



The Freedom Sunday Coalition

Faith Leaders Toolkit for Civil Engagement

Endorsed By:



NATIONAL
AFRICAN AMERICAN CLERGY
NETWORK



SAMUEL DEWITT
PROCTOR
CONFERENCE

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**Note: Organizations listed for Identification Purposes Only*

Vision & Purpose Statement

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Dr. T. Dewitt Smith, Dr. Otis Moss Jr.
Co-Conveners, Freedom Sunday Coalition;
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Background

The Freedom Sunday Coalition is a national non-partisan faith-based civic engagement coalition of African-American faith leaders dedicated to year-round voter registration, education and mobilization on issues of importance to communities of color.

The coalition is comprised of leaders from denominations such as the *(African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, National Baptist Convention, USA, National Baptist Convention of America, Church of God In Christ, Progressive National Baptist Convention and independent organizational partners such as PICO National Network, African-American Ministers Leadership Council, Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference, Inc. the Global Alliance Interfaith Network and the Global United Fellowship.* These leaders represent a network of over 13 million people of faith across the United States.

In 2014, the coalition mobilized over 3500 churches, touched over 1 million faith voters in the six weeks leading up to the Mid-Term Elections and had an impact in increasing African-American voter turnout by 1-2% in Kentucky and Louisiana.

Vision

The vision of the Freedom Sunday Coalition is to create an empowered, engaged, active voice for justice within our political system that will speak to the needs of African-American communities. We must reclaim our power and mobilize massive turnout of the African-American vote in local and national elections to determine who will best represent a vision of empowered, healthy, whole communities.

2016

In 2016, the Freedom Sunday Coalition will organize **two primary Freedom Sundays - September 25th, 2016 and November 6th, 2016 - when churches around the country will preach and teach about voting rights, voter mobilization, registration, and encourage civic participation.**

In addition, the Freedom Sunday Coalition will organize **Freedom Days Conference Calls each month** to equip church leaders with information they need to mobilize voters.



Freedom Calls Calendar

April 4th, 2016:

National Freedom Sunday Kick-off Call

April 28th, 2016:

Denominational Conference Organizing Call

May 17th, 2016:

Brown V. Board Freedom Call

June 17th, 2016:

Mother Emanuel Freedom Call

July 17th, 2016:

Harriet Tubman Freedom Call

August 17th, 2016:

Emmett Till / March on Washington Freedom Call

*****September 25th, 2016:
Freedom Sunday #1*****

October 17th, 2016:

Planning and Execution Freedom Call

*****November 6th, 2016:
Freedom Sunday #2*****

November 17th, 2016:

Freedom Sundays Debrief Call

10 WAYS TO PROTECT VOTING RIGHTS

by the Lawyers' Committee, the National Action Network (NAN), and the National Coalition for Black Civic Participation (NCBCP)

- ONE** **Vote early!** If your state provides early voting, vote before Election Day to avoid Election Day lines. Visit <http://www.canivote.org/> and go to the drop-down menu called, "Make Your Vote Count: Absentee and Early Voting" to find early voting deadlines. Or visit your state's Secretary of the State website.
- TWO** **Be an Online Activist!** Promote voting rights and the upcoming election on Twitter using the hashtags #VotingRights and #ElectionProtection.
- THREE** **Spread the Word! Bring a Friend or 2 with You to Vote!** Print out copies of this Top 10 Voting Rights list and share it in your place of worship bulletin, at your civic organization meetings/events, and with friends and family. And encourage family members, friends and neighbors to vote on Election Day!
- FOUR** **Become a Voting V.I.P!** Verify your existing voter registration or register to vote. Find out whether you need Identification to vote or what type of ID you need. And know your Polling location by calling 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683), visiting www.VOTE411.org, or downloading the Election Protection Smartphone App. Text EPAPP to 90975 to download this app!
- FIVE** **Traveling on Election Day? Vote absentee!** Request an absentee ballot from your County Board of Election. If you vote by absentee ballot, return the ballot before the deadline.
- SIX** **Ask Questions.** If you're unsure about a voting procedure, just ask! Poll workers and Election Protection trained volunteers are here to help **you vote**.
- SEVEN** **Report Any Problems While Voting.** Call 1-866-OUR-VOTE for assistance or to get answers to any voting questions. All questions are important!
- EIGHT** **Become a Voting Rights Volunteer!** We need your help as a volunteer voting rights trainer, poll worker, poll monitor or voting changes monitor of state and local voting laws. Become a trained Lawyers' Committee Ambassador for Democracy by emailing toolkit@lawyerscommittee.org. Volunteer as a NCBCP Foot Soldier for Democracy by emailing ncbcp@ncbcp.org. Or join Rev. Al Sharpton and the NAN as a Disciple of Justice Voting Rights Trainer by emailing www.nationalactionnetwork.net/FS2014 or calling 1 877-626-4651.
- NINE** **Demand State and Federal Election Reform!** Show your support for early voting, same-day registration and online voter registration to your elected representatives. And learn more about the Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 and keep updated on other voting rights bills in Congress.
- TEN** **Learn More!** Download the Civic Engagement Voting Rights Toolkit at www.toolkit.lawyerscommittee.org. Visit the NCBCP at www.ncbcp.org to learn more about protecting your right to vote. And join a NAN voting rights event at www.nationalactionnetwork.net/FS2014.

