Maine Council of Churches

Our Voice Our Vote 2026

A non-partisan voter empowerment guide

Use this QR code to download your free copy

The Maine Council of Churches has been committed to advancing peace and justice in the public square since we were founded back in 1938. Today, threats to voting rights and election misinformation raise dire concerns about the health of our democracy. **In such a time as this, people of faith cannot afford to be silent**.

MCC seeks to be faithful to the spiritual mandate that **everyone is made in the image of God, and that all people are created equal and endowed with inherent dignity**. For that reason, we believe **people deserve the freedom to vote in free, fair, and safe elections**.

That's why **MCC is deeply concerned about the massive assaults on democracy** currently underway in the United States—attacks that make it more difficult for people—especially those who are marginalized in our society—to exercise their sacred right to vote.

We believe the 2026 election will be a test of our democracy and our faith. We can pass this test with flying colors, but only if we **ALL**

GET INVOLVED to protect the freedom and fairness of the election,
VOTE,
and **DEMAND** that those in power respect the outcome.

So, we have prepared this non-partisan Faithful Voter Guide to inspire and empower Mainers of faith and good conscience to **get informed and take action**.

By equipping people with clear, accurate guidance, faith communities can help ensure that all are able to exercise their civic responsibility and participate in the democratic process safely and fairly.

Through voting, we help determine the future for our families, our neighbors (whom we are called to love), our communities, and our nation. We are stronger when more people can fully participate in civic life. And **massive voter turnout is one of the most effective ways to thwart authoritarian attempts to intervene and subvert the outcome of elections**.

Democracy is our history, but it is not guaranteed, nor should it be taken for granted. Voting ensures that it is also our future.

*The Maine Council of Churches is a **non-partisan** non-profit coalition of seven Protestant denominations and two independent churches that have common roots in Hebrew and Christian scripture. These member denominations and associate member churches represent more than 400 local congregations in Maine with over 50,000 parishioners in their care.*

*Together, we speak with a prophetic voice of faith in the public square, connecting people within, through, and beyond the church to help build a more just, compassionate, and peaceful world. We ground our work and witness in one central, simple value: **love of neighbor**.*

The vote is precious. It is almost sacred. It is the most powerful non-violent tool we have in a democracy.

John Lewis

Faithful citizenship is one way we love our neighbors and seek the flourishing of our communities.

Bishop Vashti McKenzie

Churches can play a pivotal role in encouraging each voter to create a plan to vote and to make their voice heard.

National Council of Churches
"Our Voice Our Vote"

BEARING WITNESS IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE TO OUR FAITH

Casting a ballot and ensuring that our neighbors' right to cast theirs is protected, is one way to see God's will done in our communities-on-earth as it is in heaven. It's about stewardship—an opportunity to demonstrate care for one another's well-being and safeguarding the common good in our society.

Voting bears witness in the public square to our faith and the values we hold most dear. **With our vote, we demonstrate concern for the common good and most especially for the well-being of our most vulnerable and marginalized neighbors.**

Not voting has become increasingly dangerous to the economic and spiritual vitality of our communities. We simply cannot afford to stay home on Election Day.

As part of our stewardship in a democracy, we have an obligation to make informed decisions and **choose leaders who will enact laws that do justice and love mercy**. We have the power to vote for leaders who will support life-sustaining policies and programs that

- Protect the full civil, political, and economic rights of every person regardless of race, creed, age, gender expression, or sexual orientation
- Eliminate hunger and poverty and work to benefit the most vulnerable
- Ensure affordable and accessible healthcare
- Create safe, sustainable communities with affordable housing
- Promote sustainable use of Maine's natural resources and seek to reverse the effects of climate change
- Implement tax structures and budgets that reduce disparities between rich and poor, strengthen democracy, and provide greater opportunity for everyone.

(from MCC's "Moral Agenda")

Without active, vigilant, and informed voters, the nation is at risk of electing public officials with policy agendas that harm those Jesus called "the least of these," and electing officials who might dismantle democratic principles and ignore the need for justice, righteousness, and equity in our laws.

<u>TAKE ACTION:</u>

Affirm your commitment to exercising your right to vote with integrity, discernment, conviction, and understanding this and every election season. Commit to using your vote to "speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute, and defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Proverbs 31:8-10).

