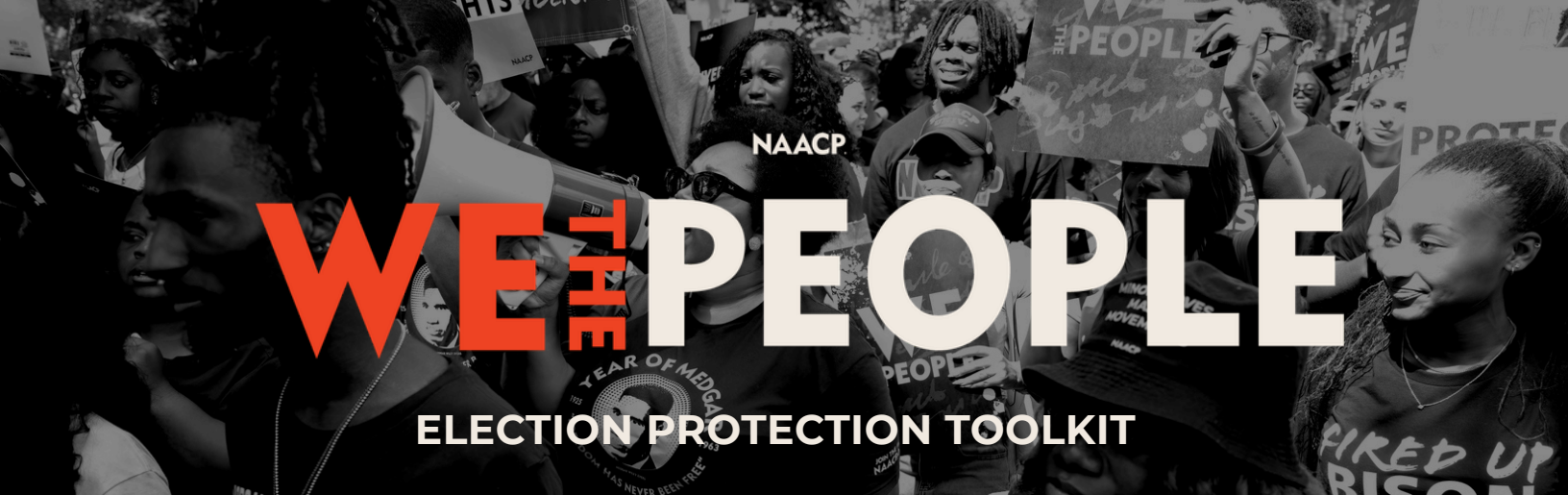




CLARITY OVER CHAOS

NAACP Election Protection • September 28 to January 3

Voters still have power. Our job is to help them use it.

This toolkit is for state conferences, units, Election Protection leads, and the volunteers responsible for planning and carrying out Election Protection work.

THE VOTER JOURNEY



KNOW → PLAN → VOTE → COUNT

Build Your Unit's Election Protection Plan

A simple Election Protection plan: what your unit will focus on, who is responsible, your key dates, and what to do when a voter has a problem.

Start With Your Key Dates

Open the workbook. Fill in your state's dates.

Focus on What Your Community Needs

Do the things that will help your community move through the voter journey.

Get the workbook

It should be attached to the same email as this toolkit. If not: [Click Here](#)

Six tabs where you find your state's information and turn your choices into a plan with a timeline.

Instructions • Escalation • Sample Key Dates (Florida) • Sample Calendar (Florida) • Your Key Dates • Your Calendar

THREE THINGS TO KNOW

Voters have power.

A well-informed voter is the first and most effective line of defense for their own vote. Our job is to make sure they have what they need, and to help when needed, when a problem is bigger than one person can solve. An informed voter can spot a problem, understand the options, ask for help, and take the next step.

Friction disrupts the journey.

