

Nebraska Public Libraries and Civic Engagement Outreach



A Guide
Created by Fiona Bryant

With Civic Nebraska, League of Women Voters of Nebraska, and
Omaha Public Library



Omaha
Public
Library

A Note

Thank you for using this resource to improve civic engagement outreach at your library! This guide was created as part of my Girl Scout Gold Award service project with the goal of encouraging voter information and other civic opportunities at more Nebraska public libraries. I hope to make public libraries' civic outreach easier to achieve and more collaborative with community organizations.

My work began with creating voting resources for the Omaha Public Library during the 2024 election. I created social media [posts](#), wrote a [blog post](#), compiled book lists, conducted surveys, and distributed FAQs to support library staff. This resource provides the information and guidance to promote civic engagement through these measures and others.

The American Library Association and other national groups have some [resources](#) for promoting voting and other civic opportunities through the public library. Yet, there is a lack of information specific to Nebraska libraries and the state's political processes. This guide provides a [timeline](#) for executing civic outreach, [background information](#) about political processes in Nebraska, suggested [programming](#), and Nebraska [civic groups](#) to collaborate with.

Public libraries have a mission to form an informed and involved public. Equipping patrons to not just vote, but vote knowledgeably, and to not just be part of the community, but to engage with community decision-making, is invariably a role of the public library. And as Nebraskans face increased barriers to the booths from voter ID laws, as voter suppression persists nationwide, this work is needed more than ever.

Thank you for joining me in this mission,
Fiona Bryant
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Overview



Suggested Timeline

Month	Political Events	Suggested Action
January	Legislative session begins	(see December)
February	-	(see December)
March	<p>For city primaries:</p> <p>Last day to register to vote online*</p> <p>Last day to request mail-in ballot*</p> <p>Last day to register to vote at County Commission Office*</p>	<p><u>Prepare for city elections:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise that elections are happening • Advertise that patrons can register to vote/receive guidance at library • Hear from a civic group or candidate <p><u>Prepare for general primaries:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise that primaries are happening • Advertise that patrons can register to vote/receive guidance at library • Hear from a civic group or candidate

Month	Political Events	Suggested Action
April	Omaha primaries**, Lincoln primaries*** For general primaries: Last day to register to vote online* Last day to request mail-in ballot* Last day to register to vote at County Commission Office*	(see March)
May	Omaha general**, Lincoln general*** General primaries*	(see March)
June	-	Prepare for voter registration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise voter registration and guidance available at library (social media, signs) • Hear from a civic group • Partner with National Voter Registration Day by August • Create civic engagement programs
July	-	(see June)
August	Deadline to register as a partner of National Voter Registration Day	(see June)

Month	Political Events	Suggested Action
September	National Voter Registration Day	(see June)
October	For November election: Last day to register to vote online* Last day to request mail-in ballot* Last day to register to vote at County Commission Office*	(see June)
November	Election Day General (every 4 years) Midterms (2 years after each General Election)	<u>Prepare for General Election:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote resources for informed voting (book lists, signs, voter ID information) Hold programs for election readiness, hear from a civic group
December	-	<u>Prepare for the Legislative Session:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate patrons about legislative process, importance Host a state senator Contact your senator workshop

*during Midterm and General Election years

**Omaha general elections occur every 4 years, the spring after the General Election (2025, 2029, 2033, 2037)

***Lincoln general elections occur every 4 years, the spring before the General Election (2023, 2027, 2031, 2035)

Important Dates

General/Midterm Elections:

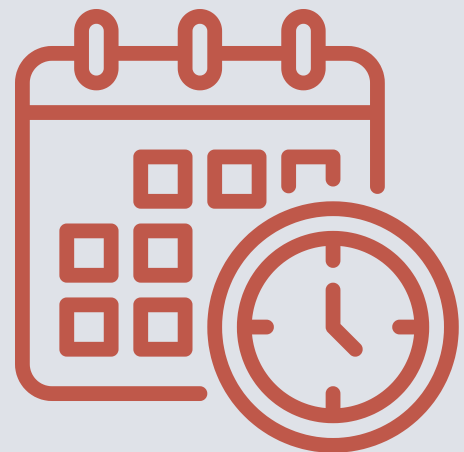
- General Elections every 4 years (2028, 2032, 2036, 2040)
- Midterm Elections every 4 years, halfway between each General Election (2026, 2030, 2034, 2038, 2042)
- **3rd Friday before the election** - Last day to register to vote at the library, Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Health and Human Services, or online
- **2nd Friday before the election at 6 PM** - Last day to register to vote at the County Commission Office
- **2nd Friday before the election** - Last day for an early/mail-in voting application to be received
- **First Tuesday in November** - Election day, polls open 8 AM to 8 PM CST, 7 AM to 7 PM MST

Primary Elections:

- **3rd Friday before the election** - Last day to register to vote at the library, Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Health and Human Services, or online
- **2nd Friday before the election at 6 PM** - Last day to register to vote at the County Commission Office
- **2nd Friday before the election** - Last day for an early/mail-in voting application to be received
- **Second Tuesday in May** - Primaries, polls open 8 AM to 8 PM CST, 7 AM to 7 PM MST

Nebraska State Legislature:

- Begins the first Wednesday of January every year
- Odd years - 90 days in a session
- Even years - 60 days in a session
- Special sessions can also be called by the governor
- nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/calendar.php?



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the new voter ID law? What are the eligible IDs?

A: The new voter ID law requires voters to bring an eligible state ID with them to the polls in order to vote. Mail-in/early voters also need an ID when applying to vote by mail-in ballot.

Acceptable IDs include:

- Nebraska driver's license
- Nebraska state ID
- Local Nebraska government (public school, city, county) ID
- Military ID
- US passport
- Nebraska college ID
- Tribal ID
- Patient records from nursing homes, assisted living, or hospitals

To help a patron get a free state ID or claim exemption from the requirement, visit [here](#).

Q: How do I know a patron is eligible to (register to) vote?

A: To be eligible to vote, the patron must be 18 years old (or will be by Election Day); a US citizen; if a felon, have served their whole sentence; not legally declared mentally incompetent.

Q: How do I help a patron register to vote?

