

Voter Action Guide

For parents and caregivers



This resource was prepared by Children's Defense Fund
for use by Children's Defense Fund Action as part of its
"Voting Rights Are Children's Rights" campaign.

Voting rights *are* children's rights.

If you are a parent or caregiver who is eligible to vote, this guide is for you. As the 2026 midterm election approaches, children are encountering political discussions on television, social media, in classrooms, and in everyday conversations.

This guide walks through everything you need to know in four parts: why voting matters, how to get involved, what to do if you run into problems at the polls, and how to talk to your children about voting.

Why This Matters

The 2026 CDF Freedom Schools® National Day of Social Action invited scholars and parents to organize and take action in response to our issue theme: Are the children well? Within CDF's Children's Health and Healing policy

zone, youth mental health was identified as a priority issue for *CDF Freedom Schools* and remains a concern in our community today.

In the spirit of keeping our eyes on the prize, children thrive when leaders prioritize their well-being and communities wield their power at the ballot box on their behalf. This work isn't limited to one day of action, the fight for our children's well-being is a commitment and must continue.

That is why CDF Action is building a community of families committed to preparing children for civic life and early participation. Together, we will train up the next generation of civic-minded adults who become child advocates.

The goal is simple:

Your guidance is key to helping your children navigate what they're hearing and seeing this election cycle. CDF encourages you to start here.



**Visit our voter
engage hub and
verify your state's
voter registration
deadlines.**

<https://cdf-action-vote.vercel.app/>

<https://www.vote.org/voter-registration-deadlines/>

Get involved.



- ✓ **Become a poll worker**
- ✓ **Become a poll watcher**
- ✓ **Become a phone banker**
- ✓ **Protect the election**

Voting rights are children's rights *requires* you.

We need you!

In addition to voting, parents and caregivers play a critical role this midterm election, leading the charge with CDF to protect America's children.

"Free and fair elections don't defend themselves — people defend them."

We must uphold our moral obligation to protect our children and ensure a parent and caregiver presence at every polling site across the nation. You have a role leading up to November 3, 2026; take a moment to read and review how you can help protect the election. We have partners on standby who are ready to assist you in securing your role this election cycle.

You won't have to do this alone: bring another parent or caregiver with you.

Sign up to Protect the Election.

This is your opportunity to serve as a Poll Worker, Poll Watcher or Phone Banker; decide how you will serve.

Our partners at All Roads Leads to the South will connect you to the opportunity that fits. To sign up or learn more, visit <http://freedomsummer2026.com>.



Choose Your Role

Inside the Polling Place

Poll Worker

Staff the polling place on Election Day: check in voters, run equipment, keep the line moving. Usually, a paid position through your county or municipal election office.

Observing & Reporting

Poll Watcher

Observe at the polls, document problems, and get voters help when something goes wrong — intimidation, broken machines, wrongly turned-away voters.

From Anywhere

Phone Banker

Call voters to confirm registration, find their polling place, and make a plan to vote. No travel, no experience needed — do it from your couch.

What to do if you encounter problems on Election Day.

In the current political climate, the **Election Protection Hotline**, administered by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, is more important than ever.

You can get help with your questions about voter registration deadlines, requesting absentee or mail-in ballots, or how to vote in-person during early voting or on Election Day? **Call or text 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683)** to speak with a trained Election Protection volunteer.

Find out all you need to know about election protection in 2026.

Common Voting Problems

- Late-arriving absentee ballots
- Voting equipment issues
- Long lines at polling places
- Campaigning inside restricted areas
- Intimidation or harassment at the polls
- Poll worker misconduct
- Language assistance



How to talk to your children about voting

First, talk to your children about the upcoming election and create a safe space for conversation. Then, start here:

✓ **Children should know voting rights are children's rights** because elected leaders at every level of government make decisions about schools, healthcare, community safety, economic opportunity, and many other conditions that shape the lives of children and families.

