OUR HOMES, OUR VOTES

2020

BECAUSE HOUSING IS BUILT WITH BALLOTS

Please standby.
We will begin momentarily.
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
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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Renters</th>
<th>Homeowners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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
Nonpartisan Candidate Engagement
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
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/)
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](https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Solutions-to-the-Affordable-Housing-Crisis.pdf)
Forum and Town Halls
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

Welcome to the Phoenix Mayoral Candidate Forum: Health, Housing and Homelessness
January 29, 2019

How would Phoenix’s next mayor respond to affordability and homelessness crisis?

Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC)

- How much do you need?
  - $50,000

What people are using the money for:
- Home Improvement
- Retirement Income
- Debt Consolidation
- Investment Purpose
- Other
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?”
Candidate Visits to Nonprofit Organization Sites or Meetings
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
Questions?
Third Thursdays at Three
Webinar and Podcast Series
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.

JOIN TODAY
WWW.NLIHC.ORG/MEMBERSHIP
Contact Us

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