



Faith in Elections Playbook

**Supporting voters to have a safe,
positive voting experience**

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Election Day can be an opportunity to celebrate community and our freedoms as Americans. Faith leaders can contribute to a safe, positive voting experience in two ways: by providing food and water and by serving as a peaceful presence. People should feel safe and comfortable as they prepare to cast their ballot. With increased tensions and even threats of violence in the leadup to our elections, religious leaders, community leaders, and lay people can play a positive role at polling locations by being a welcoming presence for voters. Additionally, faith-based organizations can help make it easier for voters to wait in long lines by providing food and water as people wait.

Providing food and water



THE NEED

- During early voting and on Election Day, some polling locations face long lines. There are a [number of reasons](#) for this including voter enthusiasm, technical issues, inexperienced poll workers, and a lack of resources or polling locations.
- Especially in places with inclement weather, waiting in line can be an impediment for some. Bad experiences in long lines may cause some voters to have to step out of line during the election, which decreases their chances of choosing to vote in the next election. One study has shown [increased](#) turnout as a result of providing food and other outreach at polling locations.
- Voters may not think to bring water, a snack, and other items to keep themselves comfortable in case there is a long line at their polling location. In most states, volunteers are allowed to provide food and water at polling locations as long as they follow the regulations of the polling location.



THE RESPONSE

- A multitude of faith traditions have some sort of scripture or other central belief around providing food for people who are hungry. Religious communities can take on the call to feed the hungry in a new way: providing food and water to people waiting in line to vote.

- Volunteers across the country are able to provide sustenance to people waiting in line, and there have been a number of innovative approaches that are streamlining the process:
 - [Pizza to the Polls](#) has an app and online portal that allows people to report long lines at their polling locations. Once they verify the long lines, Pizza to the Polls orders pizza to be sent to that polling location.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Check with your local election office to make sure that volunteers are allowed to provide food and/or water at the polls.
- Different precincts, counties, and states have different rules regarding providing food and water at polling locations. Check the rules in your county.
- If you want to help this effort but are unable to physically provide for your polling locations, you can become an official partner of [Pizza to the Polls](#) or fundraise to help them carry out their mission.
 - Partnership opportunities include:
 - Promoting @PizzatothePolls: Help spread the word by creating or sharing content across social media so people know they can report a line or promote a partnered event
 - Feeding Hungry Folks: Donate snacks or beverages to be delivered to polling locations
 - Raise Dough: Share their fundraising link with your supporters
- You can email partners@polls.pizza to explore a partnership.

“It definitely made my voting experience better,’ says Vincent. ‘Our budget was tight before the pandemic and has definitely gotten worse since, so a free meal was a moment of extra happiness that day.’”

- [Eater, “The Race to Feed Voters at the Polls”](#)



RESOURCES AND LINKS

- [Here is a checklist](#) to use as a guide for preparing to provide food and water at the polls.
- Be sure to check the [Election Official Directory](#) and contact your local elections office to find the rules about engaging in this activity.

“When it comes to voting, the most important thing is keeping people in line. A simple bottle of water or snack can be what stops people from abandoning their right to vote... We know that voting is habit-forming, so a good experience at the polls is crucial to ensuring future participation.”

[- Amirah Noaman, Pizza to the Polls](#)

Serving as a welcoming presence at a polling location



THE NEED

- While voting can be a celebration of exercising our rights and having a voice in building our free society, the environment at polling locations can be one of intensity and uncertainty.
- Increasingly, we have seen threats of violence against polling locations. During the leadup to the 2022 midterm elections, multiple federal agencies released a [joint bulletin](#) warning about potential violence at polling locations or against candidates.
- Elections can be a time of stress as people feel complicated emotions regarding their participation in the election, including the high stakes of casting their ballot.



THE RESPONSE

- Faith leaders can **provide a peaceful presence at the polls.** As Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, leader of Faiths United to Save Democracy, told [The Washington Post](#) in 2022, “When you see a priest or a clergy or an imam or rabbi and they have their clergy garment on, for most people that is a symbol of some level of calm and peace.” By standing in the appropriate places and providing a positive, prayerful presence, faith leaders can add comfort to the experience of voting.
- Poll chaplains provide basic voter information, assist vulnerable voters, and provide a calming presence at polling locations.

- The opportunity to serve as a poll chaplain is open to clergy or religious leaders and lay leaders. While there is a welcoming presence in having faith leaders in their religious vestments at polling sites, partnering with civic organizations can expand the number of those trained to provide a peaceful presence at polling locations.

“This is a natural extension for the care that we have for each other not only as clergy but for the greater community regardless of faith traditions... It just seemed a wise preventive kind of ministry to be involved in...I’m not there to care for one side or the other, but for every individual who has chosen to be a voter.”

[- Rev. Karen Hagen, Tippecanoe Presbyterian Church in Bay View, Wisconsin](#)



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- The Bridging Divides Initiative has created a bystander and de-escalation training [one-pager](#) for community members and volunteers. They also have [state-by-state guides](#) that can help you learn about providing a peaceful presence in your state.
- Faiths United to Save Democracy is recruiting a multi-faith coalition of chaplains for polling locations. You can access their toolkit [here](#).
- T’ruah specifically recruits rabbis as poll chaplains. You can find more information on their work [here](#).

“Our job was simple: welcome people, smile, and offer a sense of calm; respond to questions or incidents that arose; provide information on voting rights; keep an eye out for conflicts and help de-escalate any problems; and thank every voter for their participation... It was also neighborly and friendly. People nodded and greeted one another, cracked jokes, and laughed. They knew they might vote differently, but they would still need to live together, whatever the results.”

[- Bridget Moix, Quaker Volunteer](#)