

Strengthening Welcome Through Civic Engagement:

Introduction & Overview

CWS is committed to providing protection, humanitarian assistance and durable solutions for refugees and immigrants. As part of its mission to build stronger, more welcoming communities, CWS is intentionally engaging with its partners to promote civic engagement work. This work educates voters about immigrant and refugee rights; promotes civic participation for new citizens as part of integration efforts; encourages voter registration; keeps U.S. citizen refugee and immigrant voters from being discriminated against in the voting process; and elevates dialogue on immigrant and refugee rights in the media and public forums.

What is “Civic Engagement”?

Civic engagement refers to the ways in which individuals and groups participate in their community to improve conditions that shape the future. Participating in civic structures and processes such as schools, neighborhood associations, city and county meetings, as well as voting, and engaging in civil and productive conversation with others are critical to the functioning of democracy and an important part of integration for new Americans.

CWS Principles on Civic Engagement

1. Civic engagement is a key component of integration and belonging. Voting and participating in civil society are key to the naturalization process.
2. When naturalized immigrants and refugees exercise their right to vote, they empower themselves to be full members of their new communities. Even immigrants and refugees who are not yet naturalized—and therefore cannot vote—can contribute to their communities by participating in events and educating the public about the benefits that newcomers bring to their communities and the need to affirm welcoming policies.
3. Civic engagement is part of CWS’s mission to build welcoming communities. CWS’s network of local offices, affiliates, and congregations know first-hand the impact that policies have on the lives of refugees, immigrants, and our communities.
4. Our network’s level of civic engagement helps build champions for refugees and immigrants across party lines and create local, state, and national policies that improve the lives of refugees and immigrants. Civic engagement also energizes current volunteers and develops new leaders.
5. CWS civic engagement work is non-partisan and does not involve endorsement of candidates nor political parties. CWS seeks to promote civic participation within its networks and educate candidates and the public about the importance of building welcoming communities. CWS is a non-partisan, 501(c)3 organization. This means that we will not endorse parties or candidates, but we will continue, as we always have, to promote welcoming communities. All activities will be consistent with the CWS mission statement and core values to work with ecumenical partners and impacted communities to promote the dignity and rights of all people.

| CWS will: | CWS will not: |
|--|--|
| Education on refugee and immigration issues | Endorsing candidates or parties |
| Hosting and participating in town halls, debates, meetings and forums | Collaborating with political campaigns |
| Helping U.S. citizen refugees and immigrants register to vote and get to the polls on Election Day | Restricting access based on party affiliation or perceived voting behavior |
| Voter protection to make sure recently naturalized citizens can vote | Voting fraud or unethical behavior |
| Elevating the narrative on the importance of building welcoming communities via letters to the editor and opinion editorials | Advertising for any candidate or party |

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The following sections outline options for civic engagement work and provide resources to support their implementation. Through these activities, congregations, resettlement offices, and refugees themselves can become more civically involved. These actions can change public sentiment about immigration and refugee issues and inform candidates that these issues are important to their constituents. This toolkit has been updated to account for the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Change the Narrative on Immigrants and Refugees by Hosting and Participating in Virtual Town Halls, Meetings, and Candidate Forums

Many election events are often planned for the public to learn more about candidates. This year, many of these events will take place in-person and online. By preparing succinct, to-the-point questions to ask during such events, you can make a difference in the public discussion on immigration and refugee issues. Your congregation or office can also host such a discussion or request a video conference call to show candidates that their constituents care about immigrants and refugees. When organizing an event or requesting a meeting, it is important to always reach out to all candidates in a particular electoral race.

2. Educate Voters about Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Creating educational activities with refugees and immigrants present will help your community become well-informed, thoughtful voters on immigration and refugee issues. This is an important component to building welcoming communities and seeing changes in policies that impact immigrants and refugees.

3. Help U.S. Citizen Refugees and Immigrants Register to Vote and Get to the Polls

Registering to vote is an intrinsic part of being a U.S. citizen, and to furthering the integration process. People often fall off the voting rolls when they move and may not know where to vote, when the election day is, or how to vote by mail. Educating new voters on how to register to vote or update their registration if they move and providing details about Early Voting and/or Election Day are vital to their successful voting experience and their integration.

4. Help Ensure U.S. Citizen Refugees and Immigrants are Not Prevented from Voting

Many naturalized citizens have encountered intimidation at the polls. Individuals can volunteer with local organizations to ensure that election officials establish and implement fair procedures on voter registration, list maintenance (a.k.a. purging voter rolls), voting by mail, poll worker training, allocation of resources to election precincts, provisional ballots, and ensuring language challenges are mitigated—to ensure that every voter, specifically recently naturalized citizens, have an equal opportunity to vote.

