

Project 100



VOTE



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Project 100

Every member of the A. M. E. Zion Church engaged in the 2020 election

Voting is D.E.E.P.

Introduction

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is committed to increasing civic participation in communities to make emphatic, positive differences. How do we do this? One powerful agent of change is exercising our right to vote. Informed voting that equips us to make choices that affect the course that our nation takes is necessary. **Voting is D.E.E.P.** Voting outcomes **define** our options and we must define how we engage the church in facilitating better outcomes for our people. Voter **education** is one vehicle that must be used to equip us to exercise our right and duty to vote while voting in our best interests. Through voter education people are **empowered** to do what is necessary for positive change while engaging others in the process. We must diligently **protect** our right to vote. While information is power, voting is the actual catalyst to ignite this power. Therefore, we can conclude that “Voting is D.E.E.P.” --definitive, educational, empowering, and protective.

We are the Freedom Church; a people of faith who seek social justice for all. By influencing policy and electing candidates who believe in equity and working to do all they can to level the playing field, tangible gains can be made. We can end deliberate acts to prevent or make it difficult for the marginalized and people of color to vote. It is our right to vote. Despite a myriad of challenges--voter suppression via voter ID requirements, closing voting places, and other discriminatory practices, we persist. One example of these practices was the one Florida attempted to implement that would withhold the right to register to vote for those previously incarcerated owing court fees. All of the aforementioned tactics and others are present day Jim Crow laws , such as the poll tax, which emerged in some states of the United States in the late nineteenth century to restrict voting rights for African Americans. We can facilitate change. We must be vigilant in getting out the vote, educating on how to be an informed voter, facilitating people getting to the polls and helping people exercise their right to vote. We must be vigilant in protecting our right to vote and working to eliminate every practice preventing us from putting this right into action.

The A. M. E. Zion Church has a responsibility to teach why it is important and necessary to vote. Legislators across the nation come together at the local, state, and national levels and set policies that determine what we can and cannot do, where we live, how we live, the quality of education for ourselves and our children, and even impact the environments where we dwell, work, and play. It is essential that our communities know that policies impact us in ways that will influence, not only how we live, but will impact generations to come. Who we elect will determine whether policies established are fair or unfair. It becomes our duty, it becomes the expectation, and becomes our moral obligation to do all we can to get all of our societies actively involved in getting out the vote for the 2020 election.

Project 100 proposes that 100% of every local society in the A. M. E. Zion Church will actively participate in the **voting process** for the November 2020 election. July 26th will mark 100 days until election day on November 3, 2020. In this time frame we must work untiringly to engage all of our charges to affect change through the ballot. Outlined below are strategies that our churches can adapt to make certain that we are effective in determining the outcome of this election and beyond not just for our sake but for future generations.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT VOTING REGULATIONS
VARY FROM STATE TO STATE**

I. Define who's eligible/Dedicate our time to voter registration

A. Who Is Eligible to vote?

1. U. S. Citizens over the age of 18
 - a. Born
 - b. Naturalized
 - i. Same rights as born citizens
 - ii. Provisions for English as second language speakers
 - c. High school seniors
 - i. Who will be 18 by November 3rd can register to vote
 - ii. Can vote in primaries at age 17 if will be voting age by election day
2. Previously Incarcerated
 - a. In Maine and Vermont, previously incarcerated persons never lose their right to vote, even while they are incarcerated
 - b. In 16 states and the District of Columbia, those previously incarcerated lose their voting rights only while incarcerated and receive automatic restoration upon release
 - c. In 21 states, the previously incarcerated lose their voting rights during incarceration, and afterwards, typically while on parole and/or probation. Voting rights are automatically restored after this period. Previously incarcerated persons may also have to pay any outstanding fines, fees or do before their rights are restored as well
 - d. In 11 states the previously incarcerated lose their voting rights indefinitely for some crimes or require a governor's pardon in order for voting rights to be restored, face an additional waiting period after completion of sentence (including parole and probation) or require additional action before voting rights can be restored

B. Who Cannot vote?

1. Those incarcerated in state or federal prison
2. Those on parole for the conviction of a felony
3. Those found mentally incompetent to vote by a court

**EVERY ELECTION IS IMPORTANT: LOCAL, STATE, NATIONAL, MIDTERM,
PRIMARY, RUNOFF, GENERAL**

**II. Educate ourselves on the voting process, requirements, and issues on
the ballots**

A. Verify voting status

1. Check voter registration list
 - a. Verifying information is correct
 - i. Name
 - ii. Address
 - iii. County
 - iv. District

