

## A CALL TO ACTION

Social Work Education's role  
in turnout

# VOTING is Social Work

## Voting IS Social Work!

Central to social work's values and social justice mission.  
Gives individuals and communities the power to voice their  
opinions and effect change.

Non-partisan voter registration, education and outreach are  
*legal, ethical and professional.*

### VOTING = A Human Right

Strenuous efforts exist to restrict access to voting. Not unlike the old poll tax, they include strict voter ID laws, purging voter rolls and intimidation by political parties and even those in charge of elections.

Over 20 million people have felony convictions, nearly 6 million of which have unfairly lost the right to vote--disproportionately from communities of color (38%). In the 4 worst states, more than 1 in 5 African Americans have lost the right to vote.<sup>16</sup>

State by state rules have created widespread confusion with most assuming they can't vote even when they can.

### Voting rights are *protected* for many groups, including:

- Persons who are homeless;
- Victims of domestic violence;
- The disabled, including those with language and reading barriers; and
- Those in pre-trial detention.

### VOTING = Better Outcomes

Individual and communities that vote report better health, employment and other important outcomes; receive more resources from elected officials; and develop stronger community connections.

*Voting builds power!* It maximizes the capacity to influence public policy and can offset some of the negative effects of oppression and discrimination.<sup>1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 14</sup>

### Yet BARRIERS Still Exist

- Confusing registration and ID requirements;
- Not knowing where, when and how to vote;
- Lack of transportation;
- Long lines;
- Lack of information on candidates and issues;
- People believing their vote doesn't matter.<sup>12, 13</sup> ; and
- Wrongly thinking that voter registration is partisan, illegal, unethical and unprofessional.

### SCHOOL/PROGRAM-WIDE ACTIVITIES

- Inform faculty and students.
- Hold a forum or public event inviting all candidates on the ballot to speak about relevant social issues.
- Offer training and CEUs to field supervisors on voter engagement.
- Add voter registration links/info to school registration processes.
- Hold registration drives; inform students about election dates and resources; and encourage them to vote.

### FACULTY

- Can bring content on voting into the classroom and the field to build student political efficacy and connect voter engagement to social work's impact.
- See [VotingIsSocialWork.org](http://VotingIsSocialWork.org) for classroom resources and training ideas.
- Create experiential learning assignments such as registering voters, looking up Voter ID rules, finding polling sites, checking registration status, reviewing registration and absentee ballot forms, and running registration drives.
- Invite guest speakers to class (e.g., League of Women Voters or local registrars).
- Assign students to look up who represents them at all levels of government and/or meet with one of their elected officials.
- Ask students to partner with their field instructors to design ways to integrate voter engagement into agency services.

*The Humphreys Institute is a proud partner of the*  
**NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK  
VOTER MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGN**

[www.VotingIsSocialWork.org](http://www.VotingIsSocialWork.org)

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[www.VotingIsSocialWork.org](http://www.VotingIsSocialWork.org)  
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[info@votingissocialwork.org](mailto:info@votingissocialwork.org)

## FIELD AGENCIES

- Ask clients if they are registered to vote as part of in-take or check-in process.
- Help clients fill out registration forms online or mail paperform.
- Check client voter ID requirements, voter registration status (at current address) and felony voting rights at VOTE.ORG.
- Help clients sign up for text or email reminders for elections at TURBOVOTE.ORG.
- Help clients find out who represents them, how to contact their elected officials.
- Invite elected officials to your agency and/or encourage clients to attend candidate forums.
- Reach out to local partners for candidate guides/resources;
- Get copies of ballot at town clerk office before the election and have in office.
- Remind and encourage people to vote. *Many nonvoters have never been asked to vote.*

## NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK VOTER MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGN

**Social workers** have understood the importance of voting to political action, community power and social justice dating back the Settlement House movement. Voter engagement is still central to social work values today! Evidence exists showing that voter engagement increases individual well-being, advances civic participation, and increases social justice.

### The Campaign seeks to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of voting to social work practice and social policy;
- Integrate voter engagement activities into field education for all micro and macro students;
- Provide voter mobilization skills and strategies for agencies, field instructors, students and faculty; and
- Ensure that all the people we serve have access to the vote.

### Organizational Endorsement (list in formation).

- Association for Community Organization and Social Action (ACOSA)
- Clinical Social Work Association (CSWA)
- Congressional Institute for Social Work and Policy (CRISP)
- Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)
- Influencing Social Policy (ISP)
- Latino Social Workers Organization
- Nancy A Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work
- National Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Directors (BPD)
- National Association of Deans and Directors (NADD)
- National Association of Perinatal Social Workers
- National Rural Social Work Caucus
- Network for Social Work Management (NSWM)
- New Social Worker
- North American Network of Field Educators and Directors (NANFED)
- Special Commission to Advance Macro Practice in Social Work
- #MacroSW Twitter Chat Collaborative

*The NASW's Code of Ethics & Council on Social Work Education Practice Standards support social action.*

[www.VotingIsSocialWork.org](http://www.VotingIsSocialWork.org)

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**For more information, including an annotated bibliography on the importance of voting, go to [VotingIsSocialWork.org](http://www.VotingIsSocialWork.org)**