

PTA Federal Advocacy

What can I do to follow 501 (c)(3) guidelines and help my members advocate for public education, policies that benefit children and families, and healthy communities?

What Political Activities Can a PTA Do?

- Voter Registration Drives
- Voter Education
- Candidate Forums
- Issue Advocacy
- Congressional Testimony
- Organizing Action Alerts to Contact Congresspersons

Voter Registration Drives

- Voter registration is a great way for PTA's to engage the public and encourage them to be involved in their local, state and federal elections
- You can register members year-round but pay attention to important dates for upcoming elections
- Set up tables to register voters at all PTA events (or send out reminders through Memberhub or email with information about how to register online using [KSVotes.org](https://www.KSVotes.org))
- 2 main guidelines when registering voters: Be Nonpartisan and follow Kansas registration laws and procedures

Kansas Voter Registration Information

- Deadline to register is 21 days before any election, for this fall's general election that date is Tuesday, October 13th
- Kansas allows advanced ballots by mail- advanced ballots begin mailing 20 days prior to the election date, this fall that date is October 14th. The deadline to request an advanced ballot by mail is a week before election day. This fall that date is October 27th. Advanced ballots must be postmarked by election day and received by the close of business on the Friday following the election. They can be mailed or turned in to any county election office or to any polling place by close of poll time.
- To request an advanced ballot by mail, you can mail in an application, which can be obtained at any county election office or you can do so online at <https://www.ksvotes.org/> or at some county election office websites.
- Kansas allows early in person voting up to 20 days prior to the election. This is county dependent.

This information is from the Kansas Secretary of State website at this link <https://www.sos.ks.gov/elections/voter-information.html>

Voter Education

- PTAs can educate their members about candidates running as long as they remain nonpartisan. They must give equal time to and information about each candidate running.
- A good source to get candidate information that is nonpartisan is the League of Women Voters <https://www.vote411.org/> website.
- If you invite any candidates to speak at a PTA meeting, you must invite all candidates running for that seat to speak. You can not endorse or give any preference to any one candidate.
- PTA units should educate voters about upcoming election dates for every primary and general election.

Candidate Forums

- PTA should hold candidate forums for elections especially for school board races, state senate and representative races and Governor races. These are all very important for public education.
- Go to <https://www.nonprofitvote.org/> to get information about how to hold forums that are nonpartisan and meet the 501(c) (3) guidelines and not lose tax exempt status. This website has all the information you need to help educate voters without violating nonprofit regulations.

Checklist for staying nonpartisan



Staying Nonpartisan: Permissible Election Activities Checklist For 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organizations

The federal tax code contains a single sentence that defines the prohibition of partisan political activities by 501(c)(3) charitable organizations. It states 501(c)(3) organizations are "prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in - or intervening in - any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for elective public office."

Whether activities are considered partisan political activity depends on the "facts and circumstances" in each situation. What is clear is that there's still a lot a 501(c)(3) can do on a nonpartisan basis to promote voter and civic engagement as part of its charitable and educational mission during the election season.

Permissible Nonpartisan Activities - with common examples

The IRS affirmatively states that 501(c)(3) organizations may conduct voter engagement or connect with candidates on a nonpartisan basis. This includes encouraging voter participation, educating voters, and talking to candidates about issues. 501(c)(3) organizations may:

- 1. Conduct or Promote Voter Registration**
 - Conduct a voter registration drive at your nonprofit or in your community.
 - Encourage people to register to vote in your communications, on your website or at events.
- 2. Educate Voters on the Voting Process**
 - Provide information on when and where to vote - such as finding their poll location, getting an absentee ballot or contacting their local election office for help.
 - Remind people of registration or election deadlines and dates.
- 3. Host a Candidate Forum**
 - Sponsor a candidate forum with other community partners for all the candidates.
 - Encourage your community to attend your forum or another candidate forum sponsored by a trusted partner.
- 4. Create a Candidate Questionnaire**

- Submit questions to all the candidates in a race on issues of interest to your nonprofit.
 - Publish the candidate's full answers on your website or in a nonpartisan voter guide.
- 5. Distribute Sample Ballots or Nonpartisan Voter Guides**
 - Display or provide an official sample ballot that highlights state elections common to all voters in your state
 - Distribute a nonpartisan voter guide from trusted partner about what is on the ballot.
 - 6. Continue Issue Advocacy during an Election**
 - Continue your regular advocacy or lobbying activities during the election period, as long it is related to pending legislation on issues you have a history of working on and not timed or structured to influence how people vote.
 - 7. Support, Oppose or Host a Community Conversation on a Ballot Measure**

Unlike candidates for office, nonprofits may take sides on a ballot measure. IRS rules treat this as a lobbying activity, not electioneering.

