



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Thank you for joining Westside Friends!

This manual will empower you to connect with neighbors to make sure they have the information they need to participate in the 2020 Census and the November elections.

What's civic engagement mean anyway?

This document includes the following information and guidance to make it EASY for you to do outreach:

- How to reach out
- Contact sheets and other printables
- Ways to get involved in the Census and Elections

If you have resources that we should share, please email westsidefriendsla@gmail.com

www.westsidefriends.com | (213) 785-2052 | @westsidefriendsla

2020 Census

What it is

Every ten years, the federal government must take a count of every ten years of EVERY person living in the United States, regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, citizenship, or immigration status. This process is known as the Census.

Why it's important

Census 2020 is our **one** chance to determine how our collective **political power** and **money** will be distributed until 2030. Here's what the Census does for our community:

Political representation: The numbers of congressional representatives we get for each area and even the physical boundaries of our political districts are based on Census data. For example, if California is *not* counted accurately, our state could lose a seat in the House of Representatives. California missed an opportunity to gain a seat in Congress after the 2010 Census by only an estimated 13,000 people who did not get counted.

Money: Approximately \$883 BILLION of federal money are distributed nationally each year. The amount of money each state and county receives is based on Census data. About \$7 Billion goes to LA County, to fund programs such as Medicaid, SNAP, Section 8 Housing, foster care, child welfare programs and many more.

How to respond

If you have not responded to the Census yet, time is running out! See below for instructions on how to respond.

It's never been easier to respond to the census - it only takes a few minutes and you will just have to provide some basic information about yourself.

FYI - You should have received a letter in the mail with your Census ID number. If you still have it saved at home somewhere, make sure to take it out so you can provide the number when you respond. *If you do not have it, that is still OK! You can respond without it.*

Here's how to respond:

Online: Complete your census questionnaire [here](#).

By phone: Representatives are available every day from 4am to 11pm Pacific Time on the following phone lines:

- For English, call 844-330-2020
- En Español, llama 844-468-2020

How to inform your neighbors

We encourage you to reach out to your immediate community in a social-distance friendly way to make sure they know how to respond! Here are a few ideas:

- Write a personalized letter and put it under your neighbors' doors
- Tape a poster to your fence, laundry room, or on a telephone polls at your corner (we made [this template](#) with an easy QR code for you to use!)
- Share about the census by sharing the census website and response instructions to a local neighborhood group on Facebook or NextDoor.

2020 Elections

Why voting is important

Voting is one of the most important rights and responsibilities that U.S. citizens have. About 150 million American citizens are qualified to vote. Unfortunately, many don't. They give up on a chance to choose their leaders.

If you don't vote, you are letting other people decide the direction of our country for you.

Our elected officials decide who pays how much in taxes, what our taxes pay for, what kind of education our children get, what counts as a crime, what the minimum wage shall be, how to conduct the census, who is eligible for Medicaid, SNAP, and WIC benefits, where toxic waste is dumped, whether people will have affordable housing and health care, and many other important decisions that affect our daily lives.

Respect your right to vote! It's a privilege that many people don't have.

Voting instructions

Before you can vote in Los Angeles County, you must register to vote. This is the first step in the voting process. You must be registered to vote at least 15 days prior to an election in order to vote in that election.

- Register to Vote Online
- Check Your Voter Registration Status

You may register to vote in L.A. County if you are:

- A citizen of the United States.
- At least 18 years of age or older on or before Election Day.
- Not found mentally incompetent by a court of law.

>> [Click here to register to vote](#) <<

Pre-register to vote if you're 16 or 17

Pre-registration does not change the voting age, which is 18. Instead, it allows eligible Californians ages 16 or 17 to complete the online voter registration form providing sufficient time and opportunity to get ready to vote. To learn more about pre-registration please visit the [CA Secretary of State's website](#).

Voting with criminal justice involvement

In California, people with misdemeanor convictions and those who have felony convictions but are on probation or done with parole can also vote.

Yes, you can:

- Out on bail
- In jail awaiting trial or sentencing
- In jail on AB 109 felony
- All misdemeanors
- On probation (including supervised release)

More information at [LA Free the Vote](#)

How and where to vote

Election Day is November 3rd, but your voting options begin much sooner than that!

Because of the pandemic, every person will receive a ballot by mail in California and will be able to vote by mail OR vote in person.

Vote by mail:

- All registered voters will be mailed a Vote by Mail ballot. Mailing of Vote by Mail ballots in all elections begins 29 days prior to Election Day.
- As long as you are registered to vote by October 19th, you will receive a ballot in the mail. Postage to return your ballot is free.
- If you are worried about USPS, you can also drop off your ballot to an official collection drop box and it will be collected directly by LA County. Check here for more information. Click [this link](#) for a map of all ballot drop boxes.

Vote in person:

- In-person voting will begin starting October 24th through Election Day on November 3rd.
- Click [this link](#) for a map of all voting center locations.
- Though the voter registration deadline to receive your vote-by-mail ballot is October 19th, you can register in-person at any voting center through November 3rd.

Vote Centers will be open every day from 10 AM to 7 PM during the early voting period. On Election Day Vote Centers will be open from 7 AM to 8 PM.

How to inform your neighbors

We suggest leaving a note or posting to your local Facebook or NextDoor group to remind your neighbors about upcoming voting deadlines and details.

[Click here](#) for sample text to use. Neighbors may also appreciate [this poster](#) describing how to return their vote-by-mail ballot.

We encourage you to distribute voter registration forms as well. Westside Friends has ordered a large number of voter registration forms and will have them ready for pickup on the westside if you would like to distribute them to your neighbors! Please email us at westsidefriendsla@gmail.com to request forms.

TEMPLATES

Here's a recap of the templates you can use to help you reach neighbors:

- [Census outreach flyer](#)
- [Voting outreach letter to neighbors](#)
- [LA County printable flyers](#)

SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Protecting the health and wellbeing of our neighbors is our #1 priority. We are balancing a need for support systems and connection with the goal of reducing contact and maintaining a safe distance from others.

First and foremost, please check-in with yourself. Do not go door-to-door or get physically near your neighbors if you:

- Have traveled out of the country in the last 14 days
- Are exhibiting any signs of illness (e.g. runny nose, cough, fever, etc.)
- Have come in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days
- Have not been practicing social distancing