

A Playbook for Black Churches

Preparing for Victory in Texas

FALL 2021



HOLD THE LINE



**PUSH
DEMOCRACY
FORWARD**

A State of Emergency:

Now is the time for the chosen
to rise up to save our democracy.

Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy, but far too many people are hampered by state intervention in the process. Now more than ever, members of Black communities across the Texas should armor themselves with information on voting rights and voting access.

At least 18 states have enacted laws restricting access to the ballot box to date. In Texas, Governor Greg Abbott recently signed into law one of the worst voter suppression measures in the country. The new law targets ballot access measures like drive-thru and 24-hour voting - methods often used by people of color and in significant Democratic strongholds.

The unfortunate reality is what's happening in Texas and other influential states like Georgia will create a ripple effect across the nation. Unfortunately, other states have or will soon enact laws that will make it difficult for countless Americans in BIPOC communities to vote.

**However, we can and
will overcome roadblocks that threaten our democracy by staying
informed, getting organized, and taking action.**

In this special edition of The Playbook for Black Churches – A Guide for Overcoming Voter Suppression, we will share helpful resources to ensure members of the faith community and BIPOC communities have tools to navigate one of the most challenging election seasons in U.S. history.

This is a critical time.

We won't go back.

Instead, we will push forward.

Preparing for Victory!

A Playbook for Black Churches

It's time to get up to speed on changes to voting laws, make sure you know how to get registered, and are aware of a few opportunities to become engaged - it's time to consider how to get others activated and to the polls safely.

Here are steps you can take to ensure our brothers and sisters have a fair shot at exercising their right to vote:

Take an assessment to understand the depth in which your church is civically engaged.

Appoint a committee to take responsibility for voter engagement.

Host a voter registration drive.

Hold a Townhall Meeting.

**Prepare for Victory:
Pre-Election Day Checklist.**

Church Civic Engagement Assessment:

How Engaged is Your Church?

Does your congregation pray for our elected officials?

_____ Yes _____ No

Do you have Precinct Chairs or Election Judges in your congregation?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Not Sure

Are any of your members currently serving as elected officials?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Not Sure

Is your church used as a polling location?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Sometimes

Does your church participate in or host community issue forums or briefings to educate your congregation on policy and social issues – or partner with groups that do?

_____ Yes _____ No

Does your church conduct voter registration drives?

_____ Yes _____ No

Do sermons/teachings include messages that encourage voting and participating in the political process?

_____ Yes _____ No

Does your church have any members who are running for public office?

_____ Yes _____ No

Do you know how many county election and/or election day precincts are within a 10-mile radius of your church?

_____ Yes _____ No

Do you know who your county Voter Registrar is and how to contact them?

_____ Yes _____ No

HOW ENGAGED IS YOUR CHURCH?

How many times did you select yes? _____

1-4 times: It's time to meet people. Help build strength in your community by getting to know more about your congregation. Be aware of the pressing issues affecting them and encourage them to vote for those who are willing to fight for them.

5-7 times: You're in the know. You're partially engaged in your community in specific areas, but engagement in politics is undoubtedly something that can be improved with voter awareness.

8-10 times: You're a political powerhouse! You're up to speed on what goes on in your community and on-point on spreading the word about upcoming elections.

Voter ID Laws in Texas

Before heading to the polls, be sure you have an acceptable form of identification.

New Vote-by-Mail I.D. Mandates

Texans who are voting by mail -- those who are over age 65, out of the county on Election Day, or have a disability or illness that prevents them from voting in person -- will now need to provide either their driver's license number or the last four digits of their Social Security number twice: once on their absentee ballot application forms and once on the envelope in which they return their ballots.

Those numbers will then be matched against voters' records to confirm they are who they say they are -- a change from the current signature matching process. Those whose votes are at risk of being rejected because of technical errors can make corrections online under the new law. If time is short, voters have the option to cancel their mail-in ballots and vote in person.

