

# Design for Democracy: Building Community Power



## What does it mean to be nonpartisan?

To be nonpartisan means not biased or partisan, especially towards a candidate or political party. In the case of 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, it also includes refraining from “political activities in support of or opposition to a candidate running for public office.” This means that nonprofits can’t endorse or donate to candidates. It also means not using materials that reflect a preference (or distaste) for a specific political party or candidate, they must remain neutral.

Nonprofit VOTE reminds organizations that just because they need to be nonpartisan, it doesn’t mean they can’t participate. Nonprofits may conduct or promote any voter engagement activity – registration, education, get-out-the-vote, candidate forums as long as it’s on a nonpartisan basis. Here is some guidance on how to create materials that are powerful, but not partisan.

## Why stay nonpartisan?

In addition to it being required for nonprofits, staying nonpartisan is actually a more effective way to reach people. Have you ever felt burnt out by nonstop political campaign ads? Instead of convincing people to vote one way or another, by staying neutral you can be a trusted messenger and your real message-the importance of voting-will come through loud and clear without ulterior motives.

**Keep scrolling for Do’s & Don’ts >>**



# DON'T



## “Telegraph” a preference

Don't try to sneak in anything that indicates who or what you think people should vote for. Take the example below as a cautionary tale. While it is great design and provides equal space to both candidates and includes facts and citations, the language paints one candidate in a more positive light and we get the sense that Clinton was preferred over Trump in terms of environmental issues.

## Project “wedge” issues onto candidates

An organization with a history of engagement around an issue, even a hot button "wedge" issue, may continue to engage in the issue-advocacy on that topic even during election season. However, care must be taken not to use that issue advocacy as a way of informally endorsing or opposing a candidate or party, especially when those candidates have clearly distinct positions on the topic.

As artists creating general use content, it's best to simply avoid injecting hot-button issues into nonpartisan, election-related communications. Instead, stick to shared values like an inclusive democracy, healthy communities, or a brighter future. See examples on following pages.

Poster examples available next pg >>

# VOTE

# ON

## Clinton

Longtime Supporter Of Renewable Energy And Climate Research, Ambitious Solar Plan, Reduce Oil Consumption, Does Not Favor A Full Fracking Ban. Set national goals to have 500m solar panels installed; generate enough renewable energy to power every home in America; cut energy waste in homes, schools and hospitals by a third; and reduce American oil consumption by a third. Launch a \$60bn Clean Energy Challenge to partner with states, cities and rural communities and a \$30bn plan to revitalise coal communities.

## Trump

Doesn't Believe In Climate Change, More Drilling, More Mining, More Fuel Alternatives Only If They Make 'Financial Sense'. "Snowing in Texas and Louisiana, record setting freezing temperatures throughout the country and beyond. Global warming is an expensive hoax!" – tweet from 29 January 2014. Aggressively use coal, fracking and oil. Cut funding for the Environmental Protection Agency.

# THIS

SOURCE: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jun/09/trump-clinton-economy-immigration-gun-control-environment>  
<http://digg.com/2016/trump-hillary-clinton-comparison>



## GET OUT THE VOTE

AIGA's civic engagement initiative, part of Design for Democracy.  
Learn more: [aiga.org/vote](http://aiga.org/vote)  
Poster design by John Hemminger, Cambridge, Massachusetts



In partnership with the League of Women Voters



Design for Democracy is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

# DO



## Illustrate the importance of voting

Remember: there is power in numbers. When we vote and get our family members to vote, we can impact outcomes and change the debate. Did you know that many elections are decided by less than 100 votes?

## Target specific groups

Young people, low-income people, and people of color do not turn out to vote at the same rate as other populations. You can focus your message on reaching these people and it is not considered partisan to do so, even if they have a history of voting in a certain way.

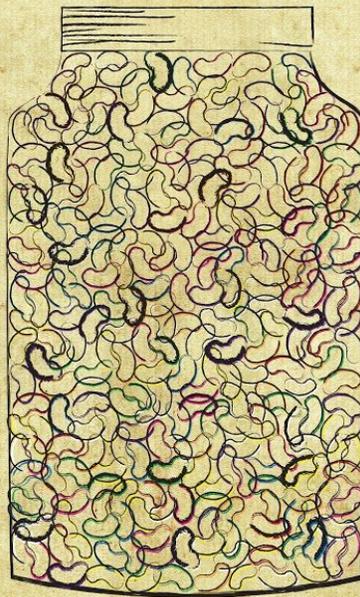
## Encourage people to register

If you aren't registered you can't vote! 36% of eligible voters forgot or missed registration deadline. Be the reminder they need so their voice can count.

- Targeting individuals to get registered:  
<https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/register-to-vote/>
- General info about registration deadlines, ex-offender eligibility, pre-registration of youth:  
<http://www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state/>
- Information about third party groups organizing a registration drive, where to get forms, rules on turnaround time:  
<https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/partner-tools/rules-for-voter-registration-drives/>

Poster examples available next pg >>

"Sure... You can VOTE, IF  
you can tell me how many  
jelly beans are in this jar."  
- Voting Registrar  
(pre-1965)



Less than  
**55** years  
ago



many blacks weren't allowed to vote unless they passed a literacy test or could count the number of jelly beans in a jar or bubbles on a bar of soap. many activists and protestors fought for your right to vote on November 8, 2016.

VOTE FOR YOUR ANCESTORS. **VOTE FOR YOURSELF. IT'S YOUR RIGHT.**



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professional  
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Poster design by Antonette D. Carroll, Saint Louis, Missouri

**VOTE411.ORG**

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**Y O U R B A L L O T C H O I C E P O W E R**  
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 Poster design by Frances Yllana, Dallas, Texas, USA

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