

2022

**Communications
Strategy Guide**

September 20, 2022



Developed by Nonprofit VOTE



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Introduction



On September 20, 2022, National Voter Registration Day marks the 10th anniversary of celebrating and strengthening democracy since the holiday's launch in 2012. We're proud to count you among this special year's coalition of partners.

While the COVID-19 pandemic threw us no shortage of curveballs over the course of the last two holidays, the resourcefulness and commitment of the partners who make this day possible went (as usual) above and beyond the call of duty:

- In 2020, we registered nearly 1.5 million voters, roughly half as many voters as in the last 8 years combined.
- In 2021, the holiday netted 233,571 registered voters, the highest total recorded in a post-presidential "off-year" election.

In 2022? Well, that depends on you! With the help of a dedicated coalition of partners like you, we're hoping to help around 800,000 voters register for the first time or update their registration.

This Strategy Guide aims to equip you with the communications resources you'll need to effectively message around and promote your organization's participation in this year's celebration. It's important to remember that this Strategy Guide should be viewed as merely a starting point, as partners are encouraged to tailor it for their target audience(s), pick the content that works best for your audience, put messages in their own words, and use language that will excite and inspire the communities they are working to register to vote and get #VoteReady.

National Voter Registration Day is celebrated every year on a Tuesday in September in advance of the various state registration deadlines. First organized in 2012, it is the nation's largest, nonpartisan civic holiday dedicated to celebrating our democracy by registering as many eligible Americans to vote as possible through the collective efforts of thousands of volunteers, nonprofit organizations, businesses, schools, libraries, election officials, and (of course) people like you from all over the country.

By engaging thousands of community and online partners and volunteers in a massive single-day event, we aim to saturate the media, light up the internet, and reach the scores of Americans who (1) haven't yet registered to vote or (2) need to update their registration due to a recent move, name change, naturalization, or other reason.



How to Celebrate

National Voter Registration Day is a civic holiday with heavy emphasis on the HOLIDAY. We celebrate our democracy and all that it stands for by approaching the task of voter registration with all the enthusiasm and unmitigated glee of a kid in a candy store and we encourage our partners to do the same.

Any voter registration event is, by definition, a GREAT voter registration event. But we challenge our partners to fully embrace National Voter Registration Day's whimsical, fun-loving, star-spangled awesome vibe by thinking outside the box of the traditional registration table to build an event people won't be able to resist visiting.

Feel free to organize creative, fun events in your community with your friends and family (in person and online) and give your communications an informal and celebratory tone. The holiday is all about creating a culture of sharing in and celebrating our democracy. Plus, the more creative your event, the more likely it is to get attention on social and traditional media.

In addition to decorative tables with banners and balloons, we've seen National Voter Registration Day-themed concerts, pub crawls, pizza parties, ice cream-fueled dance fests, barbeques, and more. One group even coupled their registration event with a goat petting zoo! Who doesn't want to pet cute animals after doing super adulty things like registering to vote? During the COVID-19 pandemic, many partners organized fully-virtual registration events while still embracing the spirit of fun, including Zoom trivia events.

Our partners organize voter registration drives in their places of business, at farmer's markets, while delivering food, and other community-gathering points. And while we look forward to a 2022 full of bustling in-person events, the virtual voter registration drives of the past two years make clear remote registration drives can be successful contributions to the holiday in their own right.





The beauty of having such a deep bench of partners is that there's no truly "wrong" way to celebrate National Voter Registration Day. Our partners are as diverse as they are far-reaching. Businesses engage their employees and customers; campus groups excel at engaging young voters; our nonprofit partners are particularly well-suited to engaging voters historically left out of the process. For many voters, you may be their first real contact about the election!

In short, no matter what kind of event you're planning or what kind of partner you are, National Voter Registration Day is about building community while also building democracy!