5. Elevate the Narrative on Immigrant and Refugee Rights in the Media

Public education is critical to shifting opinions on the importance of building welcoming communities. The more the media can spread the message about naturalized refugees and immigrants voting, the more we can shift the narrative to inclusivity. Invite local media to your issue education forums or help refugees and immigrants tell their story about why voting matters. Reach out to ethnic media for partnership in amplifying the message to get out the vote. Write letters to the editor or opinion editorials about how refugees and immigrants are contributing to your community. Utilize newsletters and social media outlets to spread the word of any upcoming events and the importance of voting.

6. Appendices

APPENDIX A: Resource Guide to Civic Engagement Partner Organizations

APPENDIX B: Sample Questions for Online Candidate Forums

APPENDIX C: Additional Resources in Support of Immigrants and Refugees

APPENDIX D: Sermons and Faith Resources on Civic Engagement

APPENDIX E: Messaging Guidance



DISCLAIMER: CWS is a non-partisan organization that does not take a position on parties or candidates. All voter education material is non-partisan and is in no way intended to reflect an endorsement for, or opposition to, any candidate, political party, or PAC. In addition, all voter registration services facilitated by and affiliated with CWS are available without regard to the voter's political preference. Information and other assistance regarding registering or voting, including transportation and other services offered, shall not be withheld or refused on the basis of support for or opposition to particular candidates, parties, or policy positions. For more information, email Rev. Noel Andersen at nandersen@cwsglobal.org.

1. Change the Narrative on Immigrants and Refugees by Hosting and Participating in Virtual Town Halls, Meetings, and Candidate Forums

Researching Candidates' Records on Immigration & Refugee Issues

Bring together a group of community members passionate about welcoming immigrants and refugees on a video conference call to research candidates' positions on their websites. You can find out more about who is on your ballot at the federal, state and local levels by going to vote411.org, clicking on your state and entering your zip code. Participants can write letters expressing their views and urging candidates to be champions for refugees and immigrants on the campaign trail. It is important to research and send correspondence to all candidates in a particular electoral race to make sure that non-profit agencies steer clear of appearing to favor or work with one candidate over another.

Participating in Town Hall Meetings, Debates, and Candidate Forums

1. Find and RSVP to local online events at which candidates are speaking.
2. Invite other community members who care about immigration and refugee issues to also attend
3. Practice and prepare questions ahead of time (see sample questions in Appendix B).
4. When the time comes, ask your question.
5. Follow up with the candidate's staff, emphasizing that your community cares about immigrants and refugees.

Hosting a Virtual Town Hall Meeting or Candidate Debate

1. Work with a team to identify a date, time, and strategy for a virtual community forum.
2. Choose one electoral race and invite all candidates running for that position. All major candidates must be invited. It is okay if not all candidates attend, but make sure they know that the other candidate(s) will be attending and ask if a surrogate can attend or if they can send a written statement instead.
3. Welcome all candidates and give them equal amounts of time for opening comments. Plan ahead with a non-partisan, neutral, and prepared moderator to facilitate questions from event organizers or those attending. Pre-screening questions is a good way to ensure they are clear and not perceived as biased. The moderator should not comment on the questions or answers or make comments that imply approval or disapproval of a candidate.
4. Have attendees sign in for future follow up. In closing, thank all candidates and reiterate the non-partisan disclaimer.

**See sample questions for candidates in Appendix B*

2. Educate Voters about Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Creating educational activities that help your community to become well-informed and thoughtful voters is a key responsibility for all congregations and community organizations. There are many ways to create forums and spaces for dialogue, civil discussion, and faithful reflection on important issues.

Integrate Civic Participation into Programs

1. Integrate civic participation and civic education into English Language Learning courses, food pantry programs or any other ministries that create contact with new voters.
2. If your organization or congregation hosts citizenship clinics, make sure to emphasize civic duty and voter participation, and provide opportunities for families to register to vote.

