SikhVOTE
Voter Registration
Volunteer Toolkit

SikhVOTE 2020 is a project of the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) with the purpose of empowering Sikh American voters. SALDEF is a 501c3 non-partisan organization that does not advocate on behalf of any party, candidate, or campaign. Use of these materials does not constitute an endorsement by SALDEF.
Who can make the Sikh American voice heard? You.

You can do a lot in your own community to empower Sikhs across America. One of the easiest things to do is encouraging people to vote.

Why should you? In 1923 the Supreme Court said Sikh Americans could not become citizens -- we could not vote and were denied a voice in our country. Today, we have the right to vote, the right to share our voice and determine the direction of our nation. By voting, we can influence the decisions our elected officials make which impact our rights. Increasing the number of Sikh Americans registered to vote is one of the best ways to build and strengthen our community’s voice, presence and political capacity.

Simply put, every candidate and elected official running for office wants to know one thing about Sikh Americans: Are they registered to vote? The more that are, the louder voice they have.

If you do not vote, you are letting others make decisions about our rights and the treatment of our community. Your participation in elections and in public affairs can help protect your sangat, your neighbors, and make our country stronger.

As nonprofit, nonpartisan organizations, SALDEF and our partners are able to encourage Sikh Americans to participate in elections and to conduct voter registration, education, and get out the vote drives. We cannot engage in political activities that support one candidate or party, but we are committed to making sure our community has the tools to make sure our voice is heard.

But how do you do it? In this short packet you will find some ideas on how to organize a voter registration drive, the first step in the voting process. These ideas are just way to spark your creativity. Feel free to come up with your own solutions.

If you have any questions don’t hesitate to email us at sikhvote@saldef.org. Send us your stories and ideas to inspire and help your fellow volunteers for www.saldef.org.

Be creative! Be engaged!

Good luck!
--The SikhVOTE Team
Before You Start
Remember to send an email to sikhvote@saldef.org to let us know where you are doing your registration drive.

States put some rules on what you can do when you are registering voters. Here is a general list of guidelines you have to follow. Be sure to check out your state’s rules through the link at www.saldef.org.

- I am an unpaid volunteer.
- I will not share any information about my political preferences or advocate for any party or candidate during the registration drive or related activities.
- I will give a registration form to anyone who asks for one regardless of party or candidate preference, race, religion, sex or background.
- I will not wear any t-shirts, stickers, etc., advocating any party, candidate, or political position or have them on my car when conducting drives or transporting people to the polling place.
- I will respect the privacy of all the information I collect.
- I will provide blank registration forms and not alter or mark a form once it has been completed.
- I will return all completed forms to my local or state elections board by the deadline required in my state.
- I will follow any state and federal laws concerning voter registration. For information about your state’s regulations and deadlines visit www.saldef.org. You are encouraged to contact your local election’s board for information and voter registration drive information.

Getting People Registered to Vote
You have the energy. You know the rules. You are ready to register new voters. But how?

This guide lists suggestions and things to consider in efforts to get Sikh Americans and others in your area registered to vote. Keep in mind that successfully achieving this goal will require time, hard work, and a number of volunteers for the event. For your ease, we have divided this tool kit into three parts: Before the Event, Day-of-Event, and Follow Up.

Here are some supplies you will need:

- Black and/or blue pens. Bring a lot. You will lose some.
- A flat surface to write on like a table or clipboard.
- A sign to let people know you are registering voters.
● SikhVOTE posters & handouts (available at saldef.org/vote)
● Voter registration forms (available online or at your local government office)
● A team of volunteers to help you
● Most importantly: Yourself and all of your excitement and energy!

BEFORE THE EVENT

1. Get Your Volunteer Team Together
Make sure your volunteers read this packet and ready to help! Have approximately double the volunteers you will need to reach your goal. One volunteer will register about 5 people within 1 hour—use this statistic to calculate the number of volunteers you will need.

Make sure all of the volunteers are familiar with the requirements to vote. Request that all of your volunteers fill out the form for themselves in order to make sure there are no questions.

2. Set Up a Registration Event
So where can you register people to vote? At almost any public place – but be sure to check if there are any state or local regulations. One of the best places is at the local gurdwara or other Sikh American community center or meeting.

