

—20 Days Away

 PURPOSE



2020 Election Messaging Guide

SPREAD THE WORD BEFORE NOVEMBER 3RD

In partnership with

VIACOMCBS

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Why it matters now



In this election, the most powerful action we can take is engaging and empowering *all* Americans to be able to vote.

How you can show up

In the last election, millions of us didn't vote, couldn't vote, or didn't think our votes mattered. But voting is our most powerful lever of change in a democratic society — and it only works if it includes all of us.

Increasing voter turnout has to be a shared mission. Every organisation, business and individual has the ability to activate their networks to exercise the power of their vote. Even in the final few days, it's not too late to make a difference.

This handbook is a nonpartisan guide to crafting impactful and responsible messages to spread vital information, encourage people to take action, and create more noise around the importance of voting in the last weeks before the election. Because, even basic voting information is not always obvious.

Before showing up online, consider the following:

Who are you talking to?

What do you know about your networks? Do you know if they have plans to vote, or what barriers and motivations to vote they experience? For example, voter suppression tactics disproportionately disenfranchise racial minorities. (See below for voter insights)

Where can you show up?

What sorts of online communities, networks and subcultures do you have the power to activate? For example, specific fan bases, community groups or social media audiences.

When are you taking action?

Make sure your posts and calls to action are timely. For example, don't suggest people request their ballot if the deadline has passed. There is more information on this below!

01

Check your registration

Timing:

Before your state's registration [deadline](#)*

*Final registration deadlines are defined state by state but typically fall in October. Before posting, make sure to double check your state's registration deadline. It is not important to break news about voter registration deadline extensions. Appeals and stays often either reverse extensions or prevent them from taking effect after rulings are handed down — wait to see what at least three reputable resources say when deadlines are being litigated.

What needs to happen:

Make sure people know when and how to check if they are registered at their current address.

Hashtags to use:

[#VoteForYourLife](#)

[#VoteEarlyDay](#)

[#Election2020](#)

What you can say:

Registering is easy. It takes two minutes or less to register online.

Don't wait until the last minute. Some states do allow in-person registration during early voting periods or on Election Day, but register as soon as possible!

Find out your state registration deadline. Remind people that each state has a different voter registration deadline. Some have passed but many haven't! Tell them to check whether they are registered at their current address and register now if they can.

If people have moved. You must update your registration if you've moved.

Register where you live. You can (and should) vote where you live for school.

Sample Messaging

Are you ready to vote this November? 🗣️🗳️

Not registered or not sure? It takes only 30 seconds to check. 👁️👁️

Go to [vote4yourlife.com](https://www.vote4yourlife.com) today!

What you can do:

- Share & promote one of these trusted registration tools:
 - [Vote for Your Life](#)
 - [Reclaim Your Vote](#)
 - [Vote.org](#)
 - [BallotReady.org](#)
 - [VoteAmerica.com](#)
- Model good behavior by talking about how you, or people in your organization, have checked or updated their own registration.

Mail-in voting is legitimate & accepted

Timing:

- Make sure you're aware of ballot requests and postmark deadlines. Check any of the sources below for details.
- However, if people in your network have already applied, remind them to double check their state's request deadline before posting.

What needs to happen:

- Support anyone who chooses to vote safely by mail or drop off their ballot.

What you can say:

- **Mail-in voting is legitimate & accepted.** Assure people that they don't have to be nervous about mail-in voting! Mail-in voting isn't new.
- **Focus on the process:**
 - **Don't wait.** Encourage your networks to mail their ballot no later than Vote Early Day on Saturday, October 24th. The earlier the better!
 - **Don't forget to check your state's rules.** Remind people to check their state's rules like signature and postage stamp requirements for their mail-in ballot to ensure their vote counts.
 - **Drop off your ballot.** Don't have time to mail your ballot the week before Election Day? Let people know that in almost every state, they can also drop it off at one of their county's polling places by 8 p.m. on Election Day. They can go to VoteForYourLife.com to find out.

