

Planning Election Activities

Know your dates and deadlines

When your PTA begins planning its election activities, there are some dates you need to know. Remember, every state has different procedures and deadlines so you will need to check with either your state's secretary of state office or your local county elections office to get this information. Start by finding out the following information:

- Does your state host primaries or caucuses?
- What is the last day to register to vote for the primary or caucus?
- Does your state have open or closed primaries? (Open primaries allow people to vote for any candidate they choose regardless of what party they are registered with.)
- What is the date of the primary or caucus?
- What is the last day to register to vote for the general election?
- What is the date of the general election? (Note: The 2008 general election will be November 4.)
- What rules govern nonprofit voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives in your state?

Types of events and activities PTAs organize

Election season can be a great time for PTAs to get our message out and let candidates and voters know our positions on important issues impacting the lives of children. Below is a list of possible activities your PTA can do.

- Host a candidates' forum.
- Hold a voter registration drive at your school.
- Publish a PTA voter's guide.
- Send out a PTA candidate questionnaire and publish responses.
- Host a debate for local candidates for public office.
- Take positions on ballot measures.
- Run a get-out-the-vote drive with PTA members.
- Run a mock election at your school for students.
- Host a presidential debate-watching party.

Co-hosting events and partnering with other groups

If your PTA is new to election activities, it might be a good idea to start by partnering with another organization for an event. Here are some organizations that might be interested in co-hosting an event.

- **American Legion and Auxiliary**—While primarily concerned with veterans' issues, they run a civic education program for high school juniors called Boys State and Girls State.
- **Chamber of Commerce**—They often host debates with a business focus.
- **Rotary Clubs**—This volunteer organization often focuses its efforts on helping children.
- **NAACP**—They often run voter registration drives.
- **League of Women Voters**—They often host candidates' forums and debates.