FIVE STEPS

for Hosting a Successful Church Voter Registration Drive

Christians can have a positive impact on elections and ultimately our nation's future. Elections determine our leaders, who in turn influence whether our nation honors family values, protects life in the womb, and allows the freedom to express our faith in the public arena. Yet every election, millions of Christians fail to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens. We can help our people obey Christ's call to participate in government (Matt. 22:21) by encouraging voter registration and voting Christian values. Here are five action steps:

STEP 1: ASK

Get permission from your pastor and church leadership so that you're under biblical authority. When asking, emphasize that voter registration is:

Biblical. Selecting godly leaders is rooted in biblical principle (see Exod. 18:21; Prov. 29:2) and that process begins with registering to vote. "Part of a pastor's responsibility is to preach the whole counsel of God to the people of God, which includes our responsibility to be salt and light as Christian citizens," says Dr. Kenyn Cureton, a pastor for 20 years, now with Family Research Council.

Simple. Recent federal laws have made voter registration easier than ever, with a national registration form that's acceptable in most states.

Legal. The IRS says church voter-registration drives are legal, and even encouraged, unless they endorse or oppose candidates. (Legal Tips Below)

Christians can have a positive impact on elections and ultimately our nation's future.

STEP 2: PREPARE

Here is a suggested game plan:

Contact your county clerk's or secretary of state's office to obtain registration forms and learn collection procedures. Voters can mail their own forms, but it's more effective to collect them from members and then volunteer to mail or return them in bulk. Some states, like Texas, require you to be deputized before doing that. Other states may require a valid ID. For state voter registration policies and contact info, visit https://www.usa.gov/election-office

Train your volunteers if they are helping you. Be sure they know the rules for conducting voter registration drives in your area. Registration drives should be kept nonpartisan and not promote any one candidate or platform.

Schedule registration drives to coincide with patriotic-themed July 4th worship services and 30-60 days preceding an election. "The Sunday nearest July 4th is a perfect time to focus on our biblical and patriotic duty as Christian citizens," says Cureton. Also, conduct voter registration "at least three consecutive Sundays leading up to the month before the election," advises Cureton, FRC's Vice President for Christian Resources. Many states have a voter registration deadline 30 days before elections, so plan ahead.

Advertise your registration drive on the church website, newsletters, PowerPoint slides, bulletins, and other church communications. However, "the pastor is the key to promotion," says Cureton, "because when the pastor leads, the people will follow."

STEP 3: REGISTER

On the Sunday your pastor preaches on Christian Citizenship, here are two ways to conduct the non-partisan voter registration drive:

Pews. The most effective method is to have ushers distribute voter registration forms in the pews, allowing church members time to fill out the forms before they are collected.

Tables. If your pastor prefers a more passive approach, set up a patriotic-themed table in a high-traffic area of the church. Recruit a team of volunteers and train them. Have plenty of registration forms and pens.

Take the initiative. Fr. Frank Pavone of Priests for Life advises: "Stand up, don't sit, and don't just let people walk by. Speak to them, saying, 'Good morning, can I help you fill out this form?'" If already registered, ask if they have moved since the last election; if so, re-register them.

Provide assistance. Lead people step-by-step through the process so they don't feel like any question is stupid. Look over the form and ensure it is complete.

Keep records. It can be helpful to have a record of the results for reference later. But be sure to "Follow the law on record keeping," advises Cureton.

If the pastor doesn't feel comfortable with either approach, ask for permission to call members who aren't registered. Start by comparing your church mailing list with voter registration records, which are public information. Offer to mail them a voter registration form or point them to www.PrayVoteStand.org where they can register to vote. They can help register a friend as well. However, don't put them on the defensive by confronting them about not being registered. Instead, offer to help them become a voter.

Remember, how you vote today impacts tomorrow.

STEP 4: STAY LEGAL

Tips from First Liberty Institute:

- Voter registration drives must be conducted in a neutral and nonpartisan manner.
- Nonpartisan activities are actions that refrain from supporting or opposing any particular candidate or political party.
- Voter registration tables should only list the name of the organization hosting the registration drive, the date of the upcoming election, and notice of the opportunity to register to vote.
- There should be no reference to any specific candidate or political party by those staffing the registration table, except they may reference official voter registration forms which allow registrants to select party affiliation.
- Any materials provided at the registration table should refrain from referencing any candidates or political parties, except that they may reference the official voter registration forms which allow registrants to select party affiliation.
- Churches should refrain from handing out voter registration literature at official church functions that praise or criticize particular candidates or political parties for any position they may take on issues.

For more information, visit firstliberty.org, email info@firstliberty.org or call (972) 941-4444.
You can also review IRS guidelines at: https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/private-foundations/influencing-elections-and-carrying-on-voter-registration-drives.

STEP 5: FOLLOW-UP

Have a plan to translate voter registration into values voting:

Collect the forms and deliver in person or by mail to your county election office. Many states have a deadline when the forms must be returned.

Ask the pastor to encourage voter participation as the election approaches.

Encourage voters who will be out of town to request an absentee ballot.

Contact those on your follow-up list a week before early voting begins and again before Election Day and remind them to vote.

Provide a sign-up sheet and transportation to the polls and childcare for parents.

Direct people to PrayVoteStand.org for Voter Guides and more on voting biblical values.