

How To Conduct A Voter Registration Drive



1 Get permission from leadership so you're under biblical authority. Emphasize the purpose is to register voters, not to promote a political viewpoint. There is no legal restriction on the ability of nonprofits to register voters. For more information, refer to "**What Churches Can and Cannot Do**" found in the "Get Involved" section at www.illinoisfamily.org.

2 Select the dates for your drive. IFI suggests holding nonpartisan voter registration drives for two or three consecutive weeks allowing as many people as possible the opportunity to register. You may also consider leaving registration forms out in a public place after the drive in case anyone missed it. When considering dates for your drives, it is helpful to note holidays and voter registration deadlines. A few holidays to consider registering voters are President's Day (in February), Independence Day (July 4th), Patriot Day (September 11th), and Veteran's Day (November 11th).

3 Make sure to request a free nonpartisan voter registration packet from IFI at least three weeks prior to your start date. The packet has been specifically designed to equip you to conduct a successful voter registration drive. Some of the resources and information included in the packet are legal tips on what churches can and cannot do, Illinois voter requirements, a list of county and election clerk offices, a sample bulletin insert, a promotional poster, and materials on the importance of voting your values. Request your IFI voter registration packet by phone at **708-781-9328**, or via email at ContactUs@illinoisfamily.org.

4 Get copies of the voter registration forms at your local post office or through your county clerk's office. Be aware of regulations. In order to register to vote, a person must be a legal resident of Illinois and at least 18 years old on or before the next election.

5 Try to advertise your voter drive in bulletins, newsletters, and posters during the week(s) prior and during the registration drive. If you are holding the drive in a church, try to have it included in the announcements. Nothing beats announcements from the pulpit. As the pastor goes, so goes the church. Additionally, many churches choose to organize a Christian Citizenship Sunday in coordination with voter

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registration. The pastor may want to preach on citizenship and moral issues from a biblical perspective. If you are looking for resources on Christian Citizenship, two excellent sources are: Family Research Council's Pastor's Portal – Watchmen on the Wall, www.frc.org/pastors, and David Barton's WallBuilders – www.wallbuilders.com.

6 Recruit volunteers to work the voter registration table. Make sure to thank them for helping. Let them know how much you and the organization leaders appreciate them!

7 Set-up. Make sure you have enough voter registration forms. Also, provide eligibility rules and plenty of black pens. Forms in other ink colors may be rejected. Chairs are a nice addition. Clearly mark your table. For example, you could put a sign on three sides of the table saying "Register to Vote." Other optional material includes talking points on the policy issues to get people excited about voting (linking the importance of voting to the important issues), a bowl of candy, refreshments, or patriotic décor. You may also consider having signup sheets for people who want to be more involved. This is a great starting point for forming a civic awareness group.

8 Make eye contact, smile and ask people, "Are you registered to vote at your current address?" or, "Are you going to be 18 by the next election?" (An individual can register at age 17 as long as they will be 18 on or before election day.) Don't put them on the defensive by saying, "You're not registered?" Instead, offer to help them become a voter. After a voter completes the form, make sure to tear off their copy to take with them.

9 Process the voter registration forms. Keep all completed forms in the same place. Then mail or drop off all the forms at your local County Clerk office or the local county elections office: encourage people to leave their forms with you (keep in mind that they keep the copy). They may forget to send them in otherwise!

10 Follow up. Send an email to ContactUs@illinoisfamily.org. Indicate the date of your voter registration drive and number of voters registered. Send thank you notes to leaders and volunteers that helped. Contact those on your sign-up sheet about getting more involved. ■

Legal Tips:

- ★ Emphasize registration, not politics
- ★ Allow people from every political party to register
- ★ Don't make issue statements like, "Do your part for pro-life candidates" that can be construed as endorsements
- ★ Don't tell people who you are voting for during registration