A friction point is a place in the voter journey where a problem, a barrier, or plain confusion can stop a voter from getting to the next step. Registration and status problems, missed deadlines, mail ballot problems, polling place changes, bad information, challenges, intimidation, provisional ballots, cure, canvass, certification.

Clarity protects the journey.

We give voters clear, accurate, and verified information. We help when they cannot solve a problem alone. We act when a vote is at risk. The earlier a voter votes, the more time there is to fix a problem. Push voters to vote as early as their state allows.





Election Protection Continues After Election Day

Election Protection continues through the processes that determine and certify official results. For this toolkit, the timeline runs through January 3, when the new congressional term begins.

Opening this after voting has already started in your state? Start with your state Election Protection table and their current plan. Then come back to Know Your Community.

WHAT IS IN THIS TOOLKIT

- **Clarity Over Chaos**
- **Know Your Election**
- **Know Your Community**
- **Choose Your Work**
- **Connect Before There Is a Problem**
- **When Something Goes Wrong**
- **Count**
- **Know Your Rights**
- **Find What You Need**

Where to get more

Your state's dates → your state or county election office

A calendar for your unit → the workbook

Anything current → the shared folder, [Click Here](#)

Graphics and messaging → the 2026 Comms Toolkit, [Click Here](#)

Legal questions → Office of General Counsel

**CONFUSION STOPS VOTERS. THAT IS THE
PART WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT.**



KNOW YOUR ELECTION

Fill in your key election dates

Election Day is November 3 everywhere. These six are not.

	Your date
Registration deadline, sometimes called book closing	_____
Mail ballot request deadline	_____
Mail ballot return deadline	_____
Early voting opens and closes, if your state has it	_____
Cure deadline or deadlines, if your state has them	_____
Certification (local and state)	_____

If your state does not have one of these, write **NONE**. A blank means you have not reviewed it yet.

How many days until voting starts in your state? _____

Look up every date and rule at your state or county election office. Record them in the workbook.

THE VOTER JOURNEY

If you vote by mail, be sure to know when your ballot must be returned in order for it to be counted, and then return it well before that date. A ballot returned early leaves time to fix a problem. A ballot mailed too close to the deadline may not.

Some states will accept ballots received by Election Day or even after, but a few require ballots be received by the election office BEFORE Election Day in order to be counted. Check and double-check your state's mail-in ballot return deadlines.

EVERY STATE IS DIFFERENT. FIND OUT HOW YOURS WORKS.

Some states mail ballots six weeks out, others four. Some start counting two weeks early, others cannot open an envelope until Election Day. Some notify a voter within a day if a ballot has a problem, others give three days after the election to fix it.



Some states require a voter to give a permissible reason — out of town, illness, work obligation — in order to vote by mail. Check your state's rules before requesting a mail-in ballot.

Rules for voting in person after you requested a mail-in ballot vary by state. Check with your state's election office before Election Day to know your options if you have requested a mail-in ballot but want to vote in person instead.

What are the rules in your state?

TELL EVERY VOTER TO CHECK THEIR DISTRICT, PRECINCT AND POLLING PLACE

True everywhere. Urgent where maps were redrawn. People who have voted at the same place for years may be voting somewhere new. It takes a voter one minute.

Also find out whether polling places moved, whether ID rules changed, and what your state's emergency law lets officials change. All three are fields in the workbook.

KNOW WHAT VOTER REGISTRATION STATUS MEANS

LIST MAINTENANCE — the official process states use to update voter rolls.

REMOVAL — one possible outcome of it.

PURGE — a word advocates use. Not a legal status. No record says "purged."

ACTIVE — The registration record is current.

INACTIVE • SUSPENSE • PENDING • CHALLENGED

These words do not all mean the same thing, and what they mean varies by state. Do not assume the voter cannot vote. Find out what the status means in your state and what the voter needs to do.

CANCELLED • REMOVED

The voter may need to take action before voting. Check the state's guidance and get help right away.