A: On or before the 3rd-to-last Friday before Election Day, help the patron by directing them to the online voter registration application [here](#). Or, give them a physical voter registration form with instructions [here](#). Otherwise, they can also go to the [County Commission Office](#) on or before the second-to-last Friday before Election Day.

Q: How can I help a patron find their polling location?

A: Ask for the patron's address. Go to the [Nebraska Voter Information Lookup](#) and enter their address. This website can also be used to check if a patron is already registered, the address they are registered under, and their political party.

Q: How can I get a patron set up with early/mail-in voting?

A: Direct the patron to the application for receiving a mail-in ballot [here](#). It is also available in [Spanish](#). A state ID is required to fill the application out. The patron will be sent their mail-in ballot and will need to return it to a drop box before Election Day. Drop box locations can be found [here](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do I provide information about the referendums and initiatives on the ballot?

A: Initiatives and referendums are proposed changes to Nebraska law that thousands of Nebraskans have signed a petition to get on the ballot. Librarians cannot explain the initiatives and referendums themselves, but patrons can be directed to nonpartisan resources. [The League of Women Voters guide](#) explains what each question is asking. The Nebraska Examiner also has great [guides](#).

Q: Where can I find information about election/political issues for a patron?

A: Many libraries already have resources such as newspaper subscriptions, book lists, or databases that can be used to find information about political issues. [Consider getting League of Women Voter guides for your library too.](#) [Ballotpedia](#) is another great nonpartisan, online resource.

Q: Where can I find information about a candidate for a patron?

A: The Nebraska Examiner has great [voter guides](#) for finding Nebraska candidates and their websites. Other local newspapers will also interview candidates before the elections. [VOTE411.org](#) and the [The League of Women Voters guides](#) include interviews from local and state candidates.

Q: Why is it important to vote and be civically engaged?

A: Voting and participating in the political process is important to having your voice heard! Political decisions made nationally, at the State Capitol in Lincoln, and in the local community impact patrons and libraries. [Remind the patron that their vote can impact libraries' funding and the laws they are subject to \(book bans for example\).](#)



Background Civic Engagement Information



Voting Basics

Requirements to Register to Vote:

- 18 years old by Election Day
- Be a US citizen
- Have completed all terms of a felony, if convicted
- Not be declared mentally incompetent

Registering to Vote:

Voter registration can be completed [online](#) or by filling out a form in-person. Registering to vote can be completed at the following locations:

- County Commission Office (find [here](#))
- Department of Motor Vehicles (when getting a driver's license)
- Department of Health and Human Services
- State Department of Education
- Library branches (if the library has the registration form)

The registration [form](#) can also be downloaded, printed, and mailed to one's County Commission Office by the 3rd to last Friday before the election. It is also available in [Spanish](#).

When registering online, a driver's license or state ID is required. When registering using the in-person form, a driver's license or Social Security number is required. When registering at the County Commission Office, identification is not required. For the other methods, the individual can register to vote while already there to get a driver's license (DMV) or apply for a public program (DHHS, Department of Education). The voter will be notified when their voter registration is completed.

After someone is registered to vote, they should find and vote at their specific [polling location](#) or complete a [mail-in ballot](#) by the specified time to have their vote counted. You can also vote early in-person at the County Commission Office. Bring a state ID, as required by the [voter ID law](#).

Voting Basics

Checking or Updating Voting Information:

When someone changes their name, address, or political party affiliation, they must update their voter registration. They should use any of the previous methods to re-register to vote. Voter registration information can be checked through the [Nebraska Voter Information Lookup](#).

Registering to Vote While Experiencing Homelessness:

A patron without a permanent address can use a shelter address or the address of the County Commission Office to vote.



How to Fill Out a Voter Registration Form

Librarians cannot tell patrons how to fill out a voter registration form; however, forms can be provided and mailed by the library.

1. Fill in the boxes with the correct answers.
2. Check all boxes that apply. This form can be used for registering or updating voter information.
3. Write your name.
4. This is where you need a driver's license or Social Security number. Fill in the boxes accordingly.
5. Fill in the address you live at (or a shelter or County Commission Office if experiencing homelessness).
6. Fill in an address you can receive mail at; this may be the same as an address you live at.
7. Include contact information if wanted.
8. If previously registered with a different name or address, include that here.
9. Choose a political party (nonpartisan is an option). This allows you to participate in primaries.
10. Sign, and if someone helped you, have them sign too.

Nebraska Secretary of State's Official Voter Registration Application	
Register to Vote OR Update Your Voter Registration	
Eligibility	Are you a citizen of the United States of America? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
1	Are you at least eighteen years of age or will you be eighteen years of age on or before the first Tuesday following the first Monday of November of this year? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2	<input type="checkbox"/> New Registration <input type="checkbox"/> Name Change <input type="checkbox"/> Address Change <input type="checkbox"/> Party Change
3	Print Your Name Last _____ First _____ Middle (name or initial) _____ Suffix (jr, III, if any) _____
4	Identification Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) _____ Nebraska Driver's License/State ID Number _____ Last 4 digits of Social Security Number (SSN) _____ Place of Birth (City and State or Country) _____ Maiden Name (if applicable) _____
5	Address Where You Live <i>Residential Only</i> Street Address _____ Apartment or Lot (if any) _____ City, State, ZIP _____
6	Address Where You Receive Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Same as above OR Mailing Address _____ Apartment or Lot (if any) _____ City, State, ZIP _____
7	Optional Contact Information <i>Check boxes if private.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Phone Number(s) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Email Address _____
8	Previous Registration Information Previous Name _____ Previous Address _____
9	Political Party <i>Must choose one.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Democratic <input type="checkbox"/> Republican <input type="checkbox"/> Libertarian <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Marijuana NOW <input type="checkbox"/> Nonpartisan (No Party) <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <small>(Print party name. Must be a party currently recognized in Nebraska.)</small>
Applicant's Oath To the best of my knowledge and belief, I declare under penalty of election falsification that: (1) I live in the State of Nebraska at the address provided in this application; (2) I have not been convicted of a felony or, if convicted, I have completed my sentence for the felony, including any parole term; (3) I have not been officially found to be non compos mentis (mentally incompetent); and (4) I am a citizen of the United States.	
WARNING: Any registrant who signs this application knowing that any of the information in the application is false shall be guilty of a Class IV felony under section 32-1502 of the statutes of Nebraska. The penalty for a Class IV felony is up to two years imprisonment and twelve months post-release supervision, a fine of up to \$10,000.00, or both.	
10	Your Signature or Mark X _____ Date _____
Assistance <small>Fill in if someone helped you with this form or witnessed you make a mark for your signature.</small>	Name _____ Address _____ Phone _____ Signature of Assistant x _____
Application Code: 01224	Registration taken by: _____ <small>(Name of election official or Deputy Registrar)</small>
Date application received in election office: _____	

After filling out a physical form, instruct the patron to send or return it to the [County Commission Office](#). Or, your library may be able to send it to the County Commission Office for the patron.

