

# UE STEWARD

## FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

UNITED ELECTRICAL, RADIO AND MACHINE WORKERS OF AMERICA • OCTOBER 2018

Engaging our rank-and-file members in our nation's political process can be a vexing challenge for any UE officer or shop steward, but it's important work that needs to get done, especially during an election year.

"Politics is concentrated economics," a wise, old philosopher once remarked. Workers who ignore politics will soon find their wages, hours and working (and living) conditions being undermined by big business and their paid-for-politicians in Washington, D.C., our state capitols and local governments. So, it's very important for workers to be involved in politics. We can't allow the bosses to determine who our elected officials will be. We wouldn't want them to pick our union's officers and shop stewards, would we?

The working class still makes up the overwhelming majority of our nation's population and has the power to determine its future, but only if it's organized, educated and mobilized to exercise its power at the ballot box. Making sure our members are registered to vote, educated



on the ins and outs of the political process, and informed on where the candidates stand on the issues important to workers is just as much the responsibility of UE officers and shop stewards as fighting to defend our members' interests at work.

UE officers and shop stewards need to have a plan to organize, educate and mobilize our members to get out the vote during an election year.

Don't get bogged down in endless debates about Democrats versus Republicans, liberals versus conservatives, etc. We need to stay focused on where the candidates stand on the issues important to workers. UE isn't beholden to either political party and only supports candidates that have earned our support. So, let's roll up our sleeves and get busy.

*Here's a GOTV checklist:*

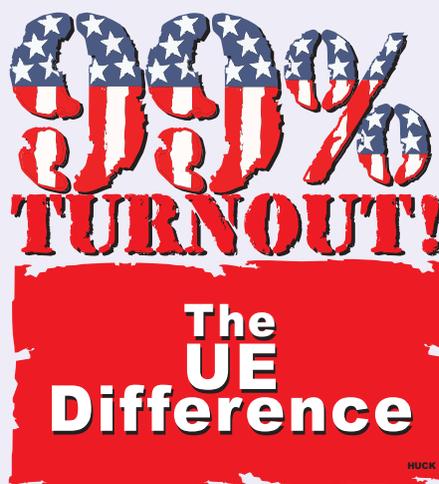
- ✓ Put the November 6 elections on the agenda of your next union meeting. Activate your local's shop stewards' network – and review the following suggested activities in order to maximize voter education and turnout.
- ✓ Visit the UE website at [www.ueunion.org](http://www.ueunion.org) for regular political action updates.
- ✓ Sign up for the UE **Activist Net** on the UE website. It's an email alert service that will send

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UE's approach to elections and politics – political action – is very different from those of most other unions. UE certainly doesn't ignore politics – to the contrary, our union recognizes that election outcomes have a huge impact on our members and all workers. Our particular kind of political action also enables our union to discuss and then democratically decide the direction our union should take when it comes to the issues we support – or oppose.

UE calls its approach to politics "rank-and-file independent political action." It's "independent" because our union does not, and never has, offered unconditional loyalty to any political party or to any politician.

It's "rank-and-file political action" because it centers on educating and mobilizing our members to make their voices heard, in order to push legislators and government officials to support policies favorable to workers. This includes rank-and-file lobbying – setting up meetings where members talk directly to elected officials about our issues. It also includes petitions, rallies, demonstrations, phone and email campaigns. We push



hard to convince public officials to vote for pro-union legislation, to oppose attacks on working people, and implement policies that our union supports.

UE locals in several states conduct annual "political actions days" in their state capitols to present UE's legislative agenda to lawmakers, and when needed, to defend themselves from attack. The national union organizes periodic national political action conferences in Wash-

ington, where members receive information on key issues and visit the offices of their senators and representatives, seeking their commitment to support union priorities. And as critical issues arise, on the federal, state, or local government levels, UE locals and regions organize and mobilize members to fight for workers' interests.