> Do all that you can to encourage and empower your community to join you in engaging in the sacred democratic process of voting. Share helpful and accurate information and resources.

Woe to those who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people, to make widows their spoil and to plunder orphans.

Isaiah 10:1-2

God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Luke 4:18

Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:3-4

VOTING RIGHTS IN MAINE

Because the U.S. Constitution gives power and control over elections to the states, each state can (and does) have different rules and laws for how they conduct voter registration, voting, and elections. *This voting rights information is specific to the State of Maine*.

- You are eligible to register and vote in Maine if you are a U.S. citizen who is 18 years old or older on Election Day and a resident of the municipality where you want to vote.

- To register to vote in Maine (which can be done before or on Election Day) you must provide approved identity documents (ID).

- Registered Maine voters do not need to show ID to get a ballot.

- Registered Maine voters can vote by absentee ballot without giving a reason. Maine municipalities are permitted but not required to have drop-off boxes for absentee ballots (so that you don't have to send your completed absentee ballot through the mail—see next section for information about potential problems with relying on the US Postal Service to deliver absentee ballots). In-person absentee voting ("early voting") is available in Maine at town clerk's offices no later than the 30th day before an election and until Thursday before the election.

- If there are questions about your voter status you cannot be turned away from your voting place and must be allowed to cast a challenged (provisional) ballot. No one has the right to question your eligibility to vote except for authorized election officials.

- If you are in line when your voting place closes, you must be allowed to register and/or vote.

- You may see a sample ballot and get help with reading and marking your ballot. If you make a mistake you can receive a new ballot. You have the right to use the Maine Accessible Voting System for in-person voting or to request an accessible electronic absentee ballot. You are not required to know how to speak, read, or write English to vote and can bring/use a translator (they can't be your employer or labor union rep). Some voting places may provide language assistance.

- It is against the law for you to be harassed or pressured about how to vote on Election Day within 250 feet of your voting place. Report incidents to a poll worker. You can also call the non-partisan Election Protection Hotline 866-OUR-VOTE (687-8683).

- Maine election law prohibits wearing apparel within 250 feet of voting places that has political messaging in support of candidates. Election workers can ask you to remove such hats or cover such items of clothing while you are within 250 feet of a voting place.

- It is illegal for the government to send ICE or other armed federal agents to the polls. If you witness them at your voting place, report it to election workers and call the non-partisan Election Protection Hotline 866 -OUR-VOTE (687-8683).

  If you believe there are ICE or other federal agents at your polling place, document details of what you witness by recording audio, taking written notes, or recording a voice memo on your phone. Your documentation should include: number of agents and activity, if voters were present, location within or around polling place, any letters, details, or patches visible on the agents' clothing, the precise time you witnessed the agents, what equipment the agents had and if they were armed. Maine allows video recording outside the "guardrail area" (where election workers and voting booths are located) at a polling place as long as you remain at least 15 feet away from any voter.

  Use caution before sharing information (especially on social media) about what you believe to be federal agents' presence. If you mistake ***local*** law enforcement (who are sometimes required or requested to be present) for federal agents, it could cause unnecessary panic and lead some people to stay home and not cast their vote.

  If you are stopped or questioned by federal agents or law enforcement while voting, ask whether you are free to go. If they say yes, calmly walk away. You have the right to remain silent and to request an attorney. You do not have to unlock your cell phone without a warrant, and you can object to a search of your belongings by saying "I do not consent to a search," without obstructing access. (Officials may have legal authority to conduct the search anyway.) If you witness someone else being stopped or questioned by federal agents, you can share this important information with them out loud as it is happening.

If you have or observe others having problems with voting either before or on Election Day, or if you are not allowed to vote, call the Maine Elections Division 1-888-868-3763. You can also call the non-partisan Election Protection Hotline 866-OUR-VOTE (687-8683).

TAKE ACTION:

Be sure to **carry a "blue card"** (distributed by MCC—"Voting Rights in Maine"). You never know when this credit-card-sized brief summary of voting rights could come in handy for you or someone nearby.

Distribute blue cards at your house of worship, along with the QR code to download this voter guide.

