Prepping for the Midterms: Civic Literacy in Contentious Times

Presented by the Simmons Center for Information Literacy (SCIL)

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Agenda & Outcomes

- Definitions
- Context
- Ideas & Examples
- Planning & Priorities

- Explain civic literacy, civic engagement, and the connections between them
- Discuss the role of the library in supporting civic literacy and civic engagement
- Explore and implement local program ideas

Ways to Engage: Graphic Organizer

https://tinyurl.com/3jbv8yjt



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What is Civic Literacy?

https://answergarden.ch/5205697

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Civics (Merriam-Webster)

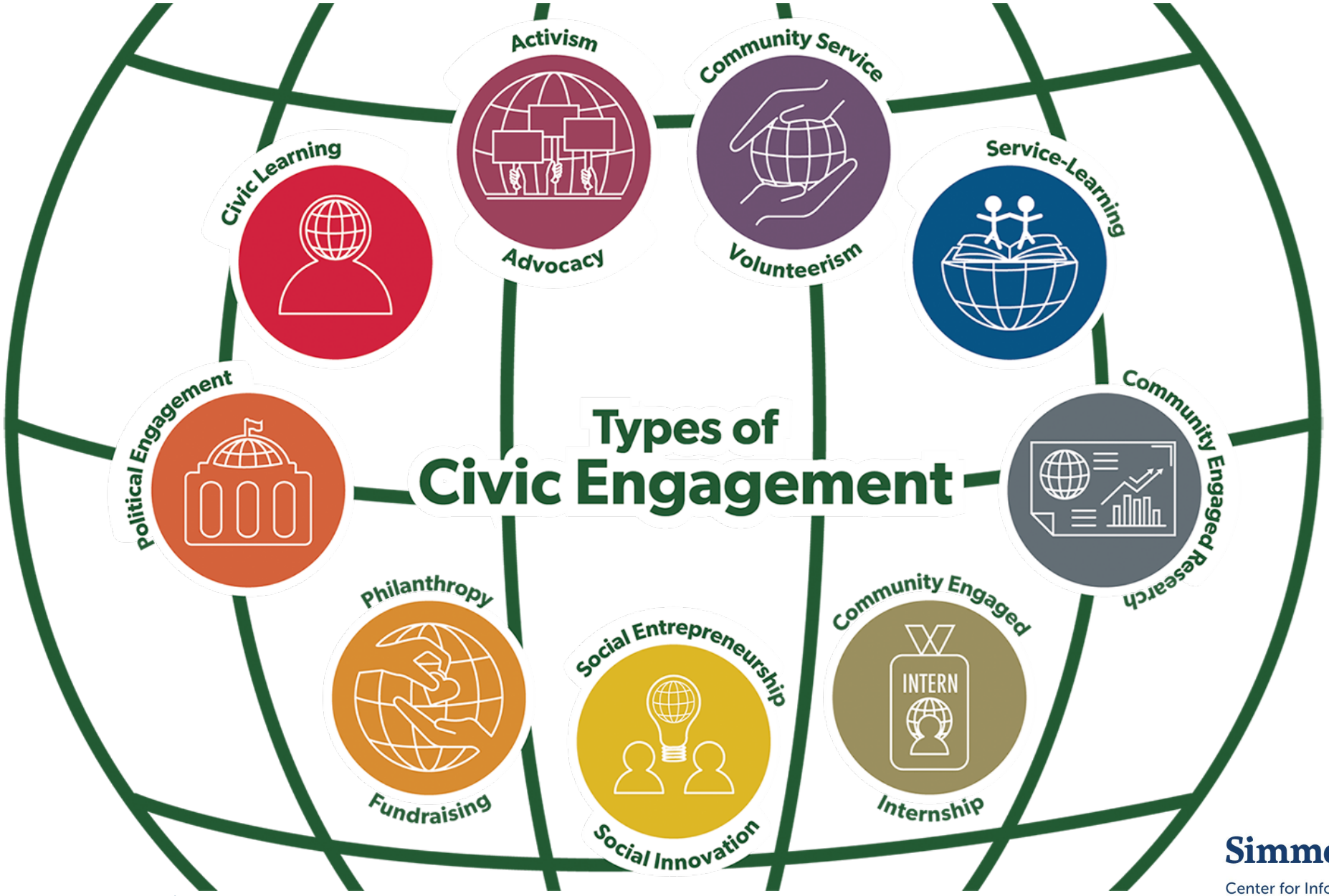
- Dealing with the rights and duties of citizens