UE has never been shy about criticizing any politician – Democrat, Republican or otherwise – for actions that we believe are harmful to working people. UE has also been very cautious about making political endorsements, and the national union does not give campaign contributions to candidates, nor do we have a political action fund that donates money to candidates. Some UE locals maintain political action funds, with money raised from voluntary contributions, and sometimes make campaign contributions to candidates whom the local union membership has voted to endorse. It's more important for UE local unions to distribute information to members about the candidates, and support the campaign activities of candidates who have earned the union's support.



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you periodic messages about the election as well as other UE action updates.

✓ Consider organizing a get-out-the-vote phone bank or texting bank for your local union. This is especially necessary since many workplaces are

decentralized or spread over several shifts. Pick an evening or two in late October and get to work on the phones. Several people making calls or sending texts while one researches phone numbers will accomplish a lot. Try it!

✓ Reach out to other UE locals in your area and combine your efforts. It's always better when you have some help. Don't hesitate to reach out to young activists, retirees and laid-off members for help.

✓ Distribute UE leaflets at an unorganized workplace nearby. Non-union workers need to hear the UE message now more than ever.

✓ Connect with others in your community who are working to get out the vote. What other unions or organization are active in your community and working to get out the vote on Election Day?

Contact them and plug in to magnify your efforts. Look for Our Revolution chapters at [ourrevolution.com](http://ourrevolution.com) or locals of the "Labor for Our Revolution" unions: ATU, BMW, NNU, APWU, ILWU.

✓ Organize a plant gate picket or roadside demonstration to ask the people in your community to get out the vote on Election Day. Contact your local news media. A nice photo in your local newspaper or spot on the evening TV news of a rank-and-file group working to get out the vote will spread the news to other working people all through your region.

Need help brainstorming or have questions? Contact your UE Regional leadership or staff person. Don't forget to take pictures, and send in reports to the UE News at [uenews@ueunion.org](mailto:uenews@ueunion.org) or via fax at 412-471-8999.

## Dealing with Voter ID Laws

If you live in a state that has adopted a voter ID law, and if you, a family member or friend do not have a valid driver's license, now is the time to find out what to do. You need to determine if you (or a loved one) possess another form of identification that will be accepted at the polling place, and if not, take action to get an ID that will be accepted.

17 states require voters to present photo identification. 17 states accept other forms of identification.

Three states where UE members live – **Indiana, Virginia and Wisconsin** – have adopted strict photo ID requirements for

voting. Voters in these states are entitled to receive a non-drivers' license photo ID from the state, but you need to learn where to go and what documents you must bring to obtain a photo ID.

In **Louisiana, South Dakota and Texas** voters are requested to show a photo ID, but a voter who does not bring photo ID to the polls may vote by signing an affidavit. Make sure UE members know this, as the election officials won't necessarily offer this option.

Six states where UE members live require voters to produce some form of identification, but not necessarily a photo ID. These states are **Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, New Hamp-**

**shire, Ohio, and West Virginia.** If you don't have a driver's license or other photo ID, a bank statement, pay stub or utility bill showing your address will do.

In any of the states with a voter ID law, if you show up at the polls without an acceptable form of ID, you should be allowed to vote with a provisional ballot, and then to produce the necessary ID within a specified time period following the election. Many other states require first-time voters to show ID. To find out about voter ID requirements in your state, go to [vote411.org](http://vote411.org). Click the tab for "Voting in Your State," then choose the topic "ID Requirements" and select your state.

## Early Voting

Over the past several years, a number of states have offered voters the option of voting before Election Day, even if you have no plans to be out of town. Unlike absentee voting, early voting generally involves voting in person at an election office or other designated government office. (Absentee voting, in most states, is by mail.) Also, early voting ballots are counted on election night, while absentee ballots are generally counted

in the days immediately following the election.

Early voting, with no excuse or reason required for doing so, is now available in 34 states and the District of Columbia, including the following states where UE members live and vote: **California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, North**

**Carolina, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, West Virginia and Wisconsin.**

In other UE states not listed here, there is no early voting, although absentee voting is available in all states.

More detailed information on early voting in the above-listed states is available at [vote411.org](http://vote411.org) and [longdistancevoter.org](http://longdistancevoter.org).