

POWER^{Up} **READY TO VOTE**

TOOLKIT

Strengthening Black Women's Civic Power

National Council of Negro Women, Inc.

Table of Contents

The Issue.....	3
The Ask.....	3
Not an NCNW Member? This Toolkit Is for You, Too.....	4
How POWER UP Works.....	4
The Six Pillars of POWER UP: Section Action Plan.....	4
What POWER UP Stands For.....	6
Key Dates for 2026.....	7
States with Upcoming Elections in 2026.....	7
Signature POWER UP Events & Programs.....	8
Voter Engagement Talking Points: Know Who You're Talking To.....	8
The Talking Point Bank.....	10
Youth Messaging (Ages 18–34).....	11
Suggested Social Media Posts & Hashtags.....	12
POWER UP Brand Assets for Sections.....	12
Phone/Text Banking Script for Voter Mobilization.....	13
Sample Outreach Letter to Faith & Community Partners.....	13
Metrics for Success: Section Reporting.....	14
How to Support & Questions.....	15

The Issue

American democracy is at a defining moment. Black women continue to serve as the nation's most consistent and reliable voting bloc — yet they continue to face disproportionate barriers to full civic participation and equitable policy outcomes. Heading into the 2026 midterm elections, those barriers are intensifying:

- Aggressive voter suppression and administrative barriers, including redistricting efforts that dilute Black voting power following the *Louisiana v. Callais* decision
- Targeted digital and text-based disinformation campaigns aimed at Black communities
- Policy threats impacting healthcare, economic security, reproductive freedom, education, and broadband access
- The cumulative burden of caregiving, work instability, and systemic inequity that turns civic participation into added labor rather than a protected right

NCNW recognizes that turnout alone is not enough. Lasting civic power requires protected access, trusted information, community-centered infrastructure, logistical support, and sustained engagement beyond Election Day.

POWER UP is NCNW's answer to this moment. It transforms NCNW's nearly 90 years of trusted leadership, community relationships, and national reach into a modern civic engagement infrastructure designed to build durable civic power beyond a single election cycle.

The Ask

POWER UP moves Black women from awareness to action — and from participation to power. We are asking every NCNW Section, Collegiate Section, and Affiliate to activate the six POWER UP pillars in your community between now, the November 2026 midterm elections.

Our national goals:

- ✓ Register 1,000,000 new Black voters through the Black Women's Leadership Collective partnership
- ✓ Overperform in voter TURNOUT — not just voter registration — in the 2026 midterms
- ✓ Register and mobilize 18-year-olds: every high school senior and college freshman who will be 18 by November 2026 is a priority
- ✓ Get souls physically to the polls — family, friends, section members, sorority sisters, church members, and business partners

Every eligible person in your circle must be registered, informed, protected, and moved to the ballot box.

NOT an NCNW Member? This Toolkit Is for You, Too

You don't have to be an NCNW member to POWER UP. If you're a community member, faith leader, educator, business owner, or neighbor who cares about protecting the vote, we're asking you to:

- ✓ Check your own voter registration today at [Vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov) — and ask three people in your life to do the same
- ✓ Make a voting plan for 2026: when, where, and how you'll vote, and who you're bringing with you
- ✓ Use the talking points in this toolkit in your everyday conversations — at the salon, the barbershop, the dinner table, and in your group chats
- ✓ Volunteer with a local NCNW Section: help at a registration drive, drive someone to the polls, or serve as a poll worker
- ✓ Share this toolkit with anyone who will use it — it belongs to the community

To connect with the NCNW Section nearest you, see our website <https://ncnw.org/find-a-section/>

How POWER UP Works

National Coordination

NCNW develops strategy, messaging, civic education tools, training, and digital infrastructure.

Section-Led Activation

Local Sections implement POWER UP in ways that reflect their communities while remaining aligned nationally.

Community-Centered Impact

Black women experience civic participation as accessible, supported, informed, and collective.

“Participation alone does not create power. Power requires infrastructure, protection, trust, and sustained engagement.”

The Six Pillars of POWER UP: Section Action Plan

Each pillar below includes concrete actions for Sections and Collegiate Sections. Sections should aim to activate all six pillars, beginning with Voter Education and Voter Registration immediately.