The message for voters: Check your status early and check it often. Do not assume that being registered today means you will be registered closer to the election. Check periodically before the registration deadline. If something looks wrong, do not stop and do not assume. Find out what it means and what you can do.

Make registration checking something your unit actively pushes, not just advice you give. Run a status-check drive before your state's registration deadline. Start with your own members and volunteers.

What your unit needs to know: how a voter checks their own status and the link to do it · whether your state has same-day registration · what provisional ballot option is available when eligibility cannot be resolved at the polls · that voter challenges are a separate process that can affect a voter's registration or ability to cast or have a ballot counted. All four are fields in the workbook.

Build your Election Protection calendar

September 28 to January 3 is fourteen weeks. Six phases, each one anchored to a date in your state.

YOUR SIX PHASES

1 LAUNCH AND PREPARE The day you start
2 REGISTER AND GET READY Start to your registration deadline
3 PLAN YOUR VOTE Registration deadline to 5 days before voting opens
4 GET READY TO VOTE EARLY The 5 days before voting opens
5 VOTE AND PROTECT Voting opens through Election Day
6 COUNT/CERTIFY November 4 through January 3

Sept 28	Program starts
Your date	Registration deadline
Oct 5–9	National Voter Education Week
Your date	Mail ballot request deadline
Oct 20	Election Hero Day
Your date	Voting opens in your state
Oct 24	Vote Early Day
Nov 3	ELECTION DAY
Your date	Cure deadline
Your date	Canvass
Your date	Certification
Jan 3	New Congress sworn in

Use the key dates in your workbook to build your Election Protection calendar and set the timing for each phase.

The two dates that anchor everything are your registration deadline and the first day voters in your state can cast a ballot before Election Day. In most states that is when early voting opens. In a few it is in-person absentee voting. Three states have neither.

Where to get more

The official source → your state or county election office website
Help for a voter right now → 866-OUR-VOTE



KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

Build Election Protection into your voter contacts

Phone calls, door knocking, postcards, church, campus, community events, the final push.

Election Protection rides on those conversations. It does not require new ones.

You are already doing	Add this
Phone calls	Is your registration current? How are you voting? What if there's a problem?
Door knocking	Your state's dates · ID rules · voter rights information
Postcards and texts	One deadline per message
Faith and community	Dates · Souls to the Polls · offers of help
Youth and college	Registration, residency and ID · early vote · poll worker and monitor recruitment
Final push	Vote-plan troubleshooting · the hotline number

Start with the people you are already recruiting. Then recruit specifically for any roles you still need.

WHERE DO VOTERS GET STOPPED?

A friction point is a place in the voter journey where a problem, a barrier, or plain confusion can stop a voter from getting to the next step.

KNOW	PLAN	VOTE	COUNT
Registration and voter status Voter ID and documents	Getting to the polling place Mail ballot problems Help and accessibility	Long lines and delays Intimidation and harassment Police or federal agents Machines and technology	Fixing a ballot (cure) Provisional ballots Canvass and certification



ELECTION PROTECTION TOOLKIT

Use these twelve friction points to identify where voters may need help, decide what your community needs, and prepare volunteers for the problems they may encounter.

Use five questions to set your priorities

1. What are your state's top voter concerns and friction points?
2. Where does each one stop a voter — Know, Plan, Vote, or Count?
3. Which problems would matter most to address?
4. **What evidence supports your choices?**
5. What can you realistically run this cycle?

Use the data. How people here vote — mail, early, or Election Day · where Black voters, college students and other communities of concern actually vote · which precincts had problems before · what your 2026 primary showed you.

Where to get more

Your county numbers → your election office

What your state allows → National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

Build your plan → the workbook



CHOOSE YOUR WORK

WHAT EVERY UNIT NEEDS

These three are not choices. They are the floor — the bare minimum of what you need to do.

KNOW YOUR GROUND

Your dates, your voters, your issues. Everything else comes from it.

