



How to: Protect Democracy in Your Community

A practical guide to election protection
before, during, and after Election Day

Six Ways to Protect Democracy in Your Community

For 250 years, Americans have relied on elections to choose their leaders, resolve disagreements peacefully, and hold those in power accountable. But in recent years, election officials, civic organizations, community leaders, and voters have faced increasing intimidation, misinformation, harassment, and other efforts to undermine confidence in election results—not just the results, but the entire election process and those who administer it.

Democracy only works when ordinary citizens participate in and trust the election process and are willing to defend it. This guide provides practical actions your organization can take before, during, and after an election to support voters, strengthen public confidence in the process, and prepare for challenges if they arise. The same organizing skills we use to build power around agriculture, energy, health care, local government, and economic justice also strengthen the democratic institutions that make self-government possible.

1 BUILD RELATIONSHIPS BEFORE YOU NEED THEM

Election protection begins long before Election Day and largely depends on building relationships and trust with those involved in running elections, which can only be done over time—not during a crisis.

2 EDUCATE YOUR COMMUNITY

Confusion creates opportunities for misinformation. Trusted local voices, including yours, remain the strongest source of accurate election information and countering misinformation.

3 PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTION PROCESS

Strong elections depend on community participation.

4 PREPARE BEFORE CHALLENGES ARISE

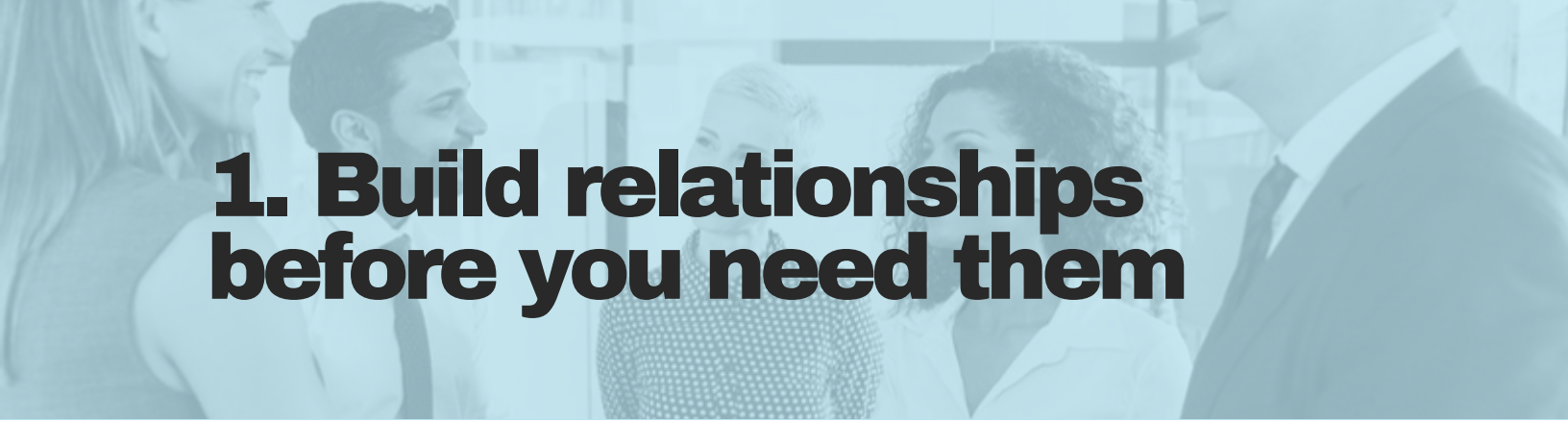
Preparation prevents confusion. Organizations respond more effectively when they understand how elections work in their communities and have clear roles in place before voting begins.

5 HAVE A PLAN TO VOTE

The most effective way to strengthen democracy is to vote—and help others vote.

6 CREATE YOUR ACTION PLAN

Now put your strategy on paper.



1. Build relationships before you need them

Election protection begins long before Election Day and largely depends on building relationships and trust with those involved in running elections, which can only be done over time—not during a crisis.

Build relationships with:

- City and county clerks
- Election administrators
- County commissioners
- Secretaries of State
- District attorneys
- Law enforcement leaders
- Tribal election officials, where applicable
- Community organizations and coalition partners

Share your values with those you are building relationships with.

You can build trust by sharing the values that motivate you. Here are the values WORC espouses:

- Democracy is worth protecting.
- Every eligible voter should be able to cast a ballot.
- Election officials deserve our respect and support.
- Election outcomes should be decided by voters—not intimidation, disinformation, or political pressure.
- Rural people play an essential role in protecting free, fair, secure, and trusted elections.

Questions to ask:

- How are elections administered in our county?
- What challenges are election officials facing?
- How can community organizations be helpful?
- Are volunteer opportunities available?
- What concerns do you have as Election Day approaches?

Take action

Draft a “declaration of values” related to free, fair, and transparent elections and submit that as a letter-to-the-editor or as a guest column to your local newspaper. Also post it on your social media accounts and share on your local community Facebook page.