Practice Opportunities:

1. Pretend to fill out a form with your information. What information did you have to look up? What wording was hard to understand? How could you make that easier for patrons to understand?
2. Find a colleague and pretend to help them fill the registration form out. Which sections were hard to assist with? What questions did your colleague have? What do you have to learn to best help patrons?

Finding a Polling Location

To vote in-person, the voter must report to their assigned polling location, found [here](#). Polling locations are determined by address as each polling location's ballots cover specific district elections.

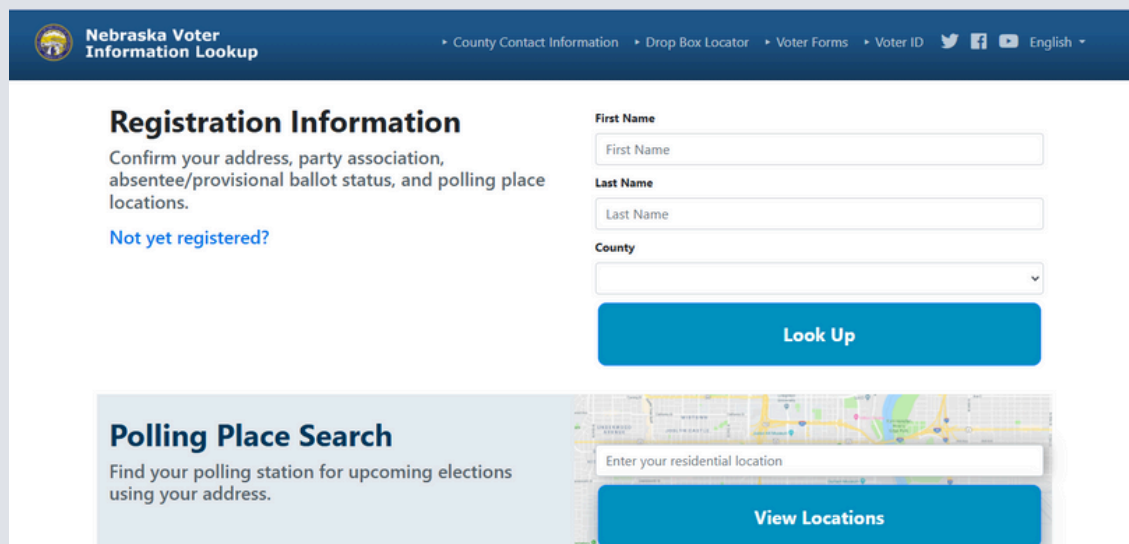
11 Nebraska counties have all-mail elections, where ballots are mailed in (instead of voters going to the polls). These counties are Boone, Cedar, Cherry, Clay, Dawes, Dixon, Garden, Knox, Merrick, Morrill, and Stanton.

At a polling location, voters need a [state ID](#). Additionally, they may be accompanied by others (children, caretaker, someone providing assistance). They may bring nonpartisan materials (such as [League of Women Voters guides](#)) into the polling location.

Mail-in Voting

To vote by mail, fill out an [early voting ballot application](#). [Forms in Spanish](#) are also available. A state ID is required when filling out the form. The deadline to submit this application is the 3rd-to-last Friday before the election. The form can be emailed to the [County Commission Office](#) or mailed to the County Commission Office.

The mail-in ballot will be sent to the voter's address. After filling it out, it must be mailed to the County Commission Office or dropped in [an approved ballot drop box](#). It must be received by 8 p.m. on Election Day.



The screenshot shows the Nebraska Voter Information Lookup website. The header includes the logo and navigation links for County Contact Information, Drop Box Locator, Voter Forms, Voter ID, and social media icons. The main content area is divided into two sections: 'Registration Information' and 'Polling Place Search'. The 'Registration Information' section includes a form with fields for First Name, Last Name, and County, and a 'Look Up' button. The 'Polling Place Search' section includes a map and a text input field for residential location, with a 'View Locations' button.

Voter ID Laws

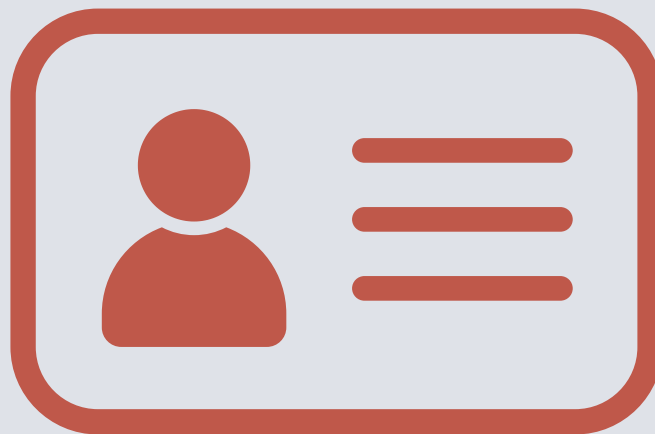
Nebraska has a new voter ID law that went into effect in April of 2024. All voters must bring an approved photo ID with them to the polls.

The list of acceptable IDs include:

- Nebraska driver's license
- Nebraska state ID
- Local Nebraska government (public school, city, county) ID
- Military ID
- US passport
- Nebraska college ID
- Tribal ID
- Patient records from nursing homes, assisted living, or hospitals

Your ID does not have to show an address or expiration date. Expired IDs and IDs with an old address are still valid for voting purposes.

Voters can also receive [a free, eligible state ID](#) at the DMV. Instructions are also available in [Spanish](#).



