

Real Action Now! Guide to Pass a Right to Vote Locally

STEP 1: YOUR BEST FRIEND IS YOUR COMMUNITY

In order to be an effective advocate for Promote Our Vote, you need backup; a chorus of voices is always louder than one. Find out who else in your community feels strongly, or has spoken out about voter turnout and voting rights. These people might be an elected official, the League of Women Voters or other civic group.

Advocating on your Campus?

Reach out to all political groups on campus, especially those whose partisan leanings differ from your own; a right to vote is a value that can bridge partisan lines. Plus, you're likely to get more positive attention and funding if you partner with people who make unlikely allies. For example, if you're a member of the College Democrats, reach out to the College Republicans, College Greens and College Libertarians.

Advocating in your Community?

Find out who is not only interested, but also who is active! Talk to friends and colleagues in your community to find out who might be excited about a right to vote, and who has been active in easing ballot access or speaking out for voter rights. Teaming with these people will give you a solid foundation ideologically and practically. A locally elected official may have been outspoken about voting rights and turnout. Your local rotary club, likely a strong organization, is a possible example of an ally. Local arms of political parties or groups like the League of Women Voters are also great groups to tap into. Attend a meeting, hand out our fact sheets and be ready to pitch Promote Our Vote!

If you have a community college or University nearby, reach out to organizations there. Students are great volunteers and can help you build a large movement quickly.

STEP 2: TIME TO TALK

How do you advocate? You have to be able to convincingly talk about Promote Our Vote! Think about these questions and develop very clear answers, with examples provided here:

Why are YOU dedicated to promoting our right to vote?

Try this answer out: Voting is a right, and as Americans, it is our civic duty to participate in our democracy. But it is also the duty of our government to provide access to the ballot, and our government is letting us down. It's time we come together and demand legally supported equality at the polls.

What does it have to do with your city?

How about: Voting rights have been under attack nationally even as voter turnout is far too low. Cities and states have traditionally led the way in expanding suffrage in our nation. Resolving locally to uphold and defend the right to vote allows our city to 'think globally and act locally.' At the local level, we can commit together to examine our own rules and practices in order to better uphold the right to vote.

What will be the effect of the resolution?

One way to say it: The resolution expands a movement, grounded in concrete local commitments, to realize the promise of democracy and shows that we mean business when it comes to voting rights. In the eyes of our legislators, the movement for a Right to Vote gains legitimacy and urgency with every local resolution passed. This is a problem, *a real problem*, and we need it fixed!

Why can't they just pass a law?

Congressional Reps. get hundreds of requests and talk about too many policy issues to count per day. If there isn't a real crisis identified by their constituents, the problem will never fall under their radar. Local resolutions are a great way to make it clear that a crisis is afoot! Passing local resolutions, which call for a constitutional right to vote, encourages legislators to pass an affirmative amendment.

STEP 3: SCOPE OUT YOUR LOCAL REPS

It's time to look to elected officials in your locality and begin to pinpoint who will be helpful, who could swing either way, and who might be unsupportive. Find out from your allies who might be most likely to help. Call them, explain Promote Our Vote in one sentence and find out if they want to hear more about your resolution. Keep track of all such conversations with specific notes on anything that might predict their degree of potential support. To create a stronger cohesive group, consider having different people explain the project after settling on your best arguments.

STEP 4: YOU KNOW YOUR TEAM, TIME TO MAKE THE LINEUP

Who's taking the lead?

- A council or school board members must ultimately take the lead on presenting the resolution. Be sure to work with someone who is truly committed to the cause, and ideally has influence within your local legislature.
- Once you've identified this person, share your resolution packet and suggestions for making the case. Be ready with evidence from other communities about their successes, and be prepared to answer questions about cost, involvement, and community interest.

For the local representative, what's the first step?

- Ask the Council Member to review and finalize the language of the resolution. Recall your notes from your initial cold calls to other members of the Council and ask for your Council Member's advice on how to proceed with these people.

First meeting is over, what's next?

- Continue to follow up with your legislative ally or aide in order to move the process along. Be polite but insistent about the imperative of the resolution.
- Work closely with your community allies and legislative sponsor to develop a media strategy that keeps your community informed and involve in the resolution's passage.

Help! Our leader is unresponsive!

- Find out why. It might be your approach, a problem with the resolution, or simply that your legislative ally is no longer interested in the resolution. Whatever the reason is, you need to know the specifics so you can change your tactics!
 - If she or he is no longer interested, find a new leader. But also follow up with your first ally so you can modify your case when approaching someone new.
 - If there's a problem with the resolution, find out what it is and figure out if it can be fixed so you're both satisfied! Have questions about making changes? Contact us!

STEP 5: CAPTURE YOUR AUDIENCE!

Legislators of all kinds want to see concrete evidence that Promote Our Vote has a large and excited following. For most representatives, this means signatures and email addresses. The members of your coalition should reach out to anyone involved in their organizations to get as much tangible support as possible. Asking people to sign on is the best way to lengthen your list of supporters. A cardinal rule of advocacy is, if you don't ask for support, people won't give it!

STEP 6: TAKE IT TO THE SOAPBOX

At any point in your campaign, it's a great idea to invite people from your campus or community to come together and voice their opinions about the resolution. Stories about why people vote, why it's hard to vote, why people register, the value of voter education, ideas for expanding suffrage, the national importance of action, and what election day means for them are great contributions that make your campaign personal. Also, hearing community members talk about the necessity of a right to vote encourages others to get behind the resolution.

Another idea is to ask your leading council member to have a Town Hall meeting where the arguments for and against the resolution are heard. Listeners can ask questions and elected officials can gauge the real interest and excitement surrounding a right to vote.

STEP 7: EXTRA EXTRA EXTRA: THE MEDIA

It's incredibly important to gain attention from media outlets as soon as possible, whether through social media or more traditional media. We want them to know the name of the movement: Promote Our Vote, and we want citizens in your community to see the campaign everywhere! To that end, you need to designate members of your coalition to reach out to any and all news sources to entice media coverage of the movement in its entirety. Be creative! The more creative your actions in presenting the movement, the more coverage you get!