

Supporting your employees on election day



Currently, voting day is not a federal holiday in the United States.

While some states require employers to give voting time off, many don't have such voting laws. Despite this, more and more employers are offering a unique benefit that allows employees PTO to vote, while others provide non paid time off.

Paid time off enables more people to vote without worrying about getting to work late, taking time off on election day, or being tardy due to voting lines. Often employees don't vote because they simply can't put in a full day at work, manage family or school responsibilities, and get to the polls.

Giving employees time to vote without having to sacrifice financially to do so can also create a better corporate culture. Many see voting as their civic duty and want to participate – and supporting workers when it's time to cast their ballot can go a long way to improving morale.

According to [Pew Research](#), voter turnout in the U.S. is lower than other developed countries, “since 1976, voting-age turnout has remained within an 8.5-percentage-point range – from just under 50% in 1996, when Bill Clinton was re-elected, to just over 58% in 2008, when Barack Obama won the White House.”

Employers can help enact change and support employees who want to vote through workplace policies and initiatives.

How to show support

Employers can show support by offering options that enable voting. Such support can start before election day. Encouraging employees to register to vote, vote by absentee ballot if they will not be able to go in person, and encourage early voting can help all workers feel that voting is essential for the company.

Pre-election day support

Providing information on registering to vote, [deadlines](#) for registration, and voting locations can help employees navigate pre-election. You can make it easy for employees to register to vote by keeping the forms in the office or sharing a registration link in the company newsletter.

You can also educate employees about when they might need to update their registration – for example, if they have moved, changed their name, or updates their political affiliation.

Due to COVID-19, many employees may decide to vote by [mail](#). Help keep them informed of deadlines and share your state's guidelines about absentee voting.

In some cases, you may want to invite local politicians to meet with employees – primarily if they work in an area of government related to your business. Help educate employees to understand how their vote matters and how the outcome of an election might affect them personally.

On voting day, employers can promote voting by eliminating meetings on voting day, temporarily closing offices, offering paid time off, offering a partial day off, or offering flexible work hours.

Share the laws

Another way to support employees is to offer general education around voting and voting laws. A comprehensive communications campaign around voting laws, registration deadlines, and voting methods can help employees make informed choices. You can also help employees by ensuring they know their local [polling](#) place and let them know what [identification](#) they will need to vote.

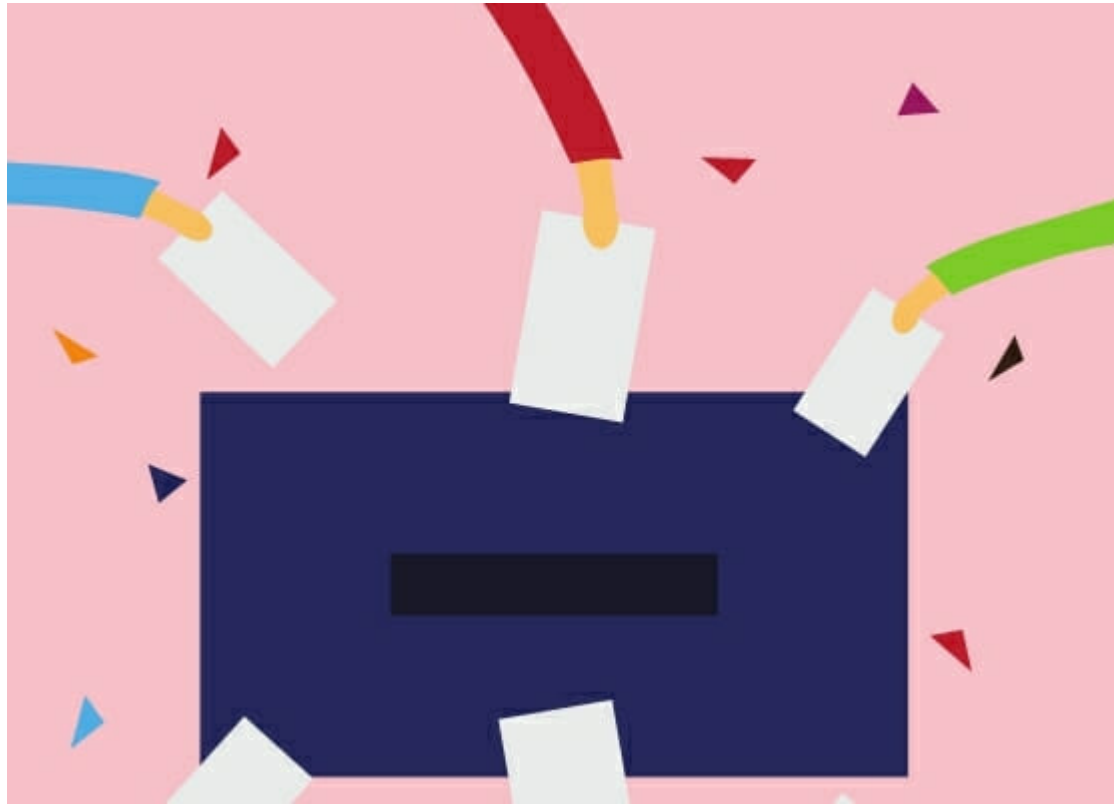
[Some states](#) have voting laws that require employers to allow time off for voting. Share your support by knowing the voting laws in your state and adequately communicate them to your employees.

