

IDEAS TO HELP YOUR CONGREGATION BE ACTIVE VOTERS

Pastors set the tone for the congregation and instill a sense of priority and vision for civic participation. Here are a few ideas for faith leaders:

- Preach about the gift and responsibility of citizenship. Provide messages from the pulpit that educate and inspire voting.
- Assign a coordinator or Elections Ambassador to create a calendar and set goals for registering 70%, 80%, 90% and 100% of eligible voters in your congregation, and set similar goals for everyone to vote.
- Place voter registration forms in programs and set a schedule for featuring information in bulletin inserts about the value of voting; registration; Early Voting times and locations; rides to the polls, etc.
- Organize a class before or after religious services about voting rights and voting. (Focus on *how* and *why* to vote, not *who* to vote for.)
- Ask parishioners to sign a pledge card saying they will vote and will take a friend with them. Collect the cards and have a committee help everyone fulfill their pledge.
- Appoint an outreach coordinator to organize phone calling, door-knocking or citizen-awareness events in nearby neighborhoods.
- Have a picnic or celebration at the church on a Saturday or Sunday when Early Voting sites are open, provide information on voting and organize transportation for people to vote: *Souls to the Polls*.

Biblical leaders in the political debate

- ◆ Moses petitioned Pharaoh to free God's people.
- ◆ Nathan confronted King David for his actions.
- ◆ Elijah took on King Ahab who promoted immorality.
- ◆ Isaiah condemned moral decay in the culture.
- ◆ Daniel challenged King Nebuchadnezzar.
- ◆ Amos criticized injustice in society.
- ◆ John the Baptist exposed King Herod's adultery.
- ◆ Peter criticized leaders for restricting his preaching.

DEMOCRACY NORTH CAROLINA & SOULS TO THE POLLS

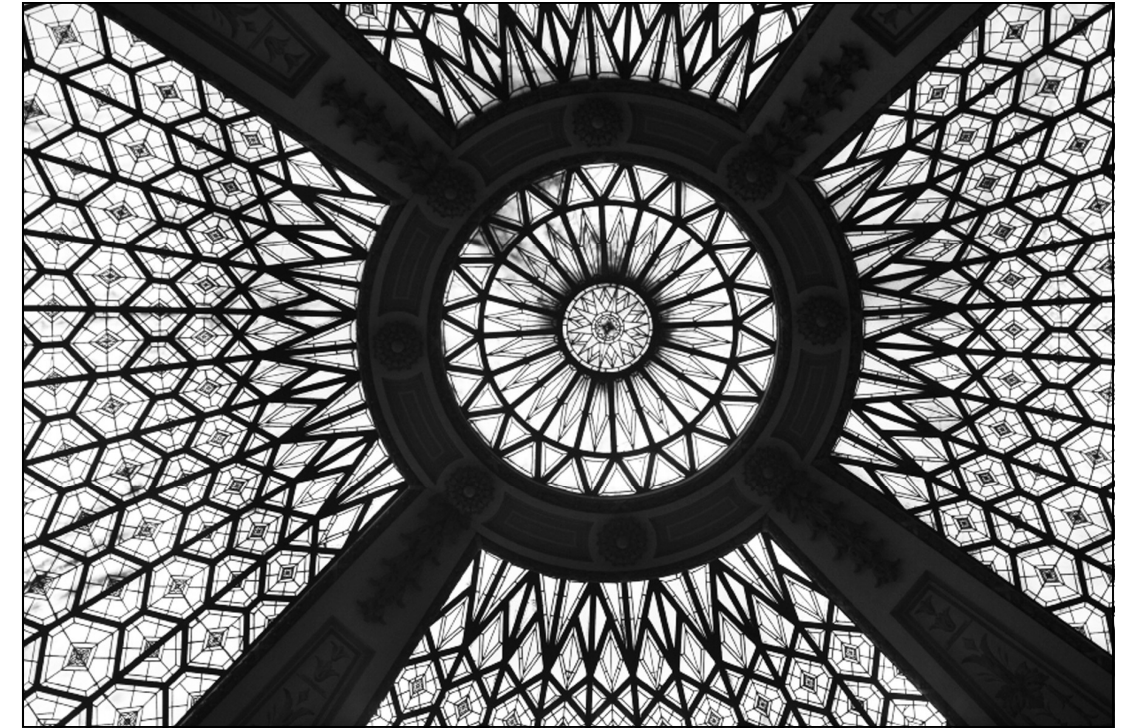
Democracy NC is a non-partisan organization that has worked with churches and faith-based groups for many years. We have field organizers, speakers, training events, bulletin inserts, data about voters in each county, and experience organizing voter education, voter registration and Get Out The Vote activities. Please contact us if you would like assistance or would like to be part of the statewide "Souls to the Polls" network.