Pillar 1: Voter Education — Building Knowledge, Confidence, and Civic Clarity

Every NCNW Section should:

- ✓ Host at least two voter education briefings, town halls, fireside chats, or “Freedom School” civic education sessions before Election Day

- ✓ Use civic education toolkits aligned with NCNW's Core 4 priorities (health, education, economic empowerment, social justice)
- ✓ Distribute plain-language ballot explainers and voting guides for your state
- ✓ Explain what is at stake: redistricting, the Supreme Court, tariffs and household costs, housing, healthcare, and SNAP
- ✓ Complete Civic Education Ambassador training for local leaders
- ✓ Partner with Collegiate Sections, HBCUs, and Divine Nine chapters to educate young and first-time voters

Outcome: Black women and their communities understand not only how to vote, but what is at stake.

Pillar 2: Voter Registration — Expanding the Electorate and Normalizing Participation/Partnering with Black Women's Collective to register 1 Million new Black Voters

Every NCNW Section should:

- ✓ Conduct monthly voter registration drives through November 2026
- ✓ Integrate registration into every NCNW program and event — no NCNW gathering without a registration table
- ✓ Register voters at churches, HBCUs, salons, barbershops, workforce programs, and community events
- ✓ Run a dedicated 18-by-November campaign at high schools and college campuses
- ✓ Distribute "I Promise to Vote" pledge cards
- ✓ Use digital and paper registration tools and follow compliance guidance and tracking systems
- ✓ Use trusted registration resources: Vote.gov, Vote.org, Vote America, and Rock the Vote

Outcome: Registration becomes visible, normalized, and sustained.

Pillar 3: Voter Protection — Protecting Access in Real Time

Every NCNW Section should:

- ✓ Distribute state-specific Know Your Rights materials
- ✓ Identify and train Voter Protection Liaisons within your Section
- ✓ Establish real-time escalation for polling and ballot access issues
- ✓ Monitor and report voter suppression concerns to NCNW National for tracking
- ✓ Coordinate with legal and civil rights partners
- ✓ Share the national Election Protection Hotline: 1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683)

Outcome: Black women and their communities are not left alone when barriers arise.

Pillar 4: Voter Mobility — Removing Practical Barriers to Participation

Every NCNW Section should:

- ✓ Organize rides to the polls through local partnerships
- ✓ Lead Souls to the Polls efforts with faith institutions

- ✓ Provide early voting and vote-by-mail education — including any changes to mail-in voting rules in your state
- ✓ Establish faith and community institutions as voter access hubs
- ✓ Provide targeted support for seniors, caregivers, voters with disabilities, and working mothers (including childcare at civic events)

Outcome: Voting becomes possible through collective care and community support.

Pillar 5: Voter Support — Turning Intention Into Action

Every NCNW Section should:

- ✓ Deploy Election Week Resource Kits
- ✓ Host community-centered events like Ballots & Brunch and Ballots & Boots
- ✓ Conduct targeted outreach to essential workers, first-time voters, and single mothers
- ✓ Recruit poll workers, poll watchers, election volunteers, and community voting ambassadors
- ✓ Run local mobilization and turnout activities during early voting and on Election Day

Outcome: Voting feels affirming, supported, and communal.

Pillar 6: Voter Communication — Countering Misinformation and Controlling the Narrative

Every NCNW Section should:

- ✓ Use national messaging templates and communication tools
- ✓ Participate in digital storytelling and rapid response training
- ✓ Elevate trusted Black women messengers and local leaders
- ✓ Monitor and counter disinformation targeting Black communities — stop the spread of lies, repost the truth and the facts
- ✓ Follow and amplify Black women elected officials, including the 29 women of the Congressional Black Caucus and Black women in your state legislature

Outcome: Truth travels faster than misinformation.

What POWER UP Stands For

Preserve access to the ballot

Organize education and registration infrastructure

Walk in by removing access barriers

Educate voters with clarity and truth

Reach communities with trusted messages

Uplift voters through practical support

Participate by driving turnout in 2026 and 2028

Key Dates for 2026

- NOW – Fall 2026: State primary elections – confirm your state’s primary date, registration deadline, and early voting window at your Secretary of State’s website or [vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov)
- September 15, 2026: National Voter Registration Day
- September 18, 2026: National Black Voter Day – pair with a registration drive and social media day of action
- October 2026: Early voting begins in most states – organize Souls to the Polls and early vote events
- Tuesday, November 3, 2026: MIDTERM ELECTION DAY

States with Upcoming Elections in 2026

The following are the congressional, state legislature, and gubernatorial elections in the states/districts where NCNW Sections are located.