In Worship and Congregational Education

1. Address issue concerns in the worship life of the congregation through prayers, sermons, and Scripture.
2. Utilize adult educational structures already established such as Bible studies, prayer meetings or classes.
3. Invite individuals who can speak about the issues so that they can tell their story. For example, invite a refugee, asylum seeker, or DACA recipient from your community to speak.
4. Discuss the issues and consider scriptural teaching and the resolutions of your denomination or organization.
5. Integrate civic engagement themes and the importance of voting in sermons *sample sermon starters are provided in Appendix C.*

Holding an Issue Education Forum

1. Work together with a leadership team to organize the forum by listing the goals, strategy, and logistics of the activity.
2. Identify the key issues you would like to hold a forum on. Ask, what is the issue that most concerns you? Some of the possible themes could include encouraging the administration to sustainably rebuild and robust support the refugee admissions program, legislation like the Refugee Protection Act, the foreign assistance, climate change or voter ID laws/ election protection.
3. Invite local or national speakers on the issue. Try to make it engaging by including ways for the audience to discuss the issue and ask questions.
4. Utilize the educational forum as a way to educate the broader public by sending out a media advisory to invite the press beforehand and a press release for the media after the event.
5. Issue education forums are a great opportunity to invite the broader public and engage more people in your congregation or organizations. Make sure to have a sign-in sheet so you can follow up with participants—Ask for name, phone number, and email address.
6. Create space for participants to discuss and reflect on the issue at hand.
7. At the forum, make sure to have a voter registration table with information about polling monitors and election protection.

501(c)(3) Limitations

According to the *Alliance for Justice*, "The law allows churches to engage in a wide variety of nonpartisan election-related activities, including voter registration and education as well as ballot measure campaigns. Federal tax law explicitly prohibits all churches from supporting or opposing candidates for public office, but it also recognizes the importance of their participation in the democratic process. A 501(c)(3) organization's role during an election must be educational - and to encourage civic participation. Although there are many activities a church can do around an election, the church needs to stop short of directly or indirectly telling people how to vote or for whom to vote.

Learn more:

- Add a speaker to your virtual event who can educate people about how to register to vote and why civic engagement is a critical part of integration and building welcoming communities, also, if possible, add a speaker who was a first-time voter in the last election to share their experience
- Create and/or share a video with information for first-time voters during your event
- Organize a periodic virtual speaker's series on civic engagement and how to register to vote
- Use Zoom or join.me to show newly naturalized citizens how to fill out voter registration forms

3. Help U.S. Citizen Refugees and Immigrants Register to Vote and Get to the Polls

Voting is an essential part of integration and is a civic duty for all citizens.

Voting is an important part of the integration continuum. When immigrants and refugees become naturalized citizens, they can make their opinions heard in the ballot box. By exercising their right to vote, new voters empower themselves and learn first-hand that their participation in democracy matters. Many, including the elderly and those who do not have access to transportation, often find it difficult to register to vote, understand their sample ballot and get to the polls. Congregations and community organizations can make voter registration and voting easily accessible by reaching out, planning online events, and coordinating rides to the polls for those who need help with transportation and cannot vote by mail.

Non-partisan voter registration

Educating people who are eligible to vote on how to register and/or how to update voter registration or vote early is a critical first step. It will be important to know your state's laws—each state has their own [early voting policies](#) and vote by mail requirements. If your state has a [voting ID law](#), inform people to have the necessary identification with them when they vote. Share [information about state voter registration deadlines and election dates](#) and [online resources on voting in all 50 states](#). You can also find resources at [Vote411](#) or check your state election board's website.

Below are ideas on actions to support voter registration during COVID-19:

- Voter registration trainings via webinar- see states with online voter registration
- Social media videos on voter registration in various languages tailored to your state's voting laws
- Voter registration video conference parties, sharing screens and registering online together
- Social media graphics that share critical information on voting including registration, early voting, voting by mail and registration deadlines
- Social media challenges, tagging 5 friends and family members and encouraging them to vote
- Utilize relational organizing to make sure you are connecting with ethnic associations, refugee communities and faith communities to set up training or education opportunities to teach people about voter registration and getting out the vote.
- Contact people who have been part of your citizenship classes
- Organize online opportunities or provide necessary lists for phone banking to help people register to vote. Encourage people to text friends and family with pertinent information. Contact your local refugee resettlement agency, local organizer or other partner organizations to find out more (see Appendix A).

Early voting list, vote by mail, and absentee ballots

The early voting list, vote by mail, and absentee ballots (depending on your state), allow people the flexibility to have various options when it comes time to vote. These options allow people to essentially vote from home and are some of the most effective ways to increase participation and voter turnout. Because it is often difficult for people, especially the elderly, those who work long hours or multiple jobs, and those who do not have access to transportation, to make it to the polls, voting early by mail is one of the most helpful tools to make sure individuals can exercise their right to vote. Not all states provide this option, but, when possible, it helps to sign up as many people as you can to vote by mail. Considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its lingering effects, it is increasingly important to educate New Americans on how voting by mail works. Please work with

partner organizations on recording new voters to the Voter Activation Network (VAN), a non-partisan database which helps ensure voters get the pertinent information.