What you can do:

- Share & promote these sources of information and help with mail-in voting:
 - [Vote for Your Life](https://VoteForYourLife.com)
 - [Reclaim Your Vote](https://ReclaimYourVote.com)
 - vote.org/covid-19
 - ballotready.org/request_ballot

Hashtags to use:

- [#VoteForYourLife](https://VoteForYourLife.com)
- [#VoteEarlyDay](https://VoteEarlyDay.com)
- [#Election2020](https://Election2020.com)

Sample Messaging

Don't wait to request your ballot and mail it in, you can do it now!
Learn about your best options to return your ballot or make a plan to vote at VoteForYourLife.com #VoteEarly #VoteReady #VoteForYourLife

You can still vote in-person but vote early if you can

Timing:

- From now to election day

What needs to happen:

- Voting early has never been more important. Make sure all voters within your network have the information and options to vote in-person or by mail - early, safely and securely.

What is Vote Early Day:

- Celebrated on Saturday, October 24, 2020, Vote Early Day is a first-ever holiday that aims to ensure millions more Americans can take advantage of their ability to cast their ballots early this fall.

Hashtags to use:

- [#VoteForYourLife](#)
- [#VoteEarlyDay](#)
- [#Election2020](#)

What you can say:

- **Voting early is possible in-person.** Let people know if they still want to vote in person but are nervous about long lines or crowds, they should be able to vote early! More than 99% of Americans can vote early this election year.
- **Know where you can vote early.** Encourage people to make sure they know where their polling site is. **Early vote locations may be different from where you vote on Election Day.**
- **ID requirements change.** Remind your connections to be sure to check the ID requirements for their state and bring the materials they need to vote at the polls.
- **Even on Election Day, people should vote early in the day.** That's why this messaging should work all the way through Election Day. Hit home on the vote early call to action in your networks - this is more important this year than ever!

Sample Messaging

In the middle of a pandemic, we need to do what we can to make sure everyone votes safely.

How? Early voting. 📍 [voteformylife.com](https://www.voteformylife.com) 📍

What you can do:

- Help amplify [Vote Early Day](#) in the lead up to 10/24
- Share & promote Vote for Your Life and encourage your networks to identify their early voting sites by using the [Vote for Your Life](#) tool.

Keep the momentum going post-election

Timing

- On and after Election Day – 11/3

What needs to happen:

- People should make sure every vote counts and continue to stay civically engaged after the election

What you can say:

- **When casting your vote.** If you experience any issues at the polls, know you can call or text the Election Protection Hotline anytime to get support at 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683).
- **Don't stop after the election!** There are many ways to continue staying involved after the election. Remind your networks that our elected officials work for us. And we can all do our part in helping to hold them accountable.
- **Local elections matter too.** There are many local elections, from state-wide congressional to community board races!
- **There is a lane for everyone.** People can find ways to stay informed and involved that work best for them throughout the year.

What you can do:

- Share ways for people to stay involved apart from presidential elections
- Continue to highlight relevant local elections in the communities and states where you are active

Hashtags to use:

- [#VoteForYourLife](#)
- [#Election2020](#)

Sample Messaging

We made it to election day! 🗳️ But the work doesn't stop here. There are tons of ways to stay active post-Election Day, like volunteering with an organization or getting involved in local elections.

Messaging tips & tricks



Try to...



Focus on voting, and not on specific candidates or issues. If you do decide to highlight an issue, make sure to focus on facts only, and stay away from harmful, non-inclusive or partisan rhetoric.

Ensure voting information is simple, accessible and clear.

Be empathetic and encouraging, especially if speaking to first time voters.

Lead with information. Encourage people to know their rights and how to act on them.

Consider the impact of your messages. What effect might the things you share and say have on people?

Apply light social pressure by highlighting the community of voters, but don't shame people if they're not yet involved or informed.

If you are an individual, walk people through your plan to vote. Discussing the voting process increases voter turnout.

Ask people to make a pledge to vote. Making a commitment to vote, increases the likelihood of individuals showing up.

Give your audience resources and links to find relevant information to their situation and state, rather than sharing dates or rules directly.

Try not to...