Encourage people to use early voting whenever possible. It is an effective way to help voters avoid intimidation efforts by bad actors and federal agents. Early voters don't usually have to stand in long lines like they might have to on Election Day at polling places. Ballots of early voters are completed and turned in in-person to the town clerk, so it minimizes the chance of interference or subterfuge and avoids the involvement of the U.S. Postal Service.

It is wise to regularly **check the status of your voter registration in the weeks leading up to the election**. If your name has mistakenly been purged from the rolls, you may catch problems early and can take steps to correct it so that your vote will count. **You can safely check your voter registration status at vote.org**. (BEWARE: Do NOT use the website created by Elon Musk and his super PAC, votesafe.org, to check your status—it is set up to collect and sell your personal information, including the IP address you used to access the site, your date of birth, location, and every link you click. It's dangerous and you should not use it!)

WHY AND HOW TO AVOID SENDING ABSENTEE BALLOTS THROUGH THE MAIL

Because of current litigation making its way through the courts, and because of credible news reports that the US Postal Service has already begun developing a plan to interfere with the delivery of absentee ballots in some states, **it is highly recommended that, whenever possible, you do not rely on the USPS to deliver your completed absentee ballot to your town clerk**.

Using drop boxes and voting early are good ways to avoid needing to send your completed absentee ballot through the mail. Hand deliver your completed absentee ballot to an in-person drop-off box if one is available in your town or go to the town clerk's office and vote early in-person.

TAKE ACTION:

Not having access to transportation can be a significant barrier to folks using drop boxes or voting early. Congregations can meet a real need by offering "GOTV" (Get Out The Vote) rides for folks who couldn't otherwise make it to a drop box or to vote early.

To maintain your house of worship's 501c3 status, you must offer rides to voters in need regardless of their party affiliation and regardless of which candidate they plan to vote for. Your transportation ministry should be a non-partisan effort to encourage *everyone's* civic engagement and participation in our democracy's free and fair election system.

Even if your congregation doesn't develop a GOTV rides program, you can still make a difference on your own (if you have access to reliable transportation) by offering rides to family members, neighbors, friends, and fellow parishioners who don't have access to transportation.

PROTECTING MAINE'S ELECTION WORKERS

In the past, they worked behind the scenes, quietly carrying out their duties without much praise or criticism. Now **election workers find themselves on the front lines of an unprecedented wave of threats and harassment just for doing their jobs**.

Since 2020, baseless claims of fraud and conspiracy theories have unleashed a storm of threats and actual violence against our election workers. They are receiving death threats, getting doxxed (having personal information about them and their families shared via social media), being "swatted" (having police and emergency services dispatched to their workplace or home by hoax callers), getting harassed, stalked, and even assaulted. All this has instilled fear among those who faithfully uphold state and federal election laws under immense pressure.

To safeguard the integrity of our election system, we must protect these dedicated individuals who serve our country, state, and communities. They ensure every vote is counted accurately and transparently and attacks on them have no place in our democracy.

In 2022, the Maine State Legislature passed a law that provides standardized training for election officials and makes it a crime to intentionally interfere by force, intimidation, or violence in the work of an election official while they are performing their duties. The law also provides reporting requirements for threats and harassment.

Together, we must stand united against threats and interference so that we can secure the future of our free and fair elections.

TAKE ACTION:

Individually, **each of us should find ways to thank our local and state election officials for their service and support them by volunteering as poll workers or poll chaplains.**

In conjunction with your efforts to thank and support your local election workers, **your congregation can host a screening of the documentary, The Officials,** which offers a behind-the-scenes look at a politically diverse group of election officials who, despite facing threats, harassment, and intimidation, remain committed to serving their communities by running secure elections and ensuring every eligible vote is counted accurately. Issue One, a non-partisan non-profit organization working to strengthen the foundations of our democracy, offers a discussion guide and screening toolkit for the film (issueone.org/the-officials-toolkit).

BECOMING A POLL CHAPLAIN/PEACEKEEPER AT POLLING PLACES IN MAINE

One way to support voting rights and free and fair elections is to **get trained as a poll chaplain**. Poll chaplains are faith leaders and members of the laity who bring a calming, non-partisan presence on Election Day to polling locations that are particularly at risk of being targeted for voter intimidation.