Resources to learn more about voting by mail and voting by mail laws can be found in the following resources:

ACLU Resource: Know Your Rights

- [Are you eligible to vote](#)
- [Know Your Voting Rights](#)
- [Vote by mail resources](#)

Voting Laws by State

- [Voting Rules by State | VOTE411](#)

Getting Out the Vote

1. Educate community members through social media, webinar trainings, and videos about how voting by mail works in your state.
2. Remind people to vote by texting and phone banking to spread the message to vote early at assigned locations or to vote by mail when applicable. Help to provide information on local poll locations and hours.
3. Make announcements on the importance of voting during worship services or other virtual events your agency is hosting.
4. On election day send reminder texts and phone bank. Identify polling places according to zip code and make sure people know where to find their polling place.
5. Work with refugee and immigrant led congregations and ethnic based associations to coordinate get out the vote days for New Americans.

Remaining Non-partisan



Make sure to keep all your actions non-partisan. For example, do NOT talk about a specific party or candidate, and do NOT share any materials from any political party or candidate on your non-profit organization's social media account. If someone asks you or other participants how they plan to vote or which party they prefer, they should NOT answer the question. An appropriate response is, "That's not important to today's voter registration efforts. We're solely here to promote civic participation, not a political party or candidate."

4. Help Ensure that U.S. Citizen Refugees and Immigrants are Not Prevented from Voting

In collaboration with local organizations and stakeholders, voter protection programs monitor and seek to ensure that election officials establish and implement fair and effective election administration procedures on a comprehensive set of issues, including voter registration, list maintenance (a.k.a. purging), poll worker training, allocation of resources to election precincts, provisional ballots, and challenges. List purging and Voter ID laws impact low income, minority groups and naturalized citizens at a higher percentage. Likewise, there has historically been intimidation at the polls of minority and naturalized citizen voters, which is why it is so important to make sure there is a transparent and honest election process.

Join a coalition

There is strength in numbers. While an individual can conduct voter protection activities, it is helpful to have the support of a voter protection coalition—a group of individuals and organizations committed to ensuring that the rights of refugee and immigrant voters in your community are protected by election officials and the election system. With such a coalition, you can meet with local election officials to ensure there is a fair voting process and everyone is given the right to vote. Connections can be made by selecting your state at <https://statevoices.org> and www.866ourvote.org/state.

Voter Registration Laws

An unprecedented amount of voter suppression laws and initiatives have taken shape over the last decade, making voter protection work even more important. There was a near record of [new voting restrictions](#) that passed at the state level in 2023. In response, 24 states and Washington D.C. [passed automatic voter registration laws](#) making it easier for citizens to register. A non-partisan hotline to report voter disenfranchisement can be reached at 1-866-OUR-VOTE and www.866ourvote.org/state.

16 million people (about the population of New York) nationwide or 7 percent of the population cannot confirm having a government ID. Minority and foreign-born voters are less likely to have a valid photo ID, so voter ID laws place a disproportionate impact on these citizens (more information available at [ACLU Fact Sheet](#)).

Voter Protection

1. Monitor and analyze election processes through volunteering at <https://protectthevote.net>.
2. Identify barriers to voting, such as not enough polling locations, limited early voting locations or lack of education about voting by mail. Work your community to raise these issues your county board of election.
3. Broaden awareness and support for the voting concerns of immigrants and refugees in your community including interpretation and discrimination at the polls.
4. Voters who have difficulty reading or writing English may receive in-person assistance at the polls from the person of their choice (See [ACLU Know Your Rights on Interpretation](#))
5. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be increasingly important to create community education about voting by mail highlighting that it is a secure and safe way to vote.