✓ **Children should understand voting is a process of democracy.** Democracy is a way of running a government where the power belongs to the people, either by voting directly on decisions or by choosing representatives to make decisions for them.

To be eligible to vote in the U.S. you must be at least 18 years old (in some states you can vote as early as age 16) and registered to vote in your state.

Share a story with your children about when you registered to vote or a memorable voting experience.

✓ **Children need to know in the past, not everyone had the right to vote.** Over time, important amendments and laws were passed to expand voting rights:

- The 15th Amendment gave Black men the right to vote (1870)
- The 19th Amendment gave white women the right to vote (1920)
- The 26th Amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 (1971)
- The Voting Rights Act of 1965 banned race and unfair practices like literacy tests and poll taxes

Enjoy a game of voting trivia with your children. Correct answers are provided after each question.

1. How old do you have to be to vote in the United States? **(18)**
2. What do you call the place where people go to vote? **(A polling place/polling station)**
3. What is the name of the piece of paper (or machine) you use to make your voting choices? **(A ballot)**
4. What color are the "I Voted" stickers usually? **(Varies, but often red, white, and blue)**
5. How often do Americans vote for president? **(Every 4 years)**
6. What is it called when you vote before Election Day? **(Early voting or absentee voting)**
7. What is the day called when everyone votes for president? **(Election Day)**
8. What do we call a person who watches the election to make sure it's fair? **(A poll watcher or election observer)**
9. What amendment to the Constitution gave women the right to vote? **(The 19th Amendment)**
10. What year did the 19th Amendment pass? **(1920)**

11. What amendment guaranteed that people could not be denied the right to vote because of race? (***The 15th Amendment***)
12. What is it called when new voters sign up to be able to vote? (***Voter registration***)
13. Can you name one job of a poll worker? (***Greeting voters, checking registration, handing out ballots, helping with accessibility, etc.***)
14. What's the name for voting that happens in a state or city, rather than for president? (***Local or state elections***)
15. True or False: You have to tell other people who you voted for. (***False — your vote is private!***)

Explain the voting process to your children.

Print or download CDF's child friendly "Our Voting Day Adventure Map" to walk through this map with your children before you vote in person.

