

Beyond Voting: Engaging in the Election, part 2

Rose Marie Tresp, RSM; Institute Justice Team

In a recent [pastoral visit to Trieste](#), Pope Francis states that “indifference is a cancer of democracy, a non-participation”, so he encourages us “to *participate* so that democracy may resemble a *healed heart*. ... Let us not be deceived by easy solutions. Let us instead be passionate about the common good. ... Democracy is not an empty box; rather, it is linked to the values of the person, fraternity, and integral ecology. ... As Catholics, in this context, we cannot be content with a marginal or private faith.”

We can participate in the political process during the election season without being partisan in several important ways.

First, by participating in non-partisan voter registration or turnout processes, which may include educating people on the security of the voting process itself. These are state level laws and processes but national groups such as [Vote411 from the League of Women Voters](#) will link to each state’s information. Voter ID laws have changed in many states. Free voter ID information cards in English or Spanish [can be obtained through VoteRiders](#) for each state by non-profit, non-partisan organizations. These can also be downloaded. Citizens who need assistance in getting the proper documentation for a voter ID – even financial assistance – can [contact the VoteRiders free help webpage](#).

Another process to get people to the polls, especially those who do not usually vote, is campaigns using postcards, text messaging, or phone banking. Center for Common Ground has a postcard campaign called [Reclaim our Vote](#). This organization also has opportunities to text bank and phone bank.

The Brennan Center includes [many articles about elections](#), including articles about misinformation, gerrymandering, voter suppression, the influence of money, and artificial intelligence.

Poll chaplain is a new role, with training being offered to help provide a calming and moral presence to vulnerable voters, such as the elderly, disabled, youth, and other disenfranchised citizens, since violence is being threatened at the polls in many states during the 2024 elections. If this is something you’re interested in, you can learn more from the [Turn Out Sunday](#) site. This will only be offered in the following states: Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin.

There are numerous ways that we can participate in political processes in a non-partisan manner:

- Educate voters by passing out information on voting requirements and/or non-partisan voter guides at churches, food pantries, farmers’ markets, and other venues;
- Support, oppose, or host a community conversation on a ballot measure;
- Write op-eds or letters to the editor on the importance of voting;
- Assist those who need support with voter registration or obtaining voter IDs;
- Drive non-drivers to their voting site; and
- Provide water to voters waiting in line when long waits are anticipated (and as the law permits).

“Politics itself is a preeminent priority. Politics and the political process is something that we must defend. The reason that we must defend politics is because, without it, we cannot hope to achieve justice or peace. Politics is how justice and peace are built in the world. Catholics cannot pursue our conscientious prudential judgements considering the consistent ethic (of life) without a political system that is open to participation.” from A Consistent Ethic of Life, by Steven P. Millies, pages 95, 96

For more information and continued updates go to the Mercy Justice [All Things Election 2024](#) web page.