Civic Literacy

- An approach to learning that emphasizes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for active and engaged citizenship
    - Masyada & Washington (2019)
- The knowledge and skills to participate effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed, understanding governmental processes, and knowing how to exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national, and global levels. Individuals also have an understanding of the local and global implications of civic decisions.
    - Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009)

Civic Engagement

- Individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation.
    - Illinois State University



Graphic credit:
https://civicengagement.illinoisstate.edu/civic-learning/engagement-types/

Civic Engagement Correlations

- Civic literacy
- Self-efficacy
- Trust
- Social cohesion and connectedness

Complicating Factors

- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of access to information and/or technology
- Complicated systems
- Mis/disinformation
- Declining trust
- Declining local news

Civic Literacy as a Response

- “Civic education for adults has emerged as an essential need for maintaining democratic participation and community engagement”
  - Understanding government processes and structures
  - Community organizing and advocacy skills
  - Voter education and electoral participation
  - Understanding the rights and responsibilities of citizenship
  - Skills for community problem-solving and collaboration (PLA, 2025)
- Advocates

  Middlemass & Rodriguez, 2022; ODPHP, n.d.; Schiavo, 2020 Sanchez;

Waterfall

Why are you interested in civic literacy programming?
What are some of your goals for this programming?

Put your answers in the chat!

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The Role of Libraries

Programming Across 4 Key Areas



Civic Literacy Learning

- Basics of government
  - How things get done/ processes
  - Who is responsible/ positions and agencies
- Rights & responsibilities

