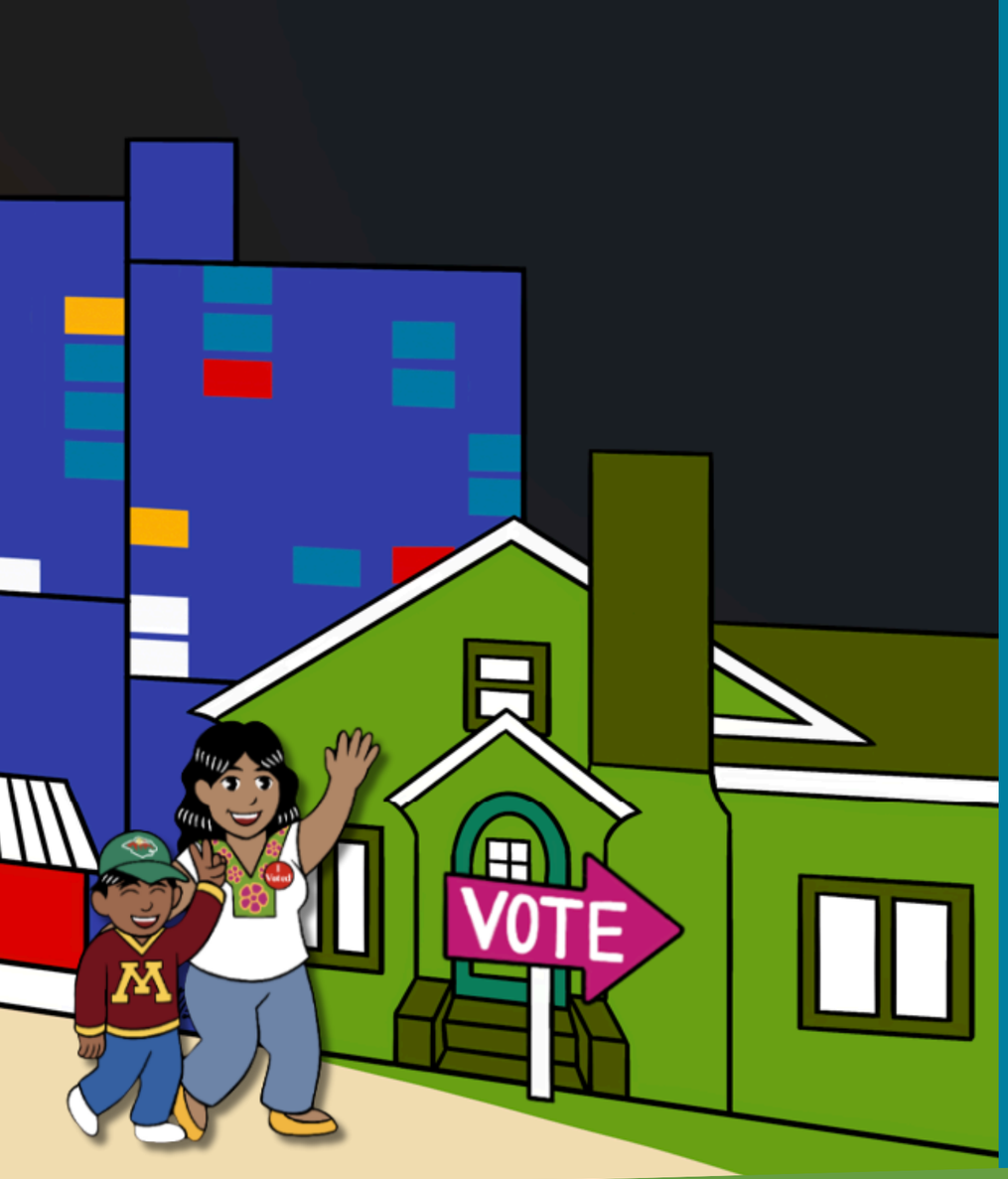


MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF NONPROFITS

The Do's and Don'ts for Nonprofits and Elections

August 18, 2026

Welcome, nonprofit advocates!

