



KEEP THE FAITH: COUNT EVERY VOTE Weekend of Action

October 30-November 1

#CountEveryVote

FAITH
IN PUBLIC LIFE

BEND THE ARC
a jewish partnership
for justice

People of faith demand: **COUNT EVERY VOTE!**

As people of faith, we believe every person's inherent dignity entitles them recognition in our democracy. Every vote is sacred. That's why we must ensure that every vote is counted.

Nothing about 2020 is normal, and neither is this election. Because of the large number of absentee ballots cast and extra Coronavirus safety measures, counting every vote will take more time than usual this year. We will not know the winner of the presidential election on November 3 and perhaps for a few weeks after. Faith leaders have a critical role in preparing our communities for an extended election season.

As we anticipate delayed or disputed election results, faith leaders can uphold the values of justice and democracy, by communicating to your community and lawmakers that every vote must be counted and the outcome of the election honored.

People of faith are essential to the movement to ensure the future of our democracy. This work begins now.

We invite you to join faith leaders across the country from October 30 – November 1 for Keep the Faith: Count Every Vote Weekend of Action to preach the message that counting every vote is a matter of dignity and justice.

In this toolkit, you'll find talking points to engage your faith community and the media, sermon guides, op-ed templates, and social media graphics and posts. These materials will help you communicate with your community and join faith leaders across the country who will be spreading the important message that people of faith are getting out the vote and calling for all votes to be counted.

Let us know your plans for *Keep the Faith: Count Every Vote Weekend of Action*, and make sure you *sign up* so we can track the location of faith communities protecting our democracy in this critical time.

We recognize that these resources are limited and would be grateful for your partnership in sharing resources with us that represent your faith tradition. You can email organizing@faithinpubliclife.org to share more resources for us to include in this toolkit.

TALKING POINTS on 2020 Election Season

Faith leaders hold a unique position and voice to help people of faith navigate this unprecedented moment. We invite you to use these talking points as a guide while addressing your congregation, in sermons, while talking to the media and on social media. [You can view our full messaging guide here.](#)

As people of faith, we believe every person's inherent dignity entitles them to a voice in our democracy. Every vote is sacred.

We are committed to making sure every eligible voter is heard, even if it takes longer than expected. Election officials must fulfill their responsibility to count every vote. Politicians and the media must resist the temptation to prematurely declare a winner before our votes are counted. Whether you're Black, Brown, Native, Asian or White, we all have a right to be counted. Counting every vote is a matter of justice.

People of faith are committed to making sure every vote is counted, even if it takes longer than expected.

Millions of people voted by mail or absentee to protect their health during the coronavirus pandemic. It takes election officials longer to count and verify absentee ballots because they have to be double-checked. In some states, counting absentee ballots can't even begin until after the polls close. It's natural to feel on edge right now as we wait, especially with so much on the line. But it's also OK for election officials to take the time they need to be sure that the vote count is fair and accurate.

When election officials take the time to count and verify every ballot, that's a sign that our democracy is working.

One of our most important rights as Americans is the right to vote, and election officials have a duty to ensure that every eligible vote is counted. We have to count every ballot that is cast – from members of the military who sent in their vote from overseas, to people with pre-existing conditions voting absentee because of coronavirus, to people who waited in long lines on Election Day.

For democracy to work for all of us, it must include us all.

For democracy to work for all of us, it must include us all, whether you're Black, Brown, Asian, Native or White. That means that we need to take the time to make sure every vote is counted. We shouldn't rush the process, but make sure every voter's voice is heard. This is about respecting every person's dignity and rights.

Do's and Don'ts

Do	Don't
Help people remain composed, but also ready to act.	Focus excessively on doomsday scenarios that promote fear and helplessness.
Talk about what we are for: counting every vote, democracy, human dignity, justice	Focus on what you are against, instead focus on values.
Speak from your faith tradition, and be a moral voice.	Try to sound like an election law expert or political pundit.
Frame completing the count as fundamentally about democracy.	Frame completing the count as a partisan struggle.