KNOW HOW TO HELP AND ESCALATE

The chain, before anything launches.

MAKE SURE VOTERS CAN GET ASSISTANCE

Directly, through your state table, or with partners.

A command center is the place where the right people communicate and resolve voter and election issues in real time. It can be virtual, in person, or both. Connect to your state table's, or stand up your own.

WHAT VOTER ASSISTANCE LOOKS LIKE

Helping a voter get past a problem they cannot solve alone.

It can look like: help at the polls · a number people can call — your own, or 866-OUR-VOTE · rides and Souls to the Polls · language and disability assistance · help dealing with the election office · calling voters whose ballots need fixing · connecting a voter to your state Election Protection table.

RECRUIT FOR THE HELP YOUR VOTERS NEED

If the problem is	You need
People cannot get to the polls	Drivers and Souls to the Polls partners
Long lines, wrong information at the site	Poll monitors
Voters turned away	Voter assistance volunteers
Ballots rejected in the primary	Cure callers
The count and certification	Canvass observers
Voters who need language or disability help	Trained assisters, often through your state table

IDENTIFY WHAT YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS MOST

VOTER PROTECTION AT THE POLLS

Poll monitors, poll worker recruitment, real-time reporting, observer training.



BALLOT PROTECTION

Mail ballot promotion, cure outreach, signature mismatch follow-up.

AFTER THE ELECTION

Canvass observation, certification monitoring, and runoff preparation.

VOTER EDUCATION AND TRUSTED MESSAGING

Use your key dates and calendar to drive voter education and messaging.

Early vote monitoring comes before Election Day, not after. Problems found during early voting can still be fixed.

Put your plan in the workbook

What your unit will focus on, with a name on each one, not a role.

Why you chose it.

What happens in the next seven days.

Your partners and what each can contribute.

→ **Your dated plan goes on Your Calendar tab in the workbook.**

Where to get more

Build your plan → the workbook

Volunteer recruitment → the National Volunteer Program

Poll monitor training → your state table, or run it yourself if there is not one

CONNECT BEFORE THERE IS A PROBLEM

Problems are easier to solve when the people involved already know each other.

NAME YOUR ELECTION PROTECTION LEAD AND BACKUP LEAD

Before voting begins, name one person responsible for Election Protection and one backup lead.

That person does not solve every problem. They make sure the right people are connected when a problem happens.

Lead: _____ **Phone:** _____ **Email:** _____

Backup: _____ **Phone:** _____ **Email:** _____

IDENTIFY AND MEET YOUR ELECTION OFFICE AND OFFICIALS BEFORE YOU NEED THEM

Five questions:

1. What has changed since the last election — locations, hours, precinct lines, equipment, ID rules, procedures?
2. What should voters know about registration and voter list status? How do they confirm it? What happens if they are marked inactive or cannot be found?
3. What are the procedures for mail ballots, provisional ballots and cure, including deadlines and how voters are notified?
4. What is the plan if voting is disrupted — weather, disaster, outage, equipment failure, site closure?
5. Who do we contact when a voter problem needs fixing right now, during early voting, on Election Day, and after?

Office: _____ **Name:** _____
Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Find and connect with your state Election Protection table

What is it? The existing coalition that coordinates Election Protection in your state. It is not your state conference.

Why connect? It may already provide training, voter assistance, poll monitor assignments, legal support, issue escalation and rapid response coordination. Do not build what already exists.

What do you bring? Local knowledge, volunteers, trusted relationships, and information about what voters are actually experiencing.

What do you do now? Find your state contact before voting begins. If there is no table, or it is not active in your county, coordinate locally and tell National.

Name: _____ **Contact:** _____

Identify and meet your law enforcement contact

How they intend to handle voter intimidation and accusations of fraud.