Core Principles



While we want you to get creative and have fun making your voter registration event your very own, there are two core principles to which every National Voter Registration Day event and media effort MUST adhere:

1. Keep it Nonpartisan, Positive, and Celebratory

National Voter Registration Day is about celebrating our shared American democracy and that means that those of every stripe should feel welcome and included in your events and messaging. We ask that all partners keep their communication positive and nonpartisan by:

- Making sure your messaging avoids any and all appeals to people on the basis of party affiliation, the campaign of a particular candidate, or specific ballot measures
- Pushing out messaging that is celebratory, unifying, and able to resonate with those from every walk of life.

2. Don't Bury the Lead – Get People Registered to Vote!

The overall goal of National Voter Registration Day is to – you guessed it! – get people registered to vote. When in doubt, ask people to check their registration status to make sure they're able to hit the polls:

- In all of the communications your group, organization, or company puts out, the primary ask should be to register and/or confirm registration status, get friends and family registered, and otherwise contribute to efforts to get every eligible American registered to vote.
- By all means, share information about related topics such as voting rules and options for voting in your state, but make sure to always do so in the overarching context of a straightforward and crystal clear call to action of registering to vote.
- If you're talking to the press, encourage them to include information on voter registration options in any article. This can be your state's online voter registration tool (in 42 states and DC), a local elections office, an online voter registration tool offered through your organization, or on NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org/register-to-vote/, and/or an in-person National Voter Registration Day event.



Communication Goals



Across all of our communication efforts, we have the shared goals of:

- Encouraging voter registration and raising awareness of voter registration options
- Elevating reliable and trusted sources of information on voting
- Building excitement about the holiday, elections, and civic participation
- Getting Americans #VoteReady by encouraging them to see the 24/7/365 practice of being informed and engaged in every election as the next natural step after registering to vote
- Amplifying and celebrating the great work of our partners





Website and Social Media Accounts



Website: NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org

On our website, individuals and organizations can access an online voter registration tool, get additional information about in-person and mail-in voting options in their states, access guides and resources to make their holiday events a success, and connect with helpful #VoteReady support tools made by our friends and partners in the civic space. Site visitors can also utilize our Event Map feature to search for National Voter Registration Day events being held in their states and/or communities.

Hashtags: #NationalVoterRegistrationDay and #VoteReady

Unsurprisingly, our primary hashtag is none other than the name of the holiday #NationalVoterRegistrationDay. While it might seem easier to abbreviate the holiday with “NVRD”, this is not an official hashtag and will fly under the radar for supporters and partners looking to signal boost voter registration content for the holiday.

Our secondary hashtag is #VoteReady, which should be used with #NationalVoterRegistrationDay whenever character limits and/or the content of your posts allow. #VoteReady serves as a bridge connecting registration to the conversations after the holiday about learning what’s on the ballot, options for voting in your state, and more.

All partners are encouraged to use these hashtags frequently, as it makes it more likely that the official National Voter Registration Day social media accounts and/or the official accounts of other partners will see, engage with, and re-share your content.





Social media accounts

Follow our social media accounts for updates on the holiday, partner highlights, training resources, webinar reminders, and more. In order to maximize the length of time that voter registration content can reach a wide audience, we encourage you to share and repost our content across your own social media accounts during both the lead up to the holiday and on September 20th.

Facebook:

@NatVoterRegDay / Facebook.com/NatVoterRegDay

Twitter:

@NatVoterRegDay / Twitter.com/NatVoterRegDay

Instagram:

@NatVoterRegDay / Instagram.com/natvoterregday

Reddit:

NatVoterRegDay / reddit.com/user/NatVoterRegDay/

Tumblr:

@NationalVoterRegistrationDay /
nationalvoterregistrationday.tumblr.com/

**September 20th
will mark not only
National Voter
Registration Day
2022, but the
10th anniversary
of the holiday's
very existence.**





Key Messages for the 2022 Holiday



The goal of every National Voter Registration Day is always to register voters, but no two holidays are alike. Each year we develop a set of key messages that animate National Voter Registration Day's vibes for the season and with this year marking our 10th anniversary, 2022's vibe is gonna be EXTRA celebratory.