[You can view our full messaging guide here.](#)

SERMON GUIDES and PRAYERS for a Faithful Election

Faith leaders are essential in the struggle for justice and a democracy for all and can use their platforms to promote a message that every voter has dignity and every vote must be counted. Below you will find sermon guides and prayers to assist you in engaging your faith community during Keep the Faith: Count Every Vote Weekend of Action (October 30-November 1) and in the following weeks of this election season.

Jewish Resources for Faith, Justice, and Democracy

Prayer for Voting by Rabbi David Seidenberg

Behold, I am intending through my vote / through my prayer to seek peace for this country, as it is written (Jer. 29:7):

“Seek the peace of the city where I cause you to roam and pray for her to YHVH (Adonai/God), for in her peace you all will have peace.”

May it be Your will, YHVH, that votes be counted faithfully, and may You count my vote as if I had fulfilled this verse with all my power.

May You give a listening heart to whomever we elect and may it be good in Your eyes to raise for us a good government that will bring healing, justice and peace to all living in this land and to all the world, and upon Jerusalem, a government that will honor the image of God in all humanity and in Creation, for rulership is Yours.

Just as I have participated / Just as I will participate in the election, so may I merit to do good works and to repair the world through all my efforts, and through the act of... [add your pledge]... which I pledge to do on behalf of all living creatures, in remembrance of the covenant of Noah's waters to protect and to not destroy the earth and her plenitude.

Give to all the peoples of this country the strength and the will to pursue righteousness and to seek peace as a unified force to uproot racism and violence and to make healing, good life and peace flourish here and throughout the world and fulfill for us the verse (Ps. 90:17):

“May the pleasure of Adonai our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; make the work of our hands endure.”

Jewish Texts On Fair Voting And Just Elections

Prepared by Rabbi Mark Hurvitz and Rabbi Ed Stafman

In the form we know them today, popular elections – where all adult citizens vote for their leaders – are the product of western democracies. In western democracies, as time has passed, modern technology has allowed for widespread campaigns and for hundreds of millions of votes to be cast and counted. Although Jewish tradition long predates western democracy, over an extended time, Jewish tradition takes an increasingly democratic approach to choosing leaders. That tradition evolves along a clear path from Moses' appointment by God to a Jewish duty to vote for governmental leaders and even assess taxes. It follows, therefore, that for this duty to vote to be meaningful, the election must be just and votes must be fairly counted.

The Jewish trend towards democratic elections is rooted in the notion that we view government as a human partnership with God. Where Torah predicts that Israelites would want civil rulers instead of priests and prophets, Moses told the people: “[B]e sure to place over yourselves the king that God elects for you” (Deut. 17:14-15). Tanach records that God chose the first king, Saul (1 Sam. 9:16-17). The second king, David, however, was chosen by God but confirmed by “all of Israel’s elders” (2 Sam. 5:3). The third king, his son Solomon, ruled in David’s bloodline but “all the people” together ratified his accession (1 Kings 1:39). This democratic shift becomes clear in the Talmud, which opined that not even God would select rulers without consulting the people (B.T. Berachot 55a).

With the destruction of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel, the role of the people in selecting their leaders and supporting secular government slowly expanded and extended. It began with the proposition that civil government is important. Thus, as in ancient days, we still “pray for government’s welfare, for without fear of it [we] would swallow each other alive” (M. Avot 3:2). The duty to create and support government was so important that it became one of the few duties that Jewish law recognizes for all, Jew and non-Jew alike (B.T. Sanhedrin 56b). To R. Moses Maimonides (the “Rambam,” 1135-1204), the purpose is to ensure public order (Mishneh Torah, Melachim 9:14); the Talmud extends the purpose to include all social welfare (B.T. Avodah Zara 4a).

This is even more evident today where public safety, health, social equity, the rule of law – the very fabric of life in an interdependent world – require wise, effective and democratically accountable government. When Jews elected

tax collectors to remit Jewish taxes to secular authorities, Moses Isserles (the “Rema,” 1520-1572) held that all taxpayers were to assemble and vote “for the sake of heaven” (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 163:1). Declining to vote means ignoring Torah’s notion of human partnership in the “heavenly” work of government. Some 200 years later, R. Moses Schreiber Sofer of Pressburg (the “Chatam Sofer,” 1762-1839) held that taxpayers who didn’t vote forfeited their rights to shape election outcomes and were bound by those outcomes.

