

VOTING IS PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDE



ASPPH ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOLS & PROGRAMS
OF PUBLIC HEALTH



Voting leads to better health policies, positively impacting individual and community well-being.

As a leading advocate for voter participation within the public health community and beyond, and a proud participant in Healthy Democracy, Healthy People's (HDHP) [Thrive Through Civic Health: We Will Vote Initiative](#), ASPPH's "Voting is Public Health" campaign aims to increase awareness of the link between voting and health outcomes across the general public while also encouraging civic engagement, particularly within the public health field.



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Understanding the Critical Relationship Between Voting and Health Outcomes

The relationship between voting and health outcomes is multifaceted, underscoring the significant impact that civic engagement can have on public well-being. Voting shapes public health policies that affect various critical areas, including healthcare access, reproductive rights, mental health services, climate change, gun violence, and **LGBTQ rights**. Research shows that restrictive voting laws can lead to higher **COVID-19 infection and mortality rates**, highlighting the direct health impacts of disenfranchisement.

Moreover, voting is crucial for influencing policies that address **social determinants of health**, such as employment, income, housing, education, environmental quality, and food security. For instance, policies promoting affordable housing can reduce homelessness and associated health issues, while education policies that improve school funding can lead to better health education and outcomes for children.

The influence of voting extends to health equity as well. Healthy democracies create conditions that can reduce health disparities, thereby enhancing overall societal well-being. Policies aimed at reducing health disparities often emerge from the electoral process, driven by the participation of voters who advocate for equity and justice. By voting, citizens can support leaders and initiatives that aim to eliminate systemic barriers to health and well-being.

Voting also impacts the allocation of resources for public health initiatives, disease prevention programs, and emergency response efforts.

For example, elected officials play a significant role in determining the funding and support for public health infrastructure, which is critical for managing health crises like pandemics. The act of voting empowers communities to hold elected officials accountable for their actions and policies. This accountability is crucial for ensuring that public health priorities are addressed and that resources are allocated equitably. Voting also promotes civic engagement and social cohesion, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility, yielding indirect health benefits. **Civic engagement, including voting, has been associated with improved health outcomes**, as it fosters a sense of agency and belonging. Engaged communities are often more resilient and better equipped to address public health challenges collectively.

Ultimately, voting transcends mere political expression; it is a vital tool for fostering a healthier, more equitable society. By participating in elections, citizens help shape policies that directly impact their communities' health and well-being, demonstrating that civic engagement is a cornerstone of public health advocacy. Voting empowers individuals to influence decisions that create healthier environments and reinforces the integral connection between a vibrant democracy and the well-being of its people.



The Role of Public Health Professionals and Voting

The public health workforce in the United States is substantial, encompassing a wide range of professionals dedicated to improving health outcomes. Estimates suggest there are approximately **22 million healthcare workers in the US**, which includes public health professionals such as epidemiologists, health educators and community healthcare workers. This workforce, **comprising about 14% of all US workers**, has the potential to leverage its collective influence to foster a more inclusive and representative democracy, thereby strengthening public health and enhancing the overall well-being of the population.

By recognizing and acting upon the critical connection between voting and health, public health professionals, in particular, can lead the charge in promoting civic engagement and advocating for policies that support healthy communities. The public health sector's collective voice is powerful and necessary for building a healthier, more equitable society. It is critical for the academic public health community to collectively harness this power to ensure that every vote contributes to the well-being of our communities and the future of public health.

ASPPH members and others working in public health have a timely opportunity to spread awareness of the link between voting and health outcomes and encourage civic engagement within their respective public health school, program, and/or network of faculty, students, staff, and coworkers.



Actions Organizations Can Take

ASPPH encourages our members—and all entities—to become voter-friendly organizations by fostering environments that actively encourage and facilitate voter participation among employees, students, and community members. Key strategies to pursue include:



Voter Registration Drives

Partner with organizations like the [Independent Sector](#) and [Nonprofit VOTE](#) to conduct voter registration campaigns, especially in communities served by nonprofits. For ASPPH members, we provide “Voting is Public Health” stickers and buttons that can be [ordered here](#).



Campus-Wide Initiatives

Work with your university to coordinate efforts to enhance voter registration and voter turnout.

Develop programs that educate individuals on the importance of voting, the voting process, and current political issues. Institutions like [AASCU's American Democracy Project](#) support campuses in preparing students for active participation in democracy.



Voter-Friendly Designation

Universities can achieve recognition as a [Voter Friendly Campus](#) through partnerships with NASPA and the Fair Elections Center. This designation highlights an organization's commitment to promoting voter engagement and education.



Establish “Time Off to Vote” Policies

Provide employees with the time and flexibility to vote by establishing and promoting organizational Time Off to Vote policies. Please see Nonprofit Vote's [Sample Staff Policies for Time Off to Vote](#) as a model.



Promote serving as poll workers or poll observers

Signing up as poll workers throughout the year ensures local elections have enough capacity to operate smoothly. See [Power the Polls' Poll Worker Sign-up](#) and [Protect the Vote](#).