See additional resources on election protection:

- [United Church of Christ](#)
- [866OurVote](#)
- [ACLU Know Your Rights](#) in the case of voter intimidation

Poll Workers

- Poll workers are the link between election administration—the laws, rules, and procedures that govern the election process—and the voters. They are the line staff of the democratic process who sit at the table, check rosters and hand out ballots.
- Poll workers are paid temporary employees, and the hiring process is at the state or county board of elections, this includes pay for the training and orientation process.
- It is critical to have a diverse representation of poll workers to ensure a fair election and to mitigate voter intimidation.
- There has been a [shortage](#) of poll workers exacerbated by the pandemic and making the need to recruit poll workers a high priority.
- It is very helpful to have poll workers that can speak multiple languages and help interpret when needed
- To sign up to be a poll worker contact your local county board of election.
- Find out more information [here](#)

Election Observers and Polling Monitors

- Polling monitors are responsible for ensuring that there is a fair voting process by monitoring poll workers and offering voters information about their rights. Monitors assist people in finding their correct polling station so their vote will count. They let voters know about the voter protection hotline and their options for getting help with their voting rights at the polls. They often conduct exit polling about voters' experiences casting their votes across the state to identify any significant successes or problems and record them for the next election. You can sign up to be an election protection volunteer [here](#).
- Many states allow for non-partisan election observers, academic observers and international observers who are meant to learn from the proceedings and ensure fair elections. It is also common practice for political parties and candidates to appoint poll watchers and/or challengers to observe elections.

5. Elevate the Narrative on Immigrant and Refugee Rights in the Media

Public education is critical to shifting popular opinion on the importance of building welcoming communities, and the role of the media is critical to shift the public narrative. Consider pitching stories of New American voters to reporters, spreading the word on how to vote in ethnic media, blogs, newsletters, Op-Eds and social media. Write letters to the editor or opinion editorials about how immigrants and refugees benefit your community. Consider highlighting the stories of essential workers who are serving critical positions during COVID-19.

Pitch your story to the media

1. Identify your 2-3 media spokespeople for the event so they will be prepared to talk to the media.
2. Work with key immigrant and refugee leaders in your network who are working on civic engagement who can serve as spokespeople.
3. Develop your list of press contacts you want to reach out to.
4. Develop non-partisan talking points and other related educational materials.
5. Highlight the stories of first-time voters, lifting up their motivation to vote as encouragement to other potential voters in their communities.
6. Pitch public service announcements to ethnic media in multiple languages to encourage and educate people around registering and getting out to vote.
 - a. [Telemundo](#)
 - b. [Get Out the Vote Activities in Greensboro](#)
 - c. [New U.S. Citizen Refugees Excited to Vote in First Presidential Election](#)
 - d. [League of Women Voters](#)
7. Invite media to public online events, panels and forums.

Social Media

- Social media is a critical tool you can utilize to spread important information about how to register to vote, early voting, registration deadlines, election protection and getting out the vote.
- Highlight the stories of New American voters via graphics with pictures, videos and quotes
- Produce and share videos in multiple languages explaining the process of voting and why it's important.
- Consider ways to use relational organizing, encouraging ethnic association and refugee community leaders to post on their own pages or tag their community partners in their posts.

Letters to the Editor and Opinion Editorials

Writing Letters to the Editor (LTE) and Opinion Editorials (Op-Eds) to your local newspaper are effective ways to lift pro-immigrant voices. Candidates carefully monitor these sections to gauge local opinions.

- Local papers are more likely to publish your piece (including neighborhood, ethnic, and religious papers)
- Keep it short (less than 200 words). State your most important point in the first paragraph.
 - *Paragraph 1* – your main point, why voting is important to you, your personal story
 - *Paragraph 2* – facts, quotes, numbers, your 'ask' of all candidates
 - *Paragraph 3* – restate your point and declare your ask that everyone votes!
- Mention by name ALL candidates for one electoral race, but do not endorse any candidate or party.
- State the specific action you want them to take, varying by electoral race, for example:
 - *National*: Funding to rebuild and strengthen the refugee admissions program, oversight to encourage the administration to protect and preserve asylum and other humanitarian

pathways, pro-refugee legislation like the Refugee Protection Act, the [Afghan Adjustment Act](#), the [House Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act](#), the [Climate Displaced Persons Act](#), the [New Deal for New Americans Act](#), the [Working for Immigrant Safety and Empowesrment Act](#), and the [Stateless Protection Act](#).

- *State*: CWS supports state legislation that creates welcoming communities for newcomers such as professional licensing (for teachers, nurses, doctors) language accessibility, integration services, housing rights and affordability, universal representation, among others.
- *Local*: Support for [Welcome Resolutions](#), [World Refugee Day Declarations](#), [Sanctuary City Welcoming Refugees 2025](#)
- See [CWS Action Alerts](#) for updates on Local, State and Federal Policies

Reporting Back on Your Civic Engagement Work

Keeping detailed records of your civic engagement work will be a critical factor in the long-term efforts to register voters and make sure they are turning out to vote. This information will be very important to track in the Voter Activation Network (VAN) , a non-partisan database which helps ensure voters get the pertinent information through further follow up and encouragement to get out and vote. It is also helpful to track engagement for future reports and to engage new volunteers in your organization.