Take 1 of these 7 acceptable forms of ID to the ballot when you vote.

- TEXAS DRIVER: Texas Driver License*
- TEXAS HL: Texas Handgun License*
- TEXAS ELECTION ID: Texas Election ID Certificate*
- U.S. CITIZEN: U.S. Citizenship Certificate with Photo
- TX PERSONAL ID: Texas Personal ID Card*
- U.S. MILITARY ID: U.S. Military ID Card with Photo*
- PASSPORT: U.S. Passport* (Book or Card)

Do not possess and cannot reasonably obtain one of these acceptable forms of ID?

You may qualify for a Reasonable Impediment Declaration by showing a copy or original of one of the following approved IDs:

- Certified Domestic Birth Certificate or Court Admissible Birth Document
- Current Utility Bill
- Bank Statement
- Government Check
- Paycheck
- Government document with your name and an address including your Voter Registration Certificate

Important Dates to Remember

NOVEMBER 2021

Texas Constitutional Amendments Elections:

November 2, 2021

First Day to Apply for Ballot by Mail:

January 1, 2021

Last Day to Apply for Ballot by Mail:

October 22, 2021

Early Voting:

October 18 – 29, 2021

Election Day:

November 2, 2021

MARCH 2022

Voter Registration Deadline:

January 31, 2022

First Day to Apply for Ballot by Mail:

January 1, 2022

Last Day to Apply for Ballot by Mail:

February 18, 2022

Vote by Mail Deadline/Absentee Voting:

October 22, 2021

Early Voting:

February 14 – 25, 2022

Election Day:

March 1, 2022

MAY 2022

Voter Registration Deadline:

April 7, 2022

First Day to Apply for Ballot by Mail:

January 1, 2022

Last Day to Apply for Ballot by Mail:

April 22, 2022

Early Voting:

April 25 – May 3, 2022

Election Day:

May 7, 2022

Next Steps for Churches

Every church can join the fight for justice and voting rights. The first step is to appoint a Voter Outreach Ambassador (VOA) skilled at record keeping.

The VOA will:

- 1** Contact the Voter Registrar Office (Elections Division) for your county to obtain a Certificate of Appointment as a Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrar.
- 2** Host Voter Registration events at your church or in the community.
- 3** Register your members to vote after church.
- 4** Keep a simple record of all activities.
- 5** Certify 100% of church members are registered to vote.
- 6** Certify 100% of church members voted in the 2022 Elections.

Contact Push Democracy Forward to get help organizing your church's GOTV efforts. They are a Texas-based organization whose mission is to transform the US culture into a democracy to fully serve the interests of marginalized people.
www.PushDemocracyForward.com

PUSH
DEMOCRACY
FORWARD

A Confession of Faith In A Time of Crisis

By Pastor Gene Collins, Odessa, Texas August 2018

I. WE BELIEVE each human being is made in God’s image and likeness (Genesis 1:26). That image and likeness confers a divinely decreed dignity, worth, and God-given equality to all of us as children of the one God who is the Creator of all things. Racial bigotry is a brutal denial of the image of God (the imago dei) in some of the children of God. Our participation in the global community of Christ absolutely prevents any toleration of racial bigotry. Racial justice and healing are biblical and theological issues for us, and are central to the mission of the body of Christ in the world. We give thanks for the prophetic role of the historic black churches in America when they have called for a more faithful gospel.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the resurgence of white nationalism and racism in our nation on many fronts, including the highest levels of political leadership. We, as followers of Jesus, must clearly reject the use of racial bigotry for political gain that we have seen. In the face of such bigotry, silence is complicity. In particular, we reject white supremacy and commit ourselves to help dismantle the systems and structures that perpetuate white preference and advantage. Further, any doctrines or political strategies that use racist resentments, fears, or language must be named as public sin—one that goes back to the foundation of our nation and lingers on. Racial bigotry must be antithetical for those belonging to the body of Christ, because it denies the truth of the gospel we profess.