The role of nonprofits in elections

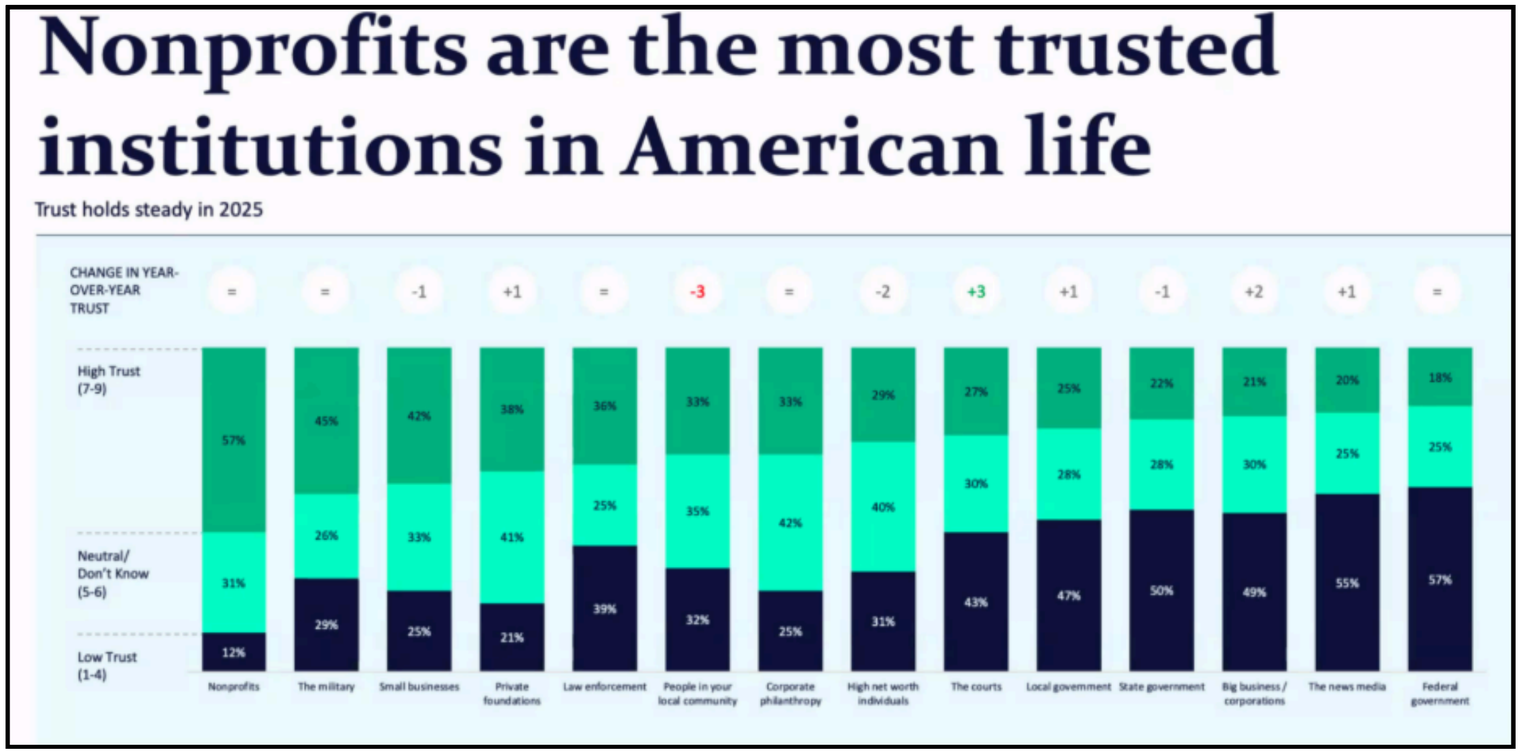


Source: Independent Sector

1. Nonprofits **can and should participate** in voter engagement

2. Nonprofits play a critical role as a **trusted messenger**

The role of nonprofits in elections



Trust in Nonprofits and Philanthropy | July 2025 | Independent Sector

Nonprofits are known



Local nonprofits "are a known person.

It's not someone random who parachuted into your neighborhood a week before the election or some anonymous mailer that you got.

