

GOTV Postcard Party Toolbox

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Overview

Description

A League member hosts a group of League members and friends of the League to write short messages to other folks in the community urging them to vote in the upcoming election.

Goal and Objectives

Goal

Encourage informed and active participation in government by facilitating voter engagement.

Objective

Increase voter turnout in Texas by 5% from 2012 to 2020

Activity Segments

1. Invitation
2. The Party
3. Mail the postcards



Introduction

Description

A 1- to 2-hour party hosted by a League member for League members and friends of the League in which participants prepare handwritten postcards to be mailed to others in the local community urging them to vote in the upcoming election.

Concepts

What works? Evidence-based voter mobilization methods!

It is the dynamic interaction of authentic person-to-person contact that is most important in determining whether a method will successfully mobilize voters.

- Personalized methods and messages work better.
- Social networks and interpersonal influence can be powerful mobilizing forces.
- The content of mobilization messages is not as important as the quality, timing, and delivery of messages.

Number LWV Volunteers

- Host
- 2-4 member committee to organize the party, obtain printed materials and supplies, and send thank-you messages to participants after the party
- One facilitator to guide the process

Supplies & Equipment

Printed Materials

- Preprinted GOTV postcards (10 per person)
- Sign-in sheet
- Nametags (if participants may not know other attendees)
- Sample messages for the postcards
- List of names and addresses (optional)

Supplies

- Pens for:
 - Sign-in sheet(s)
 - Writing the postcards
- Markers for nametags
- Stamps
- Light refreshments
- Paper plates, cups, and napkins

Equipment

- Tables and chairs

Postcard Party Ideas

- League postcard party
The League hosts a group of League members and friends of the League
- Colleague postcard party
Host a postcard party during lunch at work.
- Teenage postcard party
Get your teenagers to participate in democracy in action!
- Senior postcard party
Get your parents or friends at their retirement center to host a postcard writing party.

How It Works

Process

1. **Invite** League members, friends of the League, family, neighbors, coworkers, and others to your home, a local coffee shop, out for happy hour, or another gathering place.
2. **Start off with a conversation** about the effectiveness of personalized contact in voter mobilization (see concepts on page 3) and League nonpartisanship. Go over sample GOTV postcard messages.
3. **Write your postcards.** Aim for each participant to write 5-10 postcards each. The short messages and addresses should be handwritten.
4. **Collect** the postcards at the end of the event and encourage participants to host their own postcard parties. Don't forget to thank all participants before they leave.
5. **Mail** the postcards. Be strategic about timing—you want the postcards to reach the recipients during the last week of Early Voting or not later than 3 days before Election Day. Thus mailing the cards 9 days before Election Day is ideal.
6. **After the party** send a thank-you message and update to all attendees. Get in the habit of communicating with participants so that the next time you're a step ahead.

Postcards

Size

There are multiple options for postcards. Sample templates are provided with this toolbox.

- To qualify for a postcard stamp, the card must not be folded and must conform to the following dimensions:
 - Minimum size: 3½" high x 5" long
 - Maximum size: 4¼" high x 6" long
- If the dimensions are larger, use a first-class stamp.

Printing

Depending on the number of postcards needed for the party, the postcards can be printed via:

- A home printer
 - Packages of postcard templates are available at office supply stores. For example:
 - Avery Postcards 5689 (5½" x 4¼"; 4 cards per sheet)
 - Avery Half-Fold Greeting Cards 8316 (5½" x 8½"; 2 cards per sheet)
 - Index cards
 - Card stock paper
- Commercial print shop
 - Local
 - Online

Stamps

A postcard with a pretty stamp is more likely to be read than one with a U.S. postage-paid permit. Be sure to check the measurements of your postcard to see if it complies with U.S. postal regulations for a postcard stamp or needs a first-class stamp. And remember the postcard cannot be folded to qualify for a postcard stamp.

List of Addresses

There are two options for obtaining address lists for the postcards. Using participant social networks is most effective in turning out the vote. However, you may choose to target newly registered voters, infrequent voters, or specific low-turnout populations.

It is crucial that the addresses be handwritten on the postcards. Each address should be double-checked by another attendee for accuracy. The last thing we want is for the postcard to be undelivered because of a mistake in the house number or misspelled street name.

- Personal contacts
 - Ask each participant to bring names and addresses of at least 10 people that would benefit from receiving a personal handwritten GOTV message.
- Purchase a list from your county elections department
 - Purchase a list of newly registered voters or a voter list with history of voters in the last few elections. A list typically costs around \$30-\$35.
 - When using a voter list, target infrequent voters, those who do not vote every election. Encouraging presidential election voters to vote in a primary or off year general election is particularly effective.
 - Unless funds are unlimited, it is best to target those in your neighborhood or zip code.

Sample Postcard Messages

Sample messages should be handed out to participants before you ask them to start writing. This helps get the writing started and creative energy flowing.

The messages should be short (2-5 sentences), nonpartisan, and focus on being a voter in the upcoming election. If the writer knows the recipient, begin the message by addressing the person by first name. Always include date of the election (may be preprinted on the postcard) and the recipient's polling location (or website for polling location).

If the dates are not preprinted on your postcards, insert this sample sentence with election dates in these messages as the second sentence: Election Day is DATE, and Early Voting ends DATE.

- Hi, John. I'm Jane, a LWV volunteer working to get folks in Plano out to vote. You can find out where to vote at www.VOTE411.org. I hope to be able to thank you for voting after the election. Please vote!
- Hi, Jane. I'm John, your neighbor over on Dover St. I'm working to get all our neighbors out to vote. In our county you can vote at any Vote Center. Find out where at www.VOTE411.org. Your neighbors are counting on you to vote. I hope to thank you for making democracy work! Please vote.
- Hi, John. I'm Jane, your colleague at the office. I'm working to get everyone in our office out to vote. You can find out where to vote at www.VOTE411.org. I'm hoping I can thank your for voting when I see you after the election! Be a Texas voter!
- Hi, Jane. I'm John. I've seen you at church. I'm working to get everyone in our congregation to be a Texas voter! You can find out where to vote at www.VOTE411.org. I'm hoping I can thank your for voting when I see you the Sunday after the election! Vote—It Counts!
- Hi, John. I'm Jane, a LWV volunteer. Congratulations on registering to vote! Remember that whom you vote for is secret, but whether you vote is public record. I'm hoping I can count on you being a Texas voter this election. You can find out where to vote at www.VOTE411.org. Vote—It Counts!

Planning the Event

Before the Event

Begin detailed planning activities for the event at least 4-6 weeks prior to the date of the event.

- Assign responsibilities and deadlines to members of the event planning committee.
- Secure a location with needed tables and chairs.
- Recruit volunteers.
- Print materials and obtain supplies.
- Plan details of the invitation (social media, printed invitation, or telephone call)
 - Initial invitation: 3 weeks in advance
 - Reminders: 1 week and 1 day in advance
- Plan for light refreshments.

Day of the Event

- Arrive early to assist host with arrangement of tables.
- Prepare sign-in table and location for refreshments.
- Display a LWV banner or sign outside the front door so participants can easily identify the location. A volunteer greeting the guests makes them feel welcome!

Following the Event

Thank party participants for helping make democracy work! While emails are ok, a personal, handwritten note makes the recipient feel more appreciated.

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