Ten Tips for Reaching Young Voters

By Dr. Otis Moss, III, Senior Pastor,
Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago, IL

1. Make an announcement requesting IT professionals and/or youth to meet with the pastor or designee following service.
2. Share the importance of Freedom Sunday with the IT professionals and youth and how you as pastor want this community involved in this important effort.
3. If you have a digital minister or multimedia ministry, instruct the ministry to create posts and tweets about Freedom Sunday at least three times a day.
4. Request the congregation to post and/or tweet Freedom Sunday information on their personal social media accounts.
5. Print articles messages in the bulletin about Freedom Sunday.
6. Create a “quote campaign” have youth post and tweet famous quotes about the importance of voting daily on Instagram.
7. Post audio clips of members who experienced segregation speaking about the importance of voting on your media sight.
8. Allow a young people to tweet in service at a specified time about Freedom Sunday.
9. Reward the young person who receives the most re-tweets, new friends or followers as a result of Freedom Sunday.
10. Create a Youth Digital Ambassador who will from the pulpit share how to post, tweet and text for freedom.



Sample Voter Engagement Events and Activities

Throughout the year and leading up to Election Day, we encourage you to:

Educate and engage your congregation and community in the 2015-16 Elections. Organize a voter education campaign to educate your members on the impact of mass incarceration and lack of voter protections on our communities.

Educate!

- Partner with criminal justice reform and Voting Rights organizations in our state to identify key legislative reforms in need of advocacy.
- Host Community Forums on the impact of mass incarceration, strengthening relationships between communities and law enforcement and loss of voting rights on our local community.
- Host candidate forums to identify where candidates stand on these issues.
- Host Freedom Sunday Services - Preaching sermons on the moral imperative to act on behalf of redemption and social justice throughout the year.
- Host study circles around the impact of mass incarceration, strengthening relationships between communities and law enforcement and loss of voting rights on your local community.
- Take the #FREEAMERICA pledge, Send the Voting Rights Letter to key legislators and share the Freedom Sunday Voting Guide (Pages 37-40) with your congregation with Early Voting Dates, Times and locations and encourage members to take 5 family and friends to the polls during Early voting periods.

Advocate!

- Meet with our State and local Legislators on this issue as needed.
- Participate in Public Service Announcements and Write Op-Eds as needed.
- Participate in the Freedom Sunday Civic Engagement Training Series in the Fall 2015.

Activate!

- Ensure that every congregation member is registered to vote and aware of their local voting guidelines and rules. Check the website www.blackandbrownpeoplevote.org for details on registration in your state.
- Stay connected to the #FREEAMERICA can by registering at www.letsfreeamerica.org.
- Identify a civic engagement coordinator for your church who will recruit 10 volunteers who can work with the Freedom Sunday Team to register, educate and mobilize voters on these issues. We will be sure to capture engagement activities in the Freedom Sunday Event Reporting Card. Designate a Civic Engagement Team of 10 volunteers who will create a phone tree and call every member of the church to ensure they are registered and turned out to vote. This team could:
 - * Provide transportation to the polls during early voting through Election Day for those in need.
 - * Conduct weekly absentee voter application completion sessions after service and provide postage to mail them to the correct offices.
- Partner with local sororities, fraternities, HBCUs, Civic, Community Organizations and Labor Unions to co-host Freedom Sunday activities.
- Tweet and/or Facebook this link [Freedom Sundays Pledge](#) or website: [Freedom Sunday Coalition](#). using "I'm voting with [@freedomssundayco](#) #FreedomSundays2015 , #FREEAMERICA or share pictures and notes from your events.