WORDS TO KNOW

Ballot: the paper or screen listing all the choices you can vote for

Election worker: a helper who checks voters in and answers questions

Polling place/location: the building where people go to vote

"I Voted" sticker: a little badge of honor for voters

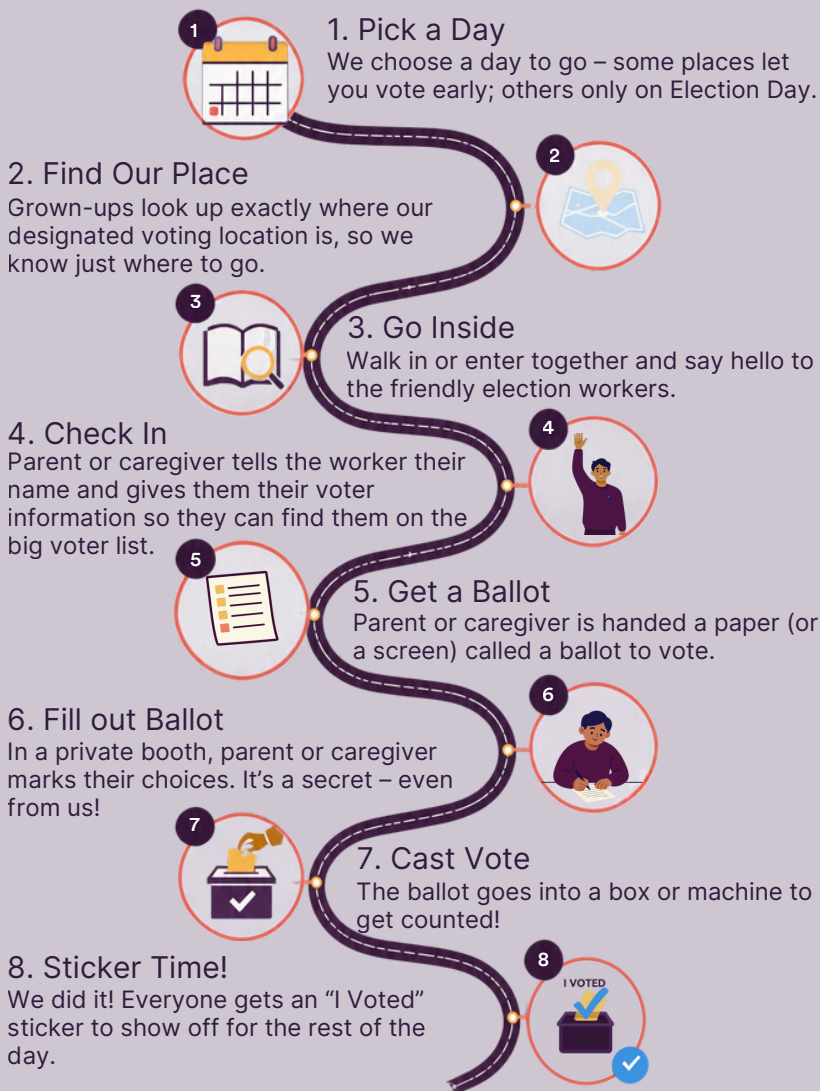
BEFORE WE GO

Date & Time: _____

Our polling place: _____

- ✓ Bring ID, if our state requires it
- ✓ Bring our map along
- ✓ Talk about why voting is private & important

Our Voting Day Adventure



Read a book.

Engage your children in reading about democracy. Select books by grade level to help guide your conversation on voting.

Level I - Grades K-2

Title

V is for Voting

Vote for Our Future

Lillian's Right to Vote

The Walk

Rock That Vote

If I Ran for President

Show Up and Vote

The Night Before Election Day

Author

Kate Farrell

Margaret McNamara

Jonah Winter

Winsome Bingham

Meg Fleming

Catherine Stier

Ani Di Franco

Natasha Wing

Level II - Grade 3-5

Title

The Walk

The Day Gogo Went to Vote

Granddaddy's Turn: A Journey to the Ballot Box

See How they Run: Campaign

Dreams, Election Schemes, and the Race to the White House

What's the Big Deal About Elections

Class Act (Jada Jones)

Author

Winsome Bingham

Elinor Batezat Sisulu

Michael S. Bandy

Susan E. Goodman

Ruby Shamir

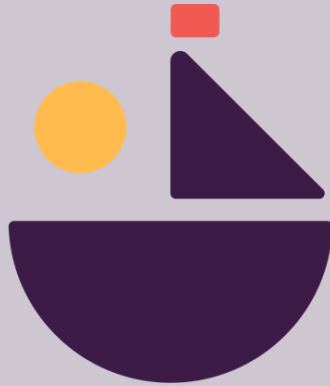
Kelly Starling Lyons

Level III - Grades 6-8

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>
Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer: The Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement	Carole Boston Weatherford
See How they Run: Campaign Dreams, Election Schemes, and the Race to the White House	Susan E. Goodman
What's the Big Deal About Elections	Ruby Shamir
We Were the Fire: Birmingham 1963	Sheila P. Moses
Drawing the Vote: Illustrated Guide to Voting in America	Tommy Jenkins
Voting Matters- Understanding Your Power in Democracy	Sharon F. Holbert

Level IV - Grades 9-12

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>
Lifting as we Climb: Black Women's Battle for the Ballot Box	Evette Dionne
Every Vote Matters: The Power of Your Voice, from Student Elections to the Supreme Court	Thomas and Natalie Jacobs
Voting Matters- Understanding Your Power in Democracy	Sharon F. Holbert
Votes of Confidence: A Young Person's Guide to American Elections	Jeff Fleischer
The Voting Booth	Brandy Colbert
One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression is Destroying Our Democracy	Carol Anderson



**children's
defense fund
action**