

# LOCAL VOTING RIGHTS ADVOCACY 101

## WHY LOCAL

While national, or even state, voting rights issues get a lot of news coverage, many important decisions impacting your right to vote happen right in your community. Your Supervisor of Elections, who is an elected official, decides where you will vote, when you can vote early, who will help you on election day and how they will be trained, how your signature on your vote-by-mail ballot will be validated and just how much assistance you will be able to get navigating the voting process. For some populations, such as the elderly, those with disabilities, college students and others who move often, those without a permanent address or those held in jail, these decisions can result in insurmountable obstacles.

## WHERE TO START

*While many specifics will depend on the practices and political climate in your county, this roadmap can shed some light on your path.*

### **Step 1. Research.**

Use this report and other resources to understand voting access and identify the issues most important to you and your community. Take some time to research how the issue plays out in your community and understand local relationships and stakeholders. Visit the Florida Department of State's Division of Elections website, <https://dos.myflorida.com/elections>, to find your local supervisor of election and their website, which should be a good starting place for your research.

### **Step 2. Gather allies.**

It is important to build a coalition of allies who can meet regularly to plan your voting access advocacy campaign. Identify organizations working on civil rights, elections and similar issues, in your community, many of whom are identified in this report. Reach out to them and other sympathetic organizations that could help. Be sure to include faith leaders, business leaders, those with political connections or influence, and those impacted by existing barriers to voting in your working group.

### **Step 3. Prioritize and plan.**

Within your working group, agree on a goal, strategy, and roles. What policy do you want adopted locally? Who is impacted by this policy? Who would oppose a change? What influence do people in your group, or their acquaintances, have with key policymakers and stakeholders?

### **Step 4. Develop your message.**

Once your goal and path are set, develop a set of talking points to clearly convey your message to leaders, community members, and media. Partner organizations can help. Let these talking points guide your policy conversations to keep you focused on your goal.

### **Step 5. Build local relationships.**

Schedule a meeting with your Supervisor of Elections to share your concerns and ask for the specific policy change(s). Be collaborative, but firm. Come with solutions but be open to their experience. You can also host a public forum, especially during election season, and ask the supervisor of elections, and any candidates, to attend. Be sure to invite local stakeholders, elected officials, community leaders, and media. Prepare questions ahead of time to highlight the importance of your policy goal. After each meeting or forum, regroup with your working group to plan the next round of advocacy.

### **Step 6. Get your message out.**

Letters to the Editor, Editorials, news interviews and public forums are all great ways to engage and inform the public to grow support for your campaign.