II. WE BELIEVE we are one body. In Christ, there is to be no oppression based on race, gender, identity, or class (Galatians 3:28). The body of Christ, where those great human divisions are to be overcome, is meant to be an example for the rest of society. When we fail to overcome these oppressive obstacles, and even perpetuate them, we have failed in our vocation to the world—to proclaim and live the reconciling gospel of Christ.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT misogyny, the mistreatment, violent abuse, sexual harassment, and assault of women that has been further revealed in our culture and politics, including our churches, and the oppression of any other child of God. We lament when such practices seem publicly ignored, and thus privately condoned, by those in

high positions of leadership. We stand for the respect, protection, and affirmation of women in our families, communities, workplaces, politics, and churches. We support the courageous truth-telling voices of women, who have helped the nation recognize these abuses. We confess sexism as a sin, requiring our repentance and resistance.

III. WE BELIEVE how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner is how we treat Christ himself. (Matthew 25: 31-46) “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” God calls us to protect and seek justice for those who are poor and vulnerable, and our treatment of people who are “oppressed,” “strangers,” “outsiders,” or otherwise considered “marginal” is a test of our relationship to God, who made us all equal in divine dignity and love. Our proclamation of the lordship of Jesus Christ is at stake in our solidarity with the most vulnerable. If our gospel is not “good news to the poor,” it is not the gospel of Jesus Christ (Luke 4:18).

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the language and policies of political leaders who would debase and abandon the most vulnerable children of God. We strongly deplore the growing attacks on immigrants and refugees, who are being made into cultural and political targets, and we need to remind our churches that God makes the treatment of the “strangers” among us a test of faith (Leviticus 19:33-34). We won’t accept the neglect of the well-being of low-income families and children, and we will resist repeated attempts to deny health care to those who most need it. We confess our growing national sin of putting the rich over the poor. We reject the immoral logic of cutting services and programs for the poor while cutting taxes for the rich. Budgets are moral documents. We commit ourselves to opposing and reversing those policies and finding solutions that reflect the wisdom of people from different political parties and philosophies to seek the common good. Protecting the poor is a central commitment of Christian discipleship, to which 2,000 verses in the Bible attest.

IV. WE BELIEVE that truth is morally central to our personal and public lives. Truth-telling is central to the prophetic biblical tradition, whose vocation includes speaking the Word of God into their societies and speaking the truth to power. A commitment to speaking truth, the ninth commandment of the Decalogue, “You shall not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:16), is foundational to shared trust in society. Falsehood can enslave us, but Jesus promises, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32). The search and respect for truth is crucial to anyone who follows Christ.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the practice and pattern of lying that is invading our political and civil life. Politicians, like the rest of us, are human, fallible, sinful, and mortal. But

when public lying becomes so persistent that it deliberately tries to change facts for ideological, political, or personal gain, the public accountability to truth is undermined. The regular purveying of falsehoods and consistent lying by the nation’s highest leaders can change the moral expectations within a culture, the accountability for a civil society, and even the behavior of families and children. The normalization of lying presents a profound moral danger to the fabric of society. In the face of lies that bring darkness, Jesus is our truth and our light.

V. WE BELIEVE that Christ’s way of leadership is servanthood, not domination. Jesus said, *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles (the world) lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.”* (Matthew 23:25-26). We believe our elected officials are called to public service, not public tyranny, so we must protect the limits, checks, and balances of democracy and encourage humility and civility on the part of elected officials. We support democracy, not because we believe in human perfection, but because we do not. The authority of government is instituted by God to order an unredeemed society for the sake of justice and peace, but ultimate authority belongs only to God.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT any moves toward autocratic political leadership and authoritarian rule. We believe authoritarian political leadership is a theological danger that threatens democracy and the common good—and we will resist it. Disrespect for the rule of law, not recognizing the equal importance of our three branches of government, and replacing civility with dehumanizing hostility toward opponents are of great concern to us. Neglecting the ethic of public service and accountability, in favor of personal recognition and gain often characterized by offensive arrogance, are not just political issues for us. They raise deeper concerns about political idolatry, accompanied by false and unconstitutional notions of authority.