MCC's trusted partner, **Multifaith Justice Maine, is offering training that is Maine-specific** (better than generic trainings being offered by national groups). Their program covers the fundamentals of poll chaplaincy, de-escalation tactics, and possible election day scenarios, along with a brief overview of voting rights. Upon completion of the training, you will be invited to choose a location to serve from a list of high-risk polling places and then be added to a communication thread for next steps.

TAKE ACTION:

For more information and to register for a training, go to https://actionnetwork.org/forms/poll-chaplaincy-and-peacekeeper-training?source=direct_link&

RESOURCES

Multifaith Justice Maine Poll Chaplain Training – https://actionnetwork.org/forms/poll-chaplaincy-and-peacekeeper-training?source=direct_link&

Department of the Secretary of State for the State of Maine, Maine Voter Guide videos and other information about voting in Maine: https://www.maine.gov/sos/elections-voting/information-about-voting

MCC Member Denominations:

- Episcopal Church "Vote Faithfully" election engagement program: https://www.episcopalchurch.org/who-we-are/ministries/office-of-government-relations/election-engagement/
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Election Engagement Toolkit: https://cdn.elca.org/cdn/wp-content/uploads/electionengagementtoolkitfinal.pdf?_ga=2.78729300.199111392.1788712082-1519331014.1788712081
- Presbyterian Church USA Office of Public Witness: https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/life-witness/ministry-areas/public-witness/domestic-opw
- Religious Society of Friends (Quaker) FCNL Engagement in the 2026 Election: https://www.fcnl.org/engagement-2026-election
- Unitarian Universalist Association "UU The Vote": https://www.sidewithlove.org/democracy
- United Church of Christ "Our Faith, Our Vote, Our Voice" campaign: https://www.ucc.org/our-faith-our-vote/
- United Methodist Church resources for free and fair elections: https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/civil-and-human-rights/free-and-fair-elections

National Council of Churches Your Vote Your Voice Voter Empowerment Guide: https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/FINAL_DRAFT_2026_NCC_Voting_Matters_Toolkit_Version_1_1.pdf

North Carolina Council of Churches Faithful Voter Guide and Companion Toolkit: https://ncchurches.org/faithful-voter-guide-companion-toolkit/

Interfaith Alliance "The Vote Is Sacred" training series: https://www.interfaithalliance.org/training?utm_campaign=iaf_training&utm_source=web&utm_medium=homepage&_gl=1*17py7hi*_gcl_au*MjAwMDc1ODk5NC4xNzg4NzExMjM4*_ga*MTM0MjM0NjAwOC4xNzg4NzExMjM4*_ga_XR6R0JP486*czE3ODg3MTEyMzgkbzEkZzAkdDE3ODg3MTEyMzgkajYwJGwwJGgxNzM1MzA4MjAz

Sojourners Faith Companion Action Guide 2026: https://sojo.net/files/resourcedocs/Interfaith_ver_Executive_Override_Faith_Companion_Action_Guide_final.pdf

Faiths United to Save Democracy Voter Protection Toolkit: https://96b8598a-8ea4-4cd1-a4b8-a199f8463040.filesusr.com/ugd/62c5d7_32936566b1cd40e08084adb997fa43d6.pdf

Check the status of your voter registration (it's recommended that you do this regularly right up to Election Day to be sure you haven't been mistakenly purged from the rolls) at https://www.vote.org/ **You can safely check your voter registration status at vote.org**. (BEWARE: Do NOT use the website created by Elon Musk and his super PAC, "votesafe.org," to check your status—it is set up to collect and sell your personal information, including the IP address you use to access the site, your date of birth, location, and every link you click. It's dangerous and you should not use it!)

To report any problems with voting, call the non-partisan Election Protection Hotline, 866-OUR-VOTE (687-8683)

Maine Council of Churches

THE Episcopal CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The United Methodist Church

HopeGateWay

Union Church
Interdenominational Christian Church

www.mainecouncilofchurches.org

YouTube

202 Woodford Street, Portland, Maine, 04103, 207-772-1918

Scan this QR code to help MCC represent the values you hold most dear.