

# **Beth El Hebrew Congregation**



**ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA**

## **Beth El Hebrew Congregation 2020 Civic Engagement Campaign**

In partnership with

**The Religious Action Center and the Center for Common Ground**

On November 3 the American people will have the chance to shape the future of our nation by participating in the 2020 election. The right to vote that we cherish as American citizens calls on each of us to take part in the democratic process, whether by voting on Election Day or casting an absentee ballot beforehand.

Unfortunately, too many Americans are denied the right to choose leaders who reflect their beliefs or represent their communities because of systemic efforts to suppress their ability to vote. The reality offends America's democratic principles and our values as a Jewish community.

This year, Beth El Hebrew Congregation in Alexandria, Virginia is proud to join in sacred partnership with the Center for Common Ground and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in a campaign to put our Jewish values in action to help those whose votes are suppressed and whose voices are silenced.

Our 2020 Civic Engagement Campaign is a non-partisan, 501c(3)-compliant voter engagement effort built around the principle that everyone who is eligible to vote in our nation should be able to cast a ballot and have their vote counted.

We invite you to join us in this holy work.

**Beth El Hebrew Congregation**

3830 Seminary Road

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## Key Dates for Virginia

- Last day to register to vote or update registration information: **Tuesday, October 13, 2020**
- Deadline to request absentee ballot by mail: **5:00 PM, Tuesday, October 23, 2020**
- Deadline to request in person absentee ballot: **5:00 PM, Saturday, October 31, 2020**

## Virginia Voter Registration

- [Register online](#)
- [Verify registration](#)
- [Find your polling place](#)
- [Request an absentee ballot](#)
- [Restoration of voting rights](#)
- [Get other voter forms and general information](#)
- [Training and authorization to register others to vote](#)

## How Can My Congregation or Community Organization Help?

Every community is different. You know your community best and what approach would be most effective within it, respecting the customs and traditions of your home synagogue or other house of worship. Create the Civic Engagement Plan that works best for your community and share your work with others so that we may all learn from it.

The following document will provide ideas for your community to consider.

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## Internal Congregational and Community Engagement

- **Voter registration:** Covid-19 restrictions permitting, set up tables in the lobby of your congregation or organization during peak traffic times. Volunteers can provide election information, check voter registrations and update or register eligible voters. Once the registration deadline passes, the tables can serve as an ongoing reminder of the upcoming election.
- **Absentee Ballot Initiative:** Given the current situation with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic, congregations and communities may wish to plan ahead by having their members request absentee ballots. Recent legal changes in the Commonwealth have made obtaining an absentee ballot easier than in the past.
- **Voter pledges:** Research suggests that signing a pledge to vote increases voter turnout. Encourage all congregants to commit to voting either by signing a pledge, poster, or filling out postcard that can be sent to them prior to the election as a reminder.

- **Member-to-Member calls:** The weekend before the election, host a phone bank to call the members of your congregation or community organization. Feedback indicates that it not only encourages voting, but fosters connection between congregants.

- **Transportation Assistance:** Organize a list of volunteers available to help members who need assistance to get to the polls. Members can be asked if assistance is required during the member-to-member calls.

Remember:

- Clergy engagement is paramount to the success of a faith-based civic engagement campaign;
- Engage Youth! There are many ways to engage youth in a civic engagement campaign. Think about incorporating elements of a civic engagement campaign into the religious school curriculum.
- College Outreach. Have a set of volunteers that focus on outreach to college students and recent graduates offering guidance on how to register to vote as well as providing election day reminders. Remember, individuals who will be 18 by election day can register to vote, so you may also have high school students in the congregation who are eligible.

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## External Congregation and Community Engagement

Systemic voter disenfranchisement plagues our nation's democracy and particularly affects communities of color throughout our country. In an effort to work outside of our individual communities and ensure that everyone who is legally eligible to vote has the opportunity to do so, we have partnered with the [Center for Common Ground of Virginia](#), a 501(c)(3) organization that is dedicated to fighting systemic voter suppression and disenfranchisement.

Through this partnership, we are participating in their phone banking, text banking, and post carding efforts.

- 1) **Non-partisan Phone Banks:** participants will call people around our nation to assist them to check their voting status and to re-register where necessary, and encourage them to go to the polls on election day.

Phone banking is easy and can be done anywhere you have access to the internet and a phone. A single call only takes a minute or so and you can make one call or many. The Center for Common Ground will provide names, numbers, and call scripts.

- 2) **Non-partisan Text Banking:** As with external phone banking efforts, the Center for Common Ground will supply the infrastructure, scripts, and contact lists. Text banking is quicker than phone banking because you can send about 60 texts every ten minutes. Texts are sent via computer rather than individuals' phones. As such, text banking is also a great way for youth to get involved.
- 3) **Non-Partisan Postcarding:** In addition to phone and text banking, sending postcards reminding individuals to vote is an important way of reaching eligible voters to provide election reminders. In the era of social distancing, sending postcards is a good way to engage youth and adults of all ages in the work of civic engagement. The Center for Common Ground will provide postcards, addresses, and script.

**For detailed information and instructions on how to engage in phone banking, text banking, and postcarding, please visit [Center for Common Ground](#) or email the Center's director, Andrea Miller at [andrea@peopledemandingaction.org](mailto:andrea@peopledemandingaction.org).**

Additional resources can be found through the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism's Civic Engagement Campaign [website](#).

If you have any questions on how to bring these efforts to your community or want to share the great work of your own Civic Engagement Campaign, please email [BethEIVotes2020@bethelhebrew.org](mailto:BethEIVotes2020@bethelhebrew.org).

We look forward to hearing from you!

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