



Dear Federally Employed Women (FEW) Voter Registration Leaders:

Voting is a basic political act in a democratic society; it is the way we elect public officials and ensure that those officials are responsive and accountable once they take office. The turnout for the 2008 election was broadly predicted to be high by American standards, and a record number of votes were cast. The final tally of total votes counted was 131.3 million, compared to 122.3 million in 2004 (which also boasted the highest record since 1968, after which the voting age was lowered to 18). Expressed as a percentage of eligible voters, 131.2 million votes could reflect a turnout as high as 63.0% of eligible voters, which would be the highest since 1960. This 63.0% turnout rate is based on an estimated eligible voter population of 208,323,000. (Ref: Wikipedia Encyclopedia.)

Recognizing that informed and active voter participation is a vital part of the legislative process, Federally Employed Women (FEW) has given special project status to voter education and voter registration and is encouraging our members to conduct Voter Registration Drives in their communities. This guide will lead your FEW Chapter through all phases of the registration process. The steps outlined can be followed precisely or used as a guideline for planning your own voter registration activities.

**If we want to put legislators in office that support our priorities, then we need to get them elected. We can only do that if we all vote.**

FEW members registered more than 12,500 voters for the national elections in past voter registration drives, and FEW plans to continue the momentum this year. Your efforts and help will enable informed voters across the nation to lift their voices and elect local and national politicians who will respond to their needs.

We are also urging members to keep us informed of your efforts. Send us an email or call the FEW headquarters office and let us know how you are doing. We will use your success stories to encourage others to conduct their own drives and obtain media attention to our efforts.

Thank you for your assistance, and together we can make a difference.

Sincerely,  
National President  
*Sue Webster*

National Vice President for Congressional Relations  
*Matthew F. Foss*

# BACKGROUND

## **WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS**

Women's impact on the political process is evident throughout history, but it was not until 1920, with the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, that women finally won a legal and legitimate voice in American politics.

After women were granted suffrage, the voting rate remained quite low for a number of years, much to the disappointment of women's voting rights activists. After World War II, however, the female voter turnout rate began to climb. During past wars and as women moved into the paid labor force in large numbers, their political activity increased. The impact of public policy on their wages and benefits acted as a catalyst for many women to learn more about the political process and take action by voting.

As the number of women entering election booths began increasing, it became evident that women were voting differently from men. This trend, termed the "gender gap," was documented as early as the 1950's, but did not gain widespread recognition until the early 1980's.

The gender gap is the difference between the political attitudes and voting behavior of women and men. A female policy agenda differs from the traditionally male agenda because it tends to address multiple issues and cuts across special interest lines. Specifically, researchers and political pollsters discovered that women make a difference with their votes on such issues as social welfare spending, civil rights, peace and environmental concerns.

The gender gap has been responsible for turning the tides of several elections since 1990 and is now an integral part of the election process. More women than ever before have been elected to seats at the local, state and national levels. With strength in numbers, leadership experience, and organizational skills, women have the best opportunity since 1920 to exercise their political clout. Women now look to the political arena to address discrimination and justice issues.

To preserve the gains that women have made and to ensure that our issues are taken seriously, we must flock to the polls in November. Plus, politicians are already targeting women as essential to winning any office this year.

By registering more citizens to vote and ensuring that they are informed voters, FEW will assist in holding elected officials accountable once they take office, ultimately creating a force that will affect legislation in the future. Additionally, these registration activities will increase your local FEW Chapter's visibility and identify FEW as a valuable resource in your community.

## **LAWS CONCERNING POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

While conducting your voter registration drive, it is important for you to know that several laws have been passed to alleviate barriers and clarify procedures concerning voting rights of U.S. citizens in other countries, voter registration and political activity of federal employees.

### ***A NOTE FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES STATIONED OVERSEAS***

According to the Overseas Citizens Voting Rights Act of 1975, all citizens residing or temporarily living outside the United States can vote by absentee ballot for federal offices as long as they meet the usual voting qualifications in their home states. Citizens stationed or living overseas should ask for absentee registration and voting forms from election officials in their home counties (the counties in which they last resided), or they can use the federal postcard application available from military bases, American embassies, or consular offices.

Overseas citizens can also use the Internet to obtain absentee ballots. Visit [www.fec.gov](http://www.fec.gov) for general information, and refer to Appendix A in this guide for the website of your specific state's requirements and instructions for obtaining these ballots.