Local Politics Basics

Local elections determine leadership for mayor, school district board, city council, utilities, public colleges, and other offices not on the state or national level. Upcoming local elections can be found on city or county commission office websites. Information about election dates and term lengths will vary by position. [League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha](#) will include local candidate and race information in their [guides](#) and at [VOTE411.org](#).

Many local candidates run as nonpartisan and have direct ties to the community. Consider hosting [library programs](#) where patrons can hear from local candidates and facilitate community input.

Local elections will be on the same ballot as state and national positions during general and midterm election years and on primary ballots for city/county primaries. For deadlines to register to vote in local elections, see the [important dates](#).

Nebraska State Politics Basics

State positions in Nebraska include state senators in the Legislature, the governor, the State Board of Education, University of Nebraska Board of Regents, and the Public Service Commission. Besides the governor race, where a Nebraskan lives will impact which district they are voting in. For instance, everyone will vote for the governor, but they will only vote for a state senator in their district (there are 49 districts).

Term Lengths and Limits:

- **State Legislature** - 4-year terms, limit 2
- **Governor** - 4-year terms, limit 2 consecutively
- **State Board of Education** - 4-year terms, no limit
- **University of Nebraska Board of Regents** - 6-year terms, no limit
- **Public Service Commission** - 6-year terms, no limit

Some state positions are nonpartisan and may represent a district in a library's community. Consider hosting [library programs](#) where patrons can hear from state candidates and facilitate community input. Nonpartisan positions include state senators (nonpartisan on the ballot), the State Board of Education, and the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

For deadlines to register to vote in state elections, see the [important dates](#).

National Politics Basics

Nebraskans vote for the president and vice president every 4 years during the General Election. Presidential elections are determined by the Electoral College system, where the candidate a majority of the state votes for takes all of the points (except in Nebraska and Maine). Nebraska is one state where the votes are divided among districts. Each congressional district gives the majority winner 1 point, and the winner of the popular vote across the whole state gets 2 points. For instance, in 2024, 2 districts voted Republican (2 points) and Donald Trump won the popular vote for Nebraska (2 more points); the 2nd congressional district gave 1 point to Kamala Harris because that district's popular vote was for the Democrats. Here is a [resource](#) for a more in-depth look at the national election process.

Nebraskans also elect Senators and Representatives to serve in the US Congress. US Senators are voted for by the entire state, but US Representatives are voted for by Nebraskans in each district (there are 3).

- **US Senator** - 6-year terms, no limit
- **US Representative** - 2-year terms, no limit



How to Utilize Existing Library Resources for Civic Engagement

The resources libraries already offer can be used to educate patrons on candidates and political issues, complement [programs](#), and lead community discussions. Even just compiling resource lists for patrons can make informed voting easier!

Books:

Books can be great resources for reading what a candidate has to say, learning how the government works, and understanding big political issues. Book lists, book displays, or book club-like programs that encourage discussion are ways to promote civic learning with a library's existing collection. See [Book Lists and Displays](#) for more.

Newspaper and Magazine Subscriptions:

Many libraries provide newspaper and magazine access. Advertising the library's subscriptions for patrons encourages their use and can be used to promote informed voting. Especially for local coverage and local candidate interviews, Nebraska-based newspapers can be a great resource.

Other Online Resources:

- Encyclopedias or Databases
- Biography Reference Bank/Source
- Points of Reference
- Gale in Context: Opposing Viewpoints

Resources like these can provide factual, often unbiased background information on candidates and big election issues. For instance, the Points of Reference resource provides background information and articles supporting different perspectives on inflation (a main election issue in 2024).

Helping Patrons



Social Media Guide

Social media posts and mentions on a library's website promote civic engagement opportunities at a library! There is also a [voter registration social media guide](#) from National Voter Registration Day.

What to promote online:

- The opportunity to register to vote at the library
- [Resources](#) and services offered at the library for informed voting
- If the library is a [ballot drop box](#) location or [voter registration kiosk](#)
- [Deadlines](#) for registering to vote
- Election dates
- Civic engagement [programs](#) being offered
- Guidelines for the new [voter ID law](#)

Social Media and Website Methods:

- Instagram post or story ([example](#), [example](#))
- Facebook post ([example](#))
- Twitter/X post
- LinkedIn post
- TikTok video
- Blog post on library website ([example](#))
- Banner announcement on library website



Book Lists and Displays

Creating book lists or displays can spark discussions about civic engagement and allow for patron research before elections.

Topics for Book Lists and Displays:

- Books authored by candidates ([example](#))
- Background information on big election issues ([example](#), [example](#))
- Election explainers (for every age group) ([example](#), [example](#))
- History of voting, voter suppression, voting rights, etc.
- Local histories of civic processes

Signs, pamphlets, and bookmarks make great additions to book displays. Consider making bookmarks with lists of civic resources and services offered at the library.

Places to Find Civic Engagement Signs and Pamphlets:

- ACLU Nebraska ([know your rights](#))
- [Nebraska Civic Engagement Table](#) ([voter ID](#))
- Nebraska Secretary of State ([voter ID English](#), [voter ID Spanish](#))
- National Voter Registration Day ([pretty much everything](#), [NVRD posters](#))

The screenshot shows a library catalog page for a book list. At the top, there are two tabs: 'TOPIC GUIDE' and 'PATRON-CREATED LIST', with an information icon to the right. The main title is '2024 Election: What the Candidates Have to Say' with a heart icon. Below the title is a description: 'OPL's collection of books written by the 2024 presidential and vice presidential candidates. Democratic Vice Presidential Candidate Tim Walz has not published a book.' The creator is identified as 'FionaFB' from 'Omaha Public Library'. Below this, it says '12 items'. Two items are visible: 'Superheroes Are Everywhere' by Harris, Kamala, 1964-, and 'The Truths We Hold' by Harris, Kamala, 1964-. Each item includes a book cover image, the title, author, and availability status (Available Book) with a link to 'View format availability'. The first item has a bookmark icon and the second also has a bookmark icon.