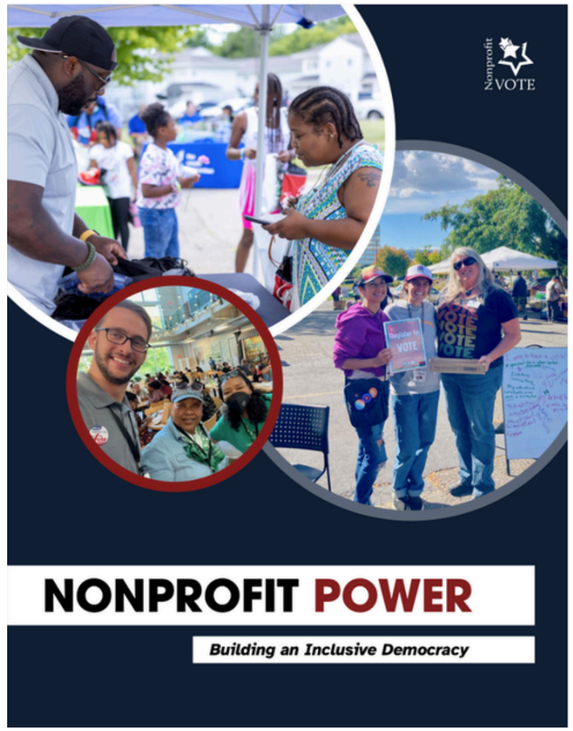
It's the place you drop your kids off for after-school programs.

We encourage more nonprofits to move into this space.

Nonprofits have long-term relationships, trust, and roots in the communities they serve."

Source: Nonprofit Power Report

Nonprofits help voter turnout



"Americans engaged by nonprofits saw a staggering **10 percentage point increase** compared to similar voters who weren't engaged."

Source: Nonprofit Power Report

Democracy is in our hands



A single nonprofit can't do everything, but we believe every nonprofit can do *something*

Source: Nonprofit Power Report

Election Day is November 3rd!



What's on the Election Day ballot in 2026?

All voters will have these races on their general election ballot:

- U.S. Senator
- U.S. Representative
- Governor & Lt. Governor
- Secretary of State
- State Auditor
- Attorney General
- State Senator
- State Representative
- Judicial Seats

Voters may have one or more of these races on their ballot:

- County Officials
- City Officers
- School Board Members
- Township Officers
- Local ballot questions

Source: Minnesota Office of Secretary of State

THE GOLDEN RULE

501c3 nonprofits must remain nonpartisan

Why is nonpartisanship important?

Nonprofits are <u>trusted</u> because we can't be <u>bought.</u>



Download here

In Summary



501c3 nonprofits are *legally allowed by the IRS* to participate in voter engagement.

However, nonprofits must remain nonpartisan.

The Do’s

The Don’ts

The Do's and Don'ts

Permitted

- **can** conduct nonpartisan voter education
- **can** support or oppose policy proposals
- **can** do voter registration
- **can** support or oppose a ballot measure

Prohibited

- **cannot** endorse a political candidate in an election
- **cannot** support a political party
- **cannot** make a campaign contribution or expenditure for or against a candidate
- **cannot** rank candidates

Source: Nonprofit Vote, Bolder Advocacy

Key Topics



- Issue Advocacy
- Candidate Education
- Voter Education
- Voter Registration and Get Out The Vote (GOTV)
- Supporting or opposing ballot measures

Source: Nonprofit Vote, Bolder Advocacy

Issue Advocacy



501c3 nonprofits CAN

- Continue your regular advocacy or lobbying activities during the election period, as long it is related to your org's mission
- Ensure your messaging is about the issue, not the people running on it.



