting and 26 Democrats opposing the proposed spending bill. While the bill proposes a slight boost to vital programs like Housing Choice Vouchers, it does not provide resources at the scale required to address the nation’s affordable housing and homelessness crisis and cuts key investments used by communities to address pressing housing needs.

Meanwhile, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) has reportedly moved forward with distributing topline funding allocations – known as “302(b)s” – to the 12 appropriations subcommittees, including the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) Subcommittee that governs HUD funding. However, these topline allocations do not have support from committee Republicans. Negotiations over topline spending stalled between Chair Murray and Vice Chair Susan Collins (R-ME) after the Senate’s Committee on Armed Services advanced a defense funding bill that would provide \$28 billion more than the spending limit allowed under the *Fiscal Responsibility*



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Act (FRA), the agreement reached in 2023 to raise the federal debt ceiling in exchange for imposing caps on federal spending in FY24 and to limit funding increases to only 1% in FY25.

Senate Democrats, including Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Chair Murray, are insisting that any increase to defense spending above the caps must be paired with an equal increase to domestic spending. In FY24, Congress was able to reach a side agreement to provide an extra \$69 billion in emergency spending above the FRA-dictated spending caps. Providing funding in FY25 over limits imposed by the FRA will be crucial to ensuring domestic programs – including HUD’s vital affordable housing and homelessness programs – have sufficient funding in the coming year to continue operations.

Funding for HUD’s programs must increase every year to maintain the number of people and communities served. Cuts to programs like Housing Choice Vouchers, Public Housing, and Homelessness Assistance Grants also reduce the number of people who are served by these programs or allow their homes to fall into disrepair, putting them at risk of housing insecurity, eviction, and, in the worst cases, homelessness.

While the road to enacting a robust FY25 spending bill for HUD’s vital affordable housing and homelessness resources is steep, together we have achieved historic resources and protections for renters, and together we can continue pushing Congress to ensure HUD’s programs and the people they serve are protected in the FY25 budget.

SUPREME COURT PUNISHES UNHOUSED PEOPLE FOR NOT HAVING A HOME

The Supreme Court of the United States issued on June 28 a ruling in *City of Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson* allowing jurisdictions to arrest and ticket unhoused people for sleeping outside, even when adequate shelter or housing is not available. NLIHC strongly condemned the ruling.

The Supreme Court's decision comes as more and more elected officials choose to arrest, ticket, or fine people experiencing homelessness for sleeping outside, even when their jurisdictions have failed to provide adequate housing and shelter. According to HUD, more than 650,000 people experienced homelessness on any given night in 2023, the highest level on record. As homelessness has increased, many state and local elected officials face political pressure to respond to the crisis, but too many have turned to politically expedient, ineffective, and inhumane measures that punish unhoused people for not having a home.

Arrests and fines are not solutions to homelessness because they do not address the underlying causes of the crisis. Instead, these measures make it more difficult for people to access the affordable housing, health services, and employment necessary to become rehoused. Decades of research demonstrate that the most effective approach to addressing homelessness is to provide individuals with immediate access to stable, affordable housing and voluntary supportive services, such as case management, mental health and substance use services, and employment services to help improve housing stability and well-being. This approach - known as "Housing First" - has garnered bipartisan support and is credited with having cut veteran homelessness in half since 2010.

NATIONAL TENANTS BILL OF RIGHTS

NLIHC, the National Housing Law Project (NHLP), and the Tenant Union Federation (TUF) launched in June the [National Tenants Bill of Rights \(NTBOR\)](#) in a major step towards shifting more power to renters and advancing tenant protections. Read the National Tenants Bill of Rights, section summaries, and a fact-sheet at: <https://nlihc.org/national-tenants-bill-rights>

Solutions to our nation's housing crisis must include strong and enforceable tenant protections to help prevent housing instability and homelessness, redress long-standing racial and social inequities, and advance housing justice. Written with direct input from tenant leaders, people with lived experience of housing instability, housing law experts, and advocates nationwide, the NTBOR provides a bold, legislative framework to enshrine tenants' rights throughout their tenancy in private as well as federally assisted properties. The NTBOR sets out seven essential rights that establish a baseline of tenant protections in the rental housing market. These rights follow a tenant's experience from applying for housing and signing a lease to living in their home.

