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# **National Federation of the Blind: How to Hold a Voter Registration Drive to Register the Blind Members of Your Community**

Use the following steps to plan and execute a voter registration drive to register the blind members of your community. Be sure to contact your local elections office early in the planning process to find out their requirements for registering voters, and adjust your plans accordingly.

### **Step One--Develop a Plan of Action**

* Form a committee and appoint a committee chair. The committee will select a location, date, and time for the drive; gather the necessary materials; and work at the drive.
* Decide where the voter registration drive will take place. Identify a location in your community where you will meet blind people. This could be a library for the blind, a rehabilitation center, a senior center, or the meeting place of a National Federation of the Blind (NFB) chapter. Choose a location that is accessible by public transportation. Call the selected facility to get permission to hold the voter registration drive and reserve a space. If possible, make arrangements to use the facility's tables and chairs for the drive. Chairs will be needed for the volunteers staffing the drive as well as for visitors to the table.
* Decide when the voter registration drive will take place. Depending on your chosen location, know when you will be able to reach the most people. It is also important to know the deadline for the close of registration before the next election.

### **Step Two--Gather the Materials You Will Need**

* Contact your local elections office to learn their requirements for registering voters and to obtain voter registration cards and voter information materials. Request that voter information materials be provided in Braille and large print, if available. Note: In order to register voters, some states require that you take an oath to become an honorary registrar.
* Contact your local League of Women Voters. They can provide additional information about conducting a voter registration drive. They may also be able to provide assistance during the drive. Contact information for your state league can be found at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org).
* Obtain copies of the free *Blind Voter's Guide* in Braille, and large print from the National Federation of the Blind Independence Market by calling (410) 659-9314, extension 2216. Electronic files of the guide are also available for download in Formatted Braille, and MS Word formats at
	+ [Voting, Accessibility, and the Law | National Federation of the Blind (nfb.org)](https://nfb.org/programs-services/center-excellence-nonvisual-access/national-center-nonvisual-election-3)
* Make arrangements with your local elections office to have a demonstration model accessible voting machine available for voter training and practice voting during the voter registration drive. Having an accessible voting machine available for practice voting will give new registrants the confidence to exercise their right to vote on Election Day and is an effective way to draw people to your voter registration drive.
* If your site does not provide tables and chairs, you will need to bring them with you. Also, consider how to attract visitors to your table while keeping in mind what is appropriate for the site. Creating a festive atmosphere by playing patriotic music and decorating the table with a tablecloth and balloons will help to attract visitors.
* Provide pens and clipboards to facilitate filling out the voter registration forms.

### **Step Three--Coordinate Your Volunteers**

* Conduct a training meeting for the volunteers who will be working at the voter registration drive. Coordinate with your local election office for training of volunteers on the set-up and operation of the accessible voting machine.
* Voter registration drives conducted by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization must be conducted in a nonpartisan manner. Volunteers working at the voter registration drive may tell people how to register to vote, the dates of elections, and how to find out where to vote. During the voter registration drive, volunteers may not endorse a candidate or tell voter registrants which party to register under or who to vote for.
* Review with your volunteers a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the voter registration process. The list of FAQs contained in this guide may be supplemented with a list contained on your local elections office Web site.
* If your selected venue is not easily accessible by public transportation, recruit volunteers to drive individuals to and from the voter registration drive.
* Thank your volunteers for their hard work and time.

### **Step Four--Publicize Your Drive**

* Include who, what, when, where, and why in all of your publicity materials. Be sure to emphasize that an accessible voting machine will be available for practice voting. Public transportation information, such as bus number or subway stop, should also be included in promotional materials. In addition, include a phone number that those who cannot access public transportation can call to arrange a volunteer driver to the voter registration drive. Include your organization's name or logo on all publicity materials.
* Place a notice in your local newspaper; organization newsletter; and newsletters published by the library for the blind, senior center, and rehabilitation agency in your community.
* Send an e-mail to your organization's mailing list. Post a notice to listservs used by blind residents in your community. Request the library for the blind, senior center, and rehabilitation agency in your community to send an e-mail to their mailing lists.
* Run a public service announcement on local radio and television stations.

### **Step Five--During the Drive**

* Federal Elections Commission rules require that a sign be posted stating: "Our voter registration services are available without regard to voter's political preference."
* Encourage people to complete voter registration forms while they are at the table. Review completed forms before the registrant leaves to make sure they are filled out correctly.
* Encourage new registrants to practice voting on the demonstration model accessible voting machine.
* Collect completed forms to either mail or take to your local election office in person or you may have individuals take the completed forms to mail themselves.
* Get the names, mailing addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses of new registrants to let them know about future events your organization is planning for the blind members of your community.
* Thank each registrant for taking the time to become a new voter.

### **Step Six--After the Drive**

* If you collected the completed registration forms, deliver them promptly by mail or in person to your local elections office for processing. Failure to do so will disenfranchise citizens who believe they are registered to vote.
* Evaluate the success of your drive. Was your site successful? Were there many people around? Did your table attract a lot of attention? Did you publicize enough? Did you have enough volunteers? Did you register many new voters?
* Contact the National Federation of the Blind HAVA Project Manager, Lou Ann Blake, by e-mail at lblake@nfb.org or by telephone at 410-659-9314, extension 2221 to report on your voter registration drive and to provide feedback for future versions of this guide.
* Start planning your next voter registration drive.