VI. WE BELIEVE Jesus when he tells us to go into all nations making disciples (Matthew 28:18). Our churches and our nations are part of an international community whose interests always surpass national boundaries. The most well-known verse in the New Testament starts with *“For God so loved the world”* (John 3:16). We, in turn, should love and serve the world and all its inhabitants, rather than seek first narrow, nationalistic prerogatives.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT “America first” as a theological heresy for followers of Christ. While we share a patriotic love for our country, we reject xenophobic or ethnic nationalism that places one nation over others as a political goal. We reject domination

rather than stewardship of the earth's resources, toward genuine global development that brings human flourishing for all of God's children. Serving our own communities is essential, but the global connections between us are undeniable. Global poverty, environmental damage, violent conflict, weapons of mass destruction, and deadly diseases in some places ultimately affect all places, and we need wise political leadership to deal with each of these.

WE ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED for the soul of our nation, but also for our churches and the integrity of our faith. The present crisis calls us to go deeper—deeper into our relationship to God; deeper into our relationships with each other, especially across racial, ethnic, and national lines; deeper into our relationships with the most vulnerable, who are at greatest risk. The church is always subject to temptations to power, to cultural conformity, and to racial, class, and gender divides, as Galatians 3:28 teaches us. But our answer is to be “in Christ,” and to “not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable, and perfect.”

“You shall have no other gods before me”

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, and your mind. This is the first commandment. And the second is like unto it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:38).

(Romans 12:1-2) The best response to our political, material, cultural, racial, or national idolatries is the First Commandment:

(Exodus 20:3). Jesus summarizes the Greatest Commandment:

As to loving our neighbors, we would add “no exceptions.”

We commend this letter to pastors, local churches, and young people who are watching and waiting to see what the churches will say and do at such a time as this.

Our urgent need, in a time of moral and political crisis, is to recover the power of confessing our faith. Lament, repent, and then repair. If Jesus is Lord, there is always space for grace. We believe it is time to speak and to act in faith and conscience, not because of politics, but because we are disciples of Jesus Christ—to whom be all authority, honor, and glory. It is time for a fresh confession of faith. Jesus is Lord. He is the light in our darkness. *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12)*

Texas Legislature Passes Most Restrictive Voter Laws in the US

On September 7, 2021, Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed one of the state's most controversial voting legislature bills (Senate Bill 1). The law sets new I.D. requirements for voting by mail, empowers poll watchers to use forceful tactics, and prohibits drive-thru voting.

During a special legislative session held earlier this summer, approximately 50 courageous lawmakers from Texas held the line by fleeing the state, denying the Texas House the number of votes required to pass suppressive voting legislature outlined in SB 1. They bought us time, but the reality of it is, the fight to protect our democracy is not theirs alone.

We want to especially highlight [insert names of lawmakers Lorem Ipsum Dolor Sit Amet, Consectetur Adipiscing Elit, Sed Diam Nonummy Nibh Euismod Tincidunt Ut Laoreet] for their courageous efforts.

Although the Texas lawmakers were not able to stop the bill from passing as they hoped, they succeeded in getting the attention of decision-makers on Capitol Hill. Thanks largely to their efforts – and the combined efforts of many others – the U.S. House passed The John Lewis Voting Rights Act, designed to restore and strengthen parts of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

But the fight is not over yet. Until the U.S. Senate votes on the matter, we are still at risk of being subjected to suppressive voting laws.

If the U.S. Senate passes The John Lewis Voting Rights Act, we'll have federal protection against racist bills like SB 1.