For more information on hosting Freedom Sunday Services and receiving additional support or materials: Email us at FreedomSundays1@gmail.com or Visit our website at: [Freedom Sunday Coalition](#)



WHAT'S AT STAKE IN 2016

Criminal Justice Reform

Health Reform: The Affordable Care Act

Protecting the Voting Rights Act

Supreme Court nominees

Retain and increase funding for food assistance programs like Food Stamps, Supplemental Assistance for Women and Children (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Women Infant and Children's Program (WIC), and others.

Improving Educational Outcomes by Increasing Funding for Public Schools, Head Start, Pell Grants, Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Funding, My Brother's Keeper, Summer Job Programs, and more

HUD vouchers

LIHEAP Energy Assistance

EITC - Earned Income Tax Credit

Workforce development / Job Training

Funding for Mental Health

Disaster Recovery Funding

International Aid

Ex-Offender Reentry Funding

Increasing the Minimum Wage

Add: Elections for Local Law Enforcement

And so much more....



VOTING 2016: WHAT'S AT STAKE

Education



On average, African American students are two to three years behind their white peers academically, and seven out of ten African-American parents say their neighborhood schools need to be reformed. We need greater reform to improve our school's and provide better opportunities for students.

Health Care



Data shows that African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to lack health insurance than non-Hispanic whites. We need to ensure equal access to coverage.

Criminal Justice Reform



African Americans are imprisoned at six times the rate of whites and minorities are sentenced to death at significantly higher rates than whites. We need to make it easier to reenter society by removing questions about encounter with criminal justice system on college, housing and employment applications.

Voting Rights



This year's presidential election will be the first one held after the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the historic Voting Rights Act in 2013, which prompted stricter voting requirements that make it more difficult for racial minorities to vote. We need to restore the full protections of the Voting Rights Act.

#WHYIVOTE



Social Media Guide

Sample Twitter Posts

Follow us on Twitter: [@freedomsundayco](https://twitter.com/freedomsundayco)
Hash tags: **#FreedomSundays2016, #FREEAMERICA.**

- Our ancestors died for the right to vote. We should not take it for granted...**#FreedomSundays2016**
- Our nation has changed dramatically, and for the better. But the present bears many parallels to that historical moment 50 years ago. **#FreedomSundays2016**
- 50 years ago, **#FreedomSummer** organizers risked their lives for civil rights. Today, we need the courage to ensure their efforts were not in vain. **#FreedomSundays2016**
- 50 years after the Civil Rights Act, there are now modern efforts to keep people from voting.
- **#FreedomSundays2016, #FREEAMERICA**
- You have the freedom to vote! Protect it. **#FreedomSundays2016**
- 50 years since **#FreedomSummer** African Americans and other minority groups STILL face oppression and discrimination **#FreedomSundays2016**
- **"#FreedomSummer** made the country take a look at itself" -Bob Moses **#FreedomSundays2016**
- It is time we are all treated EQUALLY. Discrimination belongs in HISTORY. **#FreedomSundays2016**
- "Voting is the language of American democracy: if you don't vote, you don't count." Let's make everyone count. **#FreedomSundays2016**
- Let's protect the lives of our Youth - vote for the security of our children. **#FreedomSundays2016**
- Our Vote determines our Communities' future! **#FreedomSundays2016**
- No one should serve a second sentence by permanently losing their right to vote

Sample Facebook Posts

- We have come a long way since the 1960s, but we still have a long way to go since bigotry still raises its ugly head when we turn on the news. We need to be vigilant to prevent returning to those days when an individual was judged by the color of their skin rather than by their character. **#FreedomSundays2016**
- We can look to our sacred texts and beliefs about the human condition, the need to help the poor, forgiveness, grace, and mercy to assess and improve how the criminal justice system is operating in every community. If we believe that all human beings are created in the image of God, and as a result, have inherent dignity. If we believe in the importance of forgiveness and mercy that people can be redeemed by God's grace and most importantly are called to stand against poverty and injustice. **#FreedomSundays2016 , #FREEAMERICA**
- If we are to create a more humane, just system of rehabilitation and redirect resources to provide necessary services to the poor, we must support policy reforms at the federal, state, and local levels. While each state and community is different and has unique challenges, in reality, every city and state struggles with the same problems: too many arrests, prosecutions, and prison sentences, without enough services, assistance, or healing. **#FreedomSundays2016 , #FREEAMERICA**
- This is outrageous! From 1980 to 2008, the number of people incarcerated in America quadrupled- from roughly 500,000 to 2.3 million people. Today, the US is 5% of the World population and has 25% of world prisoners. Combining the number of people in prison and jail with those under parole or probation supervision, 1 in every 31 adults, or 3.2 percent of the population is under some form of correctional control. We must **#EndMassIncarceration** by voting for leaders who will reverse this trend!
#FreedomSundays2016 , #FREEAMERICA

Sample Pulpit Announcement

The prophet Amos reminds us to “let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” (Amos 5:24)

This year, we will be participating with other churches across the nation in Freedom Sunday Services in preparation for the upcoming elections. We, as Black Americans, simply cannot afford to stay home.

