

Get Out the Vote 2026

A guide from Violence
Free Minnesota & the
Minnesota Coalition
Against Sexual Assault



VIOLENCE FREE
MINNESOTA



About the Guide

Voting is a bedrock staple of our democracy. As coalitions against gender-based violence, Violence Free Minnesota (VFMN) and the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) believe in maximizing the agency of victim/survivors within their relationships and within their communities. To that end we have constructed this guide for both victim/survivors and their advocates to be able to vote and encourage the participation of others without fear for their personal safety. This guide covers:

- The voting timeline for 2026
- The content of the ballot in Minnesota
- How to keep your address confidential when voting
- How to engage effectively with victim/survivor issues at candidate forums
- Samples for advocacy organizations to ethically encourage voting in their community
- A brief guide on the difference between lobbying and advocacy

VFMN and MNCASA are both 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations and do not participate in partisan politics. It is our goal to maximize victim/survivor agency through the act of voting, but we must stress that the decision of who to vote for on a party or individual level is left entirely up to each individual voter, and we take no position in favor of or opposition to any political party or politician. When at all possible, this guide relies upon information provided by the Minnesota Office of the Secretary of State, who oversees our elections. The Secretary of State Elections Website is: [Minnesota Secretary Of State - Elections & Voting](#).

If you have questions about the voting process or need accommodations, text or call the MN Elections Office:

- Text: 651-217-3862
- Call: 1-877-600-VOTE (8683)

Voting Timeline

September 18, 2026: Early voting opens

- By mail or at select locations in person

October 13, 2026: Early registration deadline

- Registration page: [Minnesota Secretary Of State – Register To Vote](#)
- Didn't preregister? No problem. Minnesota offers same day voter registration. Here are the requirements: [Minnesota Secretary Of State – Register on Election Day](#)
- A photo ID is one way to register but is not required

November 3, 2026: Election day!

- Go vote! Find your polling place here: [Minnesota Voting Information Portal](#)
- Note: as of 2023, Minnesotans who were formerly incarcerated are eligible to vote: A Felony record does not disqualify you from voting: [Minnesota Secretary Of State – Voting Rights Restored to Formerly Incarcerated Minnesotans](#)

What's on the Ballot

Federal Offices

- **U.S. Senate** to replace Sen. Tina Smith (retirement): Peggy Flanagan (DFL) vs. Michele Tafoya (GOP)

Note: If Amy Klobuchar wins the Governor race, she will have to leave her Senate seat, which will be filled by Governor appointment

- **U.S. House of Representatives for Every District**

MN-01: *Southern Minnesota:* Incumbent Rep. Brad Finstad (GOP) vs. Jake Johnson (DFL)

MN-02: *South Metro and surrounding area:* Replacing retiring Rep. Angie Craig: Matt Little (DFL) vs. Eric Pratt (GOP)

MN-03: *North/West Metro:* Incumbent Rep. Kelly Morrison (DFL) vs. Tyler Bass (GOP)

MN-04: *St. Paul and East Metro:* Incumbent Rep. Betty McCollum (DFL) vs. Paul Wikstrom (GOP)

MN-05: *Minneapolis and inner suburbs:* Incumbent Rep. Ilhan Omar (DFL) vs. John Nagel (GOP) vs. Develle Jackson (Ind.)

MN-06: *St. Cloud and Central Minnesota:* Incumbent Rep. Tom Emmer (GOP) vs. Doug Chapin (DFL)

MN-07: *Western Minnesota:* Incumbent Rep. Michelle Fischbach (GOP) vs. Erik Osberg (DFL)

MN-08: *Northern Minnesota:* Incumbent Rep. Pete Stauber (GOP) vs. Trina Swanson (DFL)

Statewide

- **Governor:** Senator Amy Klobuchar (DFL) vs. Speaker Lisa Demuth (GOP)
- **Attorney General:** Incumbent Keith Ellison (DFL) vs. Ron Schutz (GOP)
- **Secretary of State:** Incumbent Steve Simon (DFL) vs. Tad Jude (GOP) vs. Seth Kuhl-Stennes (Green) vs. Chip Tangen (Libertarian)
- **State Auditor:** Zach Filipovich (DFL) vs. Scott Jensen (GOP) vs. Jay Reeves (Forward Independence Party)
- **All State Senate Offices**
- **All State House of Representatives Offices**
- **Constitutional Amendment 1:**

Amendment Text:

Increasing funding to school districts

Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to increase the funding going to all school districts from the permanent school fund, which is a fund that supports school districts without raising individual income or property taxes, effective July 1, 2027?