State / District	U.S. House Seats Up	U.S. Senate Seat Up	Gubernatorial Race	State Legislature Seats Up (Senate / House)
Alabama	7	Yes	Yes	35 / 105
Arizona	9	No	Yes	30 / 60
California	52	No	Yes	20 / 80
Colorado	8	Yes	Yes	35 / 65
Connecticut	5	No	Yes	36 / 151
District of Columbia	1 (non-voting)	No	N/A	N/A
Delaware	1	Yes	No	11 / 41
Florida	28	Yes (includes a special)	Yes	40 / 120
Georgia	14	Yes	Yes	56 / 180
Illinois	17	Yes	Yes	39 / 118
Indiana	9	No	No	50 / 100
Kentucky	6	Yes	No	38 / 100
Louisiana	6	Yes	No	39 / 105
Massachusetts	9	No	Yes	40 / 160
Maryland	8	No	Yes	47 / 141
Michigan	13	Yes (Peters retiring)	Yes	38 / 110
Missouri	8	No	Yes	34 / 163
Mississippi	4	No	No	52 / 122

State / District	U.S. House Seats Up	U.S. Senate Seat Up	Gubernatorial Race	State Legislature Seats Up (Senate / House)
North Carolina	14	Yes	Yes	50 / 120
Nebraska	3	Yes	Yes	49 / ~49 (unicameral)
New Jersey	12	Yes	No	40 / 80
New Mexico	3	No	Yes	42 / 70
Nevada	4	No	Yes	11 / 42
New York	26	No	Yes	63 / 150
Ohio	15	Yes (special included)	Yes	17 / 99
Oklahoma	5	No	Yes	24 / 101
Pennsylvania	17	No	Yes	25 / 203
South Carolina	7	Yes	Yes	— / 124
Tennessee	9	No	Yes	17 / 99
Texas	38	Yes	Yes	16 / 150
Virginia	11	Yes	No	0 / 100
Washington	10	No	No	24 / 98
Wisconsin	8	No	Yes	17 / 100

Signature POWER UP Events & Programs

- Ballots & Brunch / Ballots & Boots — community-centered voter events that pair fellowship with registration and education
- Souls to the Polls — faith-based transportation and mobilization on early voting Sundays
- Freedom Schools — community civic education sessions: provide food, provide childcare, and teach why things cost so much, what tariffs do, and what is on the ballot
- I Promise to Vote pledge card drives
- 18-by-November — registration campaigns for high school seniors and college freshmen
- John Lewis Good Struggle Tour partnership events

Voter Engagement Talking Points: Know Who You're Talking To

Use these categories to identify your audience, then pull the right talking points from the Talking Point Bank below. The categories describe engagement levels, not worth — every

person can move up the ladder. **NCNW is strictly nonpartisan: these points address issues, process, and participation — never candidates or parties.**

Category	Who They Are	What They Often Sound Like	Which Talking Points to Pull
1. Legacy Voters	Consistent, lifelong voters — often elders who lived the fight for the right to vote.	"I vote in every election. I remember when we couldn't."	They don't need persuading — they need activation. Invite them to be messengers, mentors, poll workers, and ride providers.
2. Engaged Voters	Vote regularly in major elections but may skip local, primary, or special elections.	"I always vote for president, but I didn't know there was an election this August."	Down-ballot and local power — school boards, judges, prosecutors, councils — where a handful of votes decides daily life.
3. Sporadic ("Midsection") Voters	Registered and have voted before, but participation is inconsistent — often only in presidential years.	"I voted in 2024. Why does this little election matter?"	Issue-connection points plus logistics: help them make a concrete plan (registration, polling place, date) on the spot.
4. Newly Eligible / First-Time Voters	Young people turning 17–18, new citizens, and returning citizens who have regained eligibility.	"I don't really know how any of this works."	Process and confidence points — walk through registration and what voting actually looks like, step by step.
5. Disengaged Voters	Registered or voted before but dropped off — often out of disappointment, distrust, or feeling unrepresented.	"I used to vote. Nothing changed for people like me."	Listen first. Don't lead with "Are you registered?" — lead with "What's your biggest concern right now?"
6. Non-Engaged Voters	Have never participated and don't see voting as connected to their lives.	"Voting has nothing to do with me."	Issue hooks delivered by trusted peers. Neighbors, family, and people who look like them move this group — institutions rarely do.