### ***A NOTE ABOUT THE CHANGES IN VOTER REGISTRATION LAW***

The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) was passed by the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress and signed into law by President Clinton on May 20, 1993. Also known as the Motor Voter Act, this law was designed to expand access to voter registration by creating a standardized federal registration form (see page 13). It requires 48 states and the District of Columbia to allow mail-in registration and to accept a "universal" form as a valid application for voter registration. This form is the one document that allows citizens to register to vote from anywhere in the United States.

The National Form can be used to

- Register out-of-town tourist and convention groups
- Register people from surrounding States who work, shop or attend events in a central city
- Conduct voter registration drives, especially at colleges and universities.
- Register individuals at State agencies or other public offices.

There are some exceptions:

- New Hampshire town and city clerks will accept this application only as a request for their own mail-in absentee voter registration form.
- North Dakota does not have voter registration.
- Wyoming cannot accept this form under State law.

### ***A NOTE ABOUT THE HATCH ACT***

The provisions of the Hatch Act cover all civilian employees in the executive branch of the federal government except the President. Employees of the U.S. Postal Service and the District of Columbia are also covered by the Act.

During the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, FEW worked diligently to enact Hatch Act Reform Amendments Act in order to eliminate restrictions on federal workers participating in the political process. The Hatch Act Reform Amendments Act (Public Law 103-94) was signed by President Clinton on October 6, 1993, and became effective February 3, 1994.

Although federal workers are still prohibited from running for partisan political offices themselves, employees have much more leeway in political campaigns as a result of the Act. Voter registration and get-out-the-vote activities are fully permissible under the Hatch Act as long as they are carried out in a nonpartisan manner. (See below for detailed information about political activities permitted and prohibited under Hatch Act Reform).

Most employees are free to participate in the following types of activities in their free time: campaigning for or against candidates in partisan elections, distributing campaign material, organizing material, organizing or managing political rallies or meetings, circulating nominating petitions, working to register voters, and making campaign speeches for candidates.

#### **Permitted Activities for Federal Employees**

- May be candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections
- May register and vote as they choose
- May assist in voter registration drives
- May express opinions about candidates and issues
- May contribute money to political organizations
- May attend political fundraising functions
- May attend and be active at political rallies and meetings
- May join and be an active member of a political party or club
- May sign nominating petitions
- May campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, or municipal ordinances
- May campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections
- May make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections
- May distribute campaign literature in partisan elections
- May hold office in political clubs or parties including serving as a delegate to a convention

#### **Prohibited Activities for Federal Employees**

- May not use their official authority or influence to interfere with an election
- May not solicit, accept or receive political contributions unless both individuals are members of the same federal labor organization or employee organization and the one solicited is not a subordinate employee
- May not knowingly solicit or discourage the political activity of any person who has business before the agency
- May not engage in political activity while on duty, in any government office, while wearing an official uniform or while using a government vehicle
- May not be candidates for public office in partisan elections
- May not wear political buttons on duty

# **YOUR REGISTRATION DRIVE**

## PRE-REGISTRATION DRIVE ACTIVITIES

Voter registration and education drives should begin with a series of activities which will ensure that your entire drive has structure, that the individuals working on it are knowledgeable about voter registration procedures, and that you have the support necessary for a successful drive.

### STEP 1:--Setting up the Committee

The Chapter President should appoint a member to act as the coordinator of the voter registration project. This person will lead the activity through all of the organizational stages of this project: working with registration officials, planning events, organizing get-out-the-vote strategies, and reporting to the Federally Employed Women's (FEW) National Office. In addition to the coordinator, a committee should be appointed to take on specific tasks and responsibilities. For example, the Chapter President may designate individuals to head efforts such as information gathering, public relations, volunteer coordination and coalition building.

A Steering Committee can help and advise the Coordinator. Steering Committee members should be chosen on the basis of the expertise and resources they can bring to the drive and their reliability in following through on assignments and handling their share of the responsibilities.

### STEP 2:--Researching Election Laws

Every state has different election laws, and many counties have specific registration requirements, therefore, each FEW Chapter must research the laws of its state **before** proceeding with the registration drive. Contact state and county elections offices (refer to Appendix A for registration contact information for each state, as well as registration deadlines) for more information. Committee members may be given responsibility for finding information on registration statistics, precinct maps, directories, voter lists, location and voting rates of target groups.

Also contact Matthew Fogg, FEW's Vice President for Congressional at ([CongressionalRelationsVP@Few.org](mailto:CongressionalRelationsVP@Few.org)) or Janet Kopenhaver ([janetk@eyeonwashington.com](mailto:janetk@eyeonwashington.com)) FEW's Washington Representative to request a complete National Voter Registration Form publication. This contains specific Application submission requirements and instructions for each state.