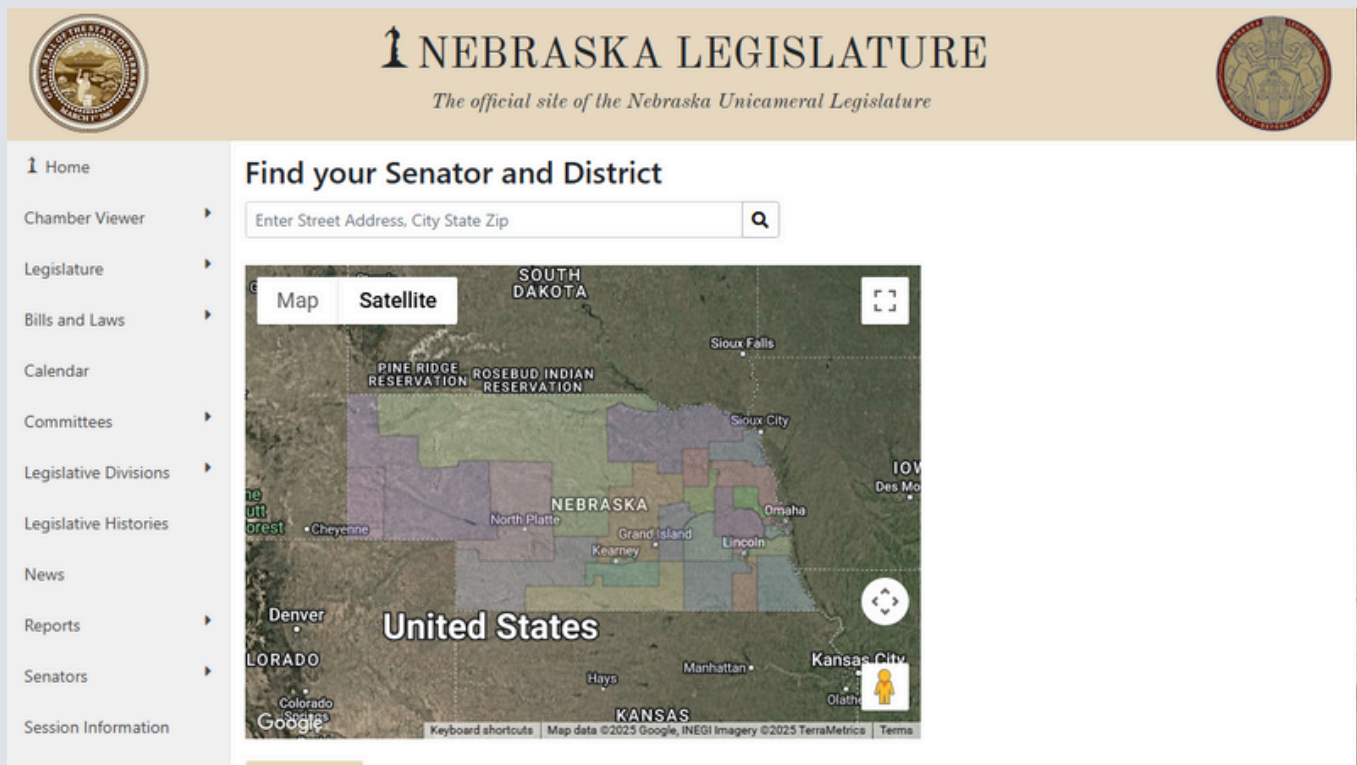
How to Contact a State Senator

State senators are elected to represent a district's Nebraskans and their views in the Unicameral; each state senator's job is to listen to their constituents' views. Contacting a state senator is an easy way to have one's voice represented on the state level. Someone could always travel to Lincoln and testify on a bill or speak to their senator in-person, but Lincoln can be far and bill hearings are often scheduled during the workday.

1. Find your state senator by entering your address [here](#).
2. Then, navigate to their [contact page](#).
3. Send an email, call, or mail a letter to the senator detailing your opinion on a bill or issue.
4. It can also be effective to email the senators on a [committee](#). These senators will vote on whether bills in their relevant topic areas should advance to be voted on by the entire Legislature.

To find legislative bills, click [here](#).

For tips from the ACLU Nebraska on contacting elected officials, click [here](#).



The screenshot displays the official website of the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature. At the top, the text reads "NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE" with the tagline "The official site of the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature". Below this is a navigation menu on the left with items like Home, Chamber Viewer, and Bills and Laws. The main content area is titled "Find your Senator and District" and features a search bar with the placeholder text "Enter Street Address, City State Zip". Below the search bar is a map of Nebraska showing legislative districts. The map includes labels for neighboring states (SOUTH DAKOTA, IOWA, KANSAS, COLORADO, LORADO) and major cities (Sioux Falls, Sioux City, Omaha, Lincoln, North Platte, Grand Island, Kearney, Hays, Manhattan, Kansas City, Olath). The map also shows the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian Reservations. A sidebar on the left of the map offers "Map" and "Satellite" views. At the bottom of the map, there are links for "Keyboard shortcuts", "Map data ©2025 Google, INEGI Imagery ©2025 TerraMetrics", and "Terms".

Suggested Programming



Election Readiness and Voter ID Workshops

A program to explain civic processes and complete voter registration on a wide scale can be effective at delivering civic information to the community! Other programs such as [hearing from civic groups](#) and [National Voter Registration Day](#) can be added to a general informational session. The program can also be adapted for [multiple ages](#).

The Library System of Bradford County (in Pennsylvania) hosted an example of a [voting basics program](#) with a movie and community discussions.

Possible Elements:

- Walk patrons through online or paper voter registration
- Hear from the [League of Women Voters](#) about voter registration
- Host a Q&A session answering patron concerns
- Present [voter ID](#) information (check that they have the right ID, advertise how to get one for free)
- Discuss the voter ID law (how does it affect patrons' personal experiences with voting? What else is a barrier to voting? What can be done?)
- Create election [checklists](#)/voting plans
- Host a community [discussion](#) about local issues and how to vote to address those concerns
- Show patrons how to access book lists, online resources, and services offered by the library for informed voting
- Teach online literacy and connect it to political issues and division (critical thinking, finding reliable sources, seeking sources out of a digital "bubble")
- Write postcards, email, or call state senators or other officials

Hear from a Local Candidate

Hearing from a nonpartisan candidate running for or serving a position in the community can introduce patrons to an elected official, produce community feedback, and explain the civic process. The ALA provides more [guidance](#).

