

COVID-PROOFING YOUR IN-PERSON VOTER REGISTRATION EVENT





We know that some of our National Voter Registration Day partners are planning for in-person and public voter registration drives on this year's holiday. In-person drives are important and effective, particularly for engaging first-time voters and those from underrepresented groups. Research on voter registration efforts shows that new voters registered through field-based efforts are more likely to be on the lower end of the income scale, young, and people of color than individuals who register online.

But there are obvious challenges related to in-person voter registration drives this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If your group does choose to organize an in-person event, please consider reviewing the below tips and guidelines. These suggestions and examples can help you organize your event in the safest way possible.

In preparing this guide, we are grateful for the contributions of Med Out the Vote, as well as Healthy Voting, a project of the American Public Health Association, Center for Civic Design, Center for Tech and Civic Life, National Association of County and City Health Officials, and We Can Vote.





PLANNING YOUR EVENT

Public health conditions are highly variable across the country, and can change very quickly. As you begin to think about your National Voter Registration Day event, make sure that you're informed about how the coronavirus is impacting your community and that you're planning accordingly.

- **Consult the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website** for COVID-19 information and updates (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>). Also make sure to check out state and local guidelines to understand public health conditions specific to where you're planning to hold your event. If you're not sure where to access this information, we suggest searching online for "Coronavirus data and information for [INSERT STATE/CITY]."
- **Refer to the state-by-state guides put together by our friends at Healthy Voting** (<https://www.healthyvoting.org/>) – a collaborative effort between the American Public Health Association and the National Association of County and City Health Officials. The Healthy Voting site has printable pocket guides for healthy voting in your state to help you participate in National Voter Registration Day and beyond.

If you determine that an in-person event is feasible, make sure to do your best to incorporate safety precautions and protocols into every aspect of your voter registration drive, beginning with the planning phase.

- **Event location:** If possible, prioritize outdoor and walk- or drive-through locations over indoor locations. If using an indoor location, try and find one that is well-ventilated and consider opening windows during your event.
- **Event duration:** Consider a longer event so that participants are able to visit throughout the day. Encourage staggered arrivals as much as possible to reduce crowding.
- **Explore options for touchless voter registration:** You might want to look into and consider touchless voter registration techniques, such as QR codes that visitors to your event can scan with their smartphones to be directed to a voter registration site. For example, our partners at the League of Women Voters have a QR code that you can use for free to direct potential voters to the Vote411.org website, where individuals can register to vote. For the QR code, see here: <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/elections-tools/vote-411org-widgets-and-qr-codes>.



PLANNING YOUR EVENT

- **Consider online voter registration as part of your event:** If your state offers online voter registration (OVR), consider posting the link on posters so that passers-by can go directly to the site without having to stop by your table. You could also have a few laptops or tablets available for visitors that you sanitize between use. This will reduce the need for face-to-face engagement between your volunteers and potential voters. You can visit www.vote.gov to see if online voter registration is available in your state and get redirected to your state's election website.
- **Get creative to limit contact:** Besides looking into QR codes and OVR, try and cook up some other creative options to get voters registered while still taking necessary public health precautions. We've heard of drive-by voter registration caravans where volunteers hand forms to people in their cars, of "virtual volunteers" that are placed on a table and connected via Zoom to help passers-by answer questions about voter registration forms, and more. Have ideas? Send them our way (info@nationalvoterregistrationday.org) so we can share them out with others!
- **Plan for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) when out in public can help stop the spread of the coronavirus. To make sure your staff and volunteers have proper protection, budget for supplies such as masks, hand sanitizer, gloves, sanitizing wipes, and single-use pens. If you don't have sufficient resources for these unanticipated needs, consider asking a local business to donate supplies or sponsor your community event.
- **Plan for social distancing:** Purchase bright tape/stickers to demonstrate six feet of social distance, and plan for extra tables to create physical barriers that prevent people from getting too close. Many grocery stores, pharmacies, and online sites are now selling "please keep social distancing" stickers for use in situations like these.
- **Have a contingency plan:** Be prepared to pivot to a different type of event if conditions worsen in your area ahead of September 22 and an in-person event is no longer recommended. Determine some benchmarks to guide your decision-making about how to organize your event.





RECRUITING AND

TRAINING VOLUNTEERS

Making a few tweaks to your plan to recruit and train volunteers can go a long way in ensuring that your voter registration event is safe, effective, and goes smoothly.