### STEP 3:--Forming Coalitions

Voter registration drives require many contacts, skills and volunteers. Most likely, there are many groups in your area planning voter registration drives for the national elections. If possible, join with organizations that share FEW's goal of increasing the participation of women in the electoral process.

Although it takes time to organize any coalition effort, the rewards are immense. Forming coalitions brings the opportunity to pool resources, increase your volunteer force and avoid duplication of effort. Additionally, coalitions may be helpful in the future as lasting relationships are often built upon specific events.

## PLANNING THE REGISTRATION DRIVE

Strategic and thorough planning is crucial for a successful voter registration campaign. At this stage of the drive, you will determine the direction of the drive and how to activate your plans. The following steps will help you to stay focused once your campaign is underway.

### STEP 1:--Choose Target Populations

The first step in planning the registration drive is to choose a target population. Your committee may decide to target college students, elderly people, women who cannot easily leave their homes, homeless people or any combination of these and other groups. It is important to target those groups who are often left out of the regular voting process in your area. Remember to target your own Chapter members! They should all be registered and active voters.

### STEP 2:--Choose Activities

Following is a list of techniques which can be used, depending on your target population(s) and the voter registration requirements in your state.

- A. **Tabling**—Setting up booths in public places is simple and fun, but is most effective when planned carefully. First, choose areas and activities where the target population(s) normally congregates. For example, if your Chapter wants to increase the registration of younger women, tabling on college campuses is most appropriate. Other suggestions include setting up tables outside public places such as shopping areas, religious centers, concerts, fairs, bazaars and/or sporting events.

Second, volunteer coordination must be well planned. In general, two or more volunteers working two-hour shifts are appropriate. Be considerate so that none of your volunteers work alone or for too long.

Third, make sure there are always plenty of registration forms and supplies available to the volunteers. (See supply checklist below) Remember to set up a recordkeeping procedure to keep track of new registrants.

Finally, gain visibility for your FEW chapter by creating a sign displaying the chapter name and identifying the activity as part of a nationwide FEW project.

- B. **Door-to-Door Canvassing**--This involves going through neighborhoods and encouraging people to register to vote. If the committee has discovered from election officials that large numbers of unregistered people live in certain areas, they should target those potential voters. Volunteers should work in pairs with one trained, experienced canvasser and one (or more) recruits. Identify all canvassers as legitimate registrars in some way (with badges or similar clothing).

Remember—whatever activity you conduct, bring lots of applications with you, plus the address where they need to be sent. On page 13, you will find the Application Form—make a stack of copies for your drive, and try to get citizens to fill them out in front of you. You might want to bring pre-addressed envelopes with you and offer to mail the applications for registrants.

### STEP 3:--Develop a Calendar of Events

To meet registration deadlines, it is important to develop a calendar of events and stick to it. Time lines may include dates for committee and/or coalition meetings, volunteer training events, or get-out-the-vote projects. Additionally, interest in elections generally increases as they near. If the time line can be organized so that detailed plans are ready for activation as close to the election date as possible, chances of registering more voters are much better.

### STEP 4:--Set Goals

To motivate volunteers and have a standard by which to measure your Chapter's success, it is important to set goals for the registration drive. Even if your committee is unsure of its ability to register a large number of voters, set some type of numerical goal. It is also beneficial to create a visual aid by which the activities can be consistently tracked.

### STEP 5:--Train Volunteers

Prior to the events(s), it is important to hold a meeting with the volunteers not only to make sure that they are prepared for the activities, but also to give them confidence in their ability to encourage potential voters. They should be well trained in registration procedures and they should understand the importance of their positions in ensuring that the registration drive runs smoothly. Emphasize that FEW's registration activities are non-partisan and that no literature, buttons or materials regarding individual candidates or political parties should be visible.

### STEP 6:--Generate Publicity

Publicity is a crucial part of any successful voter registration drive. Your Chapter's efforts are worthy of local coverage and will attract media attention. Below are several suggestions to increase the visibility of the activities.

- A. Fliers—Preparing fliers are extremely easy and beneficial if simply organized and widely distributed (refer to page 12 for a sample). Specifically, include who, what, why, where and when. Emphasize the importance of registering to vote and encourage people to participate. Fliers can be distributed door-to-door, handed out at meetings where they would be of interest (for example at PTA gatherings) or enlarged and placed in highly visible areas such as churches, banks, stores, laundry rooms and on telephone poles.
- B. Public Service Announcements—Public service announcements (PSA's) are promotional messages on behalf of non-profit groups which radio and television stations will air as a community service. Contact various stations at least one month in advance of the proposed announcement and ask the managers if they provide these services. If they do not, encourage them to do so.