Exclude certain groups. Lead with inclusivity and non-partisanship. Leave room in your conversation for every voice to be heard

Make assumptions about your audience. Don't assume you know what they know. People are on different points of the civic engagement journey and some may not be aware of what one might consider "basic voter information".

Contribute to stigma. When we're conscious of how we describe people, places and things, we can avoid unintentionally reinforcing negative stereotypes.

Use idioms or phrases you don't know the origin of. If we're unsure where a figure of speech comes from, it may be best to avoid using it. Certain phrases have negative connotations that you may not intend to convey.

Spread misinformation. Make sure you fact check statistics and word of mouth information before sharing it with your audiences.

The information in this document is intended as a guide only. You are responsible for any information you share about voting. If you share false information about voting, whether or not intentional, it could have negative consequences for you or your audiences. As a best practice, consider double or triple checking any information about voting-related deadlines, guidelines, and rules prior to sharing — or encourage your audiences to check themselves.

Audiences + Civic Engagement

Below are some voting insights that uncover some of the barriers, motivations and engagement tactics to help your messages resonate even more strongly with your audience.

General Population

- **Voters are worried about difficulties in voting.** 49% of registered voters expect to have difficulties casting a ballot in the November presidential election. ([source](#))
- **Interest in the election is high.** A 56% majority say they are more interested in politics than they were in 2016 - which was one of the highest interest elections in recent years. ([source](#))

Youth Vote

- **Digital engagement matters.** Research finds that youth who engage in politics online are most likely to vote and engage in person. ([source](#))
- **Young people believe they can create change.** 83% of young people in the U.S. say they believe young people have the power to change the country, 60% feel like they're part of a movement that will vote to express its views, and 79% of young people say the COVID-19 pandemic has helped them realize that politics impacts their everyday lives. ([source](#))

- **Outreach is still needed.**

Almost half of youth (53%) say they haven't been contacted by a political campaign this year and a third (32%) said they didn't know if they could register to vote online. ([source](#))

- **Humor works.** Humor, memes, satire and other acts of engaging with or remixing popular culture are important tactics in the repertoire of digital civic engagement by youth. However, you'll want to be careful that your use of humor doesn't overshadow the gravity of this election, or accidentally offend your audience. ([source](#))

Immigrant Vote

- **Immigrants are a powerful force.** More than 23 million U.S. immigrants will be eligible to vote in the 2020 presidential election, making up roughly 10% of the nation's overall electorate. ([source](#))

Latina/o/x Vote

- **Outreach to Latinx voters is crucial.** The number of Latinx eligible voters who didn't vote has exceeded the number of those who did vote in every presidential election since 1996. ([source](#))

Black Vote

- **Black voter turnout has been trending upwards.** Unlike other minority groups whose increasing electoral muscle has been driven mainly by population growth, Black people's rising share of the vote in the past four presidential elections has been the result of rising turnout rates. ([source](#))
- These participation milestones are notable not just in light of the long history of Black disenfranchisement, but also in light of recently-enacted state voter identification laws that some critics contended would suppress turnout disproportionately among Black and other minority groups. ([source](#))
- **However, in the last election the Black voter turnout declined.** The Black voter turnout rate /

declined for the first time in 20 years in the last presidential election, falling to 59.6% in 2016 after reaching a record-high 66.6% in 2012. ([source](#))

Asian Vote

- **Asian voters are a powerful constituency.** The population of Asians eligible to vote will reach an estimated 11 million in 2020, which is more than double the 5 million who were eligible to vote in 2000, accounting for 5% of next year's electorate. ([source](#))

Women's Vote

- **Women are turning up.** Women have turned out to vote at slightly higher rates than men since 1998. ([source](#))

Kids & Civic Education

- **Early civic participation results in skill development.** Children who are exposed to civic participation at an early age develop the following skills: stronger public speaking skills, collaboration, and better appreciation for diversity. ([source](#))

Campaign Toolkits & Additional Resources



[Vote For Your Life
Styleguide + Toolkit](#)



[Become a Vote Early
Day partner](#)



Experiencing a voting
problem and need to
talk to a trained Election
Protection volunteer?

Call or text
866-OUR-VOTE
(866-687-8683) now.