- **Adapt trainings to include safety first!** Do your best to incorporate health and safety protocols into volunteer trainings, which will help everyone be on the same page about the importance of following these protocols closely. Print out pocket guides for your staff and volunteers to refer to throughout the day if they need an in-the-moment refresher.
- **Recruit more and different volunteers than usual:** Attempt to recruit extra volunteers in the event that some are unable to participate due to sickness or other reasons. People who have been exposed to COVID-19 in the past 14 days, or who are showing any symptoms of COVID-19, should stay home and not attend or volunteer at your event. Consider other ways to engage would-be volunteers who are at higher risk for COVID-19, or who live with people at higher risk – can these individuals help with planning, fundraising, or promoting your event instead of attending the actual in-person event on National Voter Registration Day itself?
- **Try to relieve volunteers of some of the compliance burden:** Prepare clear and visible signage to put up at your event to help participants adhere to public health and safety regulations. Consider designating one staff person who is responsible for monitoring adherence to the health and safety protocols you put in place at your event, and/or have volunteers role play how they would politely initiate a conversation on this topic during their training session.





DURING YOUR EVENT

It's the big day! While you're registering voters in record numbers along with thousands of other partners on and offline across the country, don't forget these simple tips to make sure everyone stays safe. Today is the day to put into practice the careful plans you've laid to make the day a success on all levels.

- **Implement social distancing:** Attempt to maintain six feet of distance between volunteers at a registration table and between volunteers and registrants. This should include a place for registrants to fill out forms while being assisted by volunteers and enough space to wait in line while social distancing. Put tape or stickers on the ground (National Voter Registration Day stickers, for example!) to demonstrate safe distances.

An extra table can be used to provide a physical barrier that maintains social distance, or set up tables with plexiglass shields or plastic sheeting to create a barrier between people. Maintain distance when sharing forms with voters by placing forms on a clipboard or tablet and stepping back. Registrants can then step forward to fill out their form. Or, once paper forms have been completed, you could have individuals place their forms in a box to avoid having to hand it back to an event organizer or volunteer.

- **Mask up!** Current CDC guidelines recommend that every person at your event, whether manning the table for the entire day or just passing by, should wear a mask or other face covering. Remind volunteers and visitors to your event that they should attempt to refrain from touching their faces or masks. If you can, provide disposable masks to people who do not have one. Put one of your National Voter Registration Day stickers on your mask and you have yourself a custom branded facemask!
- **Sanitize, sanitize, sanitize:** We know you'll be busy registering voters left and right! But do your best to regularly sanitize all equipment, especially high-touch areas such as phone/tablet/computer screens if you are offering online voter registration, table tops, and clipboards. Set up a sanitizer or hand-washing station, and have anti-bacterial wipes available for wiping down clipboards and other places that have high touch volume. Encourage regular use of these stations. If available, individuals should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds regularly. If using hand sanitizer, make sure it is one with at least 60% alcohol.



- **Skip the free food this year:** Consider non-food options such as balloons, stickers, buttons, or something else that makes sense for your group and community. If you can't be deterred from giving out food at your event, make sure that you choose pre-packaged and individually wrapped food items, and do not put food in a shared container.
- **Make your event BYO-Pen:** If you're having visitors to your event register to vote using paper forms, or having them use paper forms for other purposes, ask them use paper forms. If they don't have one, let them take one of yours home as a souvenir. If that's not in the cards for you, either sanitize pens after each use, allowing them to full dry before the next person uses them, or have people using shared pens wear gloves.
- **Take advantage of online options:** If you've chosen to use online registration as part of your event, encourage this option for as many visitors to your event as possible to minimize contact between people. Make sure that any URLs or QR codes are displayed in large-type, easy to read fonts for passers-by to see and use without needing to come very close to your event.





AFTER YOUR EVENT

Congratulations! In addition to registering voters and hopefully having lots of fun while doing so, you also did your very best to keep everyone safe and healthy. Voter registration is more important than ever this year and it's going to take all kinds of innovative efforts to help Americans get registered and ready to vote this fall. Thanks for doing your part! Remember to report back your voter registration results to us, send us pictures, and to also take a few additional precautions given this year's unique challenges.

- **Get tested:** If your staff and volunteers were involved in a sustained period of public interaction during your event, they should get tested for COVID-19 three to five days after the event. While waiting for results, they should self-isolate.
- **Report any positive test results:** Ask volunteers, staff, and attendees at your event to report any positive COVID-19 test results back to you ASAP for contact tracing.
- **See a doctor if in doubt:** If volunteers, staff, or attendees at your event exhibit any symptoms of sickness afterwards, encourage them to stay home and get in contact with their primary care physician.