Here are steps you can take to let your designated Senator know we need their vote to protect our democracy. Governors, like Abbot, may be "winning the battle," but the fight to preserve or democracy is not over yet.

APPOINT A COMMITTEE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR VOTER ENGAGEMENT.

Organization Chart For Voter Engagement Operations

(Voter Education, Mobilization, and Registration)

PROJECT DIRECTOR

Responsible for researching voter laws, election rules, project oversight including budget, timeline, etc.

PUBLICITY COORDINATOR

Responsible for public relations, media relations and creation of promotional items

FUNDRAISING COORDINATOR

Responsible for assembling resources including funds, in-kind donations, and volunteer recruitment.

TRANSPORTATION COORDINATOR

Responsible for developing the plan for volunteer movement, voter turnout transportation, and other mobility matters.

ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR

Responsible for collecting data, maintaining files, providing updates for newsletter, and website.



Voter Registration in Texas

U.S. citizens who are at least 18 years old on Election Day are eligible to vote.

THE ONLY EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RULE ARE:

- 1** those deemed totally or partially mentally incapacitated
- 2** those deemed totally or partially mentally incapacitated

**Texans who once served time in prison for a felony
ARE STILL ELIGIBLE TO VOTE
once they have been fully discharged or pardoned**



Church Fundraising Opportunity!

Pass the Plate Fundraiser

Eligible voters who have previously served time for a felony and are not on parole may still owe fines, costs, or restitution from their conviction.

Here is an opportunity for the Church to step in. Pass the plate to help raise funds to help congregation or community members get “off-paper.”

We encourage you to collect an offering to help these individuals exercise their right to vote.

CALL TO ACTION

Call your Senator's office **TODAY** to let them know that you are
FOR the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.

Senator John Cornyn

Washington, D.C. Office:
517 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-2934

Southeast Texas Office:
5300 Memorial Dr., Ste. 980
Houston, TX 77007
713-572-3337

South Texas Office:
222 East Van Buren, Ste. 404
Harlingen, TX 78550
956-423-0162

West Texas Office:
Wells Fargo Center
1500 Broadway, Ste. 1230
Lubbock, TX 79401
806-472-7533

South Central Texas Office:
600 Navarro, Ste. 210
San Antonio, TX 78205
210-224-7485

Central Texas Office:
Chase Tower
221 West Sixth Street, Ste. 1530
Austin, TX 78701
512-469-6034

East Texas Office:
Regions Bank Building
100 E. Ferguson Street Ste. 1004
Tyler, TX 75702
903-593-0902

North Texas Office:
5001 Spring Valley Rd., Ste. 1125 E
Dallas, TX 75244
972-239-1310

Senator Ted Cruz

Washington, D.C. Office:
Russell Senate Office Bldg., Ste. 127A
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-5922

Central Texas Office:
300 E 8th, Ste. 961
Austin, TX 78701
512-916-5834

East Texas Office:
305 S. Broadway, Ste. 501
Tyler, TX 75702
903-593-5130

North Texas Office:
Lee Park Tower II
3626 N. Hall St., Ste. 410
Dallas, TX 75219
214-599-8749

South/Central Texas Office:
9901 IH-10W, Ste. 950
San Antonio, TX 78230
210-340-2885

Southeast Texas Office:
The Mickey Leland Federal Building
1919 Smith St., Ste. 9047
Houston, TX 77002
713-718-3057

South Texas Office:
200 S. 10th St., Ste. 1603
McAllen, TX 78501
956-686-7339

Voter Resources

Am I registered to vote in Texas?

To check your voter registration status, please visit <https://teamrv-mvp.sos.texas.gov/MVP/mvp.do> to view your registration status or call your county election office.

How can I get registered?

Those who are not registered to vote in Texas must complete a voter registration application and return it to their county election office at least 30 days before the upcoming election date. To complete an application, you may:

- Complete an application using the Secretary of State Online Voter Registration Application. Fill in the required information, print, sign, and mail directly to your county election office.
- Request a printed application online. A voter registration application to the address provided.
- Contact or visit your local Voter Registrar to complete the voter registration process.



