

Resources for Election Season Preparation from Thriving Communities

We are in an election season like no other, and while we hope for a clear outcome and a peaceful transition of power if the challenger wins, there are reasons to be prepared for a contested election and a protracted period of mass mobilization to protect American democracy and to make sure that every vote is counted.

The Department of Thriving Communities held a leadership call on 10.25.20 to discuss Election Season Preparation. A link to the recording can be found here:

[Recording of Thriving Communities Election Season Preparation Leadership Call on 10/25/20](#)

The Charge to Reconstructionist communities to help defend American democracy:

- **Powerpoint on Democracy as a Jewish Value and Advice on Safety** as presented by Rabbi Maurice Harris can be accessed and downloaded at <https://bit.ly/3owbjQS>.

Key Election Season Dates:

- [We modified this helpful election season calendar from T'ruah to help guide your planning of what the next few months might look like as a community.](#)

Actions Every American Congregation Can Take:

- Close your office on November 3rd to allow staff to vote and do democracy protection work. We've signed on to [this initiative from Free&Fair: Our Duty to Democracy](#).
- Meet with congregational leadership to clarify your shared messaging and plans for community action if there is a need to mobilize to defend democracy and protect every vote.
- Send a message to your congregation explaining how leadership is thinking about election season, and anything the congregation is planning to do in response. (recommendation from the [Tikkun Olam Commission](#))
- Schedule a community gathering sometime during the week following the election. Give folks an opportunity to share their responses together.
- Have your tikkun olam leaders join Thriving Communities' tikkun olam listserv so they can be in ongoing conversation with other Reconstructionist communities during election season. Send email addresses to Jacob Weinberg at jweinberg@reconstructingjudaism.org.

Election Season Messaging from Reconstructing Judaism and the RRA

- This document has been created by Reconstructing Judaism and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association as a resource for our rabbis and congregations to help them navigate the waters of a potentially tumultuous American election season (Election Day to Inauguration Day). We hope that helping our rabbis and lay leaders to have a shared understanding of the limits and opportunities for faith communities and organizations in moments such as these, will empower us all to be the most effective messengers of our Reconstructionist Jewish values in the public square in this time of great need.

Help with media/PR volunteers resource from Federation and Thriving Communities:

- Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) is offering a free resource to all US Jewish organizations called “CrisisComms.” They have assembled a group of media/PR professionals who are willing to help congregations with any messaging needs between now and Nov. 4. This includes emergency communications in case they are necessary. To reach them, email CrisisComms@JewishFederations.org. If you need a response within the next 90 minutes you can send a text to Rebecca Dinar at (786) 408-3804, Taryn Baranowski at (713) 805-6374 or Adam Hertzman at (412) 576-1098.
- Thriving Communities media training leadership call.
 - On Wednesday, October 28th, Bryan Schwartzman, Assistant Director of Media and Development Communications at Reconstructing Judaism, offered tips and strategies for speaking to the media. He covered how congregations can create positive news coverage for themselves, and how they can prepare in the case that they are contacted by news professionals. For a recording of this call, email Jacob Weinberg at jweinberg@reconstructingjudaism.org

Resources for Congregation Asset Mapping:

- Your community has so much to offer during this unprecedented confluence of a pandemic and a potentially tumultuous chaotic election season. One way to help figure out what your role(s) might be is through asset mapping. Here are two sets of questions: [The original version](#), developed by the Unitarian Universalists, and this [modified version from T’ruah](#), which conveniently provides a column in which to write answers.

How to find local partners and events for election season mobilization:

- Start thinking now about which other communities and organizations you want to be in close contact with during election season. Is there a faith-based coalition you are a part of? A local church or mosque you’ve done joint programming with in the past? A chapter of a local civic organization? Give them a call and ask if you can coordinate plans together.

- [One great compiler of national actions and events planned for the first week of election season is Protect the Results.](#)

Planning for Mobilization the Week Following the Election:

- Stopping an illegitimate seizure of power is dependent upon the size of mass mobilization, and winning over the center. The goal is to increase the number of people resisting a seizure of power, but not to increase the intensity. We want it to seem non-partisan to mobilize; like voting, it is as American as apple pie. A normal thing to do.
- **Consider gathering a group of folks to attend a few trainings together to prepare for possible mobilization strategies that may be needed:**
 - [Count Every Vote Campaign Training Calendar](#)
 - All of the trainers listed in this space have committed to conducting c3 appropriate trainings on only legal activity. The calendar will be updated on an ongoing basis through election season.
 - By subscribing to the Google calendar "training@fightbacktable.org," you can receive automatic updates from Count Every Vote. If you need help figuring out how to subscribe, please consult this article: [How to subscribe to a google calendar](#).
 - [Faith Based Election Trainings from Fight Back Table](#)
 - This calendar includes training from Election Defenders, T'ruah, Power/Faith in Action, Join for Justice, and the Lippman Kanfer Foundation.

Actions you can take from home:

- [Protect our election:](#)
 - We are asking secretaries of state and other election administrators around the nation to unite around [a nonpartisan set of democratic principles](#) - principles that lay at the foundation of our self-governance, principles that we never had reason to question until this election cycle.
 - Help us by reaching out to these officials and asking them to stand in favor of democracy, put country over party, and preemptively quash the fictional notion of a "rigged" election. [Protect Our Election Pledge Campaign: Digital Toolkit](#)
- This section will be updated as new opportunities become available.

Ongoing Communication about training and things you can do as the political situation unfolds:

- Rabbi Micah Weiss will use the tikkun olam listserv to send opportunities for congregations to get involved in election season democracy defense work as the

political landscape unfolds. **He will especially be keeping an eye out for COVID-safe, home-based advocacy opportunities as they develop.** You are welcome to have as many people on the tikkun olam listserv as you would like. It's also a great place to discuss questions with other congregations. Email Jacob Weinberg at jweinberg@reconstructingjudaism.org to be added.

