No state in the U.S. requires voters to have a physical home address in order to cast a ballot on Election Day. But nationally, people struggling with homelessness are extremely underrepresented when it comes to the ballot box. Often, people without a permanent home might be unaware of their voter eligibility, unfamiliar with ballot issues and unclear about election requirements. Others may be interested in sharing their voice through the ballot box but may not have the transportation means to do so.

Local ministries and advocacy groups can play a monumental role in ensuring inclusive access for all people interested in civic engagement and guaranteeing that no voice is lost in our democratic process. Churches engaged in the margins and faith activists are often the best positioned, and sometimes only, means to expand voter outreach to people struggling with homelessness. Here are some helpful tips for congregations interested in expanding the vote for people struggling with housing security in our communities.

“Where God’s love for people who are homeless is heard and lived, hope is engendered that breaks the downward spiral of life. We walk with people who are homeless when they are empowered to defend their own rights. Is this a ministry which your congregation can and should offer?” (ELCA 1990 social message, “Homelessness: A Renewal of Commitment”).

**Expand Voter Registration**

- Recruit a team or volunteer coordinator to organize a church voter registration campaign. Important duties often include researching local voter requirements, knowing registration deadlines, acquiring registration materials from a local board of elections and organizing congregation outreach. Read and share the [ELCA Civic Participation Guide](http://elca.org/votes) for more details on organizing a voting registration drive, including important church IRS guidelines for nonpartisan electoral activity, at [elca.org/votes](http://elca.org/votes).

- Learn your state’s procedure for address designation. When registering a person to vote, an address is needed primarily for assigning people to precincts and mailing election information. On most registration forms, many state laws allow a shelter address or a description of a location where an individual usually spends the night. Some states even allow a drawn map to be recorded as an address. Every state has a different procedure, which can often be found at your local election bureau.

- Request a vote-by-mail ballot or access alternatives if a person moves between registration and Election Day. They may still vote by...
> Some formerly incarcerated individuals struggling with homelessness believe they are unable to vote if they have been convicted of a crime. However, many states actually allow convicted felons to vote after prison release, parole or probation. Check out resources from the Sentencing Project and your local board of elections to learn more.

> Many people might believe they are registered to vote, but they may have been taken off the voter rolls due to out-of-date registration information. When registering people to vote, be sure to ask if they have updated their registration since the last time they have moved.