These key messages should be used to help inform how you message about National Voter Registration Day with media and potential registered voters alike. Key Message #1 would work best when speaking to media figures and other organizations while Key Message #2 will be most impactful when directed toward potential registered voters as well as media contacts.

KEY MESSAGE #1

Celebrate the 10th Anniversary of National Voter Registration Day by Getting Every Eligible American Registered and #VoteReady

Every year, millions of eligible voters are unable to cast a ballot because of a missed registration deadline, outdated registration information, or other problems with their voter registration.

With nearly 4.7 million voters registered since 2012, National Voter Registration Day and the diverse and dedicated nationwide coalition of partners have shown that celebrating democracy and growing our democracy go hand-in-hand. The civic holiday hopes its 2022 iteration will mean a lifetime total of 5.5 million plus registered voters to set the tone for their next decade. But even if we fall short, we believe every single newly registered voter strengthens our democracy by orders of magnitude.

According to 2020 post-election U.S. Census data, as many as one in four eligible voters in the country were not registered or weren't sure. For groups already underrepresented in the electorate such as youth and communities of color, the numbers were even more stark;





with less than 60% of potential voters aged 18-24 reported being registered to vote, and registration rates in communities of color lagging significantly behind the general electorate as well.

By joining in on the 10th anniversary of this nonpartisan celebration of democracy, we hope that Americans of every stripe across the country take advantage of the opportunity that is #NationalVoterRegistrationDay to get themselves and their communities registered to vote and ready to cast a ballot.

KEY MESSAGE #2

Life Happens (So Check Your Voter Registration)

2020 saw record rates of voter engagement and while pandemic-related brain melt might make it *seem like* it wasn't all that long ago, we're here to remind you that it has been TWO YEARS and A LOT has happened in that time!

- People have moved
- Changed their name
- Attained citizenship
- Or recently turned 18

These key messages should be used to help inform how you message about National Voter Registration Day with media and potential registered voters alike.





On top of these are **formerly incarcerated individuals reentering society**, and the legions of voters who **just haven't voted in a while** and may have since been removed or "purged" from the voting rolls due to inactivity.

In most cases, these voters need to proactively register or update their registration ahead of the November election.

Pushing the need to make sure Americans update their voter registration presents an even greater opportunity for meaningful interaction with potential voters that can be the key to making sure their voter registration status is up to date, active, and ready to be exercised in 2022 and beyond – or as we call it, being #VoteReady.

What do we mean by that? Well, asking someone if they're registered to vote is a simple "yes" or "no" question that someone who's unknowingly fallen off the voter rolls will likely answer "yes." But asking instead "When was the last time you updated your voter registration?" or "Have you moved or changed your name since you last voted?" are openings for a more substantive dialogue that creates both an uncertainty and urgency about being absolutely certain that one's registration status is up to date.





Talking Points



Whether you're speaking to a member of the press or working to inspire volunteers to come to your event, it can be helpful to have some crisp and concise messaging points that lay out the central themes of National Voter Registration Day. Here's some examples for the 2022 holiday that your organization can use.

About the Holiday

National Voter Registration Day is the nation's biggest nonpartisan civic holiday. It is dedicated to getting every eligible American registered to vote for their next election.

Every year, millions of Americans find themselves unable to vote because they miss a registration deadline, don't update their registration, or aren't sure how to register. As a nonpartisan civic holiday celebrated every September, National Voter Registration Day seeks to make sure everyone has the opportunity to get registered and vote.

On National Voter Registration Day, organizations ranging from Fortune 500 companies to local food banks and public libraries join forces for a one-day, nationwide democracy blitz to create broad awareness of voter registration opportunities through in-person events, virtual events, and digital, social, and traditional media outreach.