NLIHC urges advocates - including individuals, organizations, elected officials, and candidates for elected office - to [endorse](#) the National Tenants Bill of Rights. The endorsement link can be found at NLIHC's Legislative Action Center: <https://nlihc.org/take-action>



NATIONAL TENANTS BILL OF RIGHTS

REFORMING DISASTER RECOVERY ACT

NLIHC is requesting signatures on a letter regarding the bipartisan “Reforming Disaster Recovery Act” ([S.1686/H.R.5940](#)). The bill would permanently authorize HUD’s Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program, which provides flexible grants to help presidentially declared disaster areas rebuild affordable housing and other infrastructure, while also making critical reforms to ensure more efficient and equitable disaster recovery.

With the increasing frequency of hurricanes and flooding, we need Congress to establish a better way for communities to quickly access the funding they need. Delays hurt everyone and hit Black, Latino, and Indigenous people, low-income communities, people with disabilities, and immigrants with the fewest resources to rebuild particularly hard.

To sign the letter, visit NLIHC’s Legislative Action Center at: www.nlihc.org/take-action ■



Strengthening Voting Rights through the “Unhoused VOTE Act”



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Advocates, service providers, and people with lived experience of homelessness are working hard to close the voter turnout gap and empower unhoused voters to participate in the 2024 elections. Despite these efforts, many unhoused voters still face barriers to casting their ballots. States have a patchwork of policies and procedures for voting without a permanent address, and some states make the process more complex and burdensome than others. Federal policy changes are necessary to make voting fully accessible for unhoused people.

A bill introduced in 2023 by Representative Nikema Williams (D-GA-05) and Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ), the “Unhoused Voter Opportunity through Elections Act” (known as the “Unhoused VOTE Act” ([H.R. 5294/S. 2971](#))), would affirm that no person may be denied the right to vote because they do not have a traditional home. Representative Williams introduced the bill on the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, a pivotal event in the 1960s-era Civil Rights Movement that resulted in landmark voting rights and fair housing laws. Ensuring that all unhoused voters have fair and equal access to the democratic process is part of the unfinished business of the Civil Rights Movement.

The “Unhoused VOTE Act” contains a range of provisions that would make voting and registration more readily accessible to people experiencing homelessness. The bill would direct election officials to consult with homeless services providers when determining the location of ballot drop-boxes. The bill would also require emergency shelters to distribute voter registration forms, offer assistance with voter registration applications, and send completed voter registration forms to state election officials.

“**The ‘Unhoused VOTE Act’ contains a range of provisions that would make voting and registration more readily accessible to people experiencing homelessness...**”

The “Unhoused VOTE Act” would make it easier for unhoused voters to prove their eligibility by allowing them to attest to their residence in writing, under penalty of perjury, and to treat any documents issued by the criminal-legal system as an acceptable form of voter ID. The bill also requires that election officials provide clear online information about voting while experiencing homelessness and proactively reach out to shelters with information about voter registration deadlines and election dates. To ensure that election officials are prepared to support unhoused voters, the bill directs the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) and U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) to develop best practices for election officials. The bill also creates an EAC grant program to fund state and local government activities that facilitate unhoused citizens’ access to the ballot.

Taken together, the policy reforms included in the “Unhoused VOTE Act” would make the democratic process more inclusive of unhoused citizens and empower them to make their voices heard. ■

Research Updates

OUT OF REACH

NLIHC released in June our annual *Out of Reach* report, which compares the wages people earn and the price of modest rental housing in every state, metropolitan area, and county in the U.S. The report shows that while most indicators suggest the economy is strong, affordable rental homes are out of reach for millions of low-wage workers, seniors, families, and other renters. The report's "Housing Wage" is an estimate of the hourly wage full-time workers must earn to afford a rental home at fair market rent without spending more than 30% of their incomes. Nationally, the 2024 Housing Wage is \$32.11 per hour for a modest two-bedroom rental home and \$26.74 per hour for a modest one-bedroom rental home.

