

OUR HOMES, OUR VOTES

2020

BECAUSE HOUSING IS BUILT WITH BALLOTS



NATIONAL LOW INCOME
HOUSING COALITION

**Please standby.
We will begin momentarily.**

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Getting Candidates on the Record

March 19, 2020

General Logistics



- We will allow for time at the end of today's webinar for questions. If you have a question, please use the Q&A box in your webinar browser.
- We will provide access to both a video recording and a copy of today's slides to all participants following the webinar.
- If you are experiencing any technical difficulties, please send an email to Brooke Schipporeit at bschipporeit@nlihc.org.

Agenda



1. Introduction
2. Notes about COVID-19 and the elections
3. Candidate engagement and staying non-partisan
4. Questionnaires and fact sheets
5. Candidate forums
6. Town hall meetings
7. Candidate visits
8. Upcoming topics for webinars and podcasts

Presenters



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INTRODUCTION

Automatic voting machine with privacy
curtain, invented in Iowa, 1898
Gift of Rockwell Manufacturing Company

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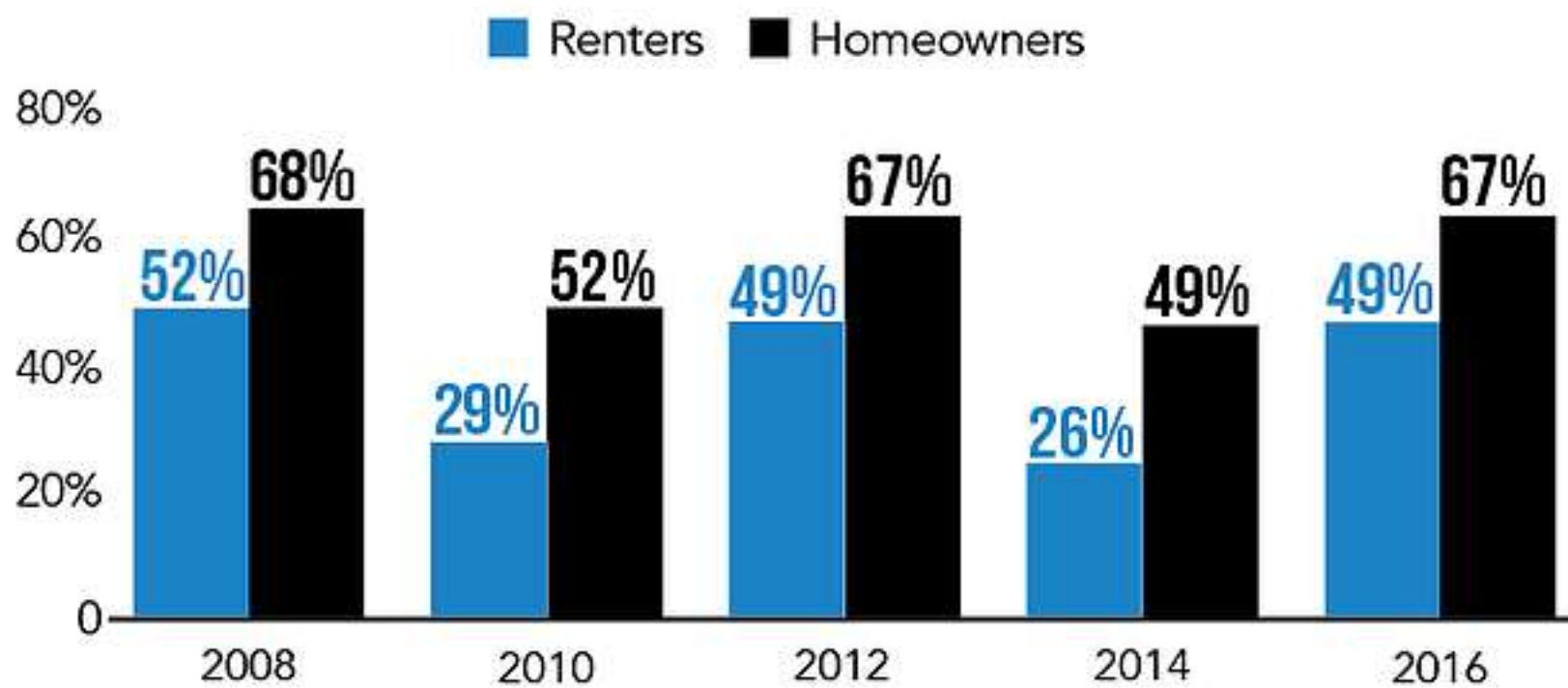
Engaging Voters and Candidates



Our Homes, Our Votes is NLIHC's voter engagement effort focusing on increasing voter registration and turnout among low-income housing renters and advocates.