Encourage Voting

An email from leadership can encourage staff to vote. If you are a nonprofit organization, use the [Get Out the Vote Email Templates](#) from Nonprofit Votes.



These efforts ensure that organizations contribute to a healthy democracy by empowering individuals to participate in the electoral process.

We strongly encourage ASPPH member institutions and those working in public health to develop a strategy for encouraging their communities to vote. The tools provided here are designed to facilitate the development of these strategies. The stakes in any presidential election are immense, with the outcome significantly affecting the nation's public health, academic research, and overall well-being. Given these profound implications, it is imperative that the public health sector actively empowers their communities and the general public to vote. ASPPH stands ready to assist our members in this critical effort.

Key Voting Dates for the 2024 Election Season

- National Voter Registration Day: September 17
- National Voter Education Week: October 7 through 11
- National Vote Early Day: October 29
- Election Day: November 5





The Impact of Misinformation and Disinformation on Voting

Misinformation and disinformation, especially those resulting from the use of AI, pose significant risks during election cycles due to their potential to undermine democratic processes and erode public trust—but there are ways to combat them.

Some key concerns about misinformation and disinformation include:

1

Eroding Trust in Elections: Misinformation can lead to diminished trust among the public in the legitimacy of electoral outcomes. This [erosion of trust](#) is often exploited to justify stringent anti-voter laws that could suppress voter turnout.

2

Amplifying False Claims: Disinformation campaigns, like those reinforced by high-profile figures, can amplify misleading claims about election integrity, causing lasting damage to [public confidence](#) in the democratic process.

3

Impacting Voter Perception and Behavior: [Pervasive misinformation](#) can affect how citizens perceive their democratic system and their own influence within it, reducing overall satisfaction with democracy and potentially discouraging electoral participation.

4

Threats to Information Integrity: [Misinformation](#) represents one of the major threats to the integrity of elections, influencing voters under false pretenses and manipulating public opinion.

5

Implications for Public Health: The rise of [misinformation in public health](#) can negatively impact voters. For example, the endorsement of candidates who contribute to the spread of misinformation can amplify the dismissal of public health measures, such as vaccine refusal and the use of unproven treatments.

These factors combined threaten the very foundation of democratic engagement and the fair conduct of elections.

Understanding Misinformation

According to [PRSA's Tackling Misinformation Guide](#), to address the issue of misinformation in this election cycle, it is critical to understand both its forms and the measures needed to spot and combat it effectively.

Misinformation in elections can take various forms

- **Misinformation:** Incorrect or misleading information shared without harmful intent.
- **Disinformation:** Deliberately false information spread with the intent to deceive.
- **Malinformation:** Correct information used out of context to harm someone.

Combating Misinformation

- **Educational Initiatives:** Programs like those from the [News Literacy Project](#) provide tools to discern fact from fiction.
- **Prebunking Techniques:** These involve exposing audiences to weakened versions of misinformation to build cognitive resilience.
- **Fact-Checking Services:** Utilize the Fact Checkers noted to the right to verify facts. Encourage critical consumption of media, emphasizing how to evaluate sources and recognize biases.

How to Spot Misinformation

- **Check the Source:** Verify the credibility of the information source.
- **Cross-Verify Facts:** Look for the same news reported on multiple reputable platforms.
- **Examine the Evidence:** Be skeptical of claims that lack verifiable evidence or rely on unnamed experts.
- **Be Wary of Emotional Content:** Misinformation often exploits emotions to persuade people quickly.

Tools and Resources (as noted in [PRSA's Tackling Misinformation Guide](#))

Utilize AI and digital tools to detect deepfakes and AI-generated misinformation such as:

- **Fact Checkers**
 - [PolitiFact](#)
 - [FactCheck.org](#)
 - Washington Post's [Fact Checker](#)
 - [USA Today's Fact Check](#)
 - [Opensecrets.org](#)
 - [ProCon.org](#)
 - [Snopes.com](#)
- **Five Steps for Vetting a News Source:** An [infographic](#) from the News Literacy Project with simple tips for assessing legitimate news and information.
- **In Brief: Misinformation:** An [infographic](#) from the News Literacy Project that distinguishes between misinformation and disinformation and provides tactics for assessing content's veracity.
- **Breaking News Checklist:** An [infographic](#) from the News Literacy Project offers six tips for vetting breaking news.
- **Reverse Image Search:** Use tools like [Google Reverse Image Search](#) to verify the authenticity of images by checking their origins and where they have been previously published.

Through these strategies, we can enhance our collective ability to identify, debunk, and advocate against the spread of misinformation, fostering a more informed and engaged public that is better informed about who and what they are voting for.

Information on Voter Suppression



Voter suppression refers to various tactics used to reduce or discourage voting among demographics. Voting is a fundamental civil right that should not be restricted by race or location. Although the *Voting Rights Act of 1965* prohibits racially discriminatory voting practices, Black people and other communities of color still face **significant barriers**. Equal access to voting is crucial for systemic equality because fair representation is the foundation of American democracy. Every citizen must have equal ability to elect representatives who advocate for their concerns.