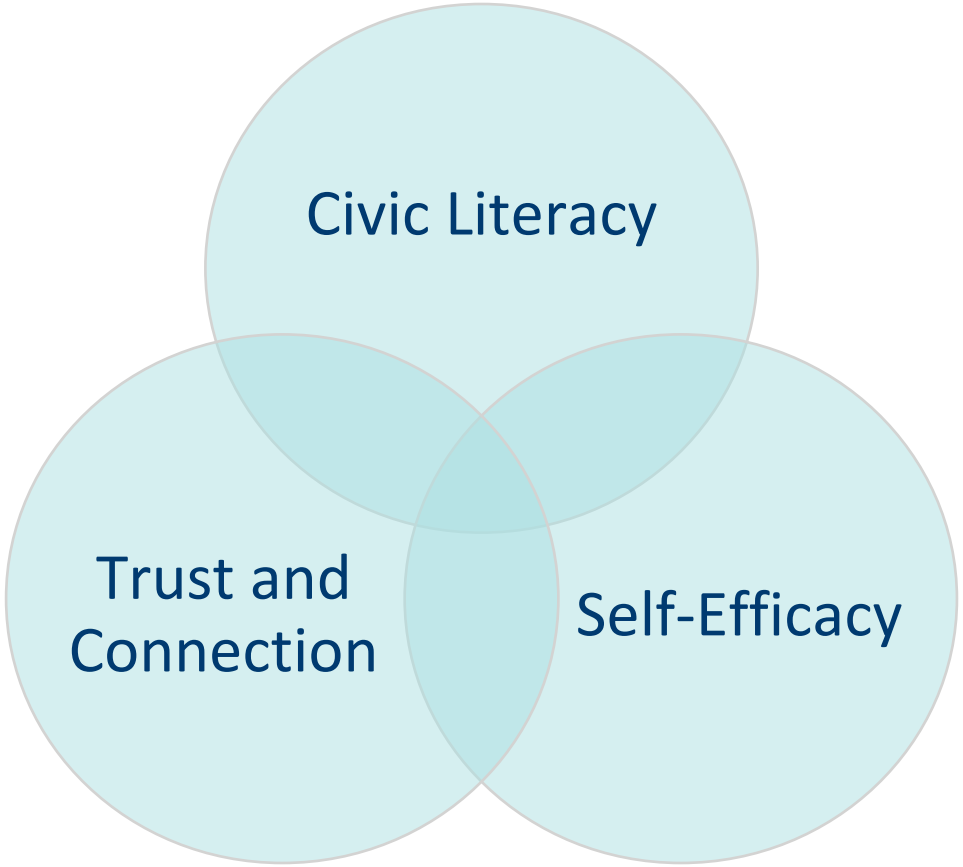
Self-Efficacy

- Where, when, and how to get involved
  - Voter Registration
  - Participating in community meetings
  - Organizing/ engaging with local and national organizations
  - Running for boards/ offices
  - Volunteering
- Skills development
  - Navigating systems and information
  - Basics of fact-verification

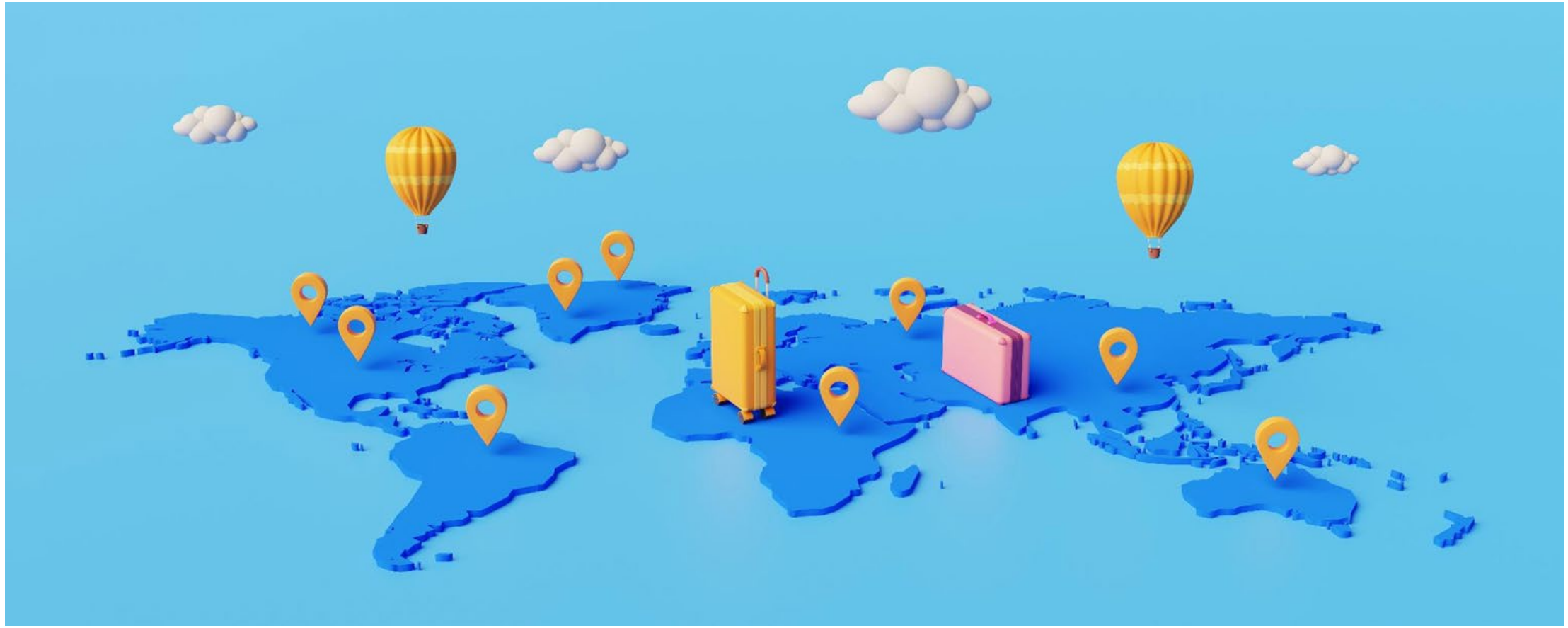
Trust & Social Connectedness

- Facilitating community connections and opportunities to increase social capital
  - Community conversations
  - Community archiving and storytelling
  - Social events
  - Workforce development