501c3 nonprofits CANNOT

- Rate a candidate on support of an issue
- Offer any information or resources to one candidate that is not publicly available or is not available to other candidates.
- Ask candidates to sign pledges on any issue

Source: Bolder Advocacy

Engaging Candidates



501c3 nonprofits CAN

- Host a candidate forum
- Offer educational materials to all candidates on an issue related to the organization's mission.
- Accept an invitation for a meeting with a candidate. (Best practice is to then offer a meeting to all candidates)

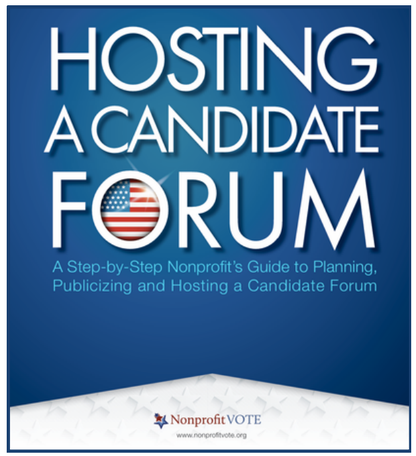


501c3 nonprofits CANNOT

- Endorse candidates for public office
- Make campaign contributions
- Publish or communicate anything that explicitly or implicitly favors or opposes a candidate or political party
- Publicize which candidates share your nonprofit's views

Source: Bolder Advocacy

Voter Education





501c3 nonprofits CAN

- Host nonpartisan candidate forums.
- Publish neutral voter guides or candidate questionnaires. Present facts, not favorites.
- Promote election judge opportunities
- Share voting basics (election day, polling hours and locations, view your sample ballot, etc)

501c3 nonprofits CANNOT

- share inaccurate and untimely voting information, or use coded language
- invite only one candidate or one party to a forum or fill out a guide/questionnaire.
- steer clear of any education actions that could be perceived or interpreted as partisan activity

Source: Bolder Advocacy

Voter Registration & GOTV



Practical Guidance: Nonprofit Voter Assistance in MN

Rules and resources about Voter Registration Drives in Minnesota

501c3 nonprofits CAN

- Sign up for National Voter Registration Day (Sept 15!) as a community partner and receive free posters and stickers for outreach.
- Rides to the polls, absentee ballot applications, phone banking, recruit poll workers
- Use VOTE411 from League of Women Voters as your one stop shop for voter engagement

501c3 nonprofits CANNOT

- offer compensation for a fixed payment rate per registration application or a quota (you can offer compensation for someone’s time doing GOTV, though!)
- offer incentives or something in exchange for registering to vote
- target registration for one party

Source: National Voter Registration Day, Bolder Advocacy

Ballot Measures

501c3 nonprofits CAN support or oppose ballot measures



If voters approve, Minnesota schools would get more money from a trust fund dating to the state's founding

A question on this fall's ballot will ask voters to increase the percentage that can be taken from the Permanent School Fund, which helps districts shore up budgets.

Nov 3rd Ballot Language:

"Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to **increase the funding going to all school districts from the permanent school fund**, which is a fund that supports school districts without raising individual income or property taxes, effective July 1, 2027?"

leaving question blank = "NO" vote

- **501c3 nonprofits can take a position on a ballot measure because it's about policy, not a person or political party**
- **There are no legal limits on the types of activities nonprofits may do to support or oppose ballot measure questions.**
  - However, we recommend a nonprofit should create an organizational policy
  - The IRS caps nonprofit spending on ballot measure activity (classified as a direct lobbying expense for reporting purposes), yet significant activity is allowed within those limits.

Sources: House Daily, MinnPost, Bolder Advocacy Ballot Measures Toolkit, The Council of State Governments

Best Practices



Rules of the Game podcast
by Bolder Advocacy

- Focus on policies, not candidates
- Educate, but do not attempt to influence the election of candidates
- Encourage participation without suggesting who the public should vote for
- Align your efforts with the work your org already does