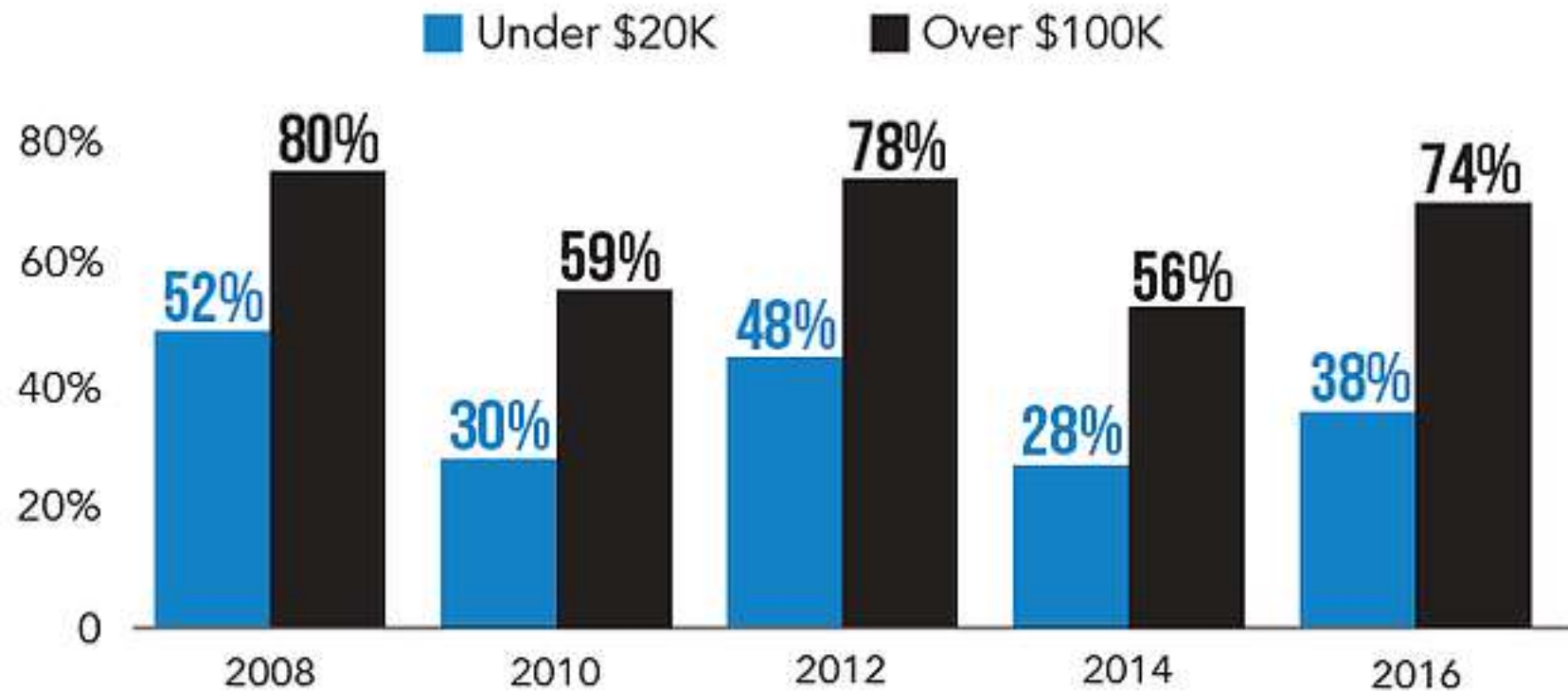


U.S. CITIZENS WHO REPORTED VOTING IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS BY HOUSING TENURE (2008 TO 2016)



Source: November 2006-2016 Current Population Survey data

U.S. CITIZENS WHO REPORTED VOTING IN NOVEMBER ELECTIONS BY FAMILY INCOME (2008 TO 2016)



Source: November 2006-2016 Current Population Survey data

83%

of the public agrees that elected officials are not paying enough attention to the cost of housing and the need for more affordable housing.



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Source: Public Opinion Poll Feb 25-Mar 4, 2019 Hart Research Associates

76%

say they are more likely to vote for a candidate that has a detailed plan for making housing more affordable.





COVID-19 Response and Elections



Call to Action! COVID-19



The Issue: Additional resources are needed to mitigate harm from the COVID-19 pandemic

The Ask: Any comprehensive response should include resources to help ensure housing stability for low-income individuals and people experiencing homelessness.

nlihc.org/coronavirus-and-housing-homelessness

Coronavirus and the elections



Primaries: Many states are rescheduling or canceling Presidential primary elections

Strategies:

1. Promote voting by mail
 - ACLU has a great resource available at <https://tinyurl.com/vdagfub>
2. Plan voter education events, candidate forums, and town halls as remote events
 - Scheduling for end of summer or early autumn are strong strategies
3. Make voters aware of online voter registration tools that can be accessed via phone or tablet

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Nonpartisan Candidate Engagement

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Legal Considerations for Nonprofits



501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations ARE allowed to participate in voter registration efforts!