- Without voting, we had few Black elected officials.
- With voting, we now have over 10,000 Black elected officials and the first African American President in the White House.
- Without voting, hate groups fought to keep African Americans from voting.
- With voting, we have had 2 Black U.S. Attorney Generals fighting for our right to vote.
- With voting we have the right to decide whether we have jobs, health care, student financial aid, and other services our community needs.

We ask all members to look out for instructions from our civic engagement coordinator (name/phone/email) as we prepare for one of the most important dates this year – upcoming elections (add date of next election)

I ask each of you to commit to encouraging 5 family members, friends, and co-workers to vote on Election Day and make sure they get to the polls.

If you need to register to vote, or update your registration information, you can do so online at www.vote411.org.



Sample Church Bulletin Announcement

Your right to vote has been bought and paid for in blood!

Exercise your power to protect it by:

Registering you and 5 friends, family members and co-workers to vote in the upcoming Election. Make sure they turn out between now and Election Day.

Sign up to join our Civic Engagement Team and Volunteer to help educate and register others to vote.

Contact our Civic Engagement Coordinator _____ at _____ (phone number/email) for more information on joining our Civic Engagement Team.



Sample Sermon Scriptures

God's Concern for Justice, the Poor, and the "Least of These"

Psalms 10:17-18

17 Lord, You know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will listen to their cries and comfort them. 18 You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so people can no longer terrify them. NLT

Psalms 82:3-4 3 Enough! You've corrupted justice long enough, you've let the wicked get away with murder. 4 You're here to defend the defenseless, to make sure that underdogs get a fair break; your job is to stand up for the powerless, and prosecute all those who exploit them. THE MESSAGE

Proverbs 14:31

Those who oppresses the poor insult their Maker, but helping the poor honors him. NLT

Proverbs 31:9

Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. NIV

Amos 5: 21, 23, 24

21 I hate, I despise your religious festivals; I cannot stand your assemblies. . . 23 Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. 24 But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! NIV

Micah 6:8

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. NIV

Zechariah 7:9-10

9 this is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. 10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other. NIV

Matthew 25:31-46

41 Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 44 They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 45 He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'" NIV

1 John 3:16-18

16 this is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. 17 And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 18 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. NIV

Scriptures are taken from New International Version (NIV), New American Standard (NAS), New Living Translation (NLT) and THE MESSAGE

Do's and Dont's on Political Activities for Churches & Pastors

- **DO** discuss the candidates' positions on issues to the congregation.
- **DO NOT** support or oppose the candidates on the congregation's behalf.
- **DO NOT** use the congregation's funding to give financial contributions of any kind to the candidates/office holders.
- **DO NOT** allow your (the church leaders) personal opinions inflict the opinions of the congregation.
Please note: the Pastor's personal views and personal donations (not affiliated with the church) can be used to his own discretion, as long as these views/endorsements are not imposed upon the congregation.
- As a congregation and/or as an individual church leader; **DO** lobby and campaign for or against legislation.
- **DO NOT** publish church editorials that are meant to support or oppose candidates.
- **DO** publish political ads; as long as the regular rates are applied...**DO NOT** publish these ads as a donation.
- **DO** publish news stories about campaigns...the congregation must be kept informed as best as possible.
- **DO** rent out church facilities (e.g. kitchens, athletic facilities, board/community rooms) for political activities...regular rates **MUST** apply.
- **DO** provide rentals of membership lists at regular rates.
- **DO** allow candidates to make appearances at church events/services.
- As a part of the congregation, **DO NOT** distribute candidate campaign literature; however the individual church leader is allowed to do so.
- **DO** distribute candidate surveys and/or voting records of office holders.
- **DO NOT** pay for a candidate's or office holder's attendance at a caucus or political party convention. While the congregations **CAN NOT** pay for this, the church leader **CAN** do so on an individual basis.
- **DO** participate in non-partisan voter registration and identification: these activities **CAN NOT** be affiliated with a political party. **DO** provide non-partisan voter education: **CAN NOT** be affiliated with a political party. As a congregation, **DO NOT** give contributions to political action committees, but the church leader may **DO** this on his or her own terms.
- **DO** use the church van for transportation to the polls, **DO NOT** use the van to advertise for candidates or allow candidate discussions in the van.

