



National Council of Jewish Women + Vote Forward Frequently Asked Questions

What is Vote Forward?

Vote Forward is a nonprofit organization that empowers grassroots volunteers to encourage their fellow citizens in underrepresented communities (like young people, people of color, and those living in rural areas) to vote by writing and sending them letters. These letters have been proven to boost voter turnout and are an effective way to help get out the vote. National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) is partnering with Vote Forward to Get Out the Vote (GOTV) for the 2022 Election. We have a [national portal](#) for advocates across the country, and some states have their own portals managed by NCJW leaders in that state/Section: [California](#), [Florida](#), [Minnesota](#), [New York](#), [Ohio \(Cleveland Section\)](#), and [Texas](#) (& more coming soon). You can learn more about Vote Forward [here](#).

Is Vote Forward nonpartisan?

Vote Forward is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization that runs both partisan (called “political”) and nonpartisan (called “social”) campaigns. All of Vote Forward’s letter templates use nonpartisan language and volunteers, regardless of their political leanings, are instructed not to reference candidates or political parties in the personalized messages they write. **NCJW Sections and advocates can only participate in Vote Forward’s social campaigns.**

Does writing letters to potential voters work?

Yes! Vote Forward’s analysis shows that letters can boost voter turnout by as much as 3.4 percentage points. Over multiple experiments in the past few years, their studies have proven that Vote Forward letters mobilize voters—at the polling booth and via absentee ballot, in multiple states, and in multiple types of election. The organization uses randomized controlled trials and rigorous analysis to demonstrate results. These results make Vote Forward one of the most effective (and cost-effective) organizations for voter turnout. To learn more, click [here](#).

How do I use Vote Forward to write letters?

Users create a Vote Forward account using one of National Council of Jewish Women’s portals. After creating an account, you will have access to a dashboard from which you can “adopt” voters and download typed letter templates to which you will add a handwritten message. You will write the letters, address the envelopes, and set them aside until the mail date for the campaign. Update your progress on the Vote Forward dashboard by marking your letters “prepared.” Find a full set of instructions on how to write letters [here](#).

What should I write in my letter?

Key to this GOTV tactic is personalizing your Vote Forward letters to inspire their recipients to vote. Make your message heartfelt and concise. Some people mention civic responsibility. Others talk about how hard-won the right to vote was. Or how the vote is more powerful than we think and can have major impact on our lives at the local, state, and federal level. Use your imagination and listen to your heart. You can mention issues but not candidates or parties. Here are [tips from Vote Forward](#) about what to write, and below are a few examples from NCJW advocates in California:

- *I vote for leaders who represent my interests – such as having clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, and affordable healthcare for all.*
- *I believe my vote is a way to have my voice heard about what is important for our country. I want leaders who represent my concerns. Don’t you?*

Do I need a printer? What about stamps? Other supplies?

You will need a printer, paper, stamps, envelopes, and a blue pen. If you do not have access to a printer, consider going to the public library, and [click here](#) for other ideas from Vote Forward. If you belong to a Section, ask Section leadership to set aside budget for stamps, envelopes, and other materials needed to write letters.

When do I mail the letters?

This year’s “Big Send” is on October 29. Consider taking pictures at the post office and sharing them on social media, especially if you or your Section has written a large number of letters! After mailing, it is critical to update the letters as “sent” on your Vote Forward dashboard; this is how Vote Forward tracks and generates its statistics. Find more information about updating the dashboard [here](#).

Do I have to be an NCJW Section member to participate in Vote Forward?

No! If you are a Section member or advocate in [California](#), [Florida](#), [Minnesota](#), [New York](#), [Ohio \(Cleveland Section\)](#), or [Texas](#), you should use that state’s Vote Forward portal, managed by

NCJW leaders in that state. If you do not fit into this category, sign up via [NCJW's Vote Forward portal](#).

How can I get members of my Section or network involved in Vote Forward?

A terrific way to get people involved is to host a letter writing party, whether it is in-person or virtual. A letter writing party is an effective tool not only to have fun while writing letters, but to engage with your Section or networks and introduce friends to NCJW. [Click here](#) for NCJW's How to Hold a Letter Writing Party resource.

Vote Forward Stories of Success

Looking for more ideas about how to engage your Section or network in Vote Forward? Read these three success stories from 2020:

California

Led by California State Policy Advocates (SPA) and NCJW Sacramento Section leaders Barbara Baran and Claire Lipschultz, 150 members of the California Sections successfully sent more than 12,000 letters through Vote Forward. The Sacramento Section was the largest “producer” and the SPAs credit Sacramento’s success to several best practices that Section employed throughout the campaign. First, participants were **organized into teams** — small groups which were each led by a volunteer leader. Barbara and Claire provided initial training to all volunteers but then team leaders provided technical assistance, emotional support and encouragement for those in their cohort. Additionally, the team leaders were responsible for identifying people in their personal networks, both within and outside NCJW, and recruiting them to participate. An **ambitious statewide goal** was set, and volunteers were informed on a regular basis on progress toward that goal. Every time it was surpassed, the goal was raised! To spur **healthy competition**, volunteers also received statistics on how many had reached the mark of 25 letters, 50 letters, 100 letters, and so on. To make letter writing possible and affordable for everyone, the Sacramento Section offered to print letters, pay for postage, pick up and mail letters. The total result of all these efforts was that participants — even and maybe especially those who wrote dozens and even hundreds of letters alone in their homes — felt **strongly connected** to each other and to the broader Vote Forward community.

Ohio

Led by former and current Promote the Vote co-chairs Rita Rome and Barbara Friedman Yaksic, as well as Ohio's co-SPA's Susan Reis and Erinn Stark, the Cleveland Section organized 70 members to write more than 5,000 letters using Vote Forward in one month. One key to success was opening up the program to the entire Section, who were eager to participate

in GOTV from home. Ohio leaders photographed each member with their stash of letters and used the images in other communications and resources to demonstrate pride in what the Section had achieved. Like the efforts in California described above, Cleveland Section leadership printed letters and provided postage to participants. By participating in the Vote Forward project, advocates said they felt as though they were making an **important and meaningful difference** regarding voter registration and access. Rita confidently noted that **“we knew we were an army, and you can be too.”**

Texas

Led by Co-SPA Elyse Rosenberg and other Section leadership, Texas advocates wrote ~6,220 letters through Vote Forward employing a few best practices to work productively and collectively. First, Section leadership **provided examples** of how to personalize their letters. They also **organized Zoom letter-writing parties** where members could meet each other, see faces, and kibbitz. In step with the other stories highlighted here, NCJW Austin **prioritized accessibility** by coordinating drop-off stations for completed letters and ensuring the budget covered postage. This election cycle, NCJW Dallas is taking it a step further by **creating packets** that will include all the resources necessary to fully participate in Vote Forward. Last, the Austin Section **incentivized** members to participate by offering prizes to those who wrote the most letters. Through these practices, the Texas members were able to achieve their goals and strengthen their community.