501(c)(3)s CAN

- Register voters
- Educate voters
- Engage candidates on issues
- Get voters to the polls

As long as all efforts and activities remain NON-PARTISAN!

501(c)(3)s CANNOT

- Make endorsements of any political candidates.
- Donate money, resources, or time to any particular candidate.
- Any staff engaged in partisan political activities **MUST** do so without representing the organization, **NEVER** on staff time, and **NEVER** using 501(c)(3) resources.

Staying Nonpartisan with Candidates



Never criticize candidate statements

- Add perspective
- Correct the record

Do NOT Rank or Rate Candidates

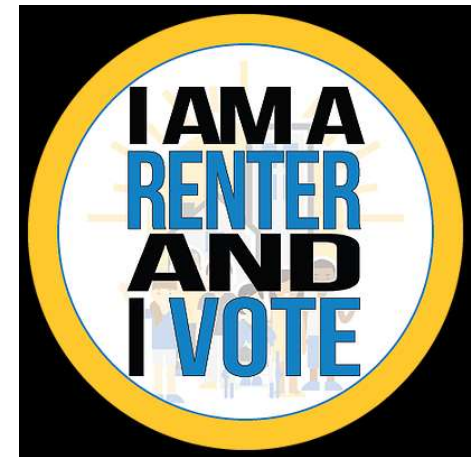
- Constitutes an endorsement

Legislative Scorecards

- Only for incumbent legislators—distinct from voter guides

What about nonpartisan candidate elections?

- Still not okay to endorse candidates or coordinate with campaigns



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Questionnaires and Fact Sheets

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Implementing a Legislative Candidate Survey



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What Is The Reason For Doing It?

Simple Answer:

ENGAGEMENT!!





Engagement with Two Separate Target Audiences:

- 1) Candidates for state house and senate races
- 2) Continuums of Care / Local Planning Bodies



Goals With Candidates

- 1) Introducing homelessness as an issue for them to have on their radar
 - 2) Finding out what they actually know about the issue
- *This will inform the way you interact with them, if elected*

Goals With Candidates

3) Assessing whether they could be a potential “ally” or “obstacle”

➤ *Developing possible “champions”*

4) Putting our organization’s name in front of them

➤ *Greasing the wheels for future engagement*

Goals With CoCs / LPBs

1) Informing community stakeholders about candidates running for office in districts that include their service area



Goals With CoCs / LPBs

2) Motivating them to reach out to candidates and to engage as appropriate based on the “ally” or “obstacle” assessment

- *Education at the district level!!*
- *The ground game at the local level empowers action at the state level.*

Education At The District Level:

- *Correspondence, introducing the issue and stakeholders “on the ground” in-district*
- *Invitation to attend a meeting(s)*
- *Invitation to make a site visit with a local provider(s)*

Remember The “Long Game”

Be aware of the value of the “long game” in establishing and maintaining relationships. Even if they lose the election, the candidate may continue to be involved in other community capacities and/or may run for office again.

Engage with people of influence (for today and the future).



Questionnaires – Best Practices



Questionnaires serve two purposes:

1. Collect information about candidates' views for voters
2. Inform candidates about the range of issues that are important to your organization

Questionnaires should be publicly posted and shared once completed

- Develop a plan for how the answers will be shared, and indicate to candidates how you will distribute their answers

Provide clear instructions

- Word limit
- Clear deadline
- How to submit

Questionnaires – Considerations and Guidelines



- Share with all candidates
- Use open ended questions
- Ask questions on a range of issues
- Do not ask for pledges of support or compare candidate's responses to organization's views
- Give candidates a reasonable amount of time to respond
- Make your survey brief to ensure a good response rate
- Do NOT modify candidate responses in any way

Questionnaires – What Happens if a Candidate Doesn't Respond



- Completely acceptable to list “Did not respond” for their responses.
- Remind candidates ahead of deadline and let them know that “Did not respond” will be used if no response is received.
- If you decided to print campaign contact information, only use that which is factual (name, address, etc.) and can be found on their website/official materials.

