

HANDS OFF OUR VOTE!



HANDS OFF OUR VOTE: OHIO MESSAGING

INTRODUCTION

Ohio's role in the 2026 midterms puts the state at the center of national attention, and with that comes a heightened risk of election misinformation and efforts to disrupt voting. Research shows many voters are aware of these risks, and most say it makes them more determined to vote. Ohio's civic leaders and community organizations have a responsibility to make sure voters have accurate, trusted information about how to vote, are prepared to navigate any obstacles at the polls, and can have confidence that every eligible vote is counted and the results are certified accurately.

This guide – based on recommendations from ASO Communications, [Local Progress](#) and the [Election Safeguards Response Network](#) (ESRN). Talking points and messaging is available below for both 501c3 and 501c4 partners. **We have also prepared similar documents for potential election sabotage scenarios that we will distribute (and link here) as necessary.**

All narratives incorporate similar best practices:

1. Lean into Ohioans' shared values of freedom, fairness and community
2. Name the villain and the motivation behind their actions
3. Give voters a sense of agency
4. Demonstrate what is possible when we act together

To ensure that the will of the people prevails, ESRN has identified four key strategic imperatives:

- **Fight:** Stop voter suppression and election sabotage.
 - *Comms goal:* Expose every suppression attempt as one coordinated power grab. Name the bad actor, their intent, and their motive.
- **Win:** Ensure voters see voting as an act of resistance regardless of who they vote for, and elections as a legitimate way to make their voices heard.
 - *Comms goal:* Make voting feel like an act of collective power. Give voters the confidence and determination to vote.
- **Prove:** Make election results unquestionable.

- *Comms goal:* Inoculate early and often against results disinformation, so voters trust the results before the lies arrive.
- **Enforce:** Ensure a peaceful transfer of power.
 - *Comms goal:* Hold one narrative through certification and beyond: Every vote must be counted. Voters choose their leaders. We decide the future.

CORE MESSAGE

All of our messaging must:

- Channel anger into determination and the will to fight to protect our freedoms.
- Inspire courage and hope as a practice and a discipline.
- Remind voters of their agency, collective power, audacity, and resilience.
- Encourage mutual protection, safety, and support within their community.
- Nurture a sense of confidence, purpose, and focus.
- Help voters see themselves in the larger arc of history.
- Tap into deeply held values: freedom, community, compassion, equality.

Narrative

In America, voters choose our leaders. But the regime is trying to keep people from voting and votes from being counted, because Trump and his enablers want to seize control of our elections so they can claim more power. No matter the obstacles they put in our way, they can't change our resolve. Together, we will show up, speak out, and refuse to be intimidated. Together, we are America. And together, we will vote and see that every vote is counted.

DO	DON'T
Talk about protecting our freedoms.	Talk about "democracy." It's an abstract concept.
Lead with shared values (e.g., "In America, voters pick our leaders.").	Open with policy details, bill names, or legal arguments.
Name who is to blame clearly: "[C4]President Trump and his regime / enablers/[C3]certain power hungry politicians."	Diffuse responsibility with "the system," or name Trump alone.
Frame actions as a coordinated power grab: connected efforts to control elections before ballots are cast.	Treat SAVE, raids, investigations, or court actions as isolated incidents.
Name intent clearly: this is an effort to keep people from voting and keep votes from counting.	Repeat others' language: "election integrity," "fraud," or "security."
Name who is harmed first and most: Black, Latino, Asian, Indigenous, and immigrant communities.	Bury harm to communities of color in footnotes or euphemisms like "some communities."

Explain motive simply: "They're trying to keep people from voting so they can seize more power."	Use abstractions like "erosion of norms."
Use active voice and present tense (e.g., "The Trump administration is keeping people from voting.").	Rely on passive constructions or future hypotheticals.
Close with determination (e.g., "Together, we are powerful. We will show up, look out for our neighbors, and refuse to be intimidated or silenced.").	End on fear or inevitability.

DRIVE EARLY VOTE

While we wait to see what, if any, threats to our election may develop, it is crucial that we encourage every Ohioans to vote – including by voting early.

In recent elections, slow vote counts have been used to fuel false claims of fraud and undermine confidence in the results. In Ohio, early votes are among the first counted and reported on election night. When more voters cast their ballots early, results come in faster and more completely, leaving less room for confusion or misinformation. Early voting also reduces lines and strain on polling places on Election Day, making it easier for everyone to vote.

Research shows that many Ohioans are more likely to skip voting in down ballot races if they don't feel like they have enough information. Especially for 501c3 organizations that are more constrained in their messaging, it's important to provide clear, fact-based information about what voters will see on their ballot. The Innovation Ohio Education Fund created the [Ohio Voter Guide](#) to provide Ohioans with “just the facts” on major state and local elections to help empower voters. A social media toolkit is also available [here](#).