The November election is a good opportunity to activate your church to engage in voter education.

Credit: <https://www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/need-id.html>

Host a Voter Registration Drive

1 Identify volunteers to help run your voter registration event! Consider hosting a volunteer interest meeting to identify volunteers. Interested individuals may help with event logistics, registering voters, or both.

2 Ensure voter registration volunteers are registered with your County Voter Registrar!

All individuals who will deliver registration forms on behalf of applicants must be authorized as volunteer deputy registrars. Those interested must contact the county voter registrar to receive a certificate of appointment and receipt book and may only register voters in the county in which they become volunteer deputy registrars.

To become a volunteer deputy registrar, a person must:

- Be at least 18 years old;
- Be a U.S. citizen;
- Be a resident of Texas;
- never have been convicted of: - a felony or, if so convicted, must have: (A) finished the sentence, including any term of incarceration, parole, or supervision, or completed a period of probation ordered by any court; or (B) been pardoned or otherwise released from the resulting disability to vote; - identity theft; or - failing to deliver a voter application to a voter registrar.
- never have been determined by a court to be: totally mentally incapacitated, or partially mentally incapacitated without the right to vote

Note: VDRs are not required to be registered voters.

3 Set a goal! Know how many voters you want to register and the date by which you want them register.

4 Set a date! Once you set your goals, it's time to set a date! Please allow time to get your volunteers registered with the County Voter Registrar.

5 Promote your event! Spread the word regarding your voter registration event by making announcements at during church services, posting on bulletin boards, and sharing on your website and/or via social media.

Hold a Town Hall Meeting

Town hall meetings serve as an opportunity for community members to meet with local politicians to either hear from them on topics of interest or to discuss specific upcoming legislation or regulation.

We encourage Black Churches to schedule town hall meetings and invite local elected officials to discuss local issues and how they're addressing disparities.

Here is a list of elected officials you may consider inviting to participate:

- **Mayor**
- **City Council Members**
- **State Representatives**
- **State Senators**

Review step-by-step instructions for hosting a town hall meeting [here](#).



PREPARING FOR VICTORY

Pre-Election Day Checklist

- Count the numbers of Precincts in your county.**
- Get to know the land mass of the county. Recruit volunteers to help drive it, google it, map it.**
- Identify your SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats).**
- Build your victory strategy through your SWOT analysis.**
- Learn the demographics of the county.**
- Get the record of how many citizens voted in the past three elections.**
- Get the record on how many citizens voted by party affiliations.**
- Identify new voters. Find the voters who are off paper.**
- Get the record on how many citizens voted by mail, early voted, absentee balloting, and voted on Election Day.**
- Organize your Deputy Voter Registration Training Campaign.**
- Identify the number of new voters that would be required for success.**
- Get the address of the exact location of each precinct.**
- Organize a team and give it a name.** (Example: TEAMD-Texas Emergency Action Managers for Democracy)
- Train each Staff Precinct Monitor.**
- Staff each precinct with Precinct Monitors.**
- Conduct Ballot Training.**
- Conduct State of Texas Election Law Training.**
- Choose and train County, City and Regional Coordinators, hourly staff, and volunteers.**
- Develop job descriptions for County, City and Regional Coordinators, hourly staff, and volunteers.**
- Set a defined dress code for County, City and Regional Coordinators, hourly staff and volunteers for election days and poll work attire.**
- Set-up paid communication system for County, City and Regional Coordinators, hourly staff and volunteers for election days and poll work.**
- Develop media footprint; print, radio, TV digital, talk shows, Letters to the Editor, Op-eds, Podcasts, Facebook, Twitter, etc.**

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committed to saving and promoting the fundamental
democratic rights of all people.**

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