Please note: in Minnesota, a constitutional amendment requires the majority of voters to vote "Yes" in order to pass. If you leave this amendment blank, it will have the same effect as voting "No"

Local

Mayors, City Councils, County Boards, Judges, School Boards, local ballot measures, and more!

How can I find out what will be on my ballot specifically?

The Secretary of State Website has you covered! [Minnesota Secretary of State – What's On My Ballot?](#)

Voting Safely

If you do not need accommodations when voting, then voting is as simple as registering where you live and casting a ballot. Commonly asked questions are answered on the Secretary of State website here: [Minnesota Secretary Of State - Register To Vote](#).

It is important to note that, when you vote, your name and address become public information. If this makes you fear for your safety, then you do have options to vote and keep your address confidential. The Secretary of State's guide is here: [Minnesota Secretary Of State - I fear for my personal safety](#).

Safe At Home

The Minnesota Safe At Home Address Confidentiality Program is one way to vote with a completely confidential address. Those using the program will use a Safe At Home mailing address to vote via mail, and their marked ballot will be counted even though the election office never collects their true address. In this way, the voter can vote without disclosing their name or address either publicly or to the election office.

This program offers more than just voting. For those with very high personal security or safety concerns, the program offers a post office box address which must be accepted by any public or private entity, keeping your real address private. Applying for the program requires the assistance of a victim advocate. For more information on Safe At Home, visit: [Minnesota Secretary Of State - About Safe at Home](#) For information on VFMN member programs which may be able to assist in applying, go to: [GET HELP | Violence Free Minnesota](#), for information on MNCASA member programs that may be able to assist in applying, go to: mncasa.org/findhelp or call the Minnesota Day One Hotline at: (866) 223-1111.

Other Options to Keep Your Name and Address Confidential

If you fear for your safety but are not using a Safe At Home Address, you may send a Request to Withhold Voter Information From Public Information List to your county election office. This will prevent your name and address from appearing publicly, though they will still appear in the internal records relied upon by election workers. This form can be found at: [Minnesota Secretary Of State - I fear for my personal safety](#).

You may also send a Request to Inactivate Voting Record to the County Election Office. This will prevent election officials from seeing your name and address in their private database. However, doing this means you will be required to re-register before voting. This form can be found at: [Minnesota Secretary Of State - I fear for my personal safety](#).

Finally, if you are registering on voting day, you may bring both of the above documents with you to register and vote. Your name and address will be entered into the state's voter database after the election, but marked as private. The state will validate your address by sending a postcard to it, in order to confirm that the address actually exists. Once the address has been verified, your information will be removed from the system. For more on this process, visit: [Minnesota Secretary Of State - I fear for my personal safety](#).

Registering to Vote While Residing in Shelter

A staff person can go with a victim/survivor residing in shelter to the polling place to confirm their address on Election Day. For more information click here: [Minnesota Secretary Of State - I'm in a residential facility](#).

Voting with a Criminal Record

VFMN and MNCASA understand that many survivors and advocates have criminal records themselves. As of 2023, that record will not prevent you from voting unless you are currently incarcerated for a felony crime. For more information on voting with a record, see: [Minnesota Secretary Of State - I have a criminal record](#).

Effective Participation in Candidate Forums

Candidate Forums, such as townhalls, debates, or campaign events, are key opportunities to inform yourself on how a candidate plans on treating issues important to you and the people you care about. This guide should help you engage with those forums more effectively. The League of Women Voters hosts candidate forums throughout the state; you can find one near you at: Candidate Forums — [Candidate Forums | League of Women Voters of MN](#). Some procedural guidance:

Be Direct.

Candidates get asked a lot of questions while running for office, and they tend to prefer to be asked a question directly rather than given a long story and context before being asked a question. The question for federal level candidates on the next page is about the maximum length that a question should be.

Ask Open-Ended Questions.

You may not be given the opportunity to follow up your question. If a simple “Yes” or “No” would not be satisfying without a follow up, then avoid using a yes or no question.

Thank Them For Their Time.

It is generally more respectful to be succinct than to be overly gracious, but make sure you fit a brief but genuine thank you into your communication.

Good Questions to Ask

- Have you known a victim/survivor of sexual violence or intimate partner violence?

Based on that experience, what did you learn about the resources – or lack of resources – available to victim/survivors?