 - Educate the public on your position within your normal lobbying limits.
 - Have your board take a position for or against a question on the ballot.
 - Engage your community leaders and residents in a conversation about the issues at the county and state level.

Note: If you make a significant investment of staff and funds on ballot measure advocacy, you must track spending as lobbying expenses and check your state's campaign spending disclosure laws for ballot questions.

- 8. Encourage People to Vote**
 - Send reminders to your staff, clients and constituents about voting in the next election and why voting is important.
 - Nonprofits may conduct any type of get out the vote activity to encourage people to vote as long as it is about participating as a voter and not suggesting who to vote for.



Staying Nonpartisan: Permissible Election Activities Checklist For 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organizations

The partisan prohibition means a 501(c)(3) organization or a staff member speaking or acting on behalf of the nonprofit may not:

- Endorse a candidate.
- Make a campaign contribution or expenditure for or against a candidate.
- Rate or rank candidates on who is most favorable to your issue(s).
- Let candidates use your facilities or resources, unless they are made equally available to all candidates at their fair market value - such as a room commonly used for public events.

What does it mean to rank or rate a candidate?

Anything that indicates which candidates you think are better or worse on your issues could be seen as a partisan endorsement. This would include things like giving candidates letter grades (A, B, C, etc.), but even commentary that compares candidates' views to yours is a problem. Take, for example, a voter guide you create to publicize where candidates stand on an issue that also includes your organization's position on the issue. This would tell the voter which candidates you believe gave the "correct" answer. When you circulate or publicize a nonpartisan guide giving candidate positions, keep your opinion out of it. Let voters use the information presented to make their own decisions.

The main principle for being nonpartisan is to conduct voter engagement and education in the context of your educational and civic mission and not in a way intended to support or oppose a specific candidate. So if you hold a candidate forum or offer to brief the candidates on issues of importance to your organization, make sure you treat the candidates equally. When you do voter registration or remind people to vote, do it in the context of the importance of voting - encouraging active citizenship and giving voice to the communities you serve.

Resources

Nonprofits, Voting and Elections: A 501(c)(3) Online Guide to Nonpartisan Voter Engagement, www.nonprofitvote.org/nonprofits-voting-elections-online

Federal Funds and Voter Registration: for organizations receiving Community Service Block Grants or AmeriCorps/National Service programs, www.nonprofitvote.org/all-resources/

If you have a question, contact Nonprofit VOTE at info@nonprofitvote.org or Bolder Advocacy at advocacy@afj.org. Or visit online:

- Nonprofit VOTE - www.nonprofitvote.org
- Bolder Advocacy - www.bolderadvocacy.org



Issue Advocacy

- National PTA has many position statements and resolutions that support public education, children, families and communities
- To find the National PTA position statements and resolutions go to the website advocacy page <https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy>
- State PTAs, regional PTAs and local units cannot contradict a National PTA position
- PTA members are encouraged to use the National PTA position statements to advocate on behalf of children and families at their schools, in their communities or on a statewide basis

Newly released: Position Statement - Addressing Systemic or Institutional Racism



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National PTA Adopts Position Statement on Addressing Institutional Racism

ALEXANDRIA, Va., (July 27, 2020)—As National PTA stands firmly against racism in all forms and the culture of oppression that permeates the United States, the association’s Board of Directors recently adopted a position statement on [addressing institutional racism](#). The statement reaffirms National PTA’s commitment to listen, educate and advocate beyond rhetoric and rise to correct all inequities and injustices.

“As an association that represents all children and families, it is our duty to disrupt the systems that propagate institutional racism,” said Leslie Boggs, president of National PTA. “Our efforts will be intentional, purposeful and relentless until every person enjoys the freedoms guaranteed to all Americans.”

As outlined in the position statement, National PTA will hold courageous conversations with its membership and communities to understand the impact of institutional racism and how it affects the well-being of children of color. These conversations will include racism, social justice, equitable education, juvenile justice, affordable housing, food sustainability, economic wealth and affordable health care for families of color.

National PTA and its constituent associations will also educate themselves and their communities on the disparities among students of color compared to their white peers related to issues such as housing, healthcare, environmental and community planning, criminal justice and employment. This knowledge is essential to understand the impact of institutional racism on school performance, which is manifested in attendance, discipline, academic achievement and graduation rates of students of color.

As also included in the position statement, National PTA and its constituent associations will advocate at all levels to eradicate the negative impact of institutional racism. National PTA will also work to ensure more comprehensive guidelines and training are required on the use of force by school resource officers, other law enforcement officers and security personnel.

National PTA strongly urges federal, state and local public officials to invest in educating students and teachers on the history and impact of institutional racism. Professional development and training must be provided for all school staff on implicit bias and culturally appropriate curriculum. School staff should also be provided professional development in mental health, trauma-informed care and restorative justice to provide a safe, inclusive environment for all students.