Source: "Preaching Politics from the Pulpit", Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. www.pewforum.org

Key Election Dates

April 2016

5th: Maryland Primary
Washington, DC Primary
Wisconsin Primary

26th: Connecticut Primary
Delaware Primary
Pennsylvania Primary
Rhode Island Primary

May 2016

3rd: Indiana Primary

10th: Nebraska Primary
West Virginia Primary

17th: Kentucky Primary
Oregon Primary

24th: Arkansas Primary

June 2016

7th: California Primary
Montana Primary
New Jersey Primary
New Mexico Primary
South Dakota Primary

July 2016

18th- 21st: Republican Presidential Nominating Convention - Cleveland, OH
25th - 28th: Democratic Presidential Nominating Convention - Philadelphia, PA

November 2016

8th: Election Day - Nationwide

Note: The 2016 Presidential primary schedule is currently being assembled. The dates below are subject to change as states make their final decisions regarding which day to hold their primary contests. List below is current as of 4/23/15.

Please check <http://www.uspresidentialelectionnews.com/2016-presidential-primary-schedule-calendar/> for updates.

For voter registration deadlines for your state, please visit our website: Freedom Sunday Coalition as well as key partners:

National Association of Secretaries of State or Rock the Vote!
<http://www.nass.org/elections-voting/2016-presidential-election/>

Rock the Vote:
www.rockthevote.com

Black and Brown People Vote:
www.blackandbrownpeoplevote.org

Partner Resources

Below is a list of organizations to partner with for local events around Criminal Justice Reform and Voting Rights. Many are a part of our coalition and have been champions for informing and empower communities around voting rights, voter protection, civil and human rights issues.

Faith-Based

African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church Social Action Commission Voter ALERT - <http://www.ame-church.com/>
African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion) Church - <http://www.amez.org>
Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church - <http://thecmechurch.org/>
Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship International (FGBFI) Church - <http://www.fullgospelbaptist.org/>
National Baptist Convention of America (NBC of A) - <http://www.nationalbaptist.com/>
National Baptist Convention, USA (NBCUSA) - <http://www.nbcainc.com/>
Church of God in Christ (COGIC) - <http://www.cogic.org/>
Progressive National Baptist Convention, USA (PNBC) - <http://www.pnbc.org/>
Freedom Sunday Texas Coalition - <http://freedomundaytx.org/>
Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference (SDPC) - <http://sdpconference.info/>
PICO LIVE FREE Campaign - <http://www.piconetwork.org/campaigns/live-free>
African American Ministers Leadership Council - Vessels Vote Initiative <http://www.pfaw.org/VESSELS>
Faith in Public Life - www.faithinpubliclife.org

Civic/Community

The John Legend #FREEAMERICA Initiative - www.letsfreeamerica.org
Black and Brown People Vote - www.BlackandBrownPeopleVote.org
The Advancement Project - www.advancementproject.org/
NAACP Legal Defense Fund - www.naacpldf.org/
American Civil Liberties Union - www.aclu.org
Project Vote - www.projectvote.org/
Rainbow Push Coalition - www.rainbowpush.org/
AFL-CIO - www.aflcio.org
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation - www.ncbcp.org/
The National Lawyers Committee on Civil Rights - www.lawyerscommittee.org
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights - www.civilrights.org
Voto Latino - www.votolatino.com
National Council of La Raza - <http://www.nclr.org/>
Rock The Vote - <http://rockthevote.org/>
We vote, We Rise - <https://www.facebook.com/wevotewerise>
National Conference of State Legislators - <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx>
My Time to vote - http://www.mytimetovote.com/United_States_Elections-2015.html
The Brennan Center for Justice - <https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/voting-rights-election>
MomsRising - <https://www.momsrising.org/blog/topics/momsvote>

Youth-Initiated

Black Lives Matters - www.blacklivesmatter.org
The Dream Defenders - <http://dreamdefenders.org/vest/>
The Gathering of Justice - <http://www.gatheringforjustice.org/>
Ferguson Action - <http://fergusonaction.com/>
We The Protestors - <http://www.wetheprotesters.org/>
Black Youth Project - <http://byp100.org/>
Black Youth Vote - <http://ncbcp.org/programs/byv/>