Find out the length of time available and write the announcement accordingly. PSA's must be typed in upper case; triple spaced, and printed on letterhead if possible. Keep the message simple and brief, with direct and forceful language. Indicate when the message is to be aired, the name of the group, a contact person, and phone number.

- C. Press Releases — As with the public service announcements, press releases should be concise and stress the importance of voter participation. Ideally, they should be typed on letterhead and include a contact name, phone number, title, and city of origination in the upper hand corner and the date in the upper left hand corner. (See page 13 for a sample press release).

Distribute the press release to local papers, radio and television stations one week prior to the event(s). Most libraries have lists of contact people, addresses, fax numbers and Email addresses of local media sources. After the releases are sent, follow-up calls are essential because most media make last-minute decisions regarding what will be covered each day. The appointed volunteer may need to make several calls, even up to the hour before the event. Inquire as to whether they received the information and if so, how it will be covered. Reinstate the importance of the activity and the need for its immediate attention.

#### STEP 7:--Conduct the Registration Drive

One of the most important parts of the actual drive is keep track of all of the voters who have been registered. Accurate records will enable you to contact new voters and remind them to vote as the election nears. Additionally, if your Chapter has set goals, there will be an accurate measure of success. Careful records from each Chapter will also assist the National Office in coordinating FEW's efforts across the nation.

If preparations have been carefully organized, your Chapter's voter registration activities will be successful. Volunteers should be well prepared, providing assistance whenever needed, and organizers should make sure that everything is running smoothly.

### **Checklist of Materials for Voter Registration**

- Identifying sign or poster
- Name tags for volunteers
- Voter registration forms/pre-addressed envelopes
- Voter registration form instructions for your state, and general instructions
- Dates for the upcoming election
- List of local community polling places
- Pens/Pads of paper to record names and contact information for new registrants
- Information on absentee voting
- Clipboards



## SAMPLE FLIER

### \_\_\_\_\_ CHAPTER

announces its local

## VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

PLACE: \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITY: \_\_\_\_\_

Voting is the basic political act in a democratic society—a way to elect public officials and to ensure that those officials will be responsive and accountable once they take office. In recognition that informed and active voter participation is a vital part of the legislative process. Federally Employed Women is launching its voter education and voter registration campaign.

FEW is a not-for-profit membership organization established in 1968 to eliminate sex discrimination and sexual harassment in the federal sector and enhance career opportunities for women in government.

For more information, call: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*EVERY VOTE MAKES A DIFFERENCE\*\***

## Door-to-Door Canvassing and Phone Contact Script

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am a volunteer for Federally Employed Women's voter registration project. Are you a registered voter?

As you probably know, 2012 is an important election with a number of offices to be filled, including our Nation's President, and important issues to be decided. Yet many Americans do not exercise their right to vote nor even register to vote, which threatens our democratic values.

But now it is very easy to register. The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) was passed by the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress and signed into law by President Clinton on May 20, 1993. Also known as the Motor Voter Act, this law was designed to expand access to voter registration by creating a standardized federal registration form. It requires 48 states and the District of Columbia to allow mail-in registration and to accept a "universal" form as a valid application for voter registration.

So, simply fill out this form, and mail it to *[provide address]*. The deadline for registering to vote before the November elections is *[provide date]*.

Or if you prefer to fill out this form online, FEW created a grassroots website that allows you to do so. Visit [www.capwiz.com/few](http://www.capwiz.com/few), click on the Elections section, and then type in your state. Once you have filled out all the relevant information, you can download the form, print and sign it and mail it to the address given.

Remember to vote on November 6, 2012. It is very important for you and our community. During this presidential election year, it is up to you to make sure that your voice is heard on important issues affecting federally employed women.

Thank you.

**[NOTE: Some people may not know whether or not they are registered. If in doubt, err on the side of duplicate registrations—it is better than no registration at all.]**



## **PRESS RELEASE FEDERALLY EMPLOYED WOMEN (FEW)**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
[DATE]

Contact: [NAME]  
[TEL]

### ***Local Organization Launches Voter Registration Drive***

(City, State)—The \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter of Federally Employed Women (FEW) has launched a voter registration drive to help activate area residents for the 2012 elections. FEW’s voter registration and education campaign is designed to assist local citizens to complete registration forms and get to the polls.

Voting is a fundamental right and privilege in the United States. FEW wants to promote and facilitate an educated and active voter base in our community, town and state. According to **[Chapter President]**, “It is important that everyone participates in our electoral process and election. That is why we are embarking on this important project to assist our neighbors and friends in registering to vote.”