National PTA also urges federal and state policymakers, school district leaders, school administrators and educators to review bias in curriculum, policies, practices and programs to identify and address those that perpetuate inequities toward children or communities of color, resulting in Black and Brown students experiencing lower school achievement rates.

“We can eliminate racism and social injustices when we unite as a community, regardless of skin color, race, language or culture,” said Anna King, National PTA president-elect. “PTA reaffirms our commitment to advocate for all children—including and specifically for Black and Brown children—to eliminate the negative impacts of institutional racism and ensure they have every opportunity to reach their full potential.”

In addition to the position statement on addressing institutional racism, the National PTA Board of Directors also adopted position statements in June on [Harmful Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts](#), [Career and Technical Education](#), [Improving School Meal Programs](#) and [Furniture Tip-Over Prevention](#).

About National PTA

[National PTA](#)® comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of family engagement in schools. PTA is a registered 501(c) (3) nonprofit association that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education, health and welfare of children and youth. For more information, visit PTA.org.

Congressional Testimony

- National PTA often testifies in congressional hearings. Recently National PTA President Leslie Boggs testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee at a hearing titled, Underfunded & Unprepared: Examining How to Overcome Obstacles to Safely Reopen Schools. You can watch her testimony here: <https://tinyurl.com/y4mazdl8>
- National PTA will notify Federal Legislative Chairs when a congressional testimony is happening. Kansas PTA VP of Advocacy will post these to Kansas PTA Facebook page and email PTA members.

Organizing Action Alerts to contact Congresspersons

- PTA members should keep an eye out for the National PTA Action Alerts
- When Kansas VP of Advocacy receives an Action Alert notice, they will post it to the Kansas PTA Facebook page, and have it emailed to all Kansas PTA members
- The Action Alerts enable you to quickly and easily customize an email to your Senators and or House Representative.
- You can see some Action Alerts on the National PTA Page here <https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/take-action>

State Advocacy

- Kansas PTA monitors the legislative session to provide information to our members
- We provide testimony – both oral and written during the session
- We send out action alerts asking our members to take action and contact their legislators on issues during the session,
- We write MythBusters and Issue Briefs to provide explanation of issue
- We work with different state level associations to provide advocacy engagement and information
- Kansas PTA would love to provide advocacy training to our units

<https://kansas-pta.org/advocacy/state/>



2020 Election Dates

July 14

Last day to register to vote for Primary Election

July 15

Advance voting in person and by mail may begin

July 28

Deadline for voters to apply for advance ballots by mail for Primary Election

August 4

PRIMARY ELECTION

October 13

Last day to register to vote for General Election

October 14

Advance voting in person and by mail may begin

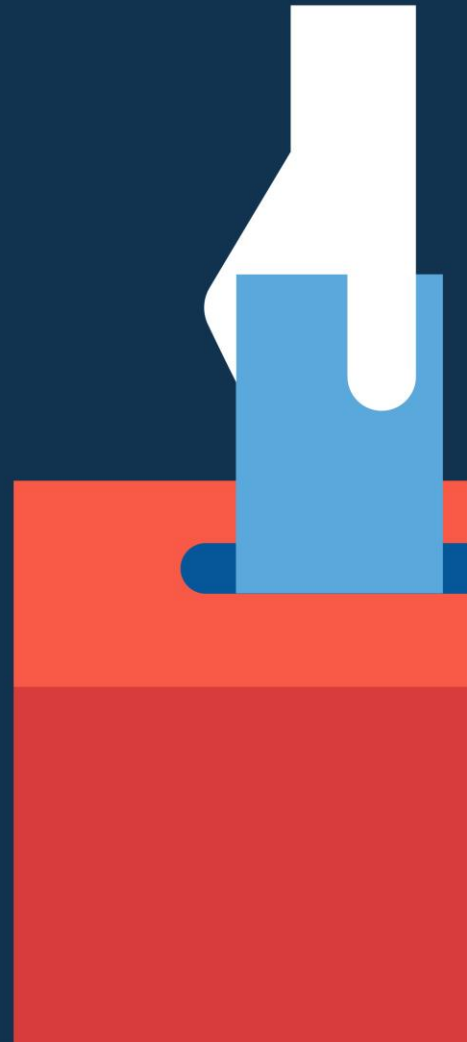
October 27

Deadline for voters to apply for advance ballots by mail for General Election

November 3

GENERAL ELECTION

If you have questions, call toll-free at 1-800-262-VOTE (8683)



<https://www.sos.ks.gov/elections/elections.html>

Questions?

VPAdvocacy@kansas-pta.org