Source: Bolder Advocacy

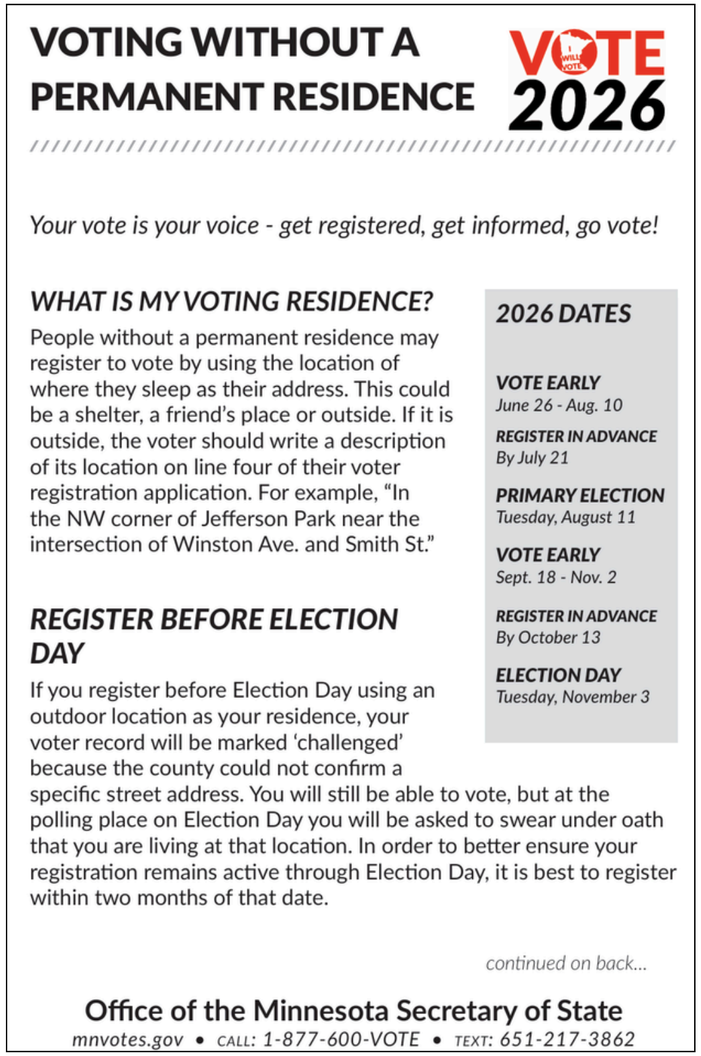
Aligning with your mission



Working smarter

- Who is your audience?
- What do they need?
- How do we integrate voter engagement via our mission and values in the work we are already doing?

sector specific strategies



VOTING WITHOUT A PERMANENT RESIDENCE

VOTE 2026

Your vote is your voice - get registered, get informed, go vote!

WHAT IS MY VOTING RESIDENCE?

People without a permanent residence may register to vote by using the location of where they sleep as their address. This could be a shelter, a friend's place or outside. If it is outside, the voter should write a description of its location on line four of their voter registration application. For example, "In the NW corner of Jefferson Park near the intersection of Winston Ave. and Smith St."

2026 DATES

VOTE EARLY
June 26 - Aug. 10

REGISTER IN ADVANCE
By July 21

PRIMARY ELECTION
Tuesday, August 11

VOTE EARLY
Sept. 18 - Nov. 2

REGISTER IN ADVANCE
By October 13

ELECTION DAY
Tuesday, November 3

REGISTER BEFORE ELECTION DAY

If you register before Election Day using an outdoor location as your residence, your voter record will be marked 'challenged' because the county could not confirm a specific street address. You will still be able to vote, but at the polling place on Election Day you will be asked to swear under oath that you are living at that location. In order to better ensure your registration remains active through Election Day, it is best to register within two months of that date.

continued on back...

Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State

mnvotes.gov • CALL: 1-877-600-VOTE • TEXT: 651-217-3862

MN Secretary of State's fact sheet
Voters Without a Permanent Residence

Ideas for HOUSING nonprofits:

- Share nonpartisan voting resources with residents who live in your organization's housing facilities
- Door knock residents and encourage them to vote (don't wear any attire that could look partisan)
- Consider adjusting curfew (if you have an overnight shelter) so clients don't have to choose between exercising their right to vote and having a bed to sleep in
- Discuss with your local election office the possibility of using your organization as a polling site
- Allow residents to use your shelter's address to vote

Simple Ways to Start



Copy paste election info (yes, really!)