Safety Assessment Resources:

- **Power-Point on Democracy as a Jewish Value and Advice on Safety** as presented by Rabbi Maurice Harris can be accessed and downloaded at <https://bit.ly/3owbjQS>.
- **Secure Community Network (SCN)** offered a recent webinar: "Security Implications for the 2020 Election Season Webinar." It included advice from experts such as Calvin Shivers - Assistant Director, Criminal Investigative Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation, John Cohen - Senior Expert on Global Threats, Argonne National Laboratory, Brad Orsini - Senior National Security Advisor, SCN, and Rebecca Dinar - Associate Vice President, Strategic Marketing & Communications, JFNA. You can review a recording, with accompanying written transcript, of the webinar at <https://bit.ly/3ju7act>. The webinar covered topics ranging from steps synagogues can take to protect their buildings and members to actions people can take if they encounter acts of voter intimidation, election disinformation, or other anti-democratic actions at their local polling places or in their communities.
- Standing Up for Racial Justice has
- **People you can contact to ask for help planning for safety for your community members and for others in your local community in the event of violence or periods of civil unrest:**
 - **David Friedman**, VP of Law Enforcement and Community Security at the ADL: dfriedman@adl.org.
 - **Your local multi-faith religious council and your neighboring faith community's leaders.** Buddy up with others in your local community who share your values and may be likely to participate in peaceful demonstrations or other public activities in defense of democracy during Election Season. Plan together how different houses of worship might use their buildings or human resources to set up safe places or emergency meet-up spaces.
 - **Your local chapters of civil rights and human rights organizations.** Many cities and towns have human rights commissions. Groups like the NAACP, ACLU, and others in your area are resources not only for getting involved in pro-democracy activism during election season, but also for partnering and planning for safety in a spirit of mutual responsibility. Contact local leaders, find out what they know

about plans to keep people and places as safe as possible, and whether your synagogue can participate as a partner.

- **Your local police department and the FBI:** while the role of law enforcement agencies is one of the complicated and in many cases controversial issues of our time, these are resources that are available to you for safety preparedness and for communicating what steps your congregation is taking for security and safety matters during election season. The FBI's local field offices have special units in place to protect voters' rights and to respond to election-related / partisan threats of violence or intimidation. To find your nearest field office, visit <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices>. As regards your local police, having a good line of communication with someone will make it easier for them to inform you about any threats, and for you to inform them about what you're doing (e.g. if people will be gathering outside your building or in the street near your building for a vigil and you have assigned safety marshals to help preserve safety during such an event, communicating that info to local police ensures that if they are called to the scene they have foreknowledge of how you've organized what you're doing and to whom they should communicate in an emergency.) If you have any plans to hire any kind of armed security presence at any time it is imperative that you make sure local police know about it, so they don't run the risk of mis-identifying a security professional as a perpetrator. We are not making a recommendation for or against hiring security guards - but if you are doing so it is a matter of public safety to inform local law enforcement.

Four simplified questions to discuss with your leadership in advance of November 3rd:

- If all these resources and suggestions are too overwhelming, you can just discuss the following four questions amongst your leadership and you will come up with a great plan:
 - 1) What are the spiritual practices and resources we need to navigate this moment?
 - 2) Are we going to act collectively as a congregation during Election Season? If so, what are our priorities for action?
 - 3) Who is on our team? Consider both congregants and neighborhood partners.
 - 4) What is our safety plan?

Election Dialogue Guide:

- Dorshei Tzedek found the following guide to community dialogue to be particularly helpful: [Essential Partners 2020 Election Dialogue Guide](#)

Spiritual and Emotional Support:

- The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association is gathering helpful models and outlines of communal gatherings of support, resilience, and comfort. Your rabbi can reach out and ask for these resources when they become available.
 - One example: Rabbi Ora Nitkin-Kaner will be leading a Zoom gathering for Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation on election night, singing songs of hope, resistance, and revolution instead of anxiously watching the news returns.
- [Sign up for Ritualwell's 30 Days of Spiritual practice leading up to the election.](#)
- RitualWell resources for election season:
 - [A Prayer for Wholeness, by Rabi Alex Weissman](#)
 - [Voting Prayer, by Rabbi David Seidenberg](#)
 - [A Prayer for Peace during Election Season, By Matt Adler](#)
 - [A Prayer for the Polls, by Rabbi Elyssa Cherney](#)
 - [Blessing for a New Day, by Devon Spier](#)
- [Fortification for Mobilization: Invoking Jewish Tradition for Resilient and Joyful Action \(October 18, 2020- January 10,2021\)](#)
 - Our friends at Rise Up, JOIN for Justice, and Bend the Arc have organized a gorgeous series of support for our people called Fortification for Mobilization, with 5 Sunday evening sessions now through inauguration. These sessions invite community members, leaders, and families to join for spiritual care in these times.

Gemilut Hassidim:

- Caregiving work is an essential part of election defense work. Reach out to your existing *Gemilut Hassidim* mutual-aid systems and invite them to begin thinking about how they might support the community and your neighbors during election season.
- An example: Mishkan Shalom in Philadelphia, PA is organizing their members with emotional and spiritual care-giving expertise (social workers, therapists, rabbis, chaplains, etc.) to be available on call during election season to lighten the Clergy pastoral care load.

Want to Read more about preparing for Election Season?

- [Hold the Line: A Guide to Defending Democracy](#)
- [10 Things you Need to Know to Stop a Coup from Waging Nonviolence](#)
- [The Count: A practical guide to defending the Constitution in a contested 2020 election](#)