Report every problem, even the ones you solved

866-OUR-VOTE — for the voter, right now, while they are standing there. Trained help.
The NAACP Voter Incident Report Form — for the record. naacp.org/vote, then click Voter Incident. Or text POLLS to 20707.

Help the voter first. Then make sure the problem is documented in the Incident Report Form — even if it was already reported somewhere else.

Why the form matters: One call is a voter's problem. Several similar calls are a pattern. One voter's challenge is a problem. A wave of identical challenges is a coordinated pattern. The National Office can only see the pattern if you report. What National does with it: legal support, escalation, pattern detection across states, and coalition coordination.

HELP → REPORT → ESCALATE → FOLLOW UP

Example. A voter's registration is not in the system. Your unit checks it. If you cannot fix it locally, it goes up to the state conference, which contacts the election office. If the voter is still at risk, it goes to National.

Follow up with the voter.

The job is not finished when the problem is handed off. Follow up with the voter and find out whether they actually voted.

Escalate the same day when a voter will miss a deadline · a polling place changed without notice · you see several similar problems · anyone is being intimidated · certification is delayed or refused.

Call 911 first if there is a threat or violence. Then the hotline, then your chain.

Fill in your chain and print it → the Escalation tab in the workbook.

What you need from us. Tell your state conference, National or EP what is missing. That channel runs both ways.

Where to get more

Report a problem → naacp.org/vote

Voter needs help now → 866-OUR-VOTE

Your state table → the shared folder, [Click Here](#)



WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG

One response works for almost everything.

1. HELP THE VOTER

What is happening, and what does this voter need right now?

2. VERIFY

Confirm the facts before you share them. If you cannot confirm it, do not send it. Unfounded rumors can be a form of voter **disenfranchisement**.

3. ACT

Give the voter at least one clear next step, or connect them to someone who can.

4. REPORT

Document it even if you solved it.

Problems reach you through many channels — the hotline, your state table, your local process, monitors, election officials, or voters directly.

Document and report what you learn so patterns can be identified. The Incident Report Form at naacp.org/vote is how National sees patterns across states.

5. ESCALATE

If it cannot be solved locally, move it up to the next level the same day.

Timing changes the answer. During early voting there is usually time to sort something out. On Election Day time is short — get help immediately. If the problem cannot be solved and the voter is eligible for a provisional ballot, make sure they understand that option and anything they must do afterward.

Be a trusted source. Verify first.

Be first when you can. Be correct always.

Before anything goes to voters:

VERIFY → EXPLAIN → ACT





ELECTION PROTECTION TOOLKIT

Clarity starts inside the organization. Units, state conferences, your state table, and National should work from the same verified information before any of it reaches voters. One wrong answer from one member undoes the work.

Correct misinformation without repeating it. State the true thing. When you do not know, say so and find out. Do not feed and amplify misinformation.

Be ready for these problems

The twelve friction points are where voters get stopped. These are the calls you will actually get.

The answer often depends on state law. Do not guess. Help the voter stay in the process, verify the rule, get help, and report the problem.

Told they are not on the list · status shows inactive, suspense or challenged · polling place moved or closed · asked for ID they do not have · offered a provisional ballot and do not know why · needs language help, disability access, or help from a person of their choice · in line when polls close · reports intimidation · law enforcement appears to be present · equipment or pollbooks are down.

If a voter is challenged. Ask for the specific reason · show any required ID · ask for a provisional ballot if it cannot be settled · tell the election official and the NAACP · make sure the voter has the instructions and the deadline.

Mail ballot calls have their own pattern. A ballot that never came, one still sitting at home, a tracker that shows nothing, a signature mismatch, a voter who wants to know if it counted. Sample calls and what to say → the workbook.

WHAT NEVER TO DO

Do not confront anyone · do not film inside a polling place · do not say federal agents are present unless it is confirmed · do not post suspicious behavior to social media, report it · do not publish a date you have not checked and confirmed.