Voter Registration Tally Sheet

Tallying the below metrics is important to track the breadth of your work and people engaged for reporting purposes, but also to inform your outreach strategy through understanding success rates for different precincts and neighborhoods. Most people will likely track this information electronically, below are the standard categories utilized in tracking voter engagement activities.

| | |
|--|---|
| | Number of phone numbers called |
| | Number of Attempts (people called) |
| | Number contacts (people talked to) |
| | Number of New Early Voters |
| | Number of New Voters Registered |
| | Number of Commitments |
| | Precinct or Neighborhood |

6. Appendices

APPENDIX A: RESOURCE GUIDE TO CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

STATES VOICES: statevoices.org

State Voices is a national network—built from the states up—that helps grassroots organizations win shared policy and civic engagement victories and build long-term power.

UCC OUR FAITH OUR VOTE: ucc.org/ourfaithourvote

Voting is a natural extension of faithful action. The decisions made by our representatives have a wide reaching impact. We have enormous potential to make positive change. We must engage our legislators, vote, and encourage everyone in our communities to do the same.

MI FAMILIA VOTA: mifamiliavota.org

Mi Familia Vota Education Fund (MFVEF) is a national non-profit organization working to unite the Latino community and its allies to promote social and economic justice through increased civic participation.

COMMON CAUSE: commoncause.org

Access: Increase access to voting by removing existing barriers, changing registration and voting practices, and ensuring voting rights for all Americans. **Accuracy:** Safeguard our voting systems by passing federal and state legislation to enhance voting machine accuracy and security. **Accountability:** Hold election officials accountable by passing legislation prohibiting partisan activity and establishing strict conflict of interest laws

ADVANCEMENT PROJECT: advancementproject.org

From Advancement Project's inception, we have worked "on-the-ground," helping organized communities of color dismantle and reform the unjust and inequitable policies that undermine the promise of democracy.

ROCK THE VOTE: rockthevote.com

We use music, popular culture, new technologies and grassroots organizing to motivate and mobilize young people in our country to participate in every election, with the goal of seizing the power of the youth vote to create political and social change.

APPENDIX B: Sample Questions for Candidates

Federal: U.S. Representatives, U.S. Senators, or Presidential Candidates

1. The U.S. has historically been a leader in refugee resettlement and asylum protections for people fleeing violence and persecution; it is part of our history and tradition. Do you support the Refugee Protection Act, which would restore and strengthen the resettlement program and asylum system, and the Afghan Adjustment Act, which would provide a pathway to permanent status for evacuated Afghan allies?
2. This administration significantly invested in rebuilding the U.S. resettlement program, particularly since the evacuation and ongoing relocation of our Afghan allies. Will you commit to holding the

administration accountable to building on this success and strengthening both refugee and asylum protections in accordance with U.S. and international laws?

3. This administration has – at times – sought to undermine key asylum protections at the southern border, in contravention of our moral and legal obligations to those fleeing violence and persecution. Will you take a stance against anti-asylum proposals, like expulsions, turnbacks, and any policies that prevent asylum seekers from a meaningful opportunity to seek protection?
4. Federal funding for the refugee related accounts funded by the Departments of State, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security not only support refugee processing & resettlement, but also local communities' capacity to welcome new arrivals. Can you commit to supporting robust funding for these accounts to ensure our capacity to welcome is protected & grown?
5. Can you commit to attending a World Refugee Day (which takes place on June 20th) or other "refugees welcome" event?

State Level: State Senators, State Representatives, or Governors

1. Do you support policies that strengthen integration services for new Americans to provide additional access to English language learners, interpretation, job placement, and housing? If so, what will you do to ensure these services are provided?
2. There are so many talented immigrants that come to this country, but they're often discriminated against in the workforce according to where they've received their education. Many refugees and immigrants come to this country with a healthcare or education professional background and other areas of expertise, and they want to help. However, barriers to licensing are preventing them from doing so. Do you support making it more accessible for people to gain professional licensing and certification for individuals who are internationally trained?
3. What types of budget initiatives will you undertake to ensure that our communities have the resources they need to meet the specific needs of newcomers in our area?
4. How are you making sure that there are no barriers (language or otherwise) for new Americans to access resources and information the State/Commonwealth provides?
5. Can you commit to attending a World Refugee Day (which takes place on June 20th) or other "refugees welcome" event?