Political (c4) Narrative:

Ohioans believe that every vote counts. But Trump knows we are rejecting his agenda of cruelty and greed – and is trying to find ways to keep our votes from being counted. We won't let him take away our freedom to vote. We're stopping Trump in his tracks by locking in our votes early. Ohioans all across the state – from urban counties like Cuyahoga to rural ones like Preble – are voting early in record numbers. We are coming together to ensure that every vote is counted.

Sample Political (c4) Talking Points

- The slower the results come in, the more opportunity Trump has to make up lies about the outcome. Let's stop him in his tracks by getting out to vote early.
- We're locking in our ballots early to keep MAGA's hands off our vote.

- Every vote counts, and we're making sure no one can stop ours from being counted by voting early.
- We demand that election officials [or name a politician] respect our freedom to cast our ballots, have them counted, and ensure the will of the people prevails.
- This election Ohioans are voting early in record numbers to ensure the will of the people prevails.

Nonpartisan (c3) Narrative:

Ohioans believe that every vote counts. But some politicians and their billionaire backers want to keep our votes from being counted. We won't let anyone take away our freedom to vote. That is why we are locking in our votes early. Ohioans all across the state – from urban counties like Cuyahoga to rural ones like Preble – are voting early in record numbers. We're coming together across the state to ensure that every vote is counted.

Sample Nonpartisan (c3) Talking Points

- The slower the results come in, the more room there is for confusion and misinformation. Voting early helps Ohio get fast, accurate results.
- We're locking in our ballots early so our voices are heard, no matter what happens on Election Day.
- Every vote counts, and voting early is one of the surest ways to make sure yours is cast and counted.
- We're grateful for the election officials working hard to protect every Ohioan's freedom to vote, count every eligible ballot, and certify results that reflect the will of the voters.
- This election, Ohioans are voting early to make sure the will of the people prevails.

Additional Resources

- [Election Protection 2026: Messaging for Trust & Combating Disinformation \(Local Progress\)](#)
- [Hands Off Our Vote \(ASO, All Voting is Local, Fair Fight Action, Research Collaborative\)](#)
- [Hands Off Our Vote Supplement: Confronting Lies on Immigrant Voting \(ASO\)](#)
- [Hands Off Ohio Communications Toolkit](#)

OHIO DEMOCRACY DEFENSE MESSAGING

<https://www.handsoffohio.org/>

(Last updated June, 2026)

Background: On June 11, federal agents raided an office of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, as well as showing up at employees' homes. This comes after Ohio politicians have been pushing a false narrative of “voter fraud” to try to put up new barriers to voting.

The following message guidance is for Ohio organizations who are willing to stand up against this government intimidation.

Messaging Principles:

- Name intent behind the raids: a deliberate attack to keep Black and brown people from voting, and to seize control of our elections so they can control the outcomes.
- Close with shared value: In America, voters choose their leaders — not the other way around.
- Close with positivity, determination, and collective power.
- Use “Hands off Our Vote.”

Nonpartisan (c3) Narrative

The FBI raids on Ohio voting rights organizations and staff are a deliberate attack to keep us from voting — and to keep our votes from counting, in order to control the outcomes of our elections. We've seen this playbook before: they lose, they lie, they lash out. When voters reject them, they go after the organizations that make voting accessible. But in Ohio, voters choose our leaders — not the other way around. We stand with every Ohioan working to protect the freedom to vote, because our future depends on the decisions we make together. Hands off our vote.

Political (c4) Narrative

The FBI raids on Ohio voting rights organizations and staff are a deliberate attack to keep us from voting — and to keep our votes from counting, in order to control the outcomes of our elections. We've seen this playbook before: when self-serving politicians like Jon Husted, Frank LaRose, and Vivek Ramaswamy are losing, they lie and lash out. When voters reject them, they go after the organizations that make voting accessible. In Ohio, voters choose our leaders — not the other way around. We stand with every Ohioan working to protect the freedom to vote, because our future depends on the decisions we make together. Hands off our vote.

Talking points:

- This is more than an attack on one organization - this is an attack on Ohioans' freedom to vote.
- Over the years, voting rights groups like the Ohio Organizing Collaborative have registered hundreds of thousands of Ohioans to vote – focusing on communities who

MAGA Republicans have tried to block from participating in elections: Black and brown Ohioans, young people, disabled people, and people with low incomes.

- A political party courts our votes – an authoritarian regime tries to stop us from voting.
- The raids on voting rights staff and leaders are the latest example of Ohio Republicans trying to rig the rules: They have purged voters from the rolls, drawn districts to dilute Black voters' power, passed laws to make it more difficult to vote and even had journalists arrested
- Ohioans won't back down and we're standing together to tell Trump and his MAGA cronies to keep their hands off our votes.

Background on OOC:

For nearly 20 years, the OOC has served as a vehicle for everyday Ohioans to have a say over the decisions that affect their communities, their families and their lives. It is a powerful multiracial coalition that spans big cities, suburbs, small towns and rural communities. OOC campaigns have lowered health care costs for Ohio families, secured more funding for child care and public schools, and removed barriers that keep punishing formerly incarcerated people long after they've served their time. Over the years, OOC staff and volunteers have registered hundreds of thousands of Ohioans to vote.