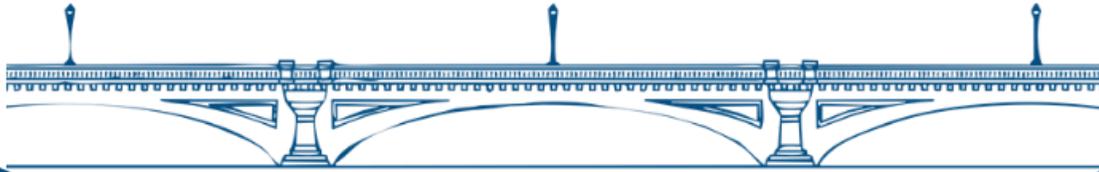


# *Building Bridges for America*



## **Vote by Mail Team Toolkit**

### **Our Values and Goals**

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Democracy means all of us have a voice and a stake in what happens in our country. For many people, though, there is little appeal in voting or paying attention to public debates. Many are simply too busy, too alienated or too disgusted to take part. Many are unjustly excluded from participation. Building Bridges believes our democracy would function better if more people were engaged – showing up to vote, to run for office and to make a difference in their communities.

Democracy means all of us have a voice, but we need to make sure our voices are heard. That means:

- ✓ Elections must be safe, fair and representative of the diverse population of the country. Voting should not be difficult, dangerous or pointless.
- ✓ Voting rights are protected. Every eligible person can vote and know that vote will be counted. People are not unjustly excluded from the participating in the life of democracy.
- ✓ People who feel disconnected, disempowered or left out take part.
- ✓ Public officials share these values and work for justice and fairness.

These are the goals the **Vote by Mail Team** is working toward now. This Toolkit gives you practical steps you can take today to help us.

Our initial focus is North Carolina, where we are working for candidates in critical races and reaching out to under-represented groups. We are also advocating for good policies nationwide – to help people vote safely in the time of COVID-19.

Review these four **Action Areas**. Check the steps that you agree to take.

### Action Area I – The Digital Landscape

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Here are some critical things you can do in the digital world:

- Raise the digital profile of **@joebiden** and the four North Carolina candidates endorsed by Win the Era – **@yvonneholley @calforNC @roycooperNC** and **@friendsforbatch**
- Get to know each candidate so you can share each one's story. Read their biographies and bookmark their web sites, which you can find at **wintheera.com/endorsements**
- Follow these five candidates on social media – Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and other platforms. Share their posts. And be sure to follow and share **@buildbridges4am** too!
- Set up a Pinterest account. Highlight these candidates and the election. Invite people to register to vote and link to your state's election office. This is a mostly untapped landscape for boosting participation in the election.
- Bookmark the North Carolina State Board of Elections – **ncsbe.gov** – where voters can register or update their registration. That's the link your friends in North Carolina need.
- Use social media to tell your story. Why are you voting in 2020? Let others know what values and hopes you have. What does voting mean to you? Invite, include.
- Ask people to register to vote. Post links to your state election office and this national form for voter registration. It is in *15 languages* and valid everywhere except Wyoming and North Dakota! - **<https://www.eac.gov/voters/national-mail-voter-registration-form>**
- Everyone feels outrage and needs to vent. Find your space to do that – but not on social media. Social media arguments can be ugly and dispiriting. Try to avoid online arguments. Instead, post positive articles, messages and comments about these candidates at least once a week. Retweet their statements. Lift up the positive and hopeful messages they are voicing.
- Be aggressive in reporting spam, misinformation and biased content about the candidates on social media. Flag and report any incorrect information about voting and elections. The platform needs to get quick pushback on false content. Let the Building Bridges team know too, for a group response. This step is *especially important*.
- Share your experiences and ideas with the Building Bridges Team – Let's learn from each other!

### Action Area 2 – Relational Organizing

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Relational Organizing is about intentionally building positive conversations about voting in your circle of friends and connections. Often people trust the opinions of people they know and respect over those of a stranger or even expert.