- MCN's policy newsletter, the Nonprofit Advocate
- MN Office of Secretary of State's FB

Ask your coalition or simliar organization if they are already doing something and join in

- ACT in Mankato

Ensure folks know their rights on voting

Schedule a Voter 101 with Melanie from Office of Minnesota Secretary of State

free technical assistance

BOLDER ADVOCACY
A program of Alliance for Justice

Have an advocacy-related question? Just ask using this form. One of our advocacy coaches will respond within two business days. We look forward to talking with you soon, and thank you for your patience during this incredibly busy time.

Submit a online question to our advocacy coaches using this form or email advocacy@afj.org.

Call for technical assistance during standard business hours, ET: 866-NP-LOBBY (866-675-6229)

Bolder Advocacy Technical Assistance

Do's and Don'ts for 501c3 nonprofit staff

Frequently Asked Questions

Can staff use their personal social media accounts to support candidates?

Individuals have a right to express preferences for or against candidates. This applies to staffs' personal social media accounts. The exception would be if that account is primarily used by the individual or others as a communication vehicle for the nonprofit.

Can staff support candidates in their personal time?

Yes. Staff may support candidates when not "on the clock" working for your nonprofit organization.

What if someone asks who the nonprofit supports or who they should vote for?

Remind them that as a nonprofit you must remain nonpartisan. You can:
-Encourage them to talk to a friend or family member they trust and share values with
-Direct them to a sample ballot or nonpartisan voter guide
-Share the MN Secretary of State's resource: "What's on my ballot?"

Is my nonprofit responsible for how our social media posts are shared?

No. You are not responsible for how and with whom others share your posts.

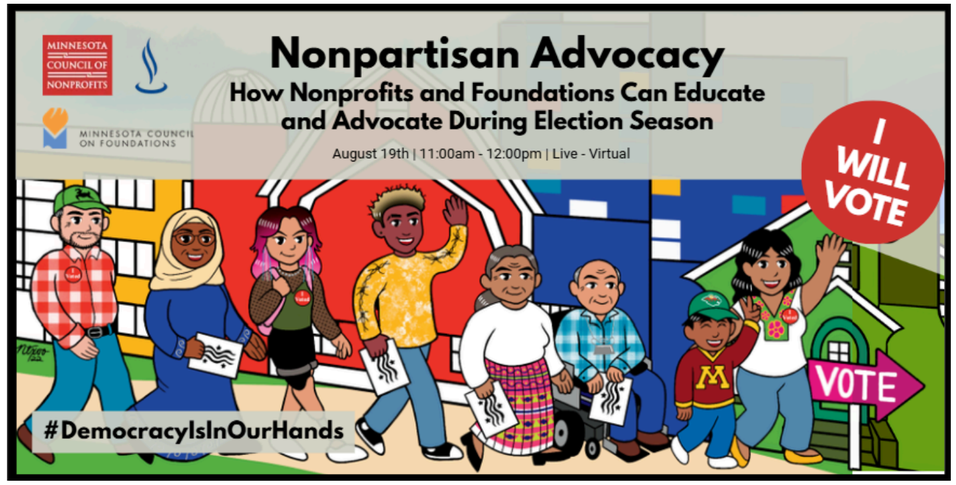
What is okay for nonprofit staff to talk about?

Staff working for 501(c)(3) organizations should also be nonpartisan when representing their nonprofit on site, at events, or doing voter engagement activities. Staff cannot suggest which candidate to vote for or which political party to support.

You can provide information about the voting process, such as dates and deadlines, early voting hours, getting a mail ballot, or helping register to vote. You can let people know about a candidate forum or debate.

