



**Non-Partisan Policy Statement
Adopted – December 4, 2019**

WeVote is a non-partisan body and our mission is to organize and promote civic learning and democratic engagement at Western Michigan University.

What is non-partisanship and why is it important to WeVote?

Nonpartisan is a lack of affiliation with, and a lack of bias toward, a political party, candidate or public policy position. To be nonpartisan means to not support or oppose candidates for public office in any election, to not take a stand for or against a political party and to not advocate action on public policy positions for the benefit of any candidate or political party.

The right to vote is a powerful freedom, and participation in free and fair elections is essential for a democratic society. A fundamental goal in higher education is to prepare students for thoughtful citizenship and participation in democratic society.

Nonpartisanship respects the diversity of political opinions among students, faculty, staff, volunteers and the larger WMU community. Thus, nonpartisanship is critical to the effectiveness of WeVote's mission to advance and support student engagement toward civic responsibilities and to institutionalize student registration, education and voting on our campus. As a nonpartisan, trusted messenger, WeVote can play a vital role in promoting voter and civic participation.

What non-partisan guidelines should WeVote follow?

WeVote as an organization, staff and volunteers should be nonpartisan when working for or representing the organization. WeVote members acting in official capacity and sponsored events, may not:

- Endorse or oppose a candidate running for public office.
- Make a campaign contribution to or expenditure for or against a candidate.
- Rate candidates on who is most favorable to an issue.
- Let candidates use the organization's facilities or resources, unless those resources are made equally available to all candidates at their fair market value.
- Use WeVote's resources, including email accounts, computers and phones, or sponsored events for partisan political activity.
- Display candidate materials or signs or wear partisan buttons or attire or express exuberance for or against candidate or issue statements.

Additionally, Executive Board Members and Paid Student Coordinators, may not:

- Hold a concurrent **paid** partisan position with a party, candidate or cause.

Being nonpartisan does not mean non-participation. WeVote as an organization may conduct a wide range of activities to promote voter registration, education and turnout, so long as it is nonpartisan. For example, WeVote may,

- Conduct or Promote Voter Registration
- Educate Voters on the Voting Process

- Distribute Nonpartisan Sample Ballots, Candidate Questionnaires, or Voter Guides
- Organize Get-Out-the-Vote Activities
- Encourage and Help People to Vote
- Host or Co-Sponsor a Candidate Forum
- Educate Voters on the Issues

Nonpartisan *Voter Registration* Guidelines:

Staff or volunteers may not suggest what candidate to support or party to join. In states that ask the person to choose a party affiliation, or it is required to vote in a primary, you may explain to voters the difference between registering with a party and registering without party affiliation. **Follow Michigan voter registration laws and procedures.** Review registration guidelines, download forms or access online voter registration or registration look up tool at: <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/>

Nonpartisan *Voter Education* Guidelines:

WeVote may conduct a broad range of voter education activities as long as they are nonpartisan and do not support or oppose a candidate, party or issue. There are two basic types of voter education: the when, where, and how of voting; and learning what’s on the ballot.

When, where, and how of voting, WeVote sample permissible activities,

- Use communications, events, video displays, classes, or forums to:
 - Announce the dates of elections and early voting period.
 - Remind people of voter registration deadlines or how to register online.
- Help people get information on early voting or find their polling place.
- Focus efforts on why voting is important in general, rather than who or what to vote for.

What’s on the ballot, WeVote sample permissible activities,

- Display or give out a sample ballot.
- Promote and distribute nonpartisan voter guides as sources of information on candidates and issues.
- Hold a mock election.
- Hold a candidate forum or a ballot measure information session, as long as due care is taken to invite all candidates or perspectives and all participants are treated neutrally and equally.

Nonpartisan *Get Out the Vote* Guidelines:

WeVote may conduct “get out the vote” activities and help people vote on a nonpartisan basis. Helping people vote is a safe, nonpartisan activity as long as you’re not telling or suggesting to someone whom to vote for or against. You may target your community you serve or any community known to need more help voting – youth, first-time voters, new citizens, underserved populations. You may not do what political campaigns do – target GOTV efforts at voters you have pre-identified as voting for a certain candidate – in other words based on a conversation you or someone has already had with them or on their partisan voting history in a voter file. Leave that type of GOTV to candidates, 501(c)(4) advocacy organizations and other political entities.

WeVote sample get out the vote permissible activities,

- Use communications and daily interactions with your community to remind people, share information and create excitement about the election.
- Highlight reasons to vote or provide information on the voting process like “where do I vote?” or “what’s on the ballot?”
- Create visibility about the election through posters and displays in other public areas.
- Conduct a voting drive (phone bank, mailing, in-person) to a list of people you registered or employees or students.

- Provide voting rights information for voters informing them of their rights on Election Day and numbers to call for help.
- Help new voters. Youth, new citizens and other first time voters particularly benefit from information about the voting process and encouragement to vote.

What if someone asks me who or what to vote for?

Say that this is a nonpartisan effort and you can't say who or what to vote for. Encourage the person to talk to a friend or family member they trust and share values with, or direct the person to a sample ballot or nonpartisan voter guide. One of the best non-partisan sources of information on the candidates remains the League of Women Voters, please encourage your students and staff to familiarize themselves with the candidates and the ballot at: <http://www.lwvmi.org>

Is political activity in a private capacity permitted?

WeVote does not ask its members about their individual political activities, and the organization remains strictly nonpartisan. However, as individuals and on their own "off the clock" or personal time, YES, WeVote members may support political parties and candidates for public office. This policy does not impact the rights of WeVote members to vote for any candidate or issue or to engage in other forms of personal political activities **so long as they do not use their WeVote affiliation when doing so**. These may include:

- Contributing money to a candidate, political party, political action committee or political cause;
- Registering for a political party or as an "independent";
- Working on other non-partisan basis to register voters, help operate a polling station, or count votes;
- Signing nominating petitions to support getting a candidate or an issue on the ballot; and
- Attending a political rally or participating in a demonstration or protest.

For more information and further resources see:

Developing and Implementing a Nonpartisan Policy

<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/policies-guidelines/developing-and-implementing-nonpartisan-policy>

Staying Non-Partisan, Non-Profit Vote Guide

<https://www.nonprofitvote.org/nonprofits-voting-elections-online/general-rules/>

<https://www.nonprofitvote.org/resource-library/staying-nonpartisan-2/>