

## **Foundation Support for Election-Related Activities** *It's Legal, It's Effective, It's Doable!*

Public and private foundations may support nonpartisan election-related activities! Foundations should consult their lawyers for details, but in general foundations have a great deal of flexibility in election-year grantmaking. The key is not to fund or engage in projects that appear to support or oppose candidates for public office.

These are some of the election-related activities foundations may support:

- Public education and training sessions about participation in the political process
- Candidate education on public interest issues
- Candidate debates and forums
- Nonpartisan get-out-the-vote drives
- Nonpartisan voter registration drives (with certain restriction for private foundations)
- Canvassing the public on issues

Foundations may also support ballot measure work through specific project grants.

As 501(c)(3) organizations, foundations may not:

- Make campaign contributions
- Make expenditures on behalf of candidates
- Endorse candidates for public office
- Communicate anything that explicitly or implicitly favors or opposes a candidate

Foundation officials and employees acting in their individual capacities may work on political campaigns outside of work hours or using their available leave, but they may not use foundation facilities, equipment, personnel, or other resources to provide support or oppose a candidate or campaign.

Election years provide a window of opportunity for nonprofit activists. Candidates running for office are more likely to listen to organizations advocating for causes, and communities need help bringing the issues, programs and policies that affect their lives to the attention of candidates. Supporting election-related activities is an effective way for foundations to strengthen democracy by broadening the civic dialogue and giving a voice to underrepresented communities.

If you want to get involved, we can help. The Alliance for Justice's Foundation Advocacy Initiative provides technical and strategic assistance, workshops, and publications specifically for foundations on federal tax and election laws so you can safely navigate the rules. Contact us at the phone number or e-mail address below.

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