***[Add in information about your upcoming event or registration initiative for your Chapter’s Voter Registration Drive.]***

FEW is a private, non-profit organization working for the advancement of women in government. Founded in 1968 after Executive Order 11375 -- added sex discrimination to the list of prohibited discrimination in the federal government—was issued, FEW has grown into an international organization serving more than one million federally employed women.

***[Add information about your Chapter, and how to get more information on the registration drive]***

###

APPLICATION FORM TO BE INSERTED HERE

## **POST-REGISTRATION DRIVE ACTIVITIES**

After your Chapter's tireless efforts, it will be time to take a break, evaluate your work, and congratulate everyone for a job well done.

### STEP 1:--Appreciate

Thank all of the people who participated and volunteered in any way, including groups that helped publicize the activities (grocery stores, banks, media sources). Create thank you notes or small gifts of appreciation.

### STEP 2:--Evaluate

Critically evaluate your Chapter's efforts, documenting strong and weak points. Taking time on this phase will help future voter registration efforts. Everyone's opinions and observations are important.

### STEP 3:--Celebrate

Plan a celebration for all of the people who were involved. No matter how small, a party would be a great way to unify your members for future events.

### STEP 4:--Contact FEW's National Office

Report results to the FEW National Office. Your Chapter's efforts will be collected with those from Chapters across the country, bringing increased visibility to the national organization

## **GET-OUT-THE-VOTE**

Get-out-the-vote (GOTV) is a common term used to describe the activities that occur after the actual registration drive. To ensure that the people who have registered actually go to the polls, it is important to contact them in some manner.

### 1.—Corresponding with new registrants

If it is only possible to reach the new registrants by mail, develop a letter to be sent to all voters reminding them when and where the actual elections will take place (see sample on page 15).

### 2.—Making telephone contact with new registrants

If it is possible to get the phone numbers of the people who have registered, phone each of them individually just before the election to remind them to vote. Distribute sample dialogue which can be used as a guideline for volunteers when making calls. Organize a phone tree through which each volunteer will have voters to call, and find one individual who will be responsible for reminding the volunteers to call.

Encourage all potential voters to visit FEW's grassroots website ([www.capwiz.com/few](http://www.capwiz.com/few)) or Project Vote Smart ([www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org)) to get specific information on candidates voting records and views on issues. Help develop educated voters! Distribute the summary sheet on page 16 to voters.

## Sample Letter to New Registrants



Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Congratulations! You are now registered to vote. Now it is time to take the very important next step—to be an informed voter casting your ballot. The next election will be on November 6, 2012, an election to fill several local and national offices, as well as to decide who our next President will be.

As a registered voter in *[precinct number]*, your polling place is located at *[place/address]*. You can get there on *[detail public transportation information]*. If you drive, parking is available at *[name of street]*. The polls will be open at *[time]* and close at *[time]*. In this county, voting is by *[voting machine, punch card ballot, written ballot, etc.]*.

By registering to vote, you have made the first move toward taking a part in your government. Take the next step by becoming an informed and active voter. Remember—your vote can make a difference!

Sincerely,

*[Name]*  
Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_ Chapter, Federally Employed Women



## **Be an Educated Voter**

### **Simple Ways to Get Information on Political Candidates**

#### **FEW's Grassroots Website—[www.capwiz.com/few](http://www.capwiz.com/few)**

Visit FEW's Grassroots website, go the Elections section, type in your state, and locate the candidate you are seeking. This site gives you general information on the election and selected views of the candidates on certain issues

#### **Project Vote Smart—[www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org)**

If you want more specific information on the candidate's political record as ranked by selected interest groups, visit this site. Project Vote Smart is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that provides voting records on elected officials at the state and national levels. Anyone can obtain a wide variety of resources from the organization free-of-charge, including biographical profiles, political histories, addresses, telephone numbers, campaign finance information, ratings by national organizations and interest groups, and a complete voting record back to the early 1990's.

When you visit the site, go to the Issues and Legislation section and choose an issue from a long list of possibilities. Then, choose the interest group that best represents your views on these issues. The results will display that group's rating of how the legislators voted on bills in that category. If the voting record gets a good grade from the interest group that you most agree with, then that candidate is probably a good choice for you.

Keep in mind that ratings done by special interest groups are biased. They do not represent a non-partisan stance. Nevertheless, they can be invaluable in showing where an incumbent has stood on a series of votes important to you—the voter.

# APPENDIX A

## **2012 Voter Registration Deadlines**

### **General Election – 2012**

Visit > <http://www.presidentialelection.com/>

**OR**

[http://www.longdistancevoter.org/verify voter registration](http://www.longdistancevoter.org/verify_voter_registration)