Beyond registering voters, National Voter Registration Day also seeks to make sure Americans are #VoteReady by raising awareness of state-specific voter registration deadlines and policies, educating voters on election information and their different options for casting a ballot, and drumming up enthusiasm for voting and democracy.

Since 2012, nearly 4.7 million voters have registered to vote or updated their voter registrations on National Voter Registration Day, including 1.5 million in 2020 alone.





A Nonpartisan Voice in a Hyper-Partisan World

In a time when so much is so intensely partisan, National Voter Registration Day stands tall as a uniquely nonpartisan holiday celebrating a basic, patriotic institution that's truly for ALL Americans: the right to vote.

National Voter Registration Day aims to make sure no one who wants to cast a ballot, regardless of political affiliation, misses the opportunity due to a registration problem.

Political parties and candidates are trying to win an election, and thus focus their outreach to like-minded people with an established voting track record. National Voter Registration Day on the other hand aims to make sure that no one is left out of the process. As such, partners often target voters who may never have voted before, or who simply have let their registrations lapse after a missed election or two.

The holiday brings together a broad spectrum of corporate partners, universities and student groups, major nonprofits, and others who represent the full diversity of this nation. National Voter Registration Day is supported by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), the National Association of State Election Directors (NASED), the National Association of Election Officials (Election Center) and the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC).

National Voter Registration Day aims to make sure no one who wants to cast a ballot, regardless of political affiliation, misses the opportunity due to a registration problem.





Ensuring All Eligible Voters Can Participate

Voters need to register or update their registration for reasons such as moving to a new address, turning 18, becoming a citizen, or changing their names. Even previously-registered voters may find they have been removed from the voter rolls if they haven't voted in a while. Many Americans are unaware of these rules, and as a result, miss deadlines in their states that prevent them from voting, deadlines that can be as far as 30 days before the election.

Nearly 5 million voters are eligible to vote for the first time each year, including an estimated 4 million who turn 18 and 855,000 new citizens who naturalize, based on data from the Census Bureau and the US Citizenship and Immigration Services respectively.

40 million Americans move each year (Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies), rendering their former registration out of date. And whether they're crossing a state line, moving to a different town, or simply relocating to a different ward within their municipality, their voter registration will be in need of an update.

In the 2020 U.S. presidential election, as many as one in four Americans reported not being registered to vote or unsure of their registration status, with over 600,000 non-voters specifically citing a registration problem as their reason for not casting a ballot.

A 2020 study by the Knight Foundation found more than one in four unregistered voters (27%) reported not being registered because they didn't know how, they kept forgetting, they didn't have time, were too busy, or they recently moved. Among unregistered voters ages 18-24, this number was even higher: 42%. National Voter Registration Day is here to help!





How Rules Vary Across States and Can be Confusing

Our multi-level election system can be confusing. Voter registration deadlines vary, from 30 days before the election to the day-of for states with Same Day Registration. Most states now have online voter registration, but a few states don't. Most states allow 16 and 17-year olds to "pre-register," but the rules vary. This allows new voters to get registered while still in high school. It becomes active when they turn 18. Other rules vary as well, including ID requirements to register and more.

On top of this, rules change. Since 2020, many states have altered their election and voting laws in one form or another, adding or changing voter ID requirements, altering steps for attaining or submitting an absentee ballot, changes to registration deadlines, and more! We are working to help voters better understand these rules, both new and old, so they can be registered and #VoteReady for the November election.

Voters Should Register Early, Even in Same Day Registration States

Many states now offer same-day-registration where voters can register or update their registration as they go to the polls, during early voting or on Election Day itself. Same-day-registration provides a useful fail-safe to ensure all eligible voters can participate. However, it's still best to register early so lines on Election Day can move faster. Voters who register early can also get information about what's on their ballot, early voting options, polling locations, and polling hours. Finally, in states that use mail-in ballots, it is even more important to register early so voters can receive their mail-in ballots in advance of the election.

