ELECTION ACTIVITY
FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES

Faith communities can use their resources to encourage their members to vote without endangering their tax-exempt status if they stick to non-partisan activities. **This guide outlines permitted activities and ways that Democracy North Carolina can help.**

DEMOCRACY NC

Not affiliated with any party or candidate.

PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

non·par·ti·san (*adjective*): Faith communities with tax-exempt status can engage in election-related activities IF they are non-partisan. They **must not show favoritism for electing a candidate or candidates of a political party.**

You can use church resources for nonpartisan "Souls to the Polls" activities, including:

☑ **Conduct a voter registration drive:** Obtain registration forms and instructions from your local Board of Elections or call us at 919-286-6000 for more information. Turn the forms in to the Board of Elections at least 25 days before the election. You may insert registration forms into your church program or hand them out at events.

☑ **Educate voters:** You can put voting information in bulletins, hold candidate forums (invite all candidates for the office), and teach people their voting rights. For example, educate people with a felony conviction that they can register to vote after serving their sentence. Call Democracy North Carolina at 919-286-6000 to learn about resources and other help.

☑ **Join a nonpartisan Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) coalition and work with other nonprofit groups to register voters or get them to the polls.** Caution: Don't join a coalition that supports a specific political party or a candidate. Democracy North Carolina works with many nonpartisan groups and can connect you to those working in your area.

☑ **Make it easier for your congregation to vote by sponsoring gatherings on a Saturday or Sunday during the 17-day Early Voting period.** Distribute resources promoting weekend voting options, including Saturday and Sunday "Souls to the Polls" events. Provide food and info about how voters can check registration status, download a sample ballot, and get nonpartisan voter guides at ncvoter.org.

☑ **Give voters rides to the polls.** Volunteer to use church vans or buses to help your congregation and others vote. Promote Democracy North Carolina's rides hotline: 232-78-RIDES (232-787-4337).

PERMITTED ACTIVITIES CHECKLIST

Can My Church's Resources Be Used To:	Permissible?	Role Democracy NC Can Play:
Conduct nonpartisan voter registration	✓	**Provide forms and follow-up**
Organize "Souls to the Polls," Get Out the Vote (GOTV), and rides to polls in a nonpartisan way	✓	**Provide you with materials, follow-up and GOTV training**
Distribute nonpartisan voter guides that include all candidates	✓	**Help you obtain materials**
Support/oppose legislation, or a bond or amendment on the ballot	✓	**Educate on legislation or a referendum issue on ballot**
Endorse or oppose political candidates	✗	**Can play no role**
Host a forum open to all of the candidates in a race	✓	**Provide relevant questions to ask**
Engage in political fundraising	✗	**Can play no role**
Include info about Early Voting and voting rights in church bulletins	✓	**Provide you with materials and pre-made bulletin inserts**
Link from the church's website to a campaign or party website	✗	**Can play no role**
Contribute to political candidate, political party, or PAC	✗	**Can play no role**
Offer candidates newsletter ads	✓ *if they pay market rate	**Plays no role**
Conduct an educational forum about politics, religion, social justice issues	✓	**Provide speakers and materials on important issuesium**

NOTE TO PASTORS AND NONPROFIT LEADERS:

Like other individuals, pastors have a First Amendment right to back specific candidates, but they should be especially cautious if their endorsement would be viewed as coming from their faith or nonprofit organization. **Religious leaders may not promote a candidate or political party from the pulpit**, but they may use church resources — including buses and bulletins — in a non-partisan way that helps people vote.