



FAITH ON THE FRONTLINES VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE GUIDANCE

This document draws on insights from Over Zero.

Document purpose

Best practices and messaging approaches for responding to incidents of political violence and intimidation in the days before and immediately after the election. The guidance in this document is meant to inform your approach across a range of settings and situations.

Best practices for every situation

Proven strategies from Over Zero for responses to political violence that prevent its spread.

Always	Never
Verify information before sharing it	Never engage in speculation
Appeal to shared identities (e.g., “Ohioans of every faith”) and broadly shared values	Never spread vague descriptions of violent incidents
Call attention to positive, peaceful actions that people are already taking	Never activate fear and anxiety
Be precise in identifying who is responsible for violent acts	Never attribute violent actions to entire categories of people
Always seek to empower your audience – help them see that acting makes a difference	Never activate defeatist feelings
Affirm pro-democracy values and actions	Discuss violence without condemning it

Pre-Election Day intimidation and violence in your community:

While incidents of political violence around the 2022 elections have been few in number so far, intimidation, threats, and attacks against voters and people who run elections at the local level are real. Fortunately, you can proactively take action to help prevent violence and to stop its spread if an incident occurs locally.

Messaging essentials

Key #1 – While pointing out threats, avoid inflating their scale and severity. Those who seek to do harm want fear to spread as widely as possible. Instead, help people feel empowered by emphasizing coming together.

Key #2 – Acknowledge local threats, place them in historical context, and emphasize how we, as a community, have overcome intimidation and violence in the past.

Key #3 – Publicly show up as diverse faith leaders in solidarity with targeted communities of voters and targeted public officials. This requires preparation in the form of building relationships across religious and racial lines, monitoring threats, and making response plans in advance of potential incidents.

For more detailed recommendations, see [this guide](#) from our partners at Over Zero.

Values to invoke in our messages and stories: Courage, dignity, community, coming together, and voice.

Example message:

Across faiths and across race, Georgia voters are showing up today in solidarity and support for everyone's freedom to cast a ballot without fear or interference. We are nonviolently standing up for each other's dignity and freedom to thrive – values we share across religions. We saw during the Civil Rights Movement that when people come together as communities of faith, freedom overcame violence and division, and people of all races gained greater access to choosing our leaders. We will not be turned around by those who attempt to deny our dignity and freedom based on race or religion or gender. We are coming together to exercise our freedom to choose the future of our communities' leaders and policies through our sacred vote.

Voter intimidation or violence at polling places during the election

Intimidation and violence at voting locations, particularly polling places on Election Day (November 8), are an important scenario for which to prepare. Here are actions you can take to respond in a way that prevents the spread of violence and helps voters feel safe.

Key #1 – Develop an action plan in advance and assemble or join a group of faith leaders ready to act. Start connecting now with a diverse range of faith leaders in your community who are willing to speak out publicly in the event of violence or threats at polling places.

Key #2 – Show up publicly with your group if you feel safe doing so. Wear clothing or accessories that identify you as a faith leader. Have a simple, clear collective message that speaks to the specific situation and reflects the guiding principles in this document.

Key #3 – Remember, the overarching purpose is to empower your community to participate in the election safely – not just warn them of danger. Model courage and respect, set positive norms, and remember the unique leadership and voice you have as a leader of faith.