Possible Elements:

- Hear a presentation on the candidate’s story, experience, and why they chose to run for office
- Hold a “town hall” [discussion](#) on a community issue the candidate is in charge of
- Practice writing letters or emails to the candidate with feedback from the patron (to practice [contacting elected officials](#))
- Discuss whether someone is more interested in national, state, or local politics (which is easiest to make an impact in? Which affects daily life more? What are the pros and cons of each?)

For guidance on being nonpartisan when hearing from candidates, see [Being Nonpartisan in Civic Engagement](#).

Hear from a Civic Engagement Group

Collaborating with an existing civic group can relate bigger political issues to the community and foster discussion. This guide includes a [directory](#) of civic groups in Nebraska. The League of Women Voters and Civic Nebraska contributed to this guide. To collaborate with a civic group on a program, reach out to their contact page with an idea for a program or longer-term collaboration in mind. What do you want to accomplish working with them? What does their organization strengthen for your library?

Possible Elements:

- Hear a presentation on the group, their work, and how to get involved
- Hold a “town hall” [discussion](#) on a community issue after the civic group provides background information
- Envision what someone’s ideal community group or project would be (why is this necessary? What is the root cause of this problem? What would it take to accomplish this?)
- Discuss whether someone is more interested in national, state, or local politics (which is easiest to make an impact in? Which affects daily life more? What are the pros and cons of each?)

National Voter Registration Day

[National Voter Registration Day](#) is every year in September. Organizations can partner with NVRD to host voter registration events. Sign your library up to be a partner of NVRD and host a voter registration event or program! NVRD provides posters and [resources](#) already. The application to be a partner of NVRD opens in May. The deadline to register as a partner of the event and receive posters and materials is in late August.

Civic Engagement Outreach for Young People

Introducing patrons to civic processes young can foster the interest and knowledge to be active participants in their community.

For Babies and Younger Children (0-5):

- Storytime with a book about voting or civic engagement
- Scavenger hunt for words or topics related to civic engagement
- Coloring sheets of voting images
- Conversation book kits for kids ([examples from OPL](#))
- [Book lists](#)

For Preteens and Older Children (6-12):

- Storytime with a book about voting or civic engagement
- Scavenger hunt for words or topics related to civic engagement
- Conversation book kits for kids ([examples from OPL](#))
- “Poll buddy” checklist or kit to encourage accompanying family to the polls
- [Book lists](#)

For Teens (13-19):

- Discussions about community or election issues
- Voter registration for older teens
- Informational sessions about [contacting politicians](#), working with civic organizations
- Banned book book clubs and discussions
- [Book lists](#)

How Civic Engagement Helps Your Library

Drawing a connection between civic participation and helping the library can get patrons more interested in voting.

1. When voting, those who love the library may vote for candidates and choices that support the library, its funding, and intellectual freedom.
2. Participating in the civic engagement process and supporting the library both contribute to the community.
3. Experience from voting and being involved in the community equips patrons to support libraries against book bans at school board and city meetings.

Possible Elements:

- [Hear from a civic group](#) and their work with protecting libraries/intellectual freedom
- Host a banned book discussion or book club (how does this relate to politics? What patterns do patrons notice in the books being banned?). Then, provide background information on the politics of book bans

[Everylibrary.org](#) tracks library issues on the ballot and encourages the public to vote with libraries in mind.



Connecting with Community Groups and Resources



League of Women Voters Guides

The League of Women Voters contributed to this guide! [LWV of Nebraska](#) and its [local chapters](#) are nonpartisan and work to increase access to voting and other civic processes. Members are volunteers and can be of any gender. LWV puts out election guides with information on candidates, initiatives, and other questions on the ballot. [VOTE411.org](#) is also created by the LWV.

Contact your local LWV chapter to request LWV guides for your library!



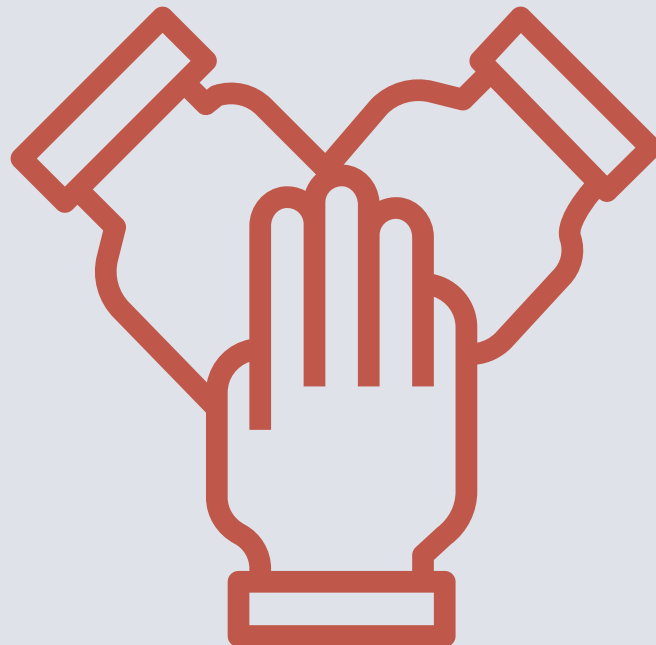
Civic Nebraska

Civic Nebraska contributed to this guide! [Civic Nebraska](#) is an organization working to strengthen democracy in the state. Some of their projects include increasing civic leadership for youth, protecting voting rights, and improving civic health in communities. Civic Nebraska would be a good organization to collaborate with for youth civic engagement and presentations from a civic organization.



