



Faith in Elections Playbook

Recruiting poll workers

Recruiting Poll Workers

Our elections face a historic staffing shortage. Without enough poll workers, long lines could make it harder to vote, polling locations might need to be closed, and longer vote-counting times could reduce trust in our elections. Filling this urgent need is an opportunity to build relationships across the community while helping to ensure that every eligible person can vote and every valid vote is counted.



THE NEED

- Our election system is made up of 117,000 polling locations across 3,000 counties. They require about a million poll workers to run smoothly.
- The average age of poll workers has increased over time, with a large share of poll workers over the age of 60. Many are retiring, leaving gaps in our election system that must be filled in order to avoid election crises. It's time for a new generation of poll workers to join this effort.
- A [recent survey](#) found that 51% of election officials worry about retaining or recruiting enough election workers in future elections.
- There is an enormous need for bilingual poll workers to adequately serve the needs of some communities.
- Our elections depend on individuals from across the country and all political leanings serving their community by being trained as election workers. Some jurisdictions even require parity of poll workers from each major political party.
- Our elections are not run from Washington, D.C. or by political elites; they are run at the state and local level. They require participation of everyday Americans serving their local communities.

“Working alongside my fellow poll workers on Tuesday, I had a profoundly renewing experience of we, of being part of this unprecedented experiment in multicultural democracy. I say that my faith was renewed – and that is because in working together to make our democracy work, we lived out and renewed the covenant we share, the covenant that is expressed in the first words of the Constitution: We, the People. May we continue to talk, to listen, to disagree peaceably, to respect the outcome of free and fair elections, to live with – and be committed to living with – one another.

[- Rabbi Josh Feigelson,
Institute for Jewish Spirituality](#)

- Poll workers conduct tasks such as setting up and testing equipment, checking in voters, providing ballots, and scanning and counting the ballots. They go through legislatively-mandated training to ensure that they can carry out these functions.



THE RESPONSE

- During the election season, faith-based organizations can recruit nonpartisan poll workers to help our elections run smoothly so that every valid vote is counted in an accurate, efficient manner.
- Poll working is one way that people who live in proximity can spend time with their neighbors and build community.
- Employers can update their employee handbooks to provide paid time off for their staff to work at the polls.
- Organizations can recruit poll workers from their staff, board, membership, or congregation. Multiple organizations can team up to create a competition for recruiting the most poll workers!



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Because of the decentralized nature of our elections, your local county will have specific rules related to working at the polls. Check with your local county for up-to-date information and requirements.
- When recruiting poll workers, you should keep in mind the following details:
 - The total time commitment including training, the days required for service, and the time necessary to serve on each day of voting. Poll workers are often asked to work either half-day shifts or the full day of Election Day and specific days during early voting.
 - Deadlines for signing up. Be sure to check with your county so that your organization can sign up individuals on time.
 - How much poll workers are paid in your community.
- In most counties, poll workers are paid for their service. Individuals who are out of work or otherwise in financial need can serve as poll workers as a way to earn money, as well as a way to build their resumé as they seek more long-term work opportunities. There are also many programs for high school students to receive school credit for this work.



RESOURCES AND LINKS

- [An email template for congregations to recruit poll workers](#)
- [An email template for networks to recruit poll workers](#)
- [Poll Worker Preparedness Checklist from the Election Assistance Commission](#)
- [US Election Assistance Commission state-by-state guide for poll workers](#) [Note that this link contains information from the 2020 election and will be updated for 2024 when guidance is available.]
- You can use this [Power the Polls link](#) to share with your organization and members so that they can sign up. Individuals who sign up using this link will receive an email from their local election office that outlines the requirements for training and serving as a poll worker. They will also receive follow up emails and reminders from Interfaith America.
- If you want to create an official partnership between your organization and Power the Polls, you can do so at this [link](#). By partnering directly with Power the Polls, your organization will receive additional specific toolkits, emails about the specific needs in our election system throughout the year, and helpful information on how you can make your poll worker recruitment effort as successful as possible.

“I’ve written about the pro-democracy faith movement and worked with religious leaders to resist authoritarianism, but it’s an extra special experience to see democracy up close as a poll worker. I volunteered on Election Day 2020 in Louisville, Kentucky, and was amazed at the community coming together to make democracy happen. I took election processes for granted, but now I understand what a tough and important role poll workers play. Making the promise of democracy real requires neighbors to help neighbors, and my Christian faith teaches me that loving my neighbors is tantamount to following Christ.”

- Guthrie Graves-Fitzsimmons, Baptist Joint Committee