### **Suggested Timeline for Planning Your Voter Registration Drive**

Follow the suggested timeline below to plan and carry out your voter registration drive. Make adjustments as necessary to meet your specific needs.

Three to four months before the drive

* Discuss the idea of holding a voter registration drive with other members of your organization.
* Get the permission of leaders of your organization to hold a drive.

Twelve to ten weeks before the drive

* Form a committee and appoint a committee chair.
* Decide on first meeting date.

Ten weeks before the drive

* Hold first meeting.
* Select possible venues and dates for the drive. It is preferable to have several choices in venue and dates in case one or more turns out to be unavailable.

Eight weeks before the drive

* Contact your local elections office to learn their requirements for registering voters and to obtain voter registration cards and voter information materials.
* Reserve the venue.
* Make arrangements with your local elections office to have a demonstration model accessible voting machine available for practice voting at your voter registration drive.
* Contact the National Federation of the Blind Independence Market 410-659-9314, extension 2216 to obtain free copies of the *Blind Voter's Guide* in Braille, and large print formats.
* Prepare publicity materials.

Seven weeks before the drive

* Place publicity announcements to run three consecutive weeks before the drive.
* Get the drive on event calendars for your library for the blind, and your local senior and rehabilitation centers.

Three weeks before the drive

* Make weekly publicity posts to listservs during each of the three weeks prior to the drive.

One week before the drive

* Gather all necessary materials.
* Print out or make required Federal Elections Commission sign.
* Conduct volunteer training meeting.

On the day of the voter registration drive

* Arrive 30 minutes before you are to begin.
* Set up the table with your materials.
* Set up the accessible voting machine and station one volunteer at the machine to assist new registrants with practice voting.
* Place one or two volunteers in front of the table to help attract people to your table.
* Store completed voter registration cards in a secure place until they can be delivered to your local elections office.

One to Three days after the drive

* Deliver completed voter registration cards to your local elections office.

### **Frequently Asked Questions about Registering to Vote**

Review the below frequently asked questions (FAQs) with your volunteers prior to the voter registration drive to ensure they are able to answer registrants questions. In addition, you should review your state elections office Web page for FAQs that are specific to your state.

Question: Am I eligible to register and to vote?

Answer: Review your state elections office Web page for eligibility requirements.

Question: Must I be able to read or write English to register or vote?

Answer: No. You can take someone with you who can assist you in the voting process, but they cannot vote for you.

Question: When can I register?

Answer: Review your state elections office Web page to find the registration deadlines for your state.

Question: Does registration cost anything?

Answer: No, it is free.

Question: Am I registered once I fill out and mail the registration form?

Answer: You must receive your voter registration card to be registered. If you have not received your card, you can call your local elections office or Registrar of Voters and ask if you are registered.

Question: How do I know if I am already registered to vote?

Answer: If you are not sure if you have registered before, you should call your local elections office or your Registrar of Voters and ask if you are registered.

Question: Do I have to register every time I vote?

Answer: No. The only times you have to re-register are when you move, change your name, want to change your political party, or if you have completed all conditions of a felony charge.

Question: If I didn't vote in the last election, do I need to register again?

Answer: If you are registered but did not vote, you are still registered and do not need to register again.

Question: What if I am out of town on Election Day?

Answer: If you are out of town on Election Day, you will need to vote by absentee ballot. Contact your local elections office to find out how to request an absentee ballot.

Question: What if I move within the State before the election?

Answer: If you move before the deadline for voter registration has passed, you need to re-register in your new precinct. If you move after the deadline for voter registration in your new precinct, you must vote in person in your former precinct or by absentee ballot.

Question: What if I move out of the State before the election?

Answer: If you move before the deadline for voter registration in your new state has passed, contact your local elections office to become registered there. If you move after the deadline for voter registration in your new state, you can vote by absentee ballot in your former state.

Question: What if I am on military or reserve duty on Election Day?

Answer: You will need to vote by absentee ballot.

Question: How do I know where to vote?

Answer: The address of your polling place will be on your registration card. You can also contact your local elections office to learn the location of and other information about your polling place.

Question: When are the polls open?

Answer: Most polling places open early in the morning and stay open until late in the evening. Review your state elections office Web page for more information on your particular State.

Question: I am a college student. Do I register where I go to school or in my home state?

Answer: You can register in either your home state and vote by absentee ballot or you can register in the state where you attend college.

**Sample Promotional Announcement**

Use the following sample announcement to prepare a promotional notice about your voter registration drive that can be included in local newspapers and newsletters, posted to e-mail list servs, and broadcast as a radio and television public service announcement.

**Be Heard.**

**Register to Vote!**

In order to vote, you must be registered. You can register to vote and practice voting on an accessible voting machine at (enter location, date, and time here). Our registration drive is easily reached by taking (enter bus number and stop information and/or subway line and stop information). If you cannot access public transportation, contact (enter your organization name and contact information) for more information or to arrange free transportation to the drive. Every vote counts, so be sure to make your voice heard by registering to vote and voting.

**Federal Elections Commission Voter Registration Services Sign**

During your voter registration drive, post a sign similar to the one below to comply with Federal Elections Commission rules. The sign should be posted in both large print and Braille.

**Our voter registration services are available without regard to voter's political preference.**