Directory of Nebraska Civic Organizations

- [ACLU Nebraska](#)
- [Civic Nebraska](#)
- [Common Cause Nebraska](#)
- [Husker Vote Coalition](#)
- [League of Women Voters of Nebraska](#) (there are city and regional chapters too)
- [Nebraska Appleseed](#)
- [Nebraska Civic Engagement Table](#)
- [Voter Information Project Nebraska](#)

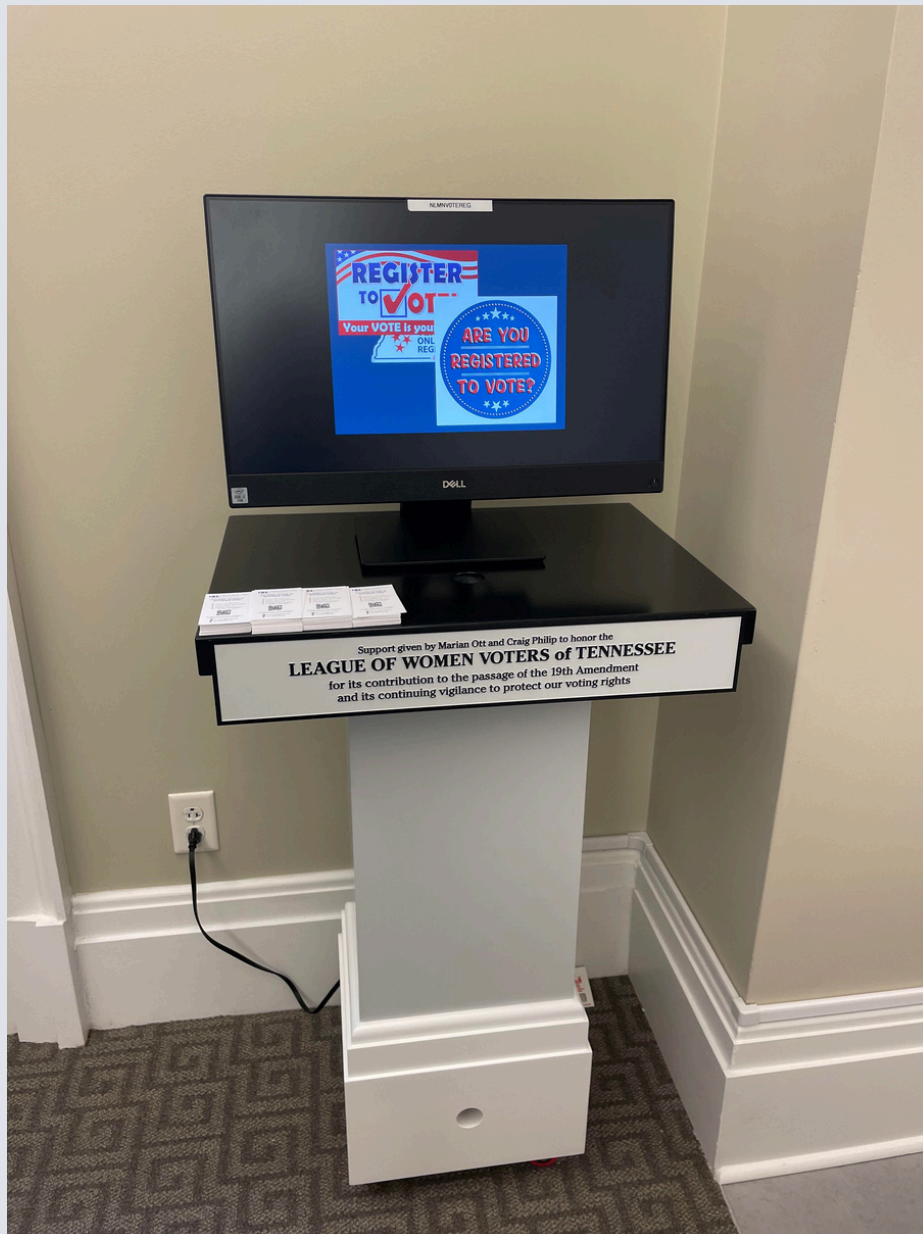


Expansion Ideas



Voter Registration Kiosks at the Library

Setting up a computer or kiosk so patrons can register to vote online can be a great addition to a civic engagement display. At the [Nashville Public Library](#), the League of Women Voters of Tennessee has a permanent computer dedicated to online voter registration. Civic organizations in Washington State have used [transportable kiosks](#) to register voters at events. Link the computer or kiosk to Nebraska's online voter registration [here](#).



Ballot Drop Boxes at the Library

A list of ballot drop boxes for submitting mail-in ballots can be found [here](#).

Libraries with Ballot Drop Boxes:

- Charles B. Washington (Omaha Public Library)
- South Omaha (OPL)
- Milton R. Abrahams (OPL)
- Elkhorn (OPL)
- Walt (Lincoln City Libraries)
- Gere (LCL)
- Eiseley (LCL)
- Anderson (LCL)
- Bellevue Public Library

Getting a Ballot Drop Box at a Library:

Having a ballot drop box at a library not only adds another ballot drop box to the community, but can complement other civic engagement opportunities at the library. Patrons will have a familiar place to return mail-in ballots, in proximity to assistance from the library. Contact the [County Commission Office](#) to request a ballot drop box at your library.

Drop box finder

If you have an early voting/absentee ballot, using an official ballot drop box is a safe, secure way to return your ballot in time for the election!

Dropbox Location Map

The deadline to drop off your [vote by mail application](#) is October 24th.
The deadline to drop off [your ballot](#) is 8 PM CT / 7 PM MT on Election Day, November 5th.

Having trouble finding your dropbox? Look for the box that says "Courthouse Collection Box" OR "Official Election Dropbox" and click on your dropbox in the map to get directions to its location in Google Maps.

Dropbox Locations

42°02'34.8"N 101°02'34.8"W
View larger map

NW 2nd St

City: Mullen
County: Hooker
Street Addr: 303 NW 1st St
Website Description: next to 1st St on North side of sidewalk and courthouse