Caveat 1: These Areas are Interconnected

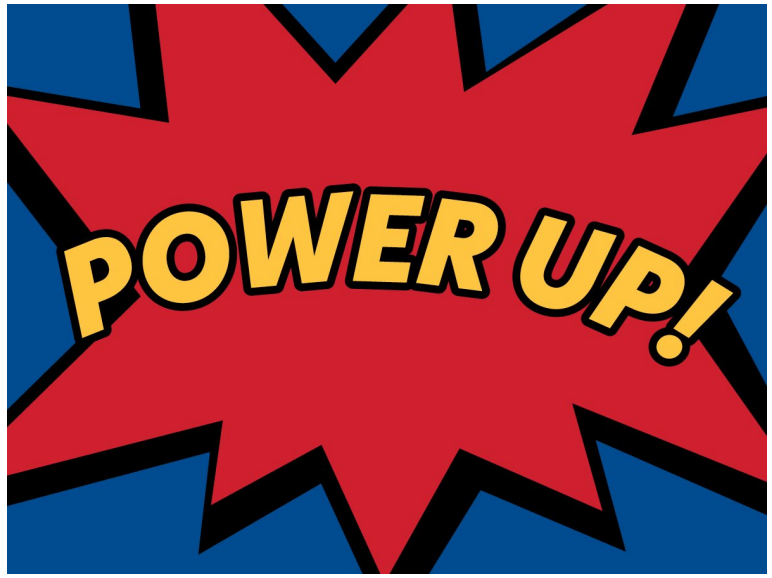


Caveat 2: All Politics Is Local



Ideas & Examples





Citizenship: Privileges, Rights, and Responsibilities

Democracy is an Action Word

We the People

Let Freedom Ring

Your Call to Civic Action2024 Philly Civics Fair and Speakers Panel



FIND MY POLLING PLACE



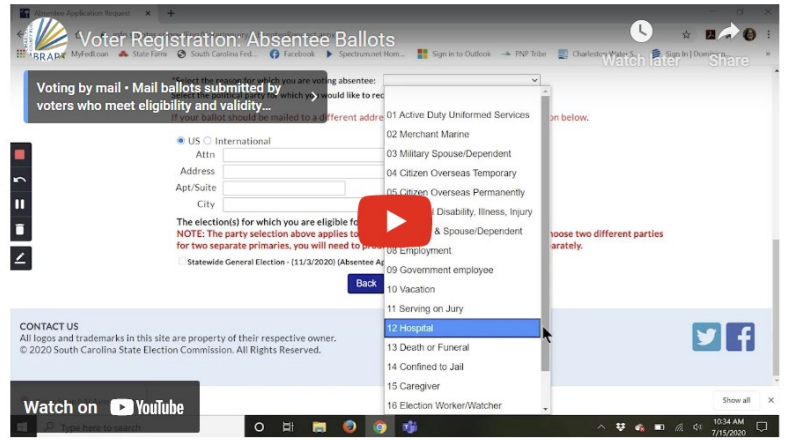
Visit this website and input your home address. After completing your search you will see the name and address for your polling location.

