

Engaged Buddhist Election Retreats

Do-It-Yourself Guide for a One-Day Voter Registration Retreat

As Buddhists we devote ourselves to witnessing and relieving the suffering of the world. The 2020 general election will be a watershed event for our nation and our planet, and for the lives of our children and grandchildren. Our intention is to work whole-heartedly to reverse the disturbing, dark, nationalistic, racist and violent forces at work in our country. By joining together to register voters we expand our democracy, and rededicate ourselves to a Buddhist practice as an engaged and committed Sangha.

To learn more about our Buddhist Election Retreats (which occur during the general election in November), feel free to visit our website at www.electionretreat.org . . . also to get a flavor of our practice, please enjoy this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RJGTC8ZYnl&feature=youtu.be>

The present document applies specifically to Voter Registration Retreats, which may occur at any time during the year. It is intended as a supplement to “The Engaged Buddhist Election Retreat Guide,” which is available at www.electionretreat.org/election-retreats/retreat-guide/. It has been tailored to the particular characteristics of a One-day Voter Registration retreat.

1. First, because the Voter Registration Retreat occurs on a single day, there is no need to find a house and arrange for lodging for participants. It is assumed that participants will commute to the event and won't need to bring sleeping gear, toiletries, etc.
2. Second, because voter registration is a non-partisan activity, it falls outside the IRS rules that prohibit 501(c)3 organizations from participating in electoral activities. Thus your zendo, meditation center or temple can be used for practice aspects of the retreat, as well as any required organizational meetings. No additional facilities are required outside what you have in your home temple. The event can be publicized in mailing lists, bulletin boards, newsletters and public talks, and officers of the center can advocate and recruit for it.
3. Finally, since the work of the retreat involves voter registration, is critical that organizers understand the rules and procedures for voter registration in your state. The Secretary of State for your state will have a website that lays

out details about voting eligibility and registration. In addition, the League of Women Voters is a valuable resource for information on the registration process; other resources include www.rockthevote.org, www.dosomething.org, www.vote.org, www.voteriders.org, etc. ***It is strongly recommended that a number of retreat participants be trained in advance in voter registration procedures.*** The Retreat Coordinator or Voter Registration Coordinator should arrange for this training (see below).

4. We recommend putting together a team of three or more people to organize the retreat. We have identified six specific positions, but in reality several of these functions may be undertaken by a single person. For example, a team might consist of a Coordinator/Administrator, a Cook, a Voter Registration Coordinator, and a Zendo Manager/Guest Teacher.
5. To facilitate the creation and organization of these retreats, we have included the following supplemental material:
 - a. Position Descriptions
 - b. Example Daily Schedule
 - c. Zendo Chants (these can be tailored to fit the practice tradition of the sangha)
 - d. Things to Bring on the One-Day Voter Registration Retreat

Position Descriptions

Retreat Coordinator

- Recruits team members, and organizes and convenes team kickoff meeting.
- Working with team, creates a plan for the retreat, including Daily Schedule; timing and location of voter registration canvassing; plan for publicizing the retreat and recruiting participants; etc.
- Works with manager of hosting facility (zendo, practice center, community center, house) regarding use guidelines, schedule, parking, etc.
- Arranges for publicity for the event, and recruitment of participants through emails, newsletters, etc.
- In advance of the retreat, offers backup and support to team members, so that thorough preparations are made and all contingencies anticipated.
- On retreat day, supports all team members, problem solving, troubleshooting, dealing with emergencies, etc.
- After the event, convenes follow-up meeting to analyze what worked and what needs improvement, and to plan for future events.

Cook

- Plans and prepares three meals.
- Does all required shopping (food costs will be reimbursed by Administrator).
- Cooks breakfast, which will be eaten by participants together; sets out ingredients for bag lunch; and cooks dinner, which will also be eaten by participants together. Meals can be served buffet style.

Voter Registration Coordinator

- Arranges for Voter Registration training for two, three or four participants, *in advance*, within the month prior to the retreat. Training can be obtained through League of Women Voters, Supermarket Legends (Wisconsin), and other groups. Trained participants will be matched with untrained volunteers, who will go out together in pairs to do the actual voter registration work.
- Identifies locations where voter registration is to occur: for example, farmer's markets, supermarkets, malls, DMV, etc. If necessary makes arrangements with the management of these facilities about where to set up.
- Gathers folding chairs and tables (ironing boards?) sufficient for all participants.
- Puts together voter registration kits, including instructions, printed forms, clipboards, pens, envelopes and stamps, etc.

