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Paul Reed

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health and Director, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion,
RADM, US Public Health Service
US Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, DC

Submitted by email to HP2030Comments@hhs.gov

Subject: Solicitation of Written Comments on Healthy People 2030 Objectives

Comment Reference: 88 FR 71580

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of the United States (The League), we write in response to the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Solicitation of Written Comments on Healthy People 2030 Objectives. The League applauds the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's (ODPHP's) leadership in establishing "[i]ncrease the proportion of the voting-age citizens who vote" (SDOH-07) as a core objective of Healthy People 2030. The League recommends next steps that ODPHP can take to further progress toward the objective's target.

The League is a 103-year-old organization that uses advocacy, education, litigation, and organizing to empower voters and defend democracy. We are a grassroots group comprised of more than 500,000 members and supporters across more than 750 local and state Leagues nationwide. Through our 501(c)(3) branch, the League of Women Voters Education Fund, we run VOTE11.org, a one-stop shop for voter registration, information, and nonpartisan voter guides.¹ As the largest nonpartisan, nonprofit, on-the-ground entity registering voters throughout the country, the League is uniquely positioned to provide best-practice guidance on improving voter registration.

The Healthy People framework is a roadmap for achieving national-level health goals over 10-year spans. The setting, measuring, and tracking progress of these goals informs health improvement planning across federal agencies and informs the process of setting health goals and priorities at state- and local-level health agencies and non-profit hospital systems.

ODPHP's promotion of increasing voter participation to a core objective is exceptionally important for the advancement of health equity. Research suggests that there is a strong relationship between civic participation and improved health and well-being. The Health & Democracy Index demonstrates that access to civic and voter participation leads to better health outcomes.² A scoping review finds the greatest positive association between health and voting among communities that have been historically marginalized by age, disability, mental and physical health, and race.³

¹ <https://www.vote411.org/>

² <https://democracyindex.hdhp.us/>

³ <https://publichealthreviews.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40985-020-00133-6>



Recommendation

Given that voter participation in 2022 was lower than in 2018 (baseline year), in order to reap the positive health outcomes associated with voting, it is vitally important that ODPHP continue supporting national progress toward the target of SDOH-07 by providing evidence-based resources and recommendations for how public health organizations and professionals can improve voter participation.⁴ In coordination with the work of our partner coalition, Healthy Democracy Healthy People, the League offers evidence-based recommendations for ODPHP to share.⁵

Health organizations and professionals can build upon their contact and established trust with the public to provide voter registration information and opportunities, voter education resources, and opportunities to make a voting plan ahead of elections.

Voter Registration

The leading reason non-voters provide for not voting is not being registered, and research shows that registering voters increases voter turnout.⁶ Health organizations can provide voter registration information and tools to the public or to care recipients in health enrollment forms and encourage community members to register to vote in one-on-one interactions.

Through the League of Women Voters Education Fund, we run VOTE411, which hosts an online voter registration tool, a resource for expediently verifying your voter registration, and state-specific registration rules and deadlines for regular, mail-in, and early voting.⁷ Between 2020 and 2022, nearly 225,000 eligible voters registered to vote on VOTE411, and more than 516,000 voters used it to check their voter registration.⁸

Voter Education

Research shows that voter engagement efforts that include education increase voter turnout.⁹ Voter education looks like providing nonpartisan information on voting rules, candidates, and ballot measures so voters can make informed decisions. Health organizations can provide voter education tools to the public or to care recipients in health enrollment forms.

Health organizations may also have a unique opportunity to engage with voters with disabilities who are receiving healthcare services and/or interacting with healthcare organizations while accompanied by a caretaker or someone else who may also assist them when voting. As such, health organizations are uniquely poised to share information about the rights of voters with disabilities to support them in fully exercising their right to vote. Voters with disabilities face numerous challenges to voting.¹⁰ During the

⁴ <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/social-and-community-context/increase-proportion-voting-age-citizens-who-vote-sdoh-07>

⁵ <https://www.healthymodemocracyhealthypeople.org/>

⁶ <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/medill-npr-nonvoters-2020>; <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ps-political-science-and-politics/article/abs/getting-registered-and-getting-to-the-polls-the-impact-of-voter-registration-strategy-and-information-provision-on-turnout-of-college-students/BF73E516BF859A89CDEE698BDD612E35>

⁷ <https://www.lwv.org/elections/vote411>

⁸ https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/2020%E2%80%9320Biennium_Impact%20Report_FINAL_0.pdf

⁹ https://funderscommittee.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/fccp_integrated_voter_engagement_case_studies_2009_final.pdf

¹⁰

https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/voters/Disability_and_voting_accessibility_in_the_2020_elections_final_report_on_survey_results.pdf



2020 election, voters with disabilities were 7% less likely to vote than people without disabilities, even after adjusting for age.¹¹ The same year, voters with disabilities were nearly twice as likely as nondisabled voters to experience problems when voting across all methods.¹²

VOTE411 provides numerous voter education resources, including a search function for voters to find their upcoming races, voting method options, guides to local ballot issues, polling locations and hours, candidates' policy positions directly in their own words, and more.¹³ VOTE411 also has voting rules for state and local elections across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Between 2020 and 2022, more than 5.5 million voters viewed their ballots on VOTE411.¹⁴ Numerous reputable nonprofit organizations also maintain know your rights guides on voting accessibility in federal elections.¹⁵

Voting Plans

Having people make a voting plan has been shown to increase voter turnout.¹⁶ Making a voting plan compels a voter to envision themselves casting their ballot and proactively identify any barriers. It includes identifying one's voting date and time, method, location, transportation, work or childcare arrangements, and necessary documentation such as identification. Health organizations can provide voting plan resources to the public or to care recipients in health enrollment forms.

Several nonprofit organizations, like the National Council of Jewish Women, maintain a checklist to help voters make a voting plan, and VOTE411 takes voters through the steps of designing a voting plan and sharing it with others for accountability.¹⁷

The League of Women Voters of the United States encourages Healthy People 2030 to provide evidence-based resources and recommendations detailing how public health organizations and professionals can improve voter participation. We appreciate the opportunity to share some such recommendations and look forward to continuing to engage in the process of supporting progress toward the target of the core objective to increase voter participation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Ann Turner, MD, JD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Deborah Ann Turner, MD, JD
President of League of Women Voters of the United States

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ <https://www.lwv.org/elections/vote411>

¹⁴ https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/2020%E2%80%932021%20Biennium_Impact%20Report_FINAL_0.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/voting-rights#:~:text=Under%20federal%20law%2C%20voters%20with,officer%20of%20the%20voter's%20union>

¹⁶ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41062187>

¹⁷ <https://www.ncjw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Create-a-Voting-Plan.pdf>; <https://www.vote411.org/make-your-plan>