Candidate Fact Sheets



Inform the Debate

- Provide data for candidates to kickstart and clarify discussion of homelessness and housing shortages

Good Data Sources

- NLIHC Housing Profiles <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state>
- National Housing Preservation Database <https://preservationdatabase.org/reports/preservation-profiles/>
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
 - National and State Housing Fact Sheets <https://www.cbpp.org/research/national-and-state-housing-data-fact-sheets>
- HUD CART (<https://egis.hud.gov/cart/>)

Candidate Fact Sheets



Propose Solutions

- Tell candidates in advance what the best solutions are; this is a chance to inform their platforms

Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020 Presidential Example

- <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Solutions-to-the-Affordable-Housing-Crisis.pdf>

The thumbnail shows the cover of a report titled 'SOLUTIONS TO THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS' in large, bold, red font. Below the title, the date 'AUGUST 15, 2019' is printed in a smaller, blue font. To the right of the title is the 'OUR HOMES, OUR VOTES 2020' logo, which includes the tagline 'BECAUSE HOUSING IS BUILT WITH BALLOTS'. The main body of the report cover contains two paragraphs of text. The first paragraph, titled 'THE NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS CONTINUES TO WORSEN', discusses the challenges faced by low-income households. The second paragraph, titled 'THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WANT ACTION', cites a national poll about housing priorities. At the bottom of the cover, the text 'POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ALL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES' is displayed in bold, red font. The entire report cover is set against a dark background with a subtle American flag pattern on the left side.



Forum and Town Halls



Candidate Forums and Town Hall Meetings



Candidate forums and town hall meetings are public events that allow candidates to have open discussion of topics and issues.

- Forums tend to be more moderator-led discussions while town halls allow for more audience participation.



Candidate Forums – Key Considerations



Be sure to invite all candidates and give equal effort to getting all to attend

- It is okay to set criteria regarding invitations but be sure that it's based on an impartial set of facts such as funds raised by a certain date, polling with voters at a certain percent, etc.
- Ensure the moderator is able to be nonpartisan in both tone and facilitation
- Set time limits for responses and give all candidates a chance to respond
- All candidate materials (signs, stickers, etc.) should be kept outside of the space where the event is taking place

Candidate Forums – Key Considerations



- If possible, screen audience questions ahead of time in order to get a diversity of viewpoints.
- Moderator questions can be controversial but should not give any suggestion of a preferred response.
- Set rules for the audience at the start of the event
 - No applause, no partisan materials (banners, stickers, posters, etc.)
- Invite media
- Write up a recap of the event and share widely

Arizona Case Study – Phoenix Mayoral Candidate Forums



Town Hall Meetings – Asking the Best Question



Being Heard

- Submit a question in advance
 - Tweet your question before the event
- Sit near the microphone

Ask Direct Questions

- Consider a question with two parts
 - A Yes/No aspect in the beginning
 - An opportunity for the candidate to offer additional thoughts

Include Facts in a Question

- Opportunity to inform the candidates

Example Question



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

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Candidate Visits to Nonprofit Organization Sites or Meetings

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Candidate Visits



Candidates are allowed to visit your organization and/or any events being held by your organization. All visits must fit into the following three types:

1. As a public figure (elected official or field expert)
 - Should not mention candidacy at any point, event should be free of all campaign materials or discussion.
 - Can speak about legislative accomplishments.
 - It IS appropriate to give an elected official an award, even in an election year. Best if the award is given on a regular basis such as annually.

Candidate Visits



2. As a candidate invited by the nonprofit
 - Must invite all candidates and cannot give any indication of support or opposition
 - No fundraising at these events
 - Best practice – have residents or members lead these events, ask questions, and tell their stories

Candidate Visits



3. Of their own initiative and interest

- Candidates can attend nonprofit sponsored events
- Nonprofits should ensure that there is no endorsement of candidate implied or otherwise
- Do NOT give candidate opportunity to address the gathering unless it is clearly through another capacity and does NOT reference candidacy

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Questions?

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Third Thursdays at Three Webinar and Podcast Series

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Upcoming Training and Discussion Topics



1. Educating voters – voting logistics and candidate positions (April 16, 2020)
2. Housing issues and ballot initiatives (May 21, 2020)
3. Overcoming common obstacles to voting (June 18, 2020)
4. The challenge of voting while homeless (July 16, 2020)
5. Voter Mobilization Part 1 – Early voting and vote-by-mail (August 20, 2020)
6. Voter Mobilization Part 2 – Protecting against voter intimidation (September 17, 2020)
7. Election Day! Getting Out The Vote (October 15, 2020)
8. Holding candidates to their promises (November 19, 2020)

Other webinar recordings available at www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/webinars

**It's never been easy.
Our commitment is unwavering.
Join us and amplify the voices of
the poorest families in need.**

**OUR MEMBERS
ARE OUR STRENGTH.**



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HOUSING COALITION**

**JOIN TODAY
WWW.NLIHC.ORG/MEMBERSHIP**

Contact Us



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