Here is an example: Talk to your local gurdwara leadership. Ask for time to speak and the chance to set up a table before the registration deadline. Let them know you are conducting a non-partisan voter registration and education drive as part of a national network of volunteers. Let them know you will conduct yourself in a nonpartisan manner, follow all state and federal laws, and not advocate for any party or campaign. Ask if you can leave a poster with information about the registration deadline and a reminder about election day on the community bulletin board.

(Visit www.saldef.org/vote for a bilingual Election Day & Voting Rights poster to put up in the gurdwara.)

3. Get Your Materials Together
DURING THE EVENT

1. Set Up Your Registration Table and Materials

2. Make An Announcement to the Sangat
Here is an example: “We are here taking part in SikhVOTE a national volunteer voter registration drive sponsored by SALDEF. In 1923 the Supreme Court said Sikh Americans could not become citizens -- we could not vote and were denied a voice in our country. Today, we have the right to vote, the right to share our voice and determine the direction of our nation. By voting, we can influence the decisions our elected officials make which impact our rights. Increasing the number of Sikh Americans registered to vote is one of the best ways to build and strengthen our community’s voice, presence and political capacity. Please stop by our table to register to vote, get information about your rights as a voter, and to take the Pledge to Vote on Election Day, Tuesday, November 3.”

(Please check www.saldef.org/vote for a Punjabi Translation/Version of this announcement. We recommend trying to make the announcement yourself, but if for any reason you are unable to, please hand the Punjabi version document to the gurdwara Secretary to make the announcement on your behalf.)

3. Be Proactive and Talk to People
Get people interested in talking to you and talking about your cause. Use the survey to find out their interests so they will genuinely want to register to vote.

Have people who are registered already or registering today fill out the Pledge to Vote sign-up sheet.

Remind people that they may be able to vote via absentee ballot.

(Check www.saldef.org/vote for the survey we recommend using & pledges Please remember to stay clear from stating any preferences for or advocating for any candidates, campaigns or political parties.)

4. Register Your Sangat

Assist future voters as they fill out the registration forms. Remind them to go out to the polls on November 3, 2020. Remind them of their rights, and give them information about their rights.
(Check [www.saldef.org/vote](http://www.saldef.org/vote) for ¼ page handouts to give to people as they leave your table/area. This is important to hand out to remind those registered to still vote on November 3rd)

**Important Note:**
You can only register someone if they:
- Are a U.S. Citizen;
- Will be eighteen years-old or older on November 3, 2020 (Election Day);
- And are eligible under any particular state or local guidelines, such as residency requirements.

5. Document Your Drive
Take photos and videos of your registration drive and send them to SikhVOTE!

**AFTER THE EVENT**

1. Deliver The Registration Forms IMMEDIATELY To The State or County Elections Office
Deliver the registration forms in accordance to state law to the appropriate elections office.

2. Send a Thank You and Reminder to Everyone Who Pledged to Vote
Share the information from the sign up sheet with SikhVOTE at [sikhvote@saldef.org](mailto:sikhvote@saldef.org).

3. Get Ready for Election Day

**Closer to Election Day**
Registering people is good. Getting them out to vote is even better. Closer to Election Day you can do a few things to remind and educate people:
- Email or call the people on your sign up sheet and see if anyone needs a ride to their polling place.
- Make an announcement at the gurdwara about the importance of voting on Election Day.
- Put up a SikhVOTE Election Day poster at your gurdwara.
- Set up a table and collect names and phone numbers of people who would like a reminder call on or the day before Election Day.
- Check out [www.saldef.org](http://www.saldef.org) for more ideas as Election Day approaches
On Election Day

- Vote!
- Remind your friends and family to go out and vote.
- Help others get to the polling place.
FAQ’s

Who is eligible to register to vote?
Eligibility to register to vote varies state by state. However, general guidelines include the following:

- You must be a citizen of the United States of America.
- You must be 18 years or older before the date of the coming election.
- You must live in your resident state (duration specified by state) for a certain period.

How do I register to vote in my state of residence?
In order to register to vote you must first complete a voter registration form. You can request a form from your state elections division or secretary of state. In most states voter registration forms are available in DMVs, local libraries, and online.

How much does a voter registration form cost?
Voter registration forms are free and widely available to the general public in hard copy as well as electronic form. However, you will need a stamp should you choose to register by mail.

Do I have to be 18 years old in order to register to vote?
No, you do not have to be 18 to register to vote if you will turn 18 by Election Day.

Does voter registration require that I affiliate with a political party?
No, you do not have to choose to affiliate with a political party. You can simply choose to remain unaffiliated. Not all states provide the option to affiliate with a party.