For the full message and more Jewish texts, view here.

These resources were collected by T’ruah: the Rabbinic Call for Human Rights. Visit the *T’ruah Election Center* for more resources to engage your faith community.

Christian Resources for Faith, Justice, and Democracy

Election Season Sermon Notes – November 1, 2020: All Saints’ Day by the Rev. Nathan Empsall, Episcopal priest and Faithful America campaigns director

Scripture readings: Revelations 7:9-17, 1 John 3:1-13, Matthew 5:1-12

On All Saints Day, we think of the whole communion of saints, honoring those who have come before us and those who will come after. Right now, many of us are preparing to vote. Thinking of our past loved ones and what they did to leave us a better world, let us do the same for those who will come later. Let us vote this week – and work in the weeks ahead to protect the counting and the results of those votes – with the values of social and racial justice, democracy, human dignity, and creation care in mind, for the sake of the saints yet to come.

This year, vote counting will take longer than usual due to extra absentee ballots, security measures, and coronavirus precautions. We may not know the winners for weeks. That is okay! The extra time means every vote can be counted – a moral imperative for justice and democracy, responsibly respecting the voices and dignity of the most vulnerable voters. That’s something worth waiting for.

In the past, the saints who have come before us in this country have always managed to vote, count the votes, and uphold the results, even in times of great crisis. We held successful presidential elections amid the Civil War, the Great Depression, and both World Wars. Now, like those before us, it’s our turn to prove that nothing – not even the pandemic – will stand in the way of our commitments to justice and democracy. We will vote, count every vote no matter how long it takes, and protect the results against any threats to democracy.

Each of today's readings refer to our fundamental values of justice and dignity. They can be woven together to talk about our call to love and stand with God's most vulnerable children by ensuring that their votes are counted and the results are honored:

- *Revelations 7:9-17*: The author has a vision of the future in which he sees people who have gone through a great ordeal but now sit with God and hunger no more, thirst no more, suffer the sun's scorching heat no more. Knowing they will be called to wear robes of white and sit with God, this election season we will honor those who hunger, thirst, and suffer.
- *1 John 3:1-3*: A beautiful passage that says we are all called children of God, loved by God. Let us share that love with all our fellow children, secure in the hope of God this passage promises, by standing for justice, democracy, and dignity all November election season long.
- *Matthew 5:1-12*: The Beatitudes further reference those we love and care for

To view the entire Election Season Sermon notes, go here. You can also review Faith America's sermon guides for the following Sundays of election season here.

Seeds for Election Season Prayers by Edith Rasell, Ph.D, UCC Minister for Economic Justice.

Gracious God,

we are blessed to live in a democracy
where each citizen has the opportunity and the responsibility
to participate in our decision-making processes.

Our faith belongs in the voting booth as well as in the sanctuary!

Justice-Seeking God,

we know that our policymakers impact our lives:
they have power to ensure that all your children
are equally part of this society;
they can require that taxes are just and that our
nation's income goes to benefit the many;
they can help to make all jobs good jobs that pay living wages;
they can send us to war or foster peace.

Our faith belongs in the voting booth as well as in the sanctuary!

Community-Building God,

we know that questions of public policy are also matters of faith, for they help us to give substance to the Beloved Community which you have called us to shape. You desire each of us to live a life of wholeness; to have the opportunities to fulfill our potential and become the persons you have created us to be; to live secure in the knowledge that if we fall on hard times, a strong, public safety net will be there to support us.

Our faith belongs in the voting booth as well as in the sanctuary!

But Holy One,

This election season has gone on too long! We are turned off by a circus which obscures critical issues, reduces complicated choices to sound bites and encourages personal attacks. We want this election season to be over! Help us to find a way to cut through the confusion and the spin. Give us patience to consider and make wise choices that will lead ever closer to your vision of the Beloved Community.

Our faith belongs in the voting booth as well as in the sanctuary!