The Talking Point Bank

Pull what fits the person in front of you. Each block answers something we actually hear in the community.

“My vote doesn’t count.”

- Your vote counts most in the elections closest to home. Local races are regularly decided by dozens or hundreds of votes — sometimes single digits.
- The officials who decide your rent protections, school funding, policing, and property taxes are chosen in the low-turnout elections most people skip. Skipping them hands your voice to whoever does show up.

“Because of the Electoral College, only swing states matter.”

- That frustration is real — and it applies to exactly one race on your ballot. Everything else — mayor, city council, school board, judges, prosecutor, state legislature, ballot measures — is decided by direct popular vote.
- State legislatures elected by us draw the district maps and write the voting rules. If you want the big system to change, it starts with the state and local races where every vote is counted straight up.

“Politics doesn’t affect me.”

Start by asking: “What’s the biggest thing stressing you right now?” Then connect their answer:

- Housing: elected officials vote on the guardrails that shape rents and who can buy up whole blocks of housing
- Jobs & money: minimum wage, small business loans, homeowner assistance, and equal pay protections all run through legislation
- Health: Black maternal health, hospital funding, and healthcare access are shaped by the people we elect
- Education: school funding, curriculum, and college affordability are on the ballot every cycle — through school boards and state legislatures

“That law is about other people, not me.”

- Rights are connective. If due process can be set aside for one group of people, it can be set aside for the next — meaning you and me. Protecting fair treatment for our neighbors protects fair treatment for us.

“Nothing ever changes.”

- Everything we count on — the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, fair housing — was won by ordinary people who stayed in the game. Change is cumulative, and so is losing ground. Our job now is to protect and renew those wins.

Preparation Points (share with everyone)

- ✓ Check your registration status regularly — voter rolls are being purged, and you can be removed without knowing it
- ✓ Moved recently? Update your address today — make it part of the moving checklist
- ✓ Know your state's ID rules; they change. If someone lacks ID or the documents to get one, connect them to local ID-assistance resources
- ✓ Make a voting plan: when, where, how you'll get there, and who you're bringing with you

Youth Messaging (Ages 18–34)

How to deliver it: this generation listens to peers and trusted people who look like them — far more than to organizations or officials. Wherever possible, recruit messengers in this age group to carry these points into high schools, campuses, group chats, and social media. Lead with their issues, keep it under a minute, and never shame.

Plain-Language Points (ready to say or post)

- On “my vote doesn’t count”: “Forget the presidential race for a second. Your city council, school board, and judges are decided by a few hundred votes — sometimes fewer. That’s rent, that’s school funding, that’s policing. That’s where your vote hits hardest.”
- On rent: “You know why your apartment costs what it costs? Because elected officials decide whether there are any rules on who can buy up housing and what they can charge. That’s on the ballot.”
- On jobs and money: “Minimum wage, student debt, first-time homebuyer help — none of that is decided on social media. It’s decided in legislatures by people who got there with somebody’s votes. Might as well be yours.”
- On “I don’t know enough”: “You don’t have to have it all figured out to vote. Nobody does. Want to walk through what’s actually on the ballot together?”
- On “politicians don’t care about us”: “Politicians pay attention to who votes. Communities that turn out get answered; communities that don’t get ignored. Voting is how you make them care.”

The Conversation Method (for tabling, classrooms, and campus visits)

Don’t open with “Are you registered?” Open with questions — then connect:

- “What matters most to you in your life right now?”
- “How do you think voting could affect that?”
- Whatever they name — rent, a job, school, safety — connect it to a specific office or piece of legislation, then to the ballot. One issue, one connection, one action.

Do / Don’t

- ✓ DO use short-form video, shareable graphics, and group chats — meet them on their platforms
- ✓ DO pair history with present-day stakes
- ✓ DON’T lead with “people died for this” alone — guilt pushes disengaged young people further away

- ✓ DON'T drown them in policy detail or assume disinterest — assume no one has connected the dots for them yet

Countering Harmful Online Messaging

- Cynical “don’t bother” content spreads through social media and streaming. The counter is consistent, trusted, in-person voices.
- NCNW’s Associates program pairs young men with older Black men for mentorship and community. Know a young man who would benefit? Refer him to membership@ncnw.org.