Local: City Council Members, County Supervisors, Mayors or Board of Education

1. Do you support passing welcoming city/county resolutions to show that our city/county welcomes new Americans, immigrants, and refugees with open arms?
2. Do you support policies that strengthen integration services for new Americans to provide additional access to English Language Learners, interpretation, job placement and housing? If so, what will you do to ensure these services are provided?
3. What are you doing to ensure this city is protecting people from evictions and expanding access to affordable housing? Everyone deserves a safe place to call home.
4. What types of budget initiatives will you undertake to ensure that our communities have the resources they need to meet the specific needs of newcomers in our area?
5. Can you commit to attending a World Refugee Day (which takes place on June 20th) or other "refugees welcome" event?

APPENDIX C:

Additional Resources on Immigration and Refugee Issues

Interfaith Immigration Coalition: interfaithimmigration.org

Refugee Council USA: rcusa.org

Sanctuary Movement: sanctuarynotdeportation.org

We Are all America: weareallusa.org

League of Women Voters: lww.org

APPENDIX D:

SERMONS & FAITH INITIATIVES ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Poor People's Campaign: Moral Agenda

The truth is that when the democratic process and the right to vote are restricted, preempted and nullified, our democracy is under attack. These attacks target people of color, especially the poor, youth, and elderly, but in doing so, they strip us all of our constitutional protections; they allow extremists to get elected through voter suppression and racial gerrymandering and then use their power to hurt people of all races. The truth is that this power has taken the form of xenophobia, Islamophobia, a fear of undocumented immigrants, and the continued oppression of First Nations, Native Americans and Alaskan Natives. We have the right to vote and the right to accountable political representation. Immigrants of all backgrounds have the right to citizenship that will afford them a full right to vote and participate in our democracy. First Nations, Native Americans, and Alaskan Natives have a right to their political and cultural institutions, lands and resources.

My Muslim Vote

The stakes in 2020 elections couldn't be higher for our community. Join the #MyMuslimVote movement to engage, motivate, and mobilize tens of thousands of Muslim voters

Reform Judaism Resources on Voter Engagement

Compelled by our Jewish history and values, we take seriously citizenship and the right to pick our leaders – and now more than ever, we see the importance of strong leadership. The Every Voice, Every Vote campaign aims to reach 100 percent voter participation across the Reform Movement

Preachers Prepare to Get Souls to the Polls

St. Joseph AME Church hosted "Souls to the Polls" Sunday in Durham. The church holds the event to promote voter engagement and consists of multiple church organizations and faith leaders from across the city.

Rev. Chuck Currie, United Church of Christ

Part of what the Bible provides is a philosophy of how to lead both our private and our public lives. If we are compassionate to the individuals, we encounter and concerned with justice above all else in community affairs then it is said we are building up God's Kingdom. It is always easier for a minister to talk about personal responsibility than it is to talk about what we need to do to improve society. But we cannot as Christians afford to forget about the larger world because Jesus did not and part of our obligation as the faithful is to follow Jesus even into difficult places.

APPENDIX E:

Messaging Guidance

Everyone deserves a safe place to call home.

- The world is facing the greatest displacement crisis in history, with over [110 million people](#) having been forced to flee their homes.
- The United States has the capacity and resources to support robust resettlement, asylum protections, and other humanitarian protection pathways. We can – and should – resettle refugees and welcome unaccompanied children and asylum seekers.

Where the US leads, the world will follow.

- The world is faced with the greatest displacement and refugee crisis in history, and the U.S., as a humanitarian leader, must set the bar for global response.
- The U.S. has taken significant steps over the last two years to respond to some of the most acute humanitarian crises with the evacuation of vulnerable Afghans, the creation of the Uniting for Ukraine program, and launching Safe Mobility Offices across Central America. The U.S. is striving to build diverse pathways that meet the unique needs of each person seeking protection and offering the appropriate services.
- The U.S. must reinvest in permanent protection pathways, and our allies will follow.

Refugee resettlement enjoys bipartisan support, and the nationwide community responses to the crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine remind us that humanitarian protection is an American value.

- Since its inception in 1980, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program has enjoyed bi-partisan support from Republican and Democratic Presidents, and Congresses led by both parties.
- The U.S. has welcomed over 3 million refugees over the last 40 years, and countless more have benefited from the ability to seek asylum.

As we face the worst refugee crisis in history, [resettlement](#) is a life-saving and transformative program for the most vulnerable.