In no state, metropolitan area, or county in the U.S. can a full-time worker earning the federal minimum wage, or the applicable state or local minimum wage, afford a modest two-bedroom rental home at fair market rent. Furthermore, of the nation's 20 most common occupations, 14 pay median wages lower than the one-bedroom housing wage. These 14 occupations account for more than 64 million workers, or 42% of the workforce.

This year's report focuses on the issue of homelessness. The number of people experiencing homelessness has been on the rise in recent years, with an estimated 653,000 people experiencing homelessness on a given night in 2023 - the highest number ever recorded by HUD during its annual Point in Time (PIT) count. In a misguided attempt to address the challenge, many communities have increased efforts to criminalize homelessness by ticketing, fining, and arresting people for having no place to call home. However, homelessness is a housing problem, and expanding housing assistance is the best way to reverse rising rates of home-

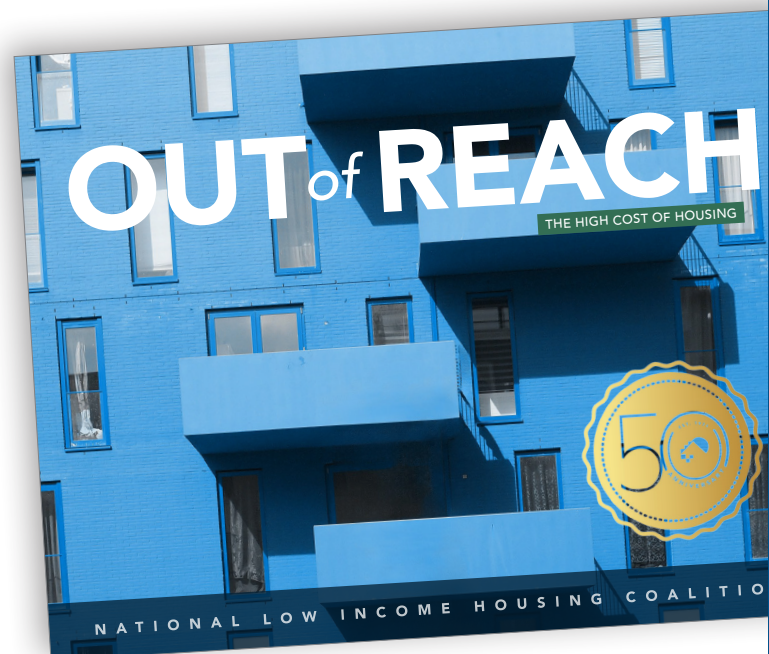
lessness. Criminalizing homelessness is not only counterproductive, failing to address the underlying causes of homelessness, but also needlessly cruel.

Despite rising wages, cooling inflation, and low unemployment rates, many renters continue to struggle with the cost of housing. The report highlights how addressing this challenge will require long-term federal investments in affordable housing. As demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, federal policies and resources can play an important role in preventing evictions and homelessness and addressing housing instability among renters with the lowest incomes. Establishing an effective federal housing safety net will require sustained investments to expand both short- and long-term rental assistance, build new deeply affordable housing, preserve the existing stock of housing, and provide stronger renter protections.

Visit <https://nlihc.org/oor> to read the report and access data for your community.



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NATIONAL RENTER SURVEY

Much of what is known about renters in the U.S. comes from national datasets like the American Housing Survey, Census Household Pulse Survey, and American Community Survey. While these resources provide considerable detail on topics like rental housing quality, rent costs, and renter demographics, they include only limited information on topics like landlord-tenant relationships, barriers to applying for housing assistance, rental junk fees, and challenges faced in obtaining accessible and inclusive housing. Having a reliable, nationwide source of numerical data on the common barriers renters face to remaining safely and stably housed in their communities of choice would be an invaluable resource for informing advocacy efforts and identifying effective policy interventions.