- Go through your phone and email lists--all the people you know. Who might need a reminder to register to vote? (Keep those links above handy!) Who might be open to talking with you about voting? Who can you invite to join you at a Building Bridges event? Do you know people in North Carolina? Send them an article about Yvonne or Cal. Share why you like these candidates.
- Make a list and see how many conversations you can start! A real conversation – not an argument. Share your story. Speak from your values. Listen.
- “I hate Trump” is not the way to start a conversation. Three things are likely to happen:  
1 – You will start an outrage session with other people who are already voting for the Democrats.  
2 – You will start an ugly argument with people who are solidly pro-Trump.  
3 – You will shut down anyone with mixed feelings about Trump or voting in general.
- Open your calendar: Pick one day a week, now through October, for check-in times with your circle of connections. Cultivate conversations with people on your list.
- Declare your support of your candidates to your friends and family, in person and on social media—and tell them why that candidate matters to you. Be sure to do it in a positive way – that invites others to the table.
- What neighborhood and niche communities can you reach out to? – Write a reminder to vote for your community newspaper. Write an article on a policy issue and cite one of the candidates. Listen to what your local TV and radio stations are covering – and send a message to the producers if they don’t get things right.
- Consider why people do not vote – It is the non-voter or the intermittent voter who needs your attention, not the uncle who argues politics at every family gathering. Think about who needs your encouragement, your story and your attention. It’s not your uncle and it’s not a troll! It’s the person who is checked out or systemically excluded. The best message may not be “Vote for Joe” but “Your Voice Matters. Please Vote.”

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- Think globally. Do you know any US citizens who live, serve or study overseas? They can register and vote wherever they are. Don't forget them! A word from you may be just what they need to cast a ballot. Send them this link: [fvap.gov](https://fvap.gov) – Everything they need to register and vote is right there. FVAP is the Federal Voting Assistance Program - a nonpartisan federal government program that helps overseas citizens and military families away from their home states vote. Overseas and military voters can vote by mail, by fax or by email – depending on their state. Details are at [fvap.gov](https://fvap.gov).
- Where else can you share [fvap.gov](https://fvap.gov)? Think of study abroad programs at your university. Think of alumni groups overseas. Young, college-educated voters are likely Democratic – but they may also be the most skeptical about voting in general. A positive word from you might go a long way.

## Action Area 3 – Information and Advocacy

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- Non-partisan information on voting** – Everyone needs the basic rules of when, where and how to vote. The best site for information on the voting process in each state is [vote411.org](https://www.vote411.org) – It is clear, non-partisan and accurate. Some material is available in Spanish, <https://www.vote411.org/north-carolina#disponible-en-espa%C3%BIol> and more language resources are available at [eac.gov](https://eac.gov).
- Every state is reconsidering its voting process in light of COVID-19. Many were already changing laws and policies – for a mix of reasons, both good and bad. The result is that ‘the basics’ of voting are in flux. That means many people will need good basic information about when, where and how to vote in their state. Share information – but please make sure it is current and correct.
- Advocacy for policy** – We need to keep pressure on federal, state and local officials to conduct safe, free and fair elections. We want expanded early in-person and vote-by-mail opportunities across the country. We need Congress to pass the Resilient Elections During Quarantine and Natural Disasters Act of 2020 (proposed by Senator Wyden), the Vote Safe Act (proposed by Senator Harris) and the For the People Act (passed by the House as HR 1, reforming elections). Please join the strong advocacy effort led by Common Power, at [commonpower.org/advocacy](https://commonpower.org/advocacy).

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- North Carolina has just changed some voting rules to make absentee voting easier, but there are still steps the state should take. Join advocates in North Carolina to learn more – [democracync.org](https://democracync.org) and Twitter [@democracync](https://twitter.com/democracync)
  
- Show up for your local elections board meeting. Even now, meetings are public and you have a right to participate. Find out what is going on with voting in your city and state. Be an informed advocate. This is a critical need. Local election boards must be ready to carry out a vote under very strained circumstances. Your voice and experience may be a great help. If there are openings, serve on the board. Consider becoming a poll worker or a poll monitor.

## Action Area 4 – Connect with Voters

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- Join Building Bridges for **Days of Action** now through November. We meet via Zoom every Tuesday and Sunday to write postcards to voters from North Carolina. Our goal is to reach **5,000 North Carolina voters** who live overseas or serve in the military. We are well on the way to doing it but we need your help! Sign up at Mobilize here:
  - ✓ Sundays, 10 AM to Noon Pacific – **Trivia and Post Cards**  
<https://events.democrats.org/event/281284/>
  
  - ✓ Tuesdays, 2 to 5 PM Pacific – **Movie Night**  
<https://events.democrats.org/event/289041/>
  
- Build your own team! Set up your own Action event. We'll help you!
  
- Follow [@buildbridges4am](https://twitter.com/buildbridges4am) and [buildingbridgesforamerica.com](https://buildingbridgesforamerica.com) for more events and announcements.

**Questions? Ideas? Share them with the Team!**

Contact Wes Edwards, Team Lead, at [grassroots@buildingbridgesforamerica.com](mailto:grassroots@buildingbridgesforamerica.com)

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***The demographic and social changes make it more important than ever for us to elect great candidates. But that doesn't happen on its own. The map won't save us. Statistics won't save us. We have to do the work.***

**--Pete Buttigieg**