Muslim Resources for Faith, Justice, and Democracy

Sample Message to Muslim Communities Provided by Munes Tomeh, Attorney and Professor of Islamic Law, Zaytuna College

لَوْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُوا أَمْرَهُ وَتَذَرُوا صَفْوَتَهُ لَتُكْمِلُنَّ كَلِمَةَ اللَّهِ وَتَرْضَوْا حُكْمَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْتَدِي لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا لِمَا بَدَّ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

Allah subhanahu wa ta`ala says in the Noble Qur'an, in surat Aal-`Imran: "Let there be among you a community calling to the good, enjoining right, and forbidding wrong. It is they who shall prosper" (3:104). And in a famous Hadith, the Prophet salla Llahu `alaihi wa sallam is reported to have stated something similar to this:

هَدِيْب هَرِيْغِيْلِف اِرْكَنْم مَكْنَم يَأْرَنْم
، هَنْاسَلْبَف عَطْتَسِي مَلَنْف
، هَبَلْقَبَف عَطْتَسِي مَلَنْف
نَامِيْإِلَا فَعَضْأَكَلْدُو

"Whosoever of you sees wrong, then let him change it with his hand, and if he is not able to, then let him change it with his tongue, and if he is no able to, then let him change it with his heart [that is, let him recognize it as wrong inside his heart], and that ["changing" it in the heart] is the weakest of faith."

We see from this verse in the Qur'an and selection from the sayings of the Prophet, *salla Llahu `alaihi wa sallam*, that "calling to the good, enjoining right, and forbidding wrong" are things that Allah has commanded us to do. It is not sufficient for us as a community to simply pray, fast, perform Hajj, and to concern ourselves with ourselves and our worship, while ignoring that which is around us. We have to be engaged, discussing issues of common concern, "calling to the good." We must enjoin that which is right, and we should not sit idly by when we see wrong, but rather should be people, as individuals and as a community, that forbids wrong through the various means at our disposal.

One of the most important Hadiths that is a basis for law in general--whether Islamic law and even secular notions of law is: *ال ررض و ال رارض*

"Let there be no harm, nor any reciprocation of harm." Based upon this Hadith, Muslim scholars have posited a general legal principle *ررض لا لازى* "Harm must be removed."

Based on the ideas above, we can understand that it is a responsibility of our community, both as individuals and collectively, to be engaged in the larger society around us, in which we work towards justice and equity in our community.

More Muslim Faith Messages:

This election will determine the future of our children as American Muslims; a vote for candidates who speak out against Islamophobia is a vote that challenges this racist rhetoric per the Prophetic responsibility of *amr bil ma'rouf wal naahee* 'an al munkar (the obligation to enjoin the good and forbid the evil).

There are many other important ethical issues at stake in this election, including income inequality, state violence against our Black sisters and brothers, and the very future of our planet - which Islamic teachings clearly emphasize as a religious and moral issue with the numerous Qur'anic verses and ahadith emphasizing the importance of acting as good stewards and khulafa (vicegerents) on this Earth

As people of this country and this state, who pay taxes and contribute in other ways to the country and community we live in, it is imperative that we make use of a right that others have given their lives for, both here and around the world.

These resources come from the Muslim Civic Engagement Toolkit created by America Indivisible, Engage Action, MPower Change, Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), and Poligon Education Fund.

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

- Every person's vote is sacred. We all have dignity and deserve a voice in our democracy – no matter our race, bank account or zip code. Counting every vote is a moral issue and a matter of justice. *#CountEveryVote*
- People of faith are committed to making sure every vote is counted, even if it takes longer than expected. When election officials take the time to count and verify every ballot, it's a sign that our democracy is working. Every person's vote is sacred. *#CountEveryVote*
- It's OK to be concerned about the election or worried about the time it will take to count every vote. But it's also OK for election officials to take the time they need to be sure that the vote count is fair and that everyone is heard from equally. *#CountEveryVote*
- In the midst of this election season, people of faith must demand that every vote be counted. Every person who cast their ballot has dignity and our government has the responsibility to recognize it through counting every vote and honoring the results. *#CountEveryVote*
- Nothing about 2020 has been normal and neither is this election. Remember that because of absentee ballots and additional coronavirus safety measures, we won't have the presidential election results as soon as we are used to and that is okay. It means our democracy is working. Our first priority is making sure that every vote is counted. *#CountEveryVote*
- I'm participating in the Keep the Faith: Count Every Vote Weekend of Action because I believe every vote is sacred and must be counted. As we head into this unprecedented election season, may we be patient for the results and ready to demand all votes be counted. *#CountEveryVote*