Connecting with Groups Underrepresented in or Barred from Voting

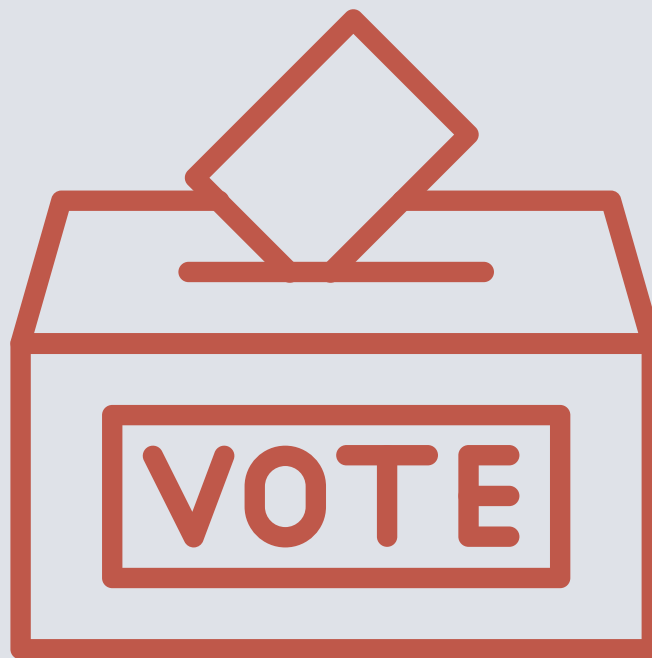
Voter suppression is a problem with lasting impacts from the historical exclusion of groups, but it is also defined by current occurrences. For a history of voter suppression in the US, click [here](#). To learn about current problems with voter ID laws, voter registration purges, inaccessible polls, and limited mail-in voting, visit the [Brennan Center for Justice](#). People of color and low-income people have faced barriers to the polls and registration, both historically and currently. Voting rights for individuals with a felony are often up in the air, causing confusion and preventing participation. Those experiencing homelessness may not have a permanent address and may lack identification paperwork. Individuals in rural areas or on reservations may face long distances and financial barriers to being able to vote. All of these factors have grown distrust, confusion, and illiteracy about the civic process. As libraries, addressing the needs of the community applies to civic engagement programming.

- **For patrons who distrust the political process** - Create programs providing accurate information on the history of voter suppression. Hear from civic groups on the importance of voting and the process.
- **For patrons who face barriers traveling to voter registration, polling location** - Educate patrons about mail-in voting, if postal services are accessible in the area. Nebraska does not allow ballot harvesting for more than 2 people per agent (someone cannot turn in more than 2 mail-in ballots for people); still, the knowledge that someone could transport two more ballots to a drop box could be valuable information. Having a [ballot drop box](#) at your library would create another, closer location for mail-in ballots to be returned. Consider organizing carpool services among the community to transport voters to the polls on Election Day.

- **For patrons who are illiterate/not literate in English** - Create a program to read a patron's mail-in ballot aloud for them. Create a program providing translation services for patrons. Tell patrons that they are allowed to have someone accompany them at the polls to provide assistance.
- **For patrons who are experiencing homelessness** - See [Voting Basics](#)

More Information on Civic Engagement Barriers in Rural or Reservation Libraries:

- [How Voter Suppression Laws Target Native Americans \(Brennan Center for Justice\)](#)
- [Vote by Mail \(Native American Rights Fund\)](#)
- [Brief Voting for All Americans: Native Americans](#)
- [Democracy and Access to Voting \(Rural Policy Action\)](#)



Extra Resources



Resources from the ALA and Others

The American Library Association and other library websites have published resources with general civic engagement ideas and guidance.

- [Civic engagement basics booklist for youth \(ALA\)](#)
- [Advocacy at the library guide and examples \(ALA\)](#)
- [Civic engagement at the library basics and examples \(Programming Librarian\)](#)
- [Voter registration at the library basics \(Programming Librarian\)](#)
- [VoteLibraries - a website for library civic engagement](#)
- [Civic engagement program examples \(Urban Libraries Council\)](#)
- [Program ideas \(Urban Libraries Council\)](#)
- [Ideas for after elections \(National Voter Registration Day\)](#)
- [Ideas for census outreach \(Nebraska Library Commission\)](#)
- [Community engagement through libraries \(Nebraska Library Commission\)](#)

Being Nonpartisan in Civic Engagement

The mission of the public library aligns with increasing access to voting and other civic processes. Yet, the public library must remain nonpartisan in this outreach. Here is a [resource](#) describing this duty in terms of library ethics. Of course, this does not mean libraries cannot be political or best serve the community in ways that may be politicized.

Tips for Being Nonpartisan:

- **Provide multiple perspectives**
 - In book lists, displays, and hearing from candidates, it may come off as partisan to only feature one side. Include multiple perspectives on issues to avoid appearing biased, but also to foster discussion and allow for comprehensive research.
- **Focus on the process**
 - To avoid expressing partisan views, focus on empowering patrons to create their own, informed opinion and to vote accordingly. For example, instead of endorsing a view, focus outreach on connecting patrons with books of different perspectives and registering them to vote.
- **Incorporate community perspectives and discussions**
 - Center programming around community perspectives, rather than sharing views from the library. Consider holding programs like [community discussions](#) and hearing from local, nonpartisan [groups](#) or [candidates](#).



Supporting Librarians in Civic Engagement Work

Learning about and implementing civic engagement outreach can be time-consuming and take away from other library duties. Additionally, elections can be stressful times for the future of libraries (in terms of funding and censorship laws), and the future of individual rights. Library staff must be supported in this work especially.

Tips for Supporting Librarians:

- **Ask where they are confused or lacking knowledge about civic engagement**
 - What do they need to effectively help patrons with their questions, but most importantly, what do they need to feel confident and supported in this new programming? Where do they feel lost?
- **Make sure the outreach helps them too**
 - Are the pushes for voter registration leading to library staff becoming registered too? Are library staff getting opportunities to engage with resources and become informed voters?
- **Incorporate civic engagement outreach, don't make it an add-on**
 - No one wants to do more work than they already do! Civic engagement outreach works better when it is incorporated as scheduled programming or scheduled duties, not last-minute extra work. For instance, in September, an election readiness workshop could be proposed as a programming idea for that month instead of an add-on event.
- **Understand when the work is becoming draining**
 - Communicate with library staff; even if civic engagement outreach is incorporated and is not a problem in terms of extra work, elections can be a stressful time. Consider delegating certain tasks to staff willing to focus on civic engagement. Check in with all staff to gauge how they are being impacted by the political climate.
- **Tie civic engagement outreach back to the library**
 - See [How Civic Engagement Helps Your Library](#). By focusing civic engagement programming on how it will help the library, staff may feel more invested in the outreach.
- **Emphasize the importance of self-care and community care in civic engagement**
 - An often-overlooked part of civic engagement and activism is the importance of care and support behind the scenes. Without those taking care of the largest activists, without a community providing input, and without someone taking care of themselves, change could not happen. When supporting staff, emphasize how self-care is essential to civic engagement and working at a library; encourage this self-care by checking in on coworkers and allowing them the resources to take breaks. Consider incorporating this message into programming too.