

Designing a Non-Partisan Voter Registration Effort

Common Questions Asked by Social Service Agencies About Voter Registration

All voter registration services by non-profit organizations must be non-partisan. Non-partisan means that the activity or program shall not be influenced by, affiliated with, or supportive of the interest or policies of any political party or candidate. Support for candidates of two different parties in an election ("bipartisanship") is not a non-partisan activity.

Q Can my organization work in conjunction with other groups that conduct voter registration, education, and get-out-the-vote programs?

A Yes, so long as the effort is non-partisan. Participating organizations and individuals cannot make any statements in support of or in opposition to any particular candidate or party, nor carry on any other activity designed to reflect a preference or recommendation for any political candidate or party.

Q Can vehicles owned by nonprofit organizations be used to transport voters to the polls? Can drivers employed by the organization transport voters to the polls?

A Yes, to both questions. You can even affix non-partisan messages to vehicles encouraging voters to go to the polls. However, make certain that the vehicles and the drivers do not have any partisan literature, buttons, posters, flyers, bumper stickers or other political propaganda.

Q Can a staff person registering voters in a 501 (c) (3) agency wear a button or put a bumper sticker on his/her car that has the name of a favored candidate?

A No, not while registering voters.

You Can Say... "You can have an impact on the decisions affecting your life. Register to vote now."

But You Can't Say... "Don't let Bush get re-elected. End the Republican stranglehold. Register to vote here."

You Can Say... "Public policy is decided at the polls. Take a position on health care, nutrition and other issues affecting our families. Register to vote here today."

But You Can't Say... "If you want a change, vote for the Democrat."

You Can Say... "Budget cuts are reducing services provided by this agency and many others. If you care about housing and child care, register to vote today."

But You Can't Say... "Budget cuts are hurting this agency. Register to vote and let the candidates know you won't take it anymore."