Suggested Social Media Posts & Hashtags

Post these messages with POWER UP graphics on your platforms (Instagram, Facebook, X, TikTok):

- “Black women are the most reliable voters in America — and in 2026 we’re not just showing up, we’re POWERING UP. Register. Educate. Mobilize. #PowerUpNCNW”
- “Turnout alone is not enough. Power requires infrastructure, protection, trust, and sustained engagement. Join NCNW’s POWER UP: Ready to Vote. #ReadyToVote”
- “Turning 18 by November 2026? Your first vote is your power. Let’s get you registered TODAY. #18ByNovember #PowerUpNCNW”
- “Your vote is your power. On Election Day, you are no less important than anyone else — billionaires get one vote, and so do you. #PowerUpNCNW”

Hashtag examples:

- #POWERUPReadyToVote

POWER UP Brand Assets for Sections

Official POWER UP: Ready to Vote logos are available for download and should be used on all Section flyers, social media posts, event signage, and printed materials. Four versions are provided on the NCNW website.

Logo usage guidelines:

- ✓ Do not stretch, recolor, rotate, or alter the logo
- ✓ Always pair the logo with the NCNW name on public-facing materials
- ✓ Use the white-on-purple versions for social media; use the transparent version over photos or light backgrounds

How to get the files: Logo files are on the website “ncnw.org” If your Section needs the files sent, email the NCNW Advocacy & Policy Team at policy@ncnw.org.

Phone/Text Banking Script for Voter Mobilization

Opening

"Hello! My name is (First Name) and I'm a volunteer with the National Council of Negro Women's POWER UP: Ready to Vote campaign. I'm reaching out to make sure you're ready for the upcoming election."

Confirm Registration

"Are you registered to vote at your current address? If you've moved, changed your name, or haven't voted in a while, it's worth double-checking — I can share a link to verify your registration in under two minutes."

Make a Plan

"Do you know when, where, and how you plan to vote? Will you vote early, by mail, or on Election Day? Do you need a ride to the polls, or information about early voting locations near you?"

Offer Support

"If you run into any problems voting — long lines, ID questions, or anyone challenging your right to vote — call the Election Protection Hotline at 1-866-OUR-VOTE. You have the right to cast your ballot."

Closing

"Can we count on you to vote in this election — and to bring one family member, friend, or neighbor with you? Thank you for your time, and remember: when Black women POWER UP, communities move, policy shifts, and democracy moves with us."

Sample Outreach Letter to Faith & Community Partners

Subject: Partner with NCNW to POWER UP Our Community for 2026

Dear [Pastor / Community Leader's Name],

The [Section Name] of the National Council of Negro Women invites [Church / Organization Name] to partner with us in POWER UP: Ready to Vote — a national campaign to strengthen Black civic power ahead of the 2026 midterm elections.

We are asking trusted community institutions like yours to serve as voter access hubs.

Partnership can include: hosting a voter registration drive, providing space for a civic education briefing, joining a Souls to the Polls event, or helping organize rides to the polls for seniors and working families.

Black women and our communities face growing barriers to the ballot — but together we have the infrastructure, the trust, and the reach to overcome them. We would welcome the chance to discuss how we can work together.

In service,

[Your Name], [Title], [Section Name]

[Contact Information]

Metrics for Success: Section Reporting

To track our national goals — including 1,000,000 new registered voters — Sections should track and report:

- ✓ Number of voter registration drives held and new voters registered
- ✓ Number of civic education events held and attendees reached
- ✓ Number of “I Promise to Vote” pledge cards distributed
- ✓ Number of 18-year-olds / first-time voters registered
- ✓ Number of poll workers, poll watchers, and Voter Protection Liaisons recruited
- ✓ Number of rides to the polls / voters transported

How to report: Sections should submit their numbers through the official POWER UP Section Reporting Form: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/019ed659e1297047bbef1bf88a1ccbf3>

How to Support

What Else Can You Do?

- ✓ Donate: join the Power of 20 campaign — \$20 a month to NCNW at ncnw.org (click PWR20)
- ✓ Support Black women candidates in your personal capacity — **NCNW is nonpartisan and does not endorse candidates, but we make sure Black women know where Black women are running**
- ✓ Follow and amplify the work of Black women elected officials at every level
- ✓ Share this toolkit with your Section, Affiliate, church, and community

Questions

Please email the NCNW Advocacy & Policy Team at policy@ncnw.org. We will assist you!

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