- Of the 110 million people who have been forcibly displaced, [36.4 million](#) of those are refugees. An estimated [2.4 million refugees](#) will be in need of resettlement in 2024.
- Refugees have three potential options: returning home to safety, integrating into their host country, or third country resettlement. Third country resettlement programs – such as the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) – are for refugees with no other options for lasting safety.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is [secure](#).

- The U.S. has the most significant screening and vetting process of resettlement countries, and we welcome the administration's commitment to reduce redundancy and streamline the refugee processing system.
- The Biden Administration has instituted a number of major improvements and efficiencies, including by rebuilding the UNHCR resettlement referral pipeline and reinvesting in refugee resettlement domestic and overseas infrastructure.

Refugee resettlement agencies work closely with states and local officials and community stakeholders.

- Existing law requires they conduct quarterly consultations with relevant state and local government officials, including the state refugee coordinator, state refugee health coordinator, local governance, public health, welfare, social services, public safety, and public education.

National, state, and local lawmakers all have important roles to play in advancing policies and legislation that positively impacts the lives of our refugee and newcomer neighbors.

NATIONAL LAWMAKERS:

- The Afghan Adjustment Act ensures a path to permanent legal status for Afghans whose lives were endangered because of their affiliation with the US mission.
- The Refugee Protection Act provides is a visionary blueprint to improve and strengthen the U.S. resettlement program and asylum protections.
- Federal funding for refugee related accounts is critical to providing overseas humanitarian assistance and refugee processing; promoting regional stability and global security in some of the most challenging areas of the world; and assisting resettled refugees to become rapidly self-sufficient and contributors to their new U.S. communities.
- Federal funding goes directly to [state and local communities](#). States and localities continue to serve refugees and other arrivals from previous years. Cutting funds to ORR unfairly shifts the funding burden from the federal government to states and local communities.

- On asylum protections, Congress can support improved border processing and a more humane, efficient, and cost-effective asylum system by robustly funding the Shelter and Services Program (SSP), expanding and improving access to work authorization, supporting community-based case management programs for asylum seekers, and cosponsoring legislation like the Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act that allows asylum seekers to work sooner and enables them to contribute to the economy and fill critical gaps in the job market more quickly.

STATE/LOCAL LAWMAKERS:

- State and local funding is critical to buttressing the local communities' capacity to welcome and serve refugees and other newcomers – as well as meet any gaps or particularly acute needs that are specific or tailored to your area (such as affordable housing, legal representation, and mental healthcare).
- State and local funding is equally important to stabilizing the resettlement infrastructure in times when the federal USRAP capacity is constricted – and it can help extend services that the federal government already provides (such as intensive case management).
- State administrations and legislatures have the power to expand access to professional licenses for internationally credentialed newcomers, such as foreign-trained doctors and nurses, teachers and educators, and other professionals. Many refugees and new Americans arrive in the United States with high-level professional skills – but struggle to make use of those skills because of barriers to professional licenses. Several states have started to address this challenge through licensure reform for foreign trained professionals.
- States and localities have invested in expanding access to education, such as in places like Oregon, New York, and Virginia, where they legislatively authorized refugees and Special Immigrant Visa holders (SIVs) to be eligible for in-state tuition upon being resettled.
- States and localities can also undertake efforts to expand language accessibility and interpretation services in areas like public transportation, accessing state and local public services, etc.
- Join the [WelcomingRefugees25](#) campaign to ask State and local elected officials to support welcoming people seeking safety in the United States. This campaign represents an opportunity for state and local elected leaders to publicly affirm their commitment to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and its importance to our social and economic vibrancy as a nation.

Asylum is a life-saving program and reflects American values and leadership.

- The United States is a leader in humanitarian protection, and the programs we have in the U.S. set a standard for other countries to model. The U.S. asylum program highlights our values of freedom and offers refuge for those seeking safety from persecution and violence.
- Expanded refugee processing and pathways to protection in the hemisphere can never replace a robust asylum system and should not be linked to efforts to restrict asylum or [externalize the border](#).
- Asylum seekers are eager to build stable lives and give back to their new communities. The ability to work is key to establishing these foundations.
- Granting earlier work authorization to asylum seekers enables them to contribute to the economy through employment, paying taxes, and stimulating local businesses, ultimately reducing reliance on government assistance programs.
- The right to work aligns with humanitarian principles, acknowledging asylum seekers' inherent dignity and providing them with the means to support themselves and their families during the asylum process.