FILL OUT A BALLOT



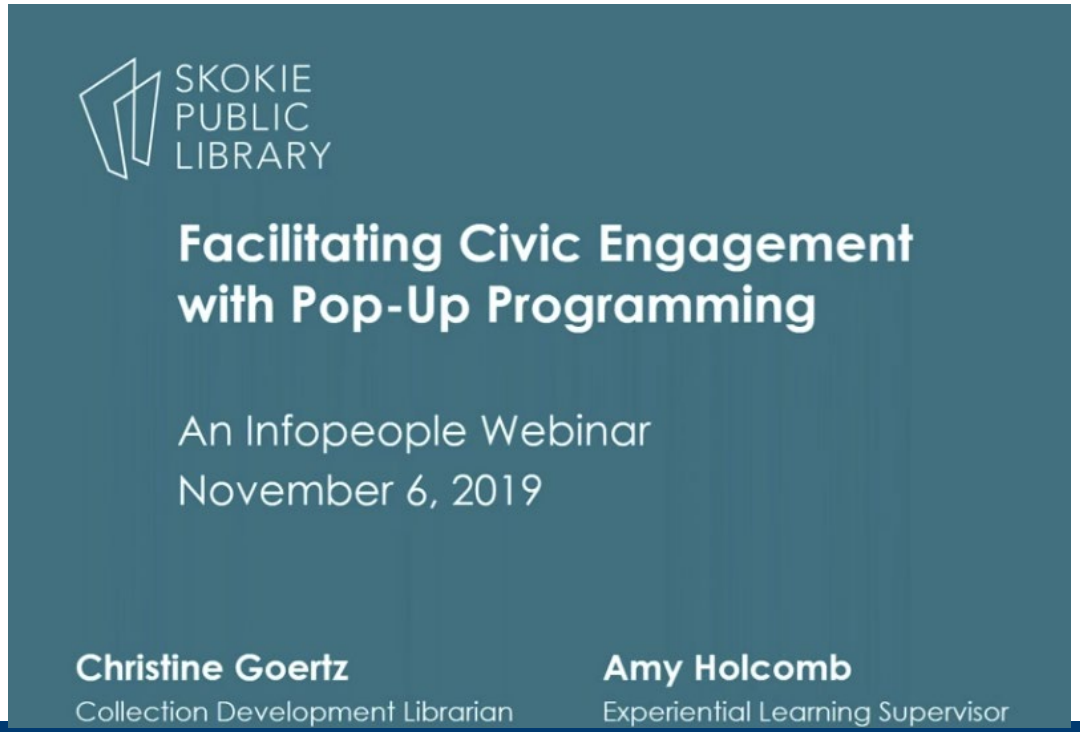
Filling out your ballot is simple! Watch this brief video to learn how to complete and cast your ballot.

GET AND RETURN AN ABSENTEE BALLOT



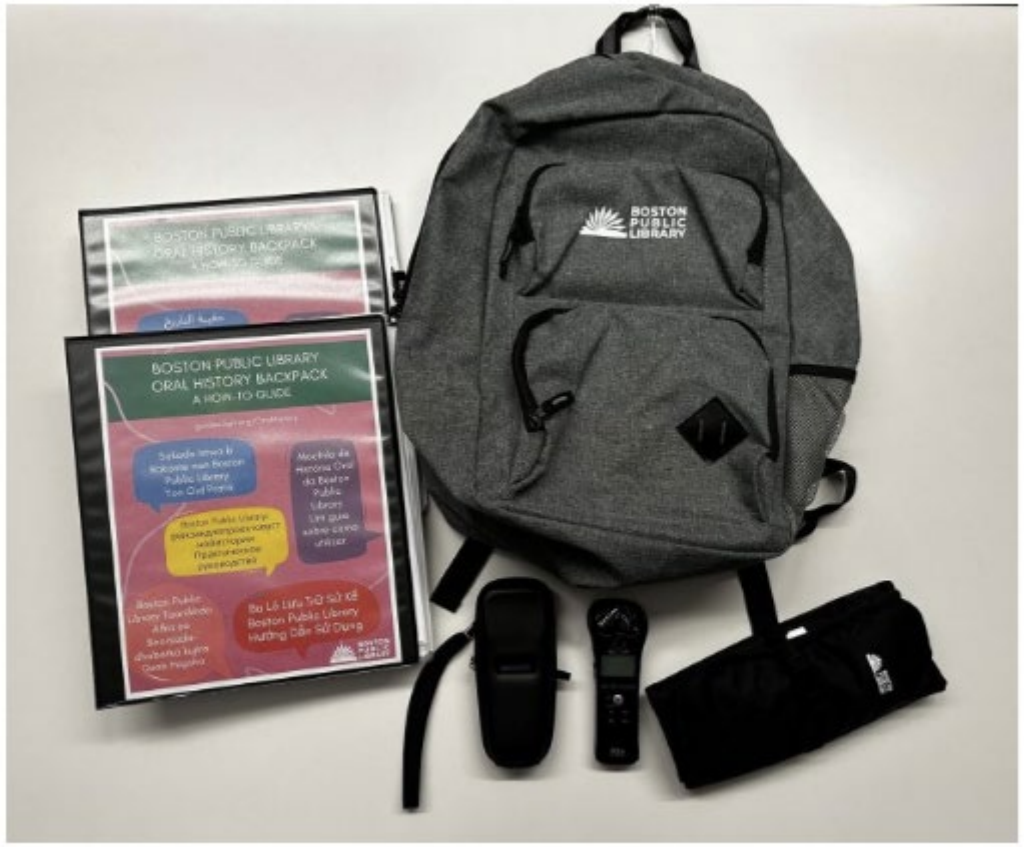
Voters or their immediate family members may call 843-744-8683 or submit written request for absentee ballot application to absentee@charlestoncounty.org