What's at Stake in 2022 - National Elections and Downballot Races

All 435 seats in the of US House of Representatives along with 34 seats in the US Senate are up for election, along with 36 governors, 30 attorneys general, 27 secretaries of states, 6,166 state legislators, 103 statewide ballot measures, and thousands of mayors, city council members, school boards, and more that have a direct impact on people's lives.



Tips, Tricks, and Best Practices



Talking about voter registration and related topics can be tricky, particularly in today's environment. As a reminder, National Voter Registration Day partners are required to remain strictly nonpartisan in all communication related to their participation in the holiday. But nonpartisan doesn't mean non-participation, and we depend on partners to help us get the word out and help every eligible voter get registered and make their voice heard!

Below are some key takeaways from research and lessons learned about the type of communication, messaging, and language that inspires action around voter registration and beyond.

Different message frames for voting:

In general, messages about voting fall into a few categories or appeals:

- **Identity** (eg "Are you a voter?"; "Be a voter", ; etc)
- **Issue-based** (focusing on the tangible impacts of voting on issues such as healthcare, education, public transportation, police reform, etc.)
- **Empowerment** (focusing on how the voter has the ability to make change)
- **Process-oriented** (specifics and detailed information on the voting process)

Across these different types of messages, a key finding is that messages that feel personal, conversational, and timely are most effective. Regardless of message frame, voters respond best to trusted messengers in the workplace, in their communities, and in their personal networks of friends and family.

This is exactly why National Voter Registration Day is so effective! We depend on a network of thousands of partners (this means YOU!), who all leverage their trusted messenger status to share information about voter registration in their communities. Interpersonal communication (eg a face-to-face interaction at a voter registration drive) is highly effective, more so than mass emails or generic social media posts.



Voting across the ages. Know your audience! Research shows that different age groups respond differently to the different types of voting message frames described above. The impact of the different categories of messaging often depends on the audience. Some key takeaways:

- **Social pressure messaging** (humorous, not shameful) is effective for all generations
- **Boomers/GenX** – Identity messaging is most impactful
- **Millennials/GenZ** – Empowerment messaging most impactful
- **GenZ** – most likely to encourage others to vote / share political views. Celebrity voices have been shown to boost GenZ turnout, but have little or no effect on other age groups.

Sometimes, boring is best. Funny memes go a long way on the internet, but research shows that people respond best to voting information that feels official and trustworthy, that gives clear and unambiguous details about election-related information and issues. As a National Voter Registration Day partner, we ask that you keep your messaging nonpartisan – which works out well here, because research also shows that nonpartisan messaging works better than partisan messaging! We recommend regularly consulting and sharing information from [Vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov) or your state or local election official's office to ensure that the critical details you share with your community are updated, accurate, and clearly communicate the necessary information to voters.

Keep it positive. In keeping with the celebratory, unifying, and nonpartisan tone and feel we try to cultivate around National Voter Registration Day, we recommend keeping your communications uplifting and positive. Lead with statements that focus on the values we share such as the freedom to vote, ensuring every voice is heard, and building a strong democracy in which voters are empowered to pick our leaders and not the other way around. Stress that voting is a superpower that we all possess, and we can create positive change by exercising it! Thank the local superheroes in your community – election officials – who register voters and administer trusted and smooth elections year after year.



Resources and Assets



The Strategy Guide offers topline information and support as you build your messaging for National Voter Registration Day 2022, but we have a variety of additional resources to support your celebration of the holiday including:

- Email Outreach
- 5 Tips for Communicating with Press
- Communications Activation Timeline
- Sample Social Media Copy and Graphics
- Sample Emails for Affiliates or Supporters
- Sample Press Releases/Media Alerts

You can also check out our resources page for swag, field organizing tools, and more. Lastly, be sure to keep an eye on your inbox for email updates full of news, upcoming webinars and training, and new tools and resources to help with all of your National Voter Registration Day Community Partner needs as we approach September, 20th!

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