So I have to be able to read or write in English to register to vote?
No. According to the United States Department of Justice, “all election information that is available in English must also be available in the minority language so that all citizens will have an effective opportunity to register, learn the details of the elections, and cast a free and effective ballot.”

If I serve in the military/reside abroad am I still eligible to register and vote?
If you are a United States citizen in the military or if you reside abroad, you may still be able to register and vote. For further inquires please contact your state elections division or secretary of state.
I am an American with dual citizenships, am I still eligible to register and vote?
Yes, you are still eligible to register and vote as long as you fulfill all other criteria required by your state of residence.

I do not have a permanent residence because I am homeless. Can I still register and vote?
Yes, you are still eligible to register and vote. Contact your state elections division or secretary of state for information about required documentation or identification.

I am a victim of domestic violence; may I keep my voter registration information private?
As of 2018, 28 states provide privacy exceptions for victims of domestic violence. For more information refer to the National Network to End Domestic Violence at: http://nnedv.org/resources/voter-privacy.html.

For further information, contact your state elections division or secretary of state.

Can I vote early, by mail, or online?
These factors depend on your state of residence. Please contact your state elections division or secretary of state.

Is it possible to vote early before Election Day?
This depends on the state in which you reside. Please contact your state elections division or secretary of state for more information.

I did not vote in earlier elections. Does this mean that I need to re-register to vote?
As long as you have not moved to a different permanent residence you are most likely still able to vote. However, you should confirm your voter registration status by contacting your state elections division or secretary of state.

I have moved to a new residence. Am I still eligible to vote?
That depends on your definition of new residence. Is it just a temporary residence? In that case you are still eligible to vote using your previous residence. If you are using your new residence as a permanent residence than you need to re-register in order to be eligible to vote.
How do I vote if I am living out of state at college?
Contact your state elections division or secretary of state for voter regulations in your given state. It may be that your state has absentee voting and will allow you to vote by mail. Additionally, you can also register to vote at your new residence (college). This is upheld in the Supreme Court ruling of Symm v. United States.

Does a P.O. Box number fulfill the requirement of permanent address for voter registration?
No, you must provide a valid permanent address on your voter application.

I missed my voter registration deadline! What can I do? Can I still vote?
The deadline to register to vote in elections differs state by state. Some states will still allow you to register after the deadline or on Election Day. Please contact your state elections division or secretary of state for additional information.

To whom and where should I address my voter registration form to?
This depends on how you are completing your voter registration form. If you are completing it at a voter registration drive, it can be handed to the appointed staff person. Likewise, it can usually be given at your local DMV. If you are mailing in your registration form, refer to information provided by your state elections division or Secretary of State.

I have completed and returned my voter registration form. Am I now registered to vote?
No, just turning in your form does not provide you the status of a registered voter. You should check on your status by contacting your state elections division or secretary of state.

Where and when can I vote on Election Day?
You can determine the location and hours that polls will remain open on Election Day by contacting your state elections division or your secretary of state.

Am I required to bring identification with me when I register to vote or go to the polls on Election Day?
Some states don’t require identification while others do. In fact, new voting legislation actions are currently pending or taking place state by state. It is best to contact your state elections division or secretary of state for further details or inquiries.
Am I allowed to wear campaign clothing or to pass out literature on Election Day at the polls?
Laws prohibiting an individual from wearing campaign clothing or passing out literature vary state by state. For more information, please contact your state elections division or secretary of state.

I cannot reach the polls on Election Day. Does that mean I cannot vote?
It is quite possible that you may still be eligible to vote. Voter legislation differs state by state; it might be possible for you to vote early, in person or as an absentee voter. Please contact your state elections division or secretary of state for additional information.

How is my voter registration information protected?
Some portions of your information are protected for your safety such as your driver’s license number, social security number, etc. All other information, such as your address, is accessible.

What is the date of the coming General Election in 2020?
The General Election this year is on Tuesday, November 3, 2020.
ONLINE RESOURCES

SikhVOTE & SALDEF
www.saldef.org

US Election Assistance Commission, Voter Registration Forms

Rock the Vote, State Election Information
http://www.rockthevote.com/election-center/

Long Distance Voter, Absentee Information
http://www.longdistancevoter.org/absentee_ballots

APIAVote
www.apiavote.org

Asian Pacific American Legal Center
www.apalc.org