



## *Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland*

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# Voter Engagement

### **Why should UU congregations participate in voter engagement activities?**

Voter engagement work helps us put our principles into action. As Unitarian Universalists, we affirm and promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and society at large. One of the most fundamental elements of the democratic process is ensuring that all eligible voters register and then vote!

Moreover, congregations have found that this work is inspiring and gratifying. It motivates members and friends to get involved, and at the same time raises the congregation's profile in the community. It is a central focus of both the UUA and the UU Service Committee this fall.

### **How can UU congregations get involved?**

Individuals or congregations may participate in nonpartisan voter registration, voter education, get out the vote, poll assistance and monitoring, forums and debates, and voter rights efforts. UUs may also want to educate presidential, congressional, and other candidates about issues of importance to them.

Make sure you have 100% voter registration in your congregation! Voter registration forms are available from the state and local boards of elections (see the state link below to download forms).

Then, you will be ready to reach out to your larger community. Voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives are great service project opportunities for small group ministry, youth groups, and even clusters of congregations. For an even greater impact, link your voter engagement work to your congregation's ongoing social justice work. To register others to vote, you should attend a short training session through the state or local board of elections.

In Maryland, your registration must be postmarked by October 14 to vote in the general election on Nov. 4, 2008.

### **Will voter engagement activities endanger the congregation's tax status?**

**NO.** Churches and 501(c)3 organizations may participate in voter education and registration activities, as well as get-out-the-vote drives, as long as they are conducted in a *nonpartisan* manner. (Check UUA Real Rules and the Alliance for Justice sites below for more specific information.)

### **Who should I contact for more information?**

MD State Board of Elections:	<a href="http://elections.state.md.us">http://elections.state.md.us</a>	(download registration forms, find out about training for volunteers, find your local election board, and check your registration & voting location)
Project Vote Smart:	<a href="http://www.votesmart.org">http://www.votesmart.org</a>	(nonpartisan background on candidates and voting)
Faithful Democracy:	<a href="http://www.faithfuldemocracy.org">http://www.faithfuldemocracy.org</a>	(interfaith advocacy that includes the UUA)
UUA Real Rules:	<a href="http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/realrules/index.shtml">http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/realrules/index.shtml</a>	(elections & advocacy)
Alliance for Justice:	<a href="http://www.afj.org">www.afj.org</a>	(legal issues regarding advocacy and lobbying)
League of Women Voters:	<a href="http://www.lwvmd.org">http://www.lwvmd.org</a>	(general resource)