As an employer, your role is to remain impartial but enable employees to act on their civic duties. It's not your position to judge, but instead to provide knowledge and support. You can encourage voting, but don't try to influence how employees vote.

It isn't ethical for a company to sway employee opinions on elected officials or coerce them into voting for a particular party or candidate.

It is, however, acceptable to share how candidates may affect your company if they were elected. By sharing the way your company operates and how it can be affected by future politics, employees can be informed about how their vote may affect their livelihood.

In some states, some laws prohibit companies from retaliating against employees based on their political affiliation or voting record, and even if there is no such law in your state, it is essential to avoid discrimination for political affiliation.



Communicate about time

off and voting rules

According to electionday.org, 100 million+ voting-eligible Americans did not vote in the 2016 election, and 35% of nonvoters said that school and work scheduling conflicts prevented them from getting to the polls.

To help enable voter turnout, create a policy, and communicate about time off for voting. Detail what is allowed, if the time off will be paid or unpaid, and how much time is permitted.

In many cases, the employer may need an advance notice that employees would like time off to vote. If this is a requirement, be sure to outline it in your policy. Also, some employers require proof that voting was completed if employees use company time to exercise their voting right.

Ensure that voting policies are applied equally to all employees, even if you operate in multiple states. If your state has laws about allowing employees to vote, be sure to comply. There are severe penalties for businesses that don't follow state law.

While you are communicating about voting, it is also an excellent time to remind employees of your workplace policies around political discussions and displays. Despite what many think, employees are not entitled to debate in the workplace about their political beliefs or controversial issues.

In general, companies can ban political displays and conversations that are purely political. However, some conversations and political discussions tied to union support may be legal. Be sure to know the rules in your state when crafting such policies.

Every company culture is different, so be sure to vary your messaging so that all employees receive the information. This might mean using newsletters, emails, company social networks, or old fashioned paper posters to ensure the message reaches all employees.

Why support voting?

Especially during COVID-19, enabling employees to vote on a flexible schedule is essential.

Allowing flexibility may allow a safer voting day - preventing polling locations from becoming too crowded during the hours before and after traditional workdays and allowing for better social distancing. Several states have implemented [new rules](#) and election dates because of the pandemic, so help employees stay informed by regularly sharing updates with them.

In some cases, the law supporting PTO to vote is required, but even if it isn't, enabling employees to vote is the right thing to do. Political responsibility is frequently being recognized as a business imperative, and not only that, your workplace values, reputation, and ability to attract talent may be enhanced by your socially responsible approach.

Supporting employees' ability to vote is suitable for a healthy democracy and shows that your business is an excellent corporate citizen.

By encouraging employees to vote, you indicate that you care about them and their lives outside of work. As the opportunity to vote in the next election approaches, take the time to craft a thoughtful plan to encourage responsible and engaged citizenship.