Efforts to counteract voter suppression include advocating for more accessible voting laws, educating the public about their voting rights, and supporting legislation that protects and expands voting access.

Key Issues Include:

- **Voter ID Laws:** These laws require voters to present specific types of identification, which can disproportionately affect minorities, the elderly, and low-income voters who may have more difficulty obtaining such IDs.
- **Purging of Voter Rolls:** This involves removing voters from registration lists, often without sufficient notice, which can result in eligible voters being unable to cast their ballots.
- **Limited Polling Locations:** Reducing the number of polling places in certain areas, particularly minority and low-income communities, leads to longer lines and wait times, discouraging people from voting.
- **Restrictions on Early Voting:** Limiting early voting days and hours can make it harder for people with inflexible work schedules to vote.
- **Mail-In Voting Restrictions:** Some states impose strict requirements on mail-in voting, including deadlines and signature matching, which can lead to the rejection of valid ballots.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Healthy Democracy, Healthy People's Storytelling Toolkit: Share your story about why democracy matters to you and the health of your community.

Organizational Commitment to Healthy Democracy, Healthy People's We Will Vote: Become an Organizational Champion by signing the commitment.

Individual Pledge to Vote from Healthy Democracy Healthy People's We Will Vote: Become an Individual Champion by signing the pledge.

Organizing for Power Toolkit: Connect with colleagues about nonpartisan voter education and registration efforts.



RESOURCES ON VOTING AND HEALTH OUTCOMES

The Health & Democracy Index: Illustrates the relationship between health outcomes and voting policies.

Healthy People 2030: Identifies public health priorities, including **increasing the proportion of voting-age citizens who vote.**

2023 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Report: Provides data and guidance to support community efforts to improve health equity and civic health. The 2023 report focuses on the connection between thriving people and places and civic health, which reflects people's opportunities to participate in their communities.

America's Health Rankings – Voter Participation Measure: Explores national and state-level data on voter participation and its connection to health and socio-economic factors.



VOTING RESOURCES



Vote411: Sponsored by the League of Women Voters, this national, nonpartisan voter guide includes information on how to [register to vote](#), [check your voter registration](#), and [find what's on your ballot](#) including who and what you are voting for.

Guidance on Voter Registration in Health Settings: Provides practical steps for integrating voter registration into healthcare settings.

Promoting Voter Registration in Healthcare Settings from Civic Health Alliance: Offers strategies and resources to encourage voter registration within healthcare facilities.

Conversation Starters from Vot-ER: Tools to help healthcare professionals engage patients in conversations about voting.

HRSA guidance on voter registration in Federally Qualified Healthcare Centers (FQHCs): Official guidance from the Health Resources and Services Administration on facilitating voter registration at Federally Qualified Health Centers.

Planning and Running your State and Volunteer Voter Registration Activity from Nonprofit Vote: Comprehensive resources for organizing and executing voter registration drives.



SAMPLE EMAIL/NEWSLETTER COPY

Promote “Voting is Public Health” Campaign

Subject Line: Join ASPPH’s “Voting is Public Health” Campaign for a Healthier Community

We [or insert name of organization] are proud to be part of ASPPH’s “Voting is Public Health” campaign—an exciting initiative that highlights the crucial intersection between civic engagement and public health. The campaign is designed to raise awareness about how voting can significantly impact health outcomes and to encourage active participation in the electoral process.

Research has shown that voting shapes public health policies that affect critical areas such as healthcare access, mental health services, climate change, and more. For instance, restrictive voting laws have been linked to higher [COVID-19 infection and mortality rates](#), underscoring the direct health impacts of disenfranchisement.

Access ASPPH’s [comprehensive guide](#) which is designed to promote voting as a public health priority. Sections in the guide include:

- Understanding the Critical Relationship Between Voting and Health Outcomes
- The Role of Public Health Professionals and Voting
- Actions Organizations Can Take to Become Voter-Friendly
- Key Voting Dates
- The Impact of Misinformation and Disinformation on Voting
- Information on Voter Suppression
- Voting Resources and Resources on Voting and Health Outcomes

Together, let's build a healthier, more equitable society through active civic engagement. Every vote counts in shaping a better future for public health.

For more information and resources, please visit [our website](#).



SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST

Promote “Voting is Public Health” Campaign

The relationship between voting and health outcomes is multifaceted, underscoring the significant impact that civic engagement can have on public well-being. Voting shapes public health policies that affect various critical areas, including healthcare access, reproductive rights, mental health services, climate change, gun violence, and LGBTQ rights.

If you are a public health professional seeking ways to encourage your communities to vote, check out ASPPH’s “Voting is Public Health” Guide! This resource provides a variety of tools for you to use based on a variety of different strategies.

Share this post to help spread the word on how to contribute to better health policies and positively impact individual and community well-being!

For more information and resources, please visit [our website](#).

#votingispublichealth #thisispublichealth



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