



*Faith in Elections Playbook*

## **Building relationships with local election officials**

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Elections are run at the state and local level. They are staffed by regular citizens who are willing to give of their time to help our elections run smoothly. You can build trust and transparency in elections by creating relationships with your local election officials — to both hold them accountable and learn about the process. Having strong relationships in place well before Election Day will make it easier to navigate challenges that may arise.



### THE NEED

- Elections in our country are run by the states — not by Washington, D.C. They have many moving parts, and the stakes surrounding elections are high. It can be hard to understand the process, from the registration and maintenance of voting, to the creation of ballots, to the system for casting and counting of votes. We can educate ourselves on the system and learn to trust the transparency and accountability measures that are in place, knowing there are laws to guide the process and watch dogs to detect any potential violations.
- The vast majority of election officials around the country are professionals with years of experience administering elections. They do not take their own personal or political beliefs into account when determining the outcome.
- Election officials are under a great deal of stress and have even faced threats and harassment.



### THE RESPONSE

- Communities can build trust in their elections by demystifying election administration and learning from their local election officials. Officials can answer questions from the public regarding how people vote, how ballots are counted, and how our elections are certified.

- By providing opportunities for direct engagement with election officials, faith-based organizations can increase trust in our elections while also raising any concerns that they have directly with the people who run our elections.
- These meetings also provide an opportunity for members from both sides of the political aisle to increase transparency and accountability from election officials. They can help election officials protect the right to vote while also maintaining the integrity of elections.
- If you can establish a relationship with election officials throughout the leadup to the 2024 election, you can better assess the information that is shared during the heat of the election itself.



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Faiths United to Save Democracy (FUSD) will host "[We Are Watching](#)" webinars in early 2024 in ten priority states. The goal is to provide faith and lay leaders with direct access to state election officials and the opportunity to ask questions to clarify the 2024 election rules and any polling site changes. These sessions also signal to state election officials that their actions are being monitored to ensure free, fair, and safe elections for all voters.
- Election officials need the support of their communities now more than ever. Find ways to publicly thank election workers for their service, and encourage others to do the same. Projects such as "[Election Heroes Day](#)" provide resources on how to thank your election officials.
- A More Perfect Union has outlined the following steps for engaging with election officials. A more detailed version of this list can be found [here](#).
  - Step 1: Research the questions, concerns, and opportunities in your community.
  - Step 2: Choose the type of engagement that best suits your organization - whether

*"Interfaith clergy gatherings are one way to bring together multiple stakeholders for a conversation with election officials. Because feelings, fears, questions, and concerns about American elections can differ dramatically by community, organizing these leaders for a single conversation with local election officials is an efficient way to build transparency quickly and at scale."*

**- A More Perfect Union: The Jewish Partnership for Democracy**

that is interfaith events, community events, examining logic and accuracy tests, attending board meetings, or some other activity.

- Step 3: Consider what new and existing coalitions might collaborate.
- Step 4: If applicable, reach out to your local election officials.
- Step 5: Prepare your questions and topics.
- Step 6: Send a thank you note.
- Step 7: Educate your community about what you have learned.



## RESOURCES AND LINKS

- [Faiths United to Save Democracy](#) toolkit (“We Are Watching” is on page 19)
- [Election Heroes Day website](#) and partner toolkit