

AAM Nonprofit Voter Resources Guide – Yes You Can!

The Alliance encourages museums to engage in nonpartisan voter engagement activities. Learn more below about how nonprofits—including museums and their staff, board, and leadership—can participate in nonpartisan election activity and voter engagement throughout the year.

Why Participating Matters

As nonprofits and community anchors, museums often serve communities frequently left out by the democratic process. Museums can play a critical role in creating more equitable representation in our democracy. Nonprofit VOTE's [Engaging New Voters](#) report provides powerful information about gaps in voting that nonprofits, including museums, can help fill.

- Nonprofit VOTE: [Benefits of Voting - Benefits for Nonprofits](#)
- Nonprofit VOTE: [Benefits of Voting - Who Votes Matters](#)

What Your Museum Can Do

While public charities, including museums, are prohibited from supporting or opposing a candidate or a political party, this does not mean you must cut off all contact with elected officials and candidates during an election year. Bolder Advocacy's [Election Checklist for 501\(c\)\(3\) Public Charities](#) includes information on permissible nonpartisan election, voter engagement, and candidate engagement activities.

- [5 Tips for Working with Candidates on a Nonpartisan Basis](#) - Nonprofit VOTE
- [Hosting Candidates at Charitable Events Fact Sheet](#) - Bolder Advocacy
- [How 501\(c\)\(3\)s Can Talk to Candidates During an Election Year Fact Sheet](#) - Bolder Advocacy

When conducted in a non-partisan manner, nonprofits and museums can participate in certain election-related activities such as voter education and voter registration—including encouraging people to register and vote, and providing information on early and absentee voting, registration and voting dates and deadlines, and locations of polling places. See AAM's updated [Guide to Election Year Activities](#) for more information.

What Your Board and Staff Can Do

While 501(c)(3) organizations are prohibited from “campaign intervention” (supporting or opposing candidates for public office) this prohibition **does not apply** to 501(c)(3) board members' activities when they are acting in their individual capacity. Learn more about what board members can and cannot do in Bolder Advocacy's [Board Members and Election-Year Activities](#). This [brief](#) and [webinar](#) (YouTube recording) from Nonprofit VOTE provide succinct questions and answers about nonprofit staff members' personal participation in political activities.

Participating in Voter Engagement

Nonprofit VOTE's [Guide to Nonpartisan Voter Engagement](#) helps nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations interested in encouraging voting and voter participation among their staff, board, clients, constituents, and communities. The guide provides in-depth coverage on issues ranging from candidate forums to voter education, voter registration, issue advocacy, [social media guidelines](#), and much more.

See Nonprofit VOTE's [Staying Nonpartisan: Permissible Election Activities Checklist](#) for additional resources and information on political activity and permissible voter engagement. Their [Getting Started Checklist](#) provides practical steps on topics ranging from creating your voter engagement plan to voter registration, engaging candidates, and ballot measures, with links to additional resources throughout.

[National Voter Registration Day](#) takes place each September. The American Alliance of Museums is a Community Partner of this important nationwide initiative to help ensure no one misses the chance to vote because of lack of information about their voting status, polling place, or how to register to vote. *Does your museum participate in allowable election activities, such as serving as a polling place? Let us know about your activities so we are aware of efforts across the museum field.*

On our [Voter Information](#) page you can use your address to confirm who represents you, access voter registration forms, and find election deadlines. On Nonprofit VOTE's [Voting in Your State](#) page you can access links to find your polling place, check your voter registration, and find state and local elections offices.

Also see Nonprofit VOTE's [Absentee Ballots & COVID-19 vote by mail policies by state](#) information.

Museums and Nonprofits Can Advocate and Lobby

Beyond voter engagement activities, museums and nonprofit organizations may get questions from leadership, staff, and board members wanting reassurance that nonprofits, including museums, **can advocate** and **can lobby**. **Yes you can!** Independent Sector and Alliance for Justice's Bolder Advocacy provide additional information confirming that nonprofits and museums can advocate and lobby.

- [Lobbying Guidelines for Public Charities Fact Sheet](#)
- [Bolder Advocacy – Guidelines for 501\(c\)\(3\) Charities](#)
- [Bolder Advocacy – Yes, Nonprofits, You Can Lobby](#)
- [Bolder Advocacy – Resource Library](#)

Nonprofit organizations may also continue to [engage in education and advocacy to promote their policy issues](#) during the election season. [Learn more](#) about how nonprofits can comment on candidates and campaigns during an election year.

For additional information please visit the Alliance's [Nonprofit Voter Resources](#) web page.

These linked resources are provided for informational purposes only and do not serve as formal legal advice. It is always recommended to consult your own legal counsel with specific questions about you or your museum's activities.

Feedback on this resource? Additional examples to share? Contact content@aam-us.org.

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