We also help advocate for reforms that remove barriers to voting and that help ordinary people, not wealthy political donors, control the election process. And we encourage people from under-represented groups to run for office to have their perspective heard about important issues.



If you represent a faith community and would like to work with us, please call 919-286-6000 or email us at info@democracy-nc.org.

Election Activity Guide for Faith-Based Communities



Faith communities can use their resources to encourage their members to vote without endangering their tax-exempt status if they stick to non-partisan activities. This guide outlines the permitted activities and ways that Democracy North Carolina can help.



ALLOWABLE

Churches and non-profits with tax-exempt status can engage in election-related activities **IF** they are *non-partisan*. That means they must not show favoritism for electing a candidate or candidates of a political party.

You can use church resources for a non-partisan “Souls to the Polls” program for your community. You can:

- **Conduct a voter registration drive:** Obtain registration forms and instructions from your local Board of Elections or call us at 919-286-6000 for more information. Turn the forms in to the Board of Elections at least 25 days before the election. *You may insert registration forms into your church program or hand them out at events.*
- **Educate voters:** You can put voting information in bulletins, hold candidate forums (invite all candidates for the office), and teach people their voting rights. For example, educate people with a felony conviction that they can register to vote after serving their sentence. *Call Democracy North Carolina to learn about handouts and other help.*
- **Join a nonpartisan Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) coalition** and work with other non-profit groups to register voters or get them to the polls. Caution: Don't join a coalition that supports a specific political party or a candidate. *Democracy NC works with many non-partisan coalitions and can connect you to groups working in your area.*
- **Make it easier for your congregation to vote** by sponsoring gatherings on a Saturday or Sunday during the Early Voting period. Provide food and information about all candidates and give voters rides to the polls. You may also hand out applications for voters to receive an “absentee” or mail-in ballot. After they fill out the applications, you can collect them and mail or deliver them to the county board of elections.

Democracy North Carolina has helped hundreds of churches with free materials, trainings and advice as part of

SOULS TO THE POLLS

Call us to learn more: 919-286-6000

ACTIVITIES

| Can My Church's Resources Be Used To: | Permissible? | Role Democracy NC Can Play: |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Conduct non-partisan voter registration | Yes | Provide forms and follow-up |
| Organize “Souls to the Polls,” Get Out the Vote (GOTV), and rides to polls in a non-partisan way | Yes | Provide you with materials, follow-up and GOTV training |
| Distribute non-partisan voter guides that include all candidates | Yes | Help you obtain materials |
| Support/oppose legislation, or a bond or amendment on the ballot | Yes | Educate on legislation or a referendum issue on ballot |
| Conduct an educational forum about politics, religion and social justice issues | Yes | Provide speakers and materials on important issues |
| Endorse or oppose political candidates | No | Can play no role |
| Host a forum open to all of the candidates in a race | Yes | Provide relevant questions to ask |
| Engage in political fundraising | No | Can play no role |
| Include info about Early Voting and voting rights in church bulletins | Yes | Provide you with materials and pre-made bulletin inserts |
| Link from the church's website to a campaign or party website | No | Can play no role |
| Contribute to political candidate, political party, or PAC | No | Can play no role |
| Offer candidates newsletter ads | Yes, if they pay market rates | Plays no role |

NOTE TO PASTORS & NON-PROFIT LEADERS:

Like other individuals, pastors have a First Amendment right to back specific candidates, but they should be especially cautious if their endorsement would be viewed as coming from their faith or non-profit organization. Religious leaders may not promote a candidate or political party from the pulpit, but they may use church resources – including buses and bulletins – in a non-partisan way that helps people vote.