B. Teach the importance of each candidate's position and ballot initiative

1. By defining the roles of councilpersons, commissioners, education board members, sheriffs, judges, etc.
2. By explaining what proposed amendments will mean and how the changes if passed will affect them

C. Absentee Ballots

1. Requesting ballot
 - a. If your state does not automatically send you an absentee ballot which is sent within 45 days before an election, request, complete and return an application
 - b. You can go to VOTE.ORG and request one
 - c. You can go to your state election office website and find the absentee ballot application. Look for "absentee voting," "vote by mail," "mail-in voting" and similar terms. Some states allow you to apply online
 - d. Submit an application by mail (usually via an approved form). Some states have absentee voting drop boxes in specified locations in designated areas or at their local, county or city election officials' offices
 - e. Some states will let voters apply for an absentee ballot in person before Election Day and then vote the ballot that same day
2. Witness/Notary
 - a. All states have different requirements but check with local, county or city elections officials for your state requirements
3. Mailbox to Ballot Box
 - a. As part of get-out-the-vote efforts or a civic engagement program some organizations like to assist voters in requesting and returning absentee/mailed ballot applications. Some states place restrictions on these activities by prohibiting third-party groups from distributing or collecting absentee/mailed ballot applications, or designate deadlines or turnaround times for groups that do this

- b. Most mail in ballots must be received **between 1 to 21 days** before an election. Please check with your election office or precinct for your states' deadline on mail in ballots
- c. Check to make certain your signature is on Absentee Ballot before mailing
- d. Mail in Absentee Ballots early, most Board of Elections start counting Absentee Ballots before November voting. Make your voice be heard!

D. Precinct Voting

- 1. Contact your local government for a listing of the precincts in the community
- 2. Every local society should contact a precinct staff member or the Board of Elections on voting procedures for in person or absentee voting

E. Support

- 1. Verify accuracy/or update to State Voter Identification/Voter Registration Card
 - a. Name Change
 - b. Residence Change
- 2. Early voting directives-
 - a. Know when early voting starts/ends
 - b. Secure a sample ballot (online or request one to be sent to you)
 - c. Review how to cast your ballot
- 3. Voter education
 - a. Ballot information
 - b. Candidate information, legislation, agendas, resolutions, etc.
 - c. Voting precincts
 - i. Each church has a precinct that is in its community
 - ii. Encourage members to know their precinct and what will be on the ballot in their districts
 - d. Become informed on all levels of government and elections: midterm, special, runoff, general national, state, and local
 - e. Host "educate me" small group gatherings to inform others of legislation, offices, candidates' past voting preferences, issues on the ballot, resolutions, etc.
 - f. Invite candidates of all parties (regardless of who attends)
 - d. Instruct/Inform persons that you cannot influence members/people to vote a specific way. Our job is to inform them of all candidates, resolutions/laws that are on the ballot to be voted upon during an election

***Any individual can endorse/campaign for/contribute money/vote for their own preference but as a representative of a local society, you cannot endorse on the society's (church's) behalf.**

- g. *Church
 - i. **Can't** allow the candidate to use the name of the church in support of his/her race
 - ii. **Can't** endorse any candidates (including members)
 - iii. **Can't** fundraise for any candidates

- i. **Can** invite all candidates to speak at church events (i.e. services, programs, forums, etc.)
- ii. **Can** encourage the community and the church members to vote for or against legislation or ballot initiatives
- iii. **Can** post commentary in bulletins/websites/etc. on political issues without indicating who to vote for
- iv. **Can** conduct non-partisan voter registration and education sessions

THOSE INFORMED MUST SHARE THEIR KNOWLEDGE

III. Empower/Engage Others

- A. Register others to vote
 - 1. Drive through voter registrations
 - 2. Any Gatherings (Virtual/ in-Person/Peer to Peer)– have a registration/information table (Social Media platform) or (Physical/Digital) voter information packet to hand out in English and Spanish for our Latinx/Hispanix communities
 - 3. County Jail Voter Registration (May be difficult during Covid-19 but can work with staff to see if this is doable)
 - 4. Nursing Home Registration (May be difficult during Covid-19 but can work with staff to see if this is doable)
 - 5. Inform all of Voter Registration deadlines/Early Voting dates/Precinct/Poll Locations
- B. Support
 - 1. Help to get voting credentials
 - a. Needed Photo ID information (Birth certificate, SSN, Passport, Utility/Rent agreement with current address)
 - b. Voter Registration Card updated
 - c. Contact local agencies that help secure this information without cost

**WE MUST PROTECT OUR RIGHT, PRIVILEGE,
AND OBLIGATION TO VOTE**

IV. Protect/Participate in our right to vote

- A. Protect
 - 1. Report any activity that is deemed threatening to any individual (1-866-OUR-VOTE)
 - a. Report faulty/ broken machines
 - b. Report individuals/stations doing excessive examining of credentials
 - c. Ensure that all ballots are sent/mailed/dropped to the correct precinct/poll
 - d. Report any solicitations/pressures to vote a certain way for rewards
 - e. Volunteer at the precinct (every member of legal age can volunteer or even work there to ensure fair voting actions and behavior)
 - f. Become acquainted with the precinct leadership, the hours of operation, etc.