If an emergency disrupts voting

An emergency can hit several friction points at once — polling places close, mail stops, voters are displaced, deadlines get hard to meet.



ELECTION PROTECTION TOOLKIT

A declared emergency does not by itself change any voting rules. What can change, and who decides, is set by your state's law.

Five questions to answer fast:

- Who has the authority here?
- What can legally change?
- What has actually changed?
- What do voters need to do now?
- How will you reach voters during an emergency? Decide this now, not then.

What your state allows → National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Election Emergencies, ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/election-emergencies. Emergency planning fields → the workbook.

Where to get more

Graphics, scripts and sample messages → the 2026 Comms Toolkit, [Click Here](#)

Report a problem → naacp.org/vote

Voter needs help now → 866-OUR-VOTE





COUNT

The weeks after Election Day are the least understood part of the voter journey.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER ELECTION DAY

TRACK

Check whether the ballot was received and accepted.

CURE

Fix a ballot problem before the deadline.

PROVISIONAL

Find out whether the voter must do anything else.

CANVASS

Observe the official review of ballots and records, where permitted.

AUDIT

A check on the count, where required.

RECOUNT

Know your state's trigger and process.

CERTIFY

Track when results become official. Escalate unusual delays.

JANUARY 3

New congressional terms begin.

Election night returns are unofficial results → remaining eligible ballots are processed → cured and provisional ballots are resolved → canvass → audit where required → certification → January 3

A changing total is not, by itself, a sign that something is wrong. Counting, checking, canvassing, audits where required, and certification are normal parts of producing final results.



TRACK

Where your state or county offers it, a voter can confirm their ballot arrived and was accepted. Promote the link.

CURE

How a voter fixes a problem with their ballot so it still counts. Reasons, procedures and deadlines differ by state, and some states have no cure at all.

A voter was told there is a problem with their ballot. Get the cure information available from your election office. Contact voters where permitted. Tell them what to do and by when. Follow up before the deadline.

PROVISIONAL BALLOT

A ballot used when a voter's eligibility cannot be settled at the polls. Election officials determine whether it can be counted. **Find out whether the voter must take any additional action and the deadline for doing so.**

CANVASS

The official process where election officials check and confirm election data so every valid ballot is reflected in the results.

Who watches the canvass? Monitors watch and write down what they see. Advocates raise issues in real time and report to the command center, where the state allows it.

What monitors and advocates may do, and whether they may attend at all, varies by state. Use your state's guidance and training.

AUDIT

A check on the count, where state law requires one.

RECOUNT

Some states order a recount automatically when a race is close enough. Others require someone to request one. **Understand how your state handles recounts and know the margin required to trigger an automatic recount.** A recount can be a normal part of resolving a close election.

Your state's rules → NCSL Election Recounts, ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/election-recounts



CERTIFY

When the responsible election officials formally attest to the official results. Who certifies and when varies by state, and sometimes by contest.

If certification is delayed or refused, tell the National EP Team the same day. Do not try to fix it locally.

JANUARY 3

The new term for Congress — both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives — begins January 3.

This toolkit runs through January 3, when the new congressional term begins. Some recounts, contests, litigation, or other election proceedings may continue beyond that date.

WHAT TO DO NOW

Recruit canvass observers early. Put your canvass and certification dates in the workbook. Confirm any mail ballot and provisional cure deadlines that apply in your state.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Success is not how many activities your unit runs. Success is whether voters get the information and help they need to keep moving through the voter journey and have their eligible ballots counted.

BEFORE YOU CLOSE THIS TOOLKIT

Do these in the next week.