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA GRAPHICS



[Click here to download these graphics for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.](#)

OP-ED TEMPLATE

Along with preaching and engaging your faith community, you can also promote the message that every vote must be counted through writing an op-ed, blog, or longer social media post. Below is a template you can use as a base and then add your unique voice. Be sure to identify yourself as a person of faith, or leader, and share how your faith motivates you to speak out for our democracy and demand every vote be counted. If your piece gets published, email organizing@faithinpubliclife.org so we can share it!

[Sample Title] Let Every Vote Be Counted, Every Voice Heard

Open with a personal value and / or declaration of fact and faith in action.

- I live my life by faith, and as a faith leader, it is sustaining me through this difficult election season.
- All across America, millions of voters have turned out in overwhelming numbers to vote early, whether by mail or in-person. This is an inspiration and an affirmation of democracy.
- By their choice, they're speaking up for something more important than partisan belief: A divinely given dignity that gives us the right to be heard.

State clearly the duty/ opportunity offered this election season, and why it's vital. Include a call action.

- Each ballot is an extension of that sacred right. The right to be heard at the ballot box is the moral foundation of democracy. We must protect the vote and count the vote – no matter how long it takes or who tries to get in the way.
- Whether you're Black, Brown or White, all voters have a vital role to play in this fight. We know that voter suppression – from long lines to intimidation – deliberately targets people of color. We must unite to overcome politicians who attack equal voting rights for their own personal gain.
- Now it's election officials' turn. They have a moral duty to count every vote. They must count every vote with a level of transparency and accuracy that respects the promises of democracy.

Push for/demonstrate faith's continued role in engagement and action steps.

- We need to be ready for the likelihood that decisive results will not be announced Election Night. It's natural to feel on edge right now, especially given the importance of this election. But one of our most important rights as Americans is the right to vote, and election officials have a duty to ensure that every eligible vote is counted.
- Like everyone, I would prefer to go to bed knowing the outcome. But ensuring that every person's vote gets counted is more important.
- Like most Americans and American institutions, election offices are working with reduced staff and added safety precautions due to coronavirus. These new facts of life, and the high levels of early absentee voting are sure to slow the process, but that's a sign that our democracy is working.

Add a another action step and reiterate why it's critical:

- On Election Night, our collective call for everyone to be heard must be louder than clamors for an early result. There is too much on the line.

Share concise moral demands

- Millions of voters have already voted. Millions more will wait in lines to hand deliver their vote amid the pandemic. No matter when you voted or where you voted, no matter your race, religion or ZIP Code, your ballot must be honored.
- A national commitment to a full, careful count of every vote is what engaged voters deserve. It's also the best measure we have as a country to help restore the trust in our fragile voting system.
- Now is the time for election officials to turn up the volume on their pledges to protect the process and voters rights
- We ask the media and politicians at every level to resist the temptation of declaring early winners or even lamenting delays in the verification of ballots.

Circle back to personal, faith-centered opening.

- Still, I'm hopeful because I choose to see the early turnout and voter engagement much like the mustard seed, a moment filled with immense possibility for positive change. We can hold the faith because we've felt its force. Across every belief tradition, faith has moved minds and mobilized the masses to push against impossible odds and great darkness.
- "Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark," writes the great poet Rabindranath Tagore.

Painting a picture of hope you'd like to see actualized. Tie the hope to policy with a bit of passion.

- Elections are opportunities to push toward the realization of American ideals. Justice is still worth working for, and the vote count is worth waiting for.
- Every ballot is a voice that must be heard. History is listening, and so must our election officials.

More election protection resources:

Quick-Start Guide to Protecting Democracy: What Rabbis and Cantors Can Do

Election Resources for Religious Communities

Upcoming Count Every Vote Faith Trainings

Vote Common Good Resources for Pastors

Poor People's Campaign M.O.R.E. Toolkit

RALLY SIGN POSTER

**People of faith demand:
Count Every Vote**

[Click here to download this graphic.](#)