Schedule introductory meetings with your local officials months before Election Day. Become a trusted community partner before problems arise.

2. Educate your community

Confusion creates opportunities for misinformation. Trusted local voices remain the strongest source of accurate election information and countering misinformation.

Help voters understand:

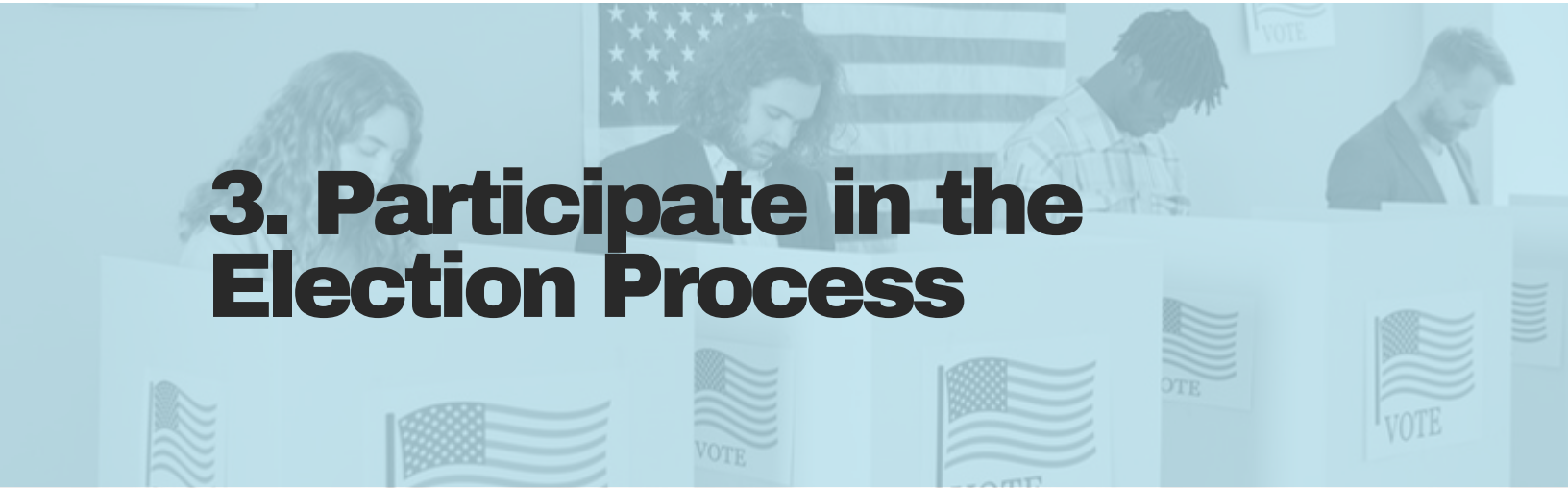
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| • Voter registration | • Polling locations |
| • Registration deadlines | • Election certification |
| • Early voting | • Where to find official election information |
| • Vote-by-mail procedures | • Local ballot measures and candidates |
| • Ballot drop boxes | |

Take action

Use newsletters, social media, local newspapers, community meetings, and one-on-one conversations to share accurate election information.

Consider ways you can promote confidence and trust in your county election system. Ask your county clerk and election administrators if they would be willing to hold an open house or participate in a community meeting to discuss and demonstrate how your election process works and field questions from voters.

Contact a local television or print media reporter and ask if they might be interested in doing a story on your county's election process. Invite the reporters to the open house/community meeting.



3. Participate in the Election Process

Strong elections depend on community participation.

Build relationships with:

- Poll workers
- Election judges
- Nonpartisan election observers
- Poll watchers (where permitted by state law)
- Voter assistance volunteers

Take action

Recruit members to serve, and connect them with official county training opportunities.

4. Prepare before challenges arise

Preparation prevents confusion. Organizations respond more effectively when they understand how elections work in their communities and have clear roles in place before voting begins.

Know your election system

Before Election Day, make sure your organization can answer these questions:

- Who administers elections in our county and state?
- Who certifies election results, and when does certification occur?
- What public bodies oversee election administration?
- What relationships do we already have with election officials?
- Which relationships still need to be built?
- How could election certification be challenged under state law?

Define your response

If a challenge arose, who would:

- Coordinate our response?
- Communicate publicly?
- Mobilize members?
- Contact coalition partners?
- Work with legal counsel?
- Respond to misinformation?

Take action

Develop a simple Election Response Plan before voting begins. Review it with your staff, member leaders, and coalition partners so everyone understands their role.

In advance of the elections, ask members to submit a letter-to-the-editor to your local newspaper expressing confidence and trust in your county's election process, while avoiding repeating any misinformation that you hear and hope to counter (which can have the unintended effect of spreading that misinformation).

Post your letter on your community Facebook page (if your community has one).



