

What Roles Can Nonprofits Play in Elections?

During election campaigns, many 501(c)(3) organizations may be uncertain about the extent to which they can discuss issues of importance in the campaigns or interact with candidates for public office. They may also be uncertain about the role they can play in encouraging citizens to register and vote.

While there are many prohibitions for 501(c)(3) nonprofits around campaign intervention, there are many ways that those organizations can safely participate in the process without facing sanction.

501(c)(3)s may not support or oppose any candidate for public office. This means 501(c)(3)s may not endorse, rate, contribute to candidates, or provide special resources to one candidate that are not offered to everyone in the race.¹

Nonpartisan activities and voter education are allowed.

- 501(c)(3) nonprofits can educate voters about important issues, thus potentially influencing a campaign's issues.
- Nonprofits can promote voter registration, encourage voter participation, provide voter education and register voters.
- Nonprofits can invite candidates to speak at an organization event as long as certain criteria are met. The organization must ensure that:
 - It provides an equal opportunity to political candidates seeking the same office.
 - It does not indicate any support for, or opposition to, the candidate.
 - No political fundraising occurs.

This document is intended as a brief overview of this topic. Before engaging in any election-related activity, organizations are strongly encouraged to thoroughly review [information on the IRS website related to this topic](#).

¹ <http://www.nonprofitvote.org/nve-general-rules.html>