- For federal-level candidates: Domestic and sexual violence programs in Minnesota depend on VOCA (Victims of Crime Act) dollars to provide critical services to survivors and their families. Over the past decade, VOCA funds have been consistently reduced to a fraction of their former high. The lack of VOCA dollars could have a devastating impact on victims and their children in communities across Minnesota. What will you do to ensure that the VOCA fund is sustained so domestic/sexual violence programs can give victim/survivors the resources they desperately need?
- For candidates for state legislature: How do you plan to ensure ongoing support to our state's crime victims' services infrastructure?
- For candidates for state legislature: The state has recently made several attempts to address public safety in innovative ways beyond the traditional justice system. How do you plan to support a more expansive public safety ecosystem?

Sample Emails for Staff

Nonprofit leadership can help promote voting within the office. The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits has provided the following sample email to help show how to encourage participation within an office:

Sample 1: Staff Voter Registration

Dear [Employee Name],

We at [Organization Name] are asking all our staff, board members, and volunteers who are eligible to make sure you are registered to vote. You are important to us and our community, and we want to make sure that your voice is heard in the upcoming – and future – elections. If you're already registered, now is the time to make sure your official voter registration information is up to date at your current address.

Our goal is to have 100% of eligible staff, board, and volunteers registered by the week of National Voter Registration Day [Insert Date]. Will you help us reach that goal? When we ask elected officials to support our issues and funding for services like ours, having our staff, board, and volunteers be registered voters makes our voice that much stronger. [Insert org. specific or election-specific information].

Option 1: Direct: [Employee Name] will be coming around the office with registration forms asking you if you need to register or update your registration [Insert timeframe]. They can help you fill it out and return it.

Option 2: Indirect: You can learn more about registering and voting using [Organization's registration tool of choice; the Minnesota Secretary of State's toolkit can be found here: www.sos.mn.gov/media/eyqhi1n1/2026voterparticipationtoolkit.pdf(state.mn.us)]

Be sure to visit your county's election website for the most up-to-date information ahead of the election. We appreciate your service to [Organization Name]. Thank you for being a registered voter!

Sincerely,
[Sender Name]

Sample 2: Reminder of Your Policy on Time Off to Vote

Subject line: Election on Tuesday, November 3rd!

As you may know, the Election is on Tuesday, November 3. As a nonpartisan nonprofit organization, we want to ensure employees have access to the information in order to be a voter in the election. To demonstrate our organization's commitment to civic participation, here is a reminder of our time off to vote policy:

[Copy your organization's time off to vote policy here] – Note: employers are required by law to pay employees for the time they need to vote if it falls within employees scheduled work time.

[Minnesota Secretary Of State – Time off work to vote](#)

Polling places are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. If you need help finding your poll, use the Secretary of State's polling place finder: [Minnesota Voting Information Portal](#). Some small towns open voting later than 7 a.m. You can find the list of those towns here: [townships-with-polling-place-that-opens-later-than-7am.xlsx](#)

If you are unable to make it to the polls on Tuesday, November 3, you can vote by mail or in person from September 18 through November 2. Learn more here: [Minnesota Secretary Of State – Elections Calendar](#)

Get information about registering to vote here.: [Minnesota Secretary Of State – Register To Vote](#)

Know who's on your ballot by viewing a sample ballot: [Minnesota Secretary Of State – What's On My Ballot?](#)

Thanks again for being a voter!

Sincerely,
[Sender Name]

Lobbying vs. Advocacy

The IRS defines lobbying as the attempt to influence the passage, defeat, introduction or amendment of legislation, including bills introduced by a federal, state or local legislative body, bond issues, referenda, constitutional amendments, and Senate confirmation votes on Executive branch nominees. In sum, lobbying is any attempt to influence any specific legislation, and can be direct (expressing directly to your legislator that they should support a specific bill), or grassroots (asking the general public to contact their legislators to support a specific bill). Non-profit organizations can do nominal lobbying but cannot use any government dollars to fund that work.

A conversation with a legislator or candidate is not automatically lobbying. Talking with legislators, educating them about who you are, what you do, how funding cuts impact your services is NOT lobbying. Advocacy includes educating policymakers and the public about broad social issues, encouraging people to register to vote, organizing communities, educating voters about candidate positions, litigating, and many other activities; these are not lobbying. With the exception of legislation-specific lobbying and supporting a specific candidate or political party, all of the forms of advocacy listed above are unrestricted and unlimited for 501(c)(3) public charities.

If you are uncertain whether your program can do a certain activity, you can always check with your TA providers at VFMN and MNCASA.

Questions?

Reach out to us!



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