From 2024 to 2025, NLIHC will address this information gap by conducting a nationally representative survey of renters. The primary goal of this survey is to supplement existing data sources by gathering new, actionable data to inform our advocacy on federal policies that affect renters. Visit <https://nlihc.org/national-renters-survey> to follow the latest updates on the progress of the survey.

NATURAL HAZARDS AND FEDERALLY ASSISTED HOUSING

NLIHC and the Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation (PAHRC) released a joint report, *The National Risk Index and Racial Equity for Renters*, in June. The report assesses whether the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Risk Index (NRI) reflects known disparities in natural hazard risk for renters of color. The report shows that some parts of the NRI may not fully reflect the differences in

natural hazard risks faced by renters, particularly for Black and Hispanic households. For this reason, the report urges caution in using the index to guide decision-making around mitigation and recovery planning resources targeted to renters. Specifically, the report argues that planners and policymakers should use alternative measures within the NRI when deciding how to prioritize these resources, or they should supplement the NRI with other metrics that better capture racial inequities. Read the full report at: <https://shorturl.at/i209Z> ■



Following Rollback of Civil Rights Laws, Racial Disparities in Voter Turnout Grow

In *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), the U.S. Supreme Court rolled back key provisions of the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*, the landmark civil rights law that prohibits racial discrimination in voting. The *Voting Rights Act* required states and localities with a history of racially discriminatory voting policies to receive the federal government's approval, known as "preclearance," before making any changes to their voting laws or policies. The Supreme Court narrowly ruled in *Shelby County* that the formula used to determine which jurisdictions must receive preclearance is outdated and cannot be used until Congress approves a new formula. More than a decade later, Congress has still not approved a new formula, which limits the power of the *Voting Rights Act*.

The *Shelby County* decision effectively gave states the green light to change their voting laws, even if these laws have a harmful impact on historically disenfranchised communities. In the decade following the *Shelby County* decision, states passed [nearly 100 restrictive voting laws](#). [New research](#) from the nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice shows that the difference in voter turnout between white and non-white voters, known as the racial voter turnout gap, has grown consistently in this period.

In every region of the country, the racial turnout gap in the 2022 midterm election was larger than any midterm since at least 2006. White Americans voted at higher rates than non-white Americans in every state but Hawaii in the 2022 midterm elections. Racial turnout gaps exist within every income group and across all levels of education.

The racial turnout gap is growing across the U.S. – but it is growing most quickly in regions

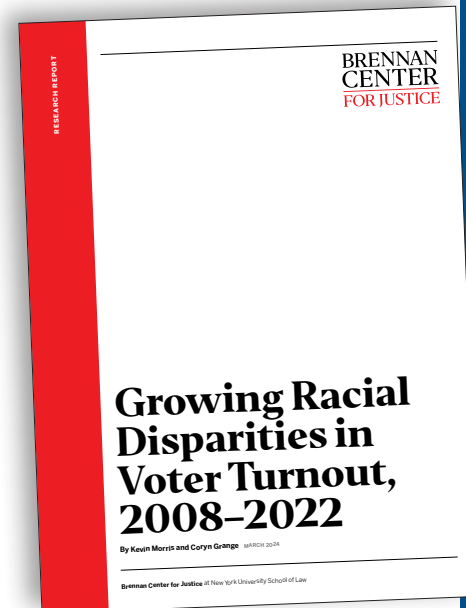
that have a history of racially discriminatory voting policies and that were affected by the *Shelby County* decision. These jurisdictions no longer need to obtain permission to make changes to their voting policies, and many have responded by passing voter suppression laws that disproportionately impact voters of color.

The Brennan Center's report finds that the overall white-nonwhite turnout gap grew about four points larger in counties formerly covered by preclearance, and the white-Black turnout gap grew about five points large in these counties, than the gaps would have grown if preclearance were still in effect.

This research highlights the need for stronger federal civil rights protections and the importance of engaging historically disenfranchised voters, especially voters in Black communities and other communities of color targeted by voter suppression policies, so that they can overcome the obstacles to voting and make their voices heard. Read the full report at: www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/growing-racial-disparities-voter-turnout-2008-2022 ■



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