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Pictured: a BPL Oral History Backpack, including a multilingual guidebook, audio recorder, and basic tech accessories

ALL YOURS
SPRINGFIELD CITY LIBRARY
JUST ASK

Library Website | Events Calendar | Reserve a Room

Home

Community Coffee Hour

Upcoming

AUG 4 2026 TUE

Forest Park Branch Program Den

Tuesday, August 4, 2026
10:15am–3:00pm

Also Occurs On

Program Type: Community Events, Food & Cooking
Age Group: Babies & Toddlers, Children, Tweens, Teens, Adults
Event Details

Come enjoy a cup of coffee, tea, and other light refreshments with your neighbors!



In August we'll be … making our own cookbook! Do you have a favorite recipe … Make it and bring the recipe to share. We'll put the recipes together, illustrate them, and publish them as a fundraiser for the library as well as a give away at the Millers Falls Library food pantry.

Can't make it to the club but want to contribute? Use our recipe submission form.

CHARLESTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Suggest a Title

LivingRoom Conversations

Living Room Conversations - Media and Polarization In-Person

Living Room Conversations is a conversational model developed by dialogue experts in order to facilitate connection between people despite their differences, and even identify areas of common ground and shared understanding. Participants will be divided in small groups of 4/6 persons and will talk about a specific topic. The topic this month is "Media and Polarization."

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Events › **An In-Person Living Room Conversation — Trustworthy Elections (Local)**



Photo courtesy of Living Room Conversations

An In-Person Living Room Conversation — Trustworthy Elections (Local)

Tuesday, October 20, 2026 Add to Calendar

4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

Central Library in Copley Square

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Registration is required. Register for this Living Room Conversation here.

Space Available

CONTACT INFO

Telephone: (617) 859-2000 ext. 4270

Email: ehusting@bpl.org

Central Library in Copley Square

Address:
700 Boylston Street
Boston MA 02116

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Planning, Resources & Support

Be Prepared

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Priorities

- Design for your audience
  - How can you best reach them?
  - What do they *want* to learn?
  - What do they *care about*?
- Focus on asset (vs. deficit) based approaches
- Leverage local expertise

Find Partners

- Academic institutions
- Community organizations and NGOs
- Local news media and journalists

Support

- Agendas or lesson plans
- Guidelines for engagement
- Resources & Training

Resources

- ALA Dialogue & Deliberation Resources
  - https://www.ala.org/tools/librariestransform/libraries-transforming-communities/dialogue-deliberation-resources
- National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation
  - https://www.ncdd.org/
- The American Conversation Project for Libraries
  - https://www.americanconversations.org/libraries
- Everyday Democracy
  - https://everyday-democracy.org/

Resources Cont'd

- Living Room Conversations
  - https://livingroomconversations.org/
- Interfaith America
  - https://www.interfaithamerica.org/resources/faith-in-elections/
- League of Women Voters
  - https://www.lwv.org/
- ACLU
  - https://www.aclu.org/

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