- ☐ Fill in your six dates
- ☐ Name your Election Protection lead and a backup
- ☐ Find your state Election Protection table and your election office contact
- ☐ Identify the friction points most likely to stop voters in your community
- ☐ Choose what your community needs most, and put an owner's name on each one
- ☐ Put the work, the owners and the dates in the workbook

Where to get more

Your canvass and certification dates → your county or state election office

How counting and certification work → the Election Assistance Commission

Certification delayed → National EP Team, same day



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

ICE Agents at the Polls

18 U.S.C. § 592 provides:

Whoever, being an officer of the Army or Navy, or other person in the civil, military, or naval service of the United States, orders, brings, keeps, or has under his authority or control any troops or armed men at any place where a general or special election is held, unless such force be necessary to repel armed enemies of the United States, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than five years, or both; and be disqualified from holding any office of honor, profit, or trust under the United States.

It is illegal for armed federal agents to be at a polling place unless such force is necessary to repel armed enemies of the United States.

If you see ICE agents at or near a polling place, please call 866-OUR-VOTE as soon as possible and complete the NAACP Voter Incident Form. Please contact your NAACP Office of General Counsel (OGC) State Contact. If local election officials are unable to address the situation, legal action may be necessary.

DOJ Monitors at the Polls

As stated on the Brennan Center's website, "the DOJ has no authority to permit monitors to interfere with a voter's ability to enter a polling place, order election judges to take any action, or interfere with the operations, administration, management, or activities of a polling place. Local officials have enforced these limitations." Furthermore, "monitors can be removed from election sites for violations of state and federal election laws, including federal laws prohibiting the intimidation of voters or election workers or interference in elections." Andrew Garber and Sara Steele, Roles and Rules for the Federal Election Monitor Programs, Brennan Center for Justice, September 15, 2026, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/roles-and-rules-federal-election-monitor-programs>

If you see DOJ monitors engaging in any of said conduct, please call 866-OUR-VOTE as soon as possible and complete the NAACP Voter Incident Form. Please contact your NAACP OGC State Contact immediately. If local election officials are unable to address the situation, legal action may be necessary.



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Voter Intimidation

Section 11(b) of the Voting Rights Act prohibits actual or attempted “intimidation”, “threats”, or “coercion” against a person “for voting or attempting to vote” or “for urging or aiding any person to vote or attempt to vote.” Federal Laws Protecting Against Intimidation and Election Interference, Brennan Center for Justice, July 23, 2026, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/federal-laws-protecting-against-intimidation-voters-and-election-workers>

If you witness, experience, or receive a report of any voter intimidation, please call 866-OUR-VOTE as soon as possible, complete the NAACP Voter Incident Form, and contact your NAACP OGC State Contact immediately.

NATIONAL VOTER PROTECTION TRAININGS

Dates tentative. Confirm in the shared folder.

September 30 — Regions 5 and 6

October 7 — Regions 1, 2 and 7

October 22 — National, open to everyone





FIND WHAT YOU NEED

This page is updated in the Election Protection folder. [Click Here](#) for the current version.

You need	Go to
A voter needs help right now	866-OUR-VOTE · 888-VE-Y-VOTA · 888-API-VOTE · 844-YALLA-US
Report a problem	naacp.org/vote, then click Voter Incident · or text POLLS to 20707
Reach National EP	voterprotection@naacpnet.org
Your state's dates and rules	Your Secretary of State or Board of Elections · 866ourvote.org
Your state EP table	The shared folder
Anything current	The shared folder — maintained by the National EP Team
Graphics, scripts, sample messages	The 2026 Comms Toolkit
How counting and certification work	Election Assistance Commission · eac.gov/election-officials/election-results-canvass-and-certification
Build your plan	The workbook
Poll monitor training	Your state EP table, or run it yourself
Volunteer recruitment	protectthevote.net/?source=NAACP
What your state allows in an emergency	NCSL Election Emergencies · ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/election-emergencies
Recount rules in your state	NCSL Election Recounts · ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/election-recounts
Election bills moving in your state	NCSL State Elections Legislation Database, 2025 · ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/state-election-legislation-database
What became law recently	NCSL Election Enactments, 2025 · ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/election-related-enactments
Legal questions	Office of General Counsel