- Gives orientation and brief training on the morning of the retreat day, prior to teams going into the field.
- Coordinates, facilitates and troubleshoots in the field, as necessary.
- Following the event, gathers information and feedback from participants on number of contacts, number of registrations (of different types), etc. Prepares a summary report with stats.

Zendo manager

- Organizes the practice and service aspects of the day.
- Prepares and photocopies chant books for participants.
- Lines up volunteers for the doanryo positions of fukudo and doan (bell ringer and drummer), kokyo (chant leader), and doshi (priest).

Guest teacher

- Prepares and delivers a dharma talk to 30 minutes on the morning of the retreat day, with a theme of Engaged Buddhism.

Administrator

- Develops a signup sheet for retreat participants. Working with Cook and members of the team, decides on participant fee (this may range from \$10 to \$25 per person, depending on food costs and other expenses).
- Working with members of the team, generates a mailing list of potential participants. Beginning eight weeks before the date, emails out invitations (other team members may assist in recruitment as well). Include description of the retreat and the activities planned for the day, as well as specifics regarding date, daily schedule and fee. Also include signup sheet.
- Manages communications, inquiries, emails, phone calls, etc. with participants. Tracks responses (interested, tentative, definite . . .) and maintains a spreadsheet of all potential participants.
- Develops procedure for handling cash, checks and electronic payments (this may involve setting up a personal bank account). Creates an accounting ledger or other similar method of recording all expenses and cash receipts.
- Enrolls participants and collects fees. Notes special dietary needs, accessibility issues, scheduling quirks, etc. Emails participants general introductory information about the retreat, including the *Daily Schedule* and *Things to Bring on the One-day Voter Registration Retreat*.
- Advises Cook and other team members of the number of participants. Advises Voter Registration Coordinator of participants, so Coordinator can arrange for advance voter registration training.

- Prepares a roster of all participants with contact information (email and cell phone numbers) and photocopies and distributes these to all participants so that everyone can be in touch with one another.
- Reimburses cook for food purchases.
- After the event prepares a financial report detailing revenues and expenses. Manages surplus cash (if any).

Example Daily Schedule

The following is derived from the daily schedule for our two-week long Election Retreats, adjusted for a single day. Please feel free to modify it to fit your needs. For example, if you want to shorten the day to ease the burden on your participants, you may wish to begin your morning at 7:45 and have only a single period of zazen. Or you may want to move up the times for dinner and zazen to conclude at 8:30 or 9:00. Also, much depends on where you'll be doing your voter registration canvassing, and what makes the most sense for these locations: if you are going to a Farmer's Market it may be appropriate to begin by mid-morning and conclude early in the afternoon; or if you are at the DMV you may want to synchronize your hours with the DMV hours of operation. The weather can be a factor in planning your schedule as well. In any event, you'll want to be practical and think of the comfort of your participants.

7:00 AM	Zazen (sitting meditation), beginning with Robe Chant
7:35 AM	Walking meditation (kinhin)
7:45 AM	Zazen
8:20 AM	Service (offering flowers or incense, nine bows, chanting Heart Sutra and Maylie's Metta Prayer)
8:35 AM	Breakfast after Meal Chant (first half of meal silent until clappers)
9:30 AM	Individual cleanup and dishwashing. Set out bag lunch ingredients.
9:45 AM	General cleanup jobs. Each person make a bag lunch.
10:15 AM	Dharma talk
11:00 AM	Orientation and brief training of new participants by Voter Registration Coordinator.
11:30 AM	Leave in pairs for voter registration locations.
NOON	Arrive at Voter Registration sites, set up tables, begin work. Eat bag lunch on your own, in the afternoon.
4:30 PM	Evening cook stops work, if shopping is necessary.
5:30 PM	Evening cook returns to home base to cook dinner.
6:30 PM	All stop work and return to home base.
7:30 PM	Eat dinner together, and discuss experiences of the day.
8:30 PM	Dishwashing and cleanup.
9:00 PM	Zazen
9:35 PM	Closing refuges and conclude retreat.

