

Election Advocacy for 501(c)(3) Nonprofits

What You Can (and Can't) Do During Election Season



YES! Your Organization CAN...



Educate Voters

- Share nonpartisan information about elections, voting, and the voting process.
- Explain why voting matters.
- Provide voter registration information.
- Share polling locations, voting hours, and election deadlines.
- Help people request absentee or vote-by-mail ballots (without favoring a candidate).



Encourage Civic Participation

- Encourage everyone to vote.
- Host nonpartisan voter registration drives.
- Remind people about election dates.
- Help remove barriers to voting (transportation, language access, accessibility, etc.).



Provide unbiased candidate information

- Publish nonpartisan voter guides that cover all viable candidates using the same questions and format.
- Host candidate forums where all candidates are invited and treated equally.
- Share factual information about ballot measures.
- Educate voters about the roles and responsibilities of elected offices.



Talk about issues

- Advocate for issues that align with your mission.
- Educate the public about how policies affect your community.
- Continue advocacy work during election season-- as long as it does not support or oppose candidates.



Proceed with Caution

These activities **may be permissible**, but only if they remain **strictly nonpartisan**:

- Candidate forums
- Candidate questionnaires
- Voter guides
- Issue advocacy close to an election
- Social media posts about elections
- Staff or board members speaking in their official roles



NO! Your Organization CANNOT...

Support or oppose candidates

- Endorse candidates for public office.
- Tell people who to vote for—or against.
- Rate or rank candidates.
- Make statements favoring one candidate over another.
- Allow organizational resources to be used for campaign activities.

Give campaign support

- Donate money to campaigns.
- Make in-kind contributions (office space, staff time, equipment, mailing lists, etc.).
- Coordinate activities with political campaigns.
- Display campaign signs or campaign materials at organizational events.

Use organizational communications for campaigning

- Publish endorsements in newsletters or on social media.
- Email supporters urging them to vote for or against a candidate.
- Share campaign messages using organizational accounts.
- Link to campaign fundraising or volunteer pages.

**Be pro-voter,
not pro-candidate.**



Remember

Be pro-voter, not pro-candidate.

501(c)(3) organizations can encourage civic participation and educate voters while remaining strictly nonpartisan.



MCCOY is a non-partisan and independent non-profit organization that champions the positive development of youth through leadership on key issues and support of the youth development professional community.