- B. Participating
 - 1. Souls to the Polls
 - a. Use church vans on early voting /election day
 - b. Use carpools on early voting /election day
 - 2. Phone Banking/Email/Text Messages Reminders
 - a. Did you return your absentee mail -in ballots?
 - b. Do you know the early voting dates?
 - c. Do you know the voter registration deadline?
 - d. Do you know the date of the election?
 - e. Do you know the runoff dates if there are any?
 - 3. Voting Day Selfies/Family Voting Pics
 - a. Post on social media platforms
 - b. Feature during church/society services (project on screen)

IMPLEMENT PROJECT 100 (VOTING IS D.E.E.P.) CALL TO ACTION

I. Roles/Responsibilities

A. Bishops

- 1. Appoint an Episcopal Civic Engagement officer for the Episcopal area
- 2. Promote Project 100 with all available resources and platforms
- 3. Periodic check-ins to ensure the implementation of Project 100

B. National Chair

- 1. Coordinate with Board of Bishops to provide logistical assistance and updates directly through vice chairs and episcopal area facilitators
- 2. Coordinate and distribute information and strategy with vice chairs and facilitators for the implementation of Project 100
- 3. Report the progress and outcomes of Project 100 with local churches/societies

C. Vice Chairs

- 1. Resource agents for Project 100
- 2. Connecting local churches/societies to organizations and agencies for assistance in implementing Project 100
- 3. Assisting in the implementation of the initiatives from Board of Bishops
- 4. Disseminating relevant information to the Episcopal Area Representatives/Facilitators to implement Project 100
- 5. Providing assistance to the Episcopal Area Representatives/Facilitators and the local churches/societies

D. Episcopal Area Representatives/Facilitators

- 1. Report to your Presiding Bishop the status of Project 100 implementation
- 2. Distribute information to Presiding Elders
- 3. Resource person for Presiding Elders and local churches/societies

E. Presiding Elders

1. On-Field managers of Project 100
 - a. With exactness, assist the pastors in determining each member's qualification to vote
 - b. Influence members to exercise their right to vote
 - c. Assist in identifying and eliminating any hindrances to voting
 - d. Examine/approve the GOTV (Get Out The Vote) initiative/plan for each local church/society

F. Pastors

1. Implement Project 100
2. Establish a political action/civic engagement ministry team
3. Ensure that every qualified member is engaged in the voting process
4. Encourage and assist in Early/Absentee/Day of Voting by:
 - a. Transportation provision
 - b. Voter ID assistance
 - c. Educate the membership about the candidates/ballot items
 - d. Report to Presiding Elders progress of Project 100
 - e. Encourage photographic success of voting

G. Local Churches/Societies Civic Engagement Ministry Teams

1. Implement Project 100
 - a. Contact precinct staff
 - b. Provide transportation
 - c. Host "educate me" gatherings (following government/CDC guidelines)
 - d. Distribute relevant information (ballots/candidates' information)
 - e. Encourage and assist in Early/Absentee/Day of Voting
 - f. Contact candidates' offices for forum opportunities
2. Seek assistance from Pastors/Presiding Elders/Episcopal facilitators/Vice Chairs when necessary

Conclusion

As the incoming President of the Board of Bishops, I accept this mantle with the sure knowledge that it is our moral and spiritual responsibility to make voting less difficult and impress upon ourselves and others the sense of urgency in turning out to vote in this crucial election. Restating the Project 100 goals--

Define: Know what defines the requirements to vote and dedicate your time and resources to help Get Out the Vote (GOTV)

Educate: Create opportunities to educate and assist people to be informed voters who know the importance of voting on all levels

Empower: Use what you know to give others the ability and power to vote responsibly

Protect: Work diligently to make certain that the rights we deserve are not subjected to voter suppression whether through intimidation by individuals or unfair policies passed by politicians

Voting is **D.E.E.P!!!!** With our intentional efforts through Project 100, we will make a profound difference.

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