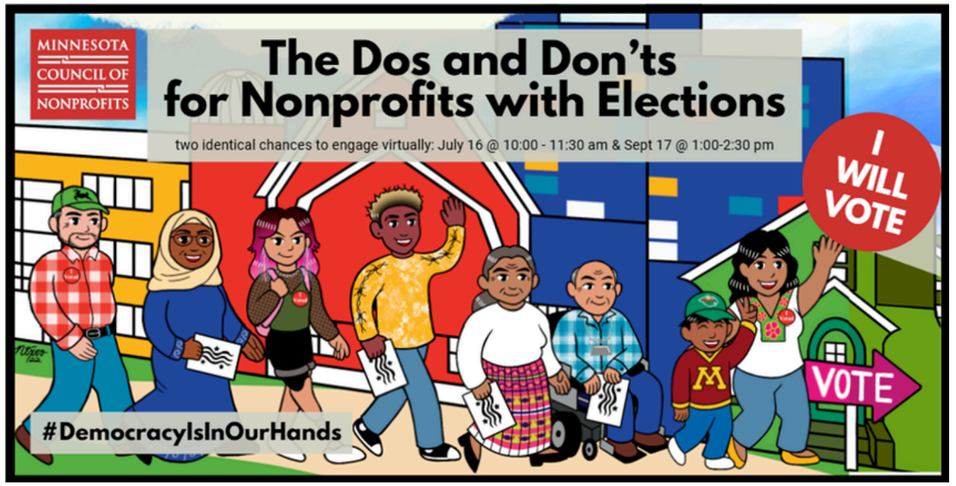
Source: Nonprofit Vote

Register today



AUGUST 19 FROM 11AM-12PM

- Presenters from Bolder Advocacy
- for nonprofits AND foundations



SEPT 17 @ 1:00 - 2:30PM

- the second of two identical offerings
- for nonprofits

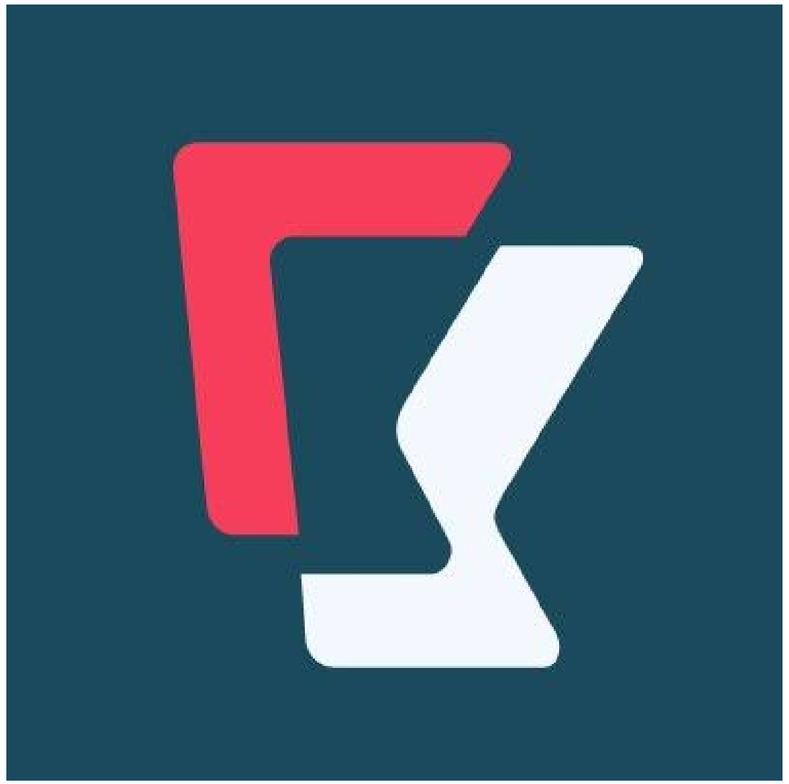
Voting and Election Resources

MCN



Voting and Election Resources

Minnesota Office of Secretary of State



- Voter registration applications
- Absentee ballot applications
- Absentee Mail Ballot Instructions
- Factsheets
- Outreach Toolkit
- Registration QR Code Flyers and Posters in Multiple Languages
- Social Media Graphics
- YouTube Voter Outreach Videos

Resources

General

- Vote.gov
- Rock the Vote
- MN Secretary of State
- State Voices
- TurboVote
- Vote.org

Nonprofit Specific

- Subscribe for MCN's Public Policy Advocate Newsletter
- Voices for Racial Justice's Our Power, Our Democracy
  (mapping race & voter turnout in Minnesota)
- Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
  - Nonprofit Voter Guide
- National Council of Nonprofits
- Bolder Advocacy
- Nonprofit Vote
- Asian American Organizing Project (AAOP)
- League of Women Voters
- Black Votes Matter MN
- Minnesota Voice



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Thanks for joining us!

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