Zendo Chants

Great Wisdom Beyond Wisdom Heart Sutra

Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva

When practicing deeply the prajna paramita

Perceived that all five skandhas in their own being are empty

And was saved from all suffering.

“O Shariputra, form does not differ from emptiness

Emptiness does not differ from form.

That which is form is emptiness.

That which is emptiness form.

The same is true of feelings, perceptions, formations, consciousness.

O Shariputra, all dharmas are marked with emptiness;

They do not appear nor disappear,

Are not tainted nor pure,

Do not increase nor decrease.

Therefore in emptiness, no form,

No feelings, no perceptions, no formations, no consciousness;

No eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind;

No color, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no object of mind;

No realm of eyes until no realm of mind-consciousness;

No ignorance and also no extinction of it;

No suffering, no origination, no stopping, no path;

No cognition, also no attainment.

With nothing to attain

A bodhisattva depends on prajna paramita

And the mind is no hindrance.

Without any hindrance no fears exist;

Far apart from every perverted view one dwells in nirvana.

In the three worlds all buddhas depend on prajna paramita

And attain unsurpassed complete perfect enlightenment.

Therefore know the prajna paramita

Is the great transcendent mantra,

Is the great bright mantra,

Is the utmost mantra,

Is the supreme mantra,

Which is able to relieve all suffering and is true, not false.

So proclaim the prajna paramita mantra,

Proclaim the mantra that says:

“Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate! Bodhi! Svaha!”

After Dedication:

All Buddhas ten directions three times
All beings, Bodhisattva Mahasattvas
Wisdom beyond wisdom, Maha Prajna Paramita

Robe Chant

Now we open Buddha's robe
A field far beyond form and emptiness
The Tathagata's teaching for all beings

Dai zai ge da pu ku
Mu so fu ku den-e
E bu nyorai kyo
Do do sho shu jo

Now we open Buddha's robe
A field far beyond form and emptiness
The Tathagata's teaching for all beings

Metta Prayer by Maylie Scott

May I be well, loving and peaceful. May all beings be well, loving and peaceful.
May I be at ease in my body, feeling the ground beneath my seat and feet, letting my back be long and straight, enjoying breath as it rises and falls and rises.
May I know and be intimate with body mind, whatever its feeling or mood, calm or agitated, tired or energetic, irritated or friendly.
Breathing in and out, in and out, aware, moment by moment, of the risings and passings.
May I be attentive and gentle towards my own discomfort and suffering.
May I be attentive and grateful for my own joy and well-being.
May I move towards others freely and with openness.
May I receive others with sympathy and understanding.
May I move towards the suffering of others with peaceful and attentive confidence.
May I recall the Bodhisattva of compassion; her 1,000 hands, her instant readiness for action. Each hand with an eye in it, the instinctive knowing what to do.
May I continually cultivate the ground of peace for myself and others and persist, mindful and dedicated to this work, independent of results.
May I know that my peace and the world's peace are not separate; that our peace in the world is a result of our work for justice.
May all beings be well, happy and peaceful

Refuges

I take refuge in Buddha

I take refuge in Dharma

I take refuge in Sangha

I take refuge in Buddha as the perfect teacher

I take refuge in Dharma as the perfect teaching

I take refuge in Sangha as the perfect life

Now I have completely taken refuge in Buddha

Now I have completely taken refuge in Dharma

Now I have completely taken refuge in Sangha

Refuges – Pali

Buddham saranam gacchami

Dammam saranam gacchami

Sangham saranam gacchami

Dutiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami

Dutiyampi Dammam saranam gacchami

Dutiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami

Tatiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami

Tatiyampi Dammam saranam gacchami

Tatiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami

Things to bring on the One-day Voter Registration Retreat:

- Comfortable clothes for sitting meditation
- Meditation bench, if you use one
- Eating bowls and utensils
- Coffee/tea cup
- Clothes in which to meet the public (warm clothes in winter!)
- Hat, sunscreen, sunglasses
- Rain gear and umbrella if necessary
- Sturdy walking shoes
- Day pack for your lunch and personal items
- Clipboard, paper and pens
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Cell phone, fully charged
- Water bottle
- Any personal medications you may need
- Map
- Cash
- List of contacts + phone numbers (to be provided by Administrator)
- Voter Registration materials (to be provided by Voter Registration Coordinator)
- Vehicle, with a full gas tank