5. Have a plan to vote

The most effective way to strengthen democracy is to vote—and help others vote. Here's a checklist you can use to help voters make a plan to vote:

- ☐ I know whether I will vote in person, vote early, or vote by mail.
- ☐ If voting by mail, I know when and how to request my ballot if required.
- ☐ I know when my ballot should arrive.
- ☐ I know where my polling place or ballot drop box is located.
- ☐ I know my options for returning my ballot.
- ☐ I know how to track my ballot if my state offers ballot tracking.
- ☐ If voting by mail, I will send my ballot at least 10 days before the election, ensuring it arrives well before Election Day.
- ☐ I have my county election office's phone number.
- ☐ I have reminded at least five friends, neighbors, or family members to make their own voting plan.
- ☐ I rely on my County Clerk and Secretary of State—not rumors or social media—for election information.

Take action

Ask one simple question: "What's your plan to vote?"

Helping someone make a voting plan is one of the easiest and most effective ways to increase participation. Encourage voters to vote early and, if possible, drop their ballot at their election office or official mail ballot drop box instead of mailing it, ensuring their vote is cast and not subject to potential delays or other problems with the U.S. Postal Service.

Consider submitting a letter to the editor or guest column to your local newspaper that helps people consider their plan to vote and encourages them to vote early.

6. Create your action plan

Now put your strategy on paper. Before Election Day, identify three priorities, which could include any of the following:

- Meet with every county clerk in your service area.
- Recruit volunteers to serve as judges, poll workers, and nonpartisan election observers.
- Hold a community forum on voting and election administration.
- Develop a voter education campaign for your members.
- Build relationships with local law enforcement and county commissioners.
- Create an Election Day rapid response team.
- Conduct a "What's Your Plan to Vote?" outreach campaign.
- Establish relationships with legal partners before Election Day.

Our top three priorities:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Also identify:

Lead staff person:

Lead member leader:

Key coalition partners:

Important election officials:

Legal partners:

Communications lead:

Rapid response team:

List your timelines and deadlines before Election Day.

Be sure to review and update your plan throughout the election season.

Why This Matters

Democracy depends on public confidence in elections.

Protecting democracy means supporting the dedicated public servants who administer elections fairly, securely, and transparently. Building trust in elections is not a partisan act—it is a civic responsibility.

Democracy needs you

Democracy has never depended on extraordinary people.

It has always depended on ordinary people who choose to participate.

People who build relationships.

People who organize their communities.

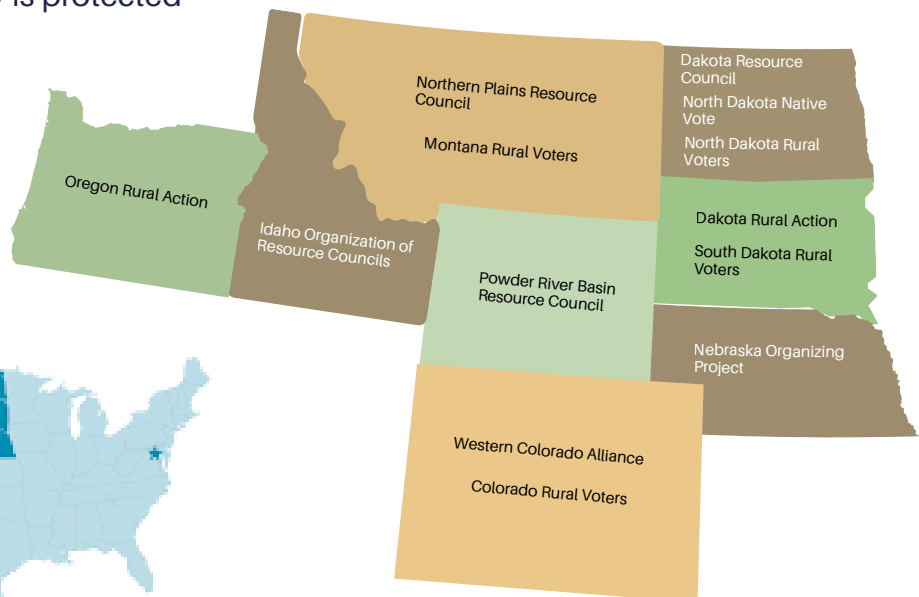
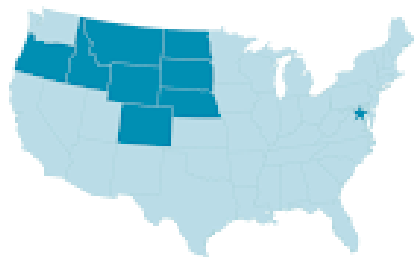
People who help neighbors vote.

People who support election officials.

People who stand up for truth.

That's how democracy is protected

WORC spans eight states in the Mountain West and Northern Plains region with a long-standing presence in our nation's Capitol.



WESTERN ORGANIZATION OF RESOURCE COUNCILS' GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY PROGRAM

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