Guide of the Do’s and Don’ts for Nonprofit Youth-Serving Organizations During Election Season

By following these guidelines, your nonprofit can navigate election years effectively, maintain a nonpartisan stance as required, and help young people explore civic participation.

NONPARTISAN APPROACH:

• **DO:** Keep all activities and communications nonpartisan. Focus on educating your audiences about candidates and their views, especially those of relevance to your nonprofit.
• **DON’T:** Endorse any candidate or their campaign position on key issues over another.

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT:

• **DO:** Use local election issues as discussion topics with young people, allowing them to explore and share ideas without judgment.
• **DO:** Share information about candidates’ positions relevant issues to your organization equally.
• **DON’T:** Indicate support for a candidate's views on behalf of the nonprofit.
• **DON’T:** Share partisan information or links directly from candidates' campaign websites.

VOTER PREPARATION:

• **DO:** Host voter registration widgets on your website, or share nonpartisan voter registration links on social media and in your newsletters (for example, the Nonprofit Votes registration tool).
• **DO:** Educate young people about voter registration processes, including early registration opportunities where applicable (learn more about state-specific rules here).

MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES:

• **DO:** Set clear guidelines for acceptable behavior regarding political views and activities for staff, volunteers, and young people in your program.
• **DON’T:** Allow partisan apparel at work or work-sponsored events.
• **DON’T:** Use work-supplied equipment or emails for partisan activities or donations.

PROMOTE VOTING:

• **DO:** Ensure staff and volunteers have time to vote on Election Day.
• **DO:** Encourage families and mentors to involve young people in the voting process.
• **DON’T:** Penalize staff for using accrued leave time to support voting activities (like driving people to the polls).

PUBLIC EVENTS & SPACE USAGE:

• **DO:** Share information with your audiences about public events featuring all candidates, especially if they will be discussing issues of importance to your work.
• **DO:** Organize ways young people and supporters can participate in these events.
• **DO:** Offer your nonprofit’s physical space equally and at fair market rate to all candidates, documenting equal outreach to candidates’ campaign officials.

Learn more about the legalities around nonprofits during election years here.