



THE MOVEMENT COOPERATIVE

# Neighbor-to-Neighbor GOTV Letters in 7 States

A Field Experiment in the 2022 Midterm Elections

Progressive Turnout Project

The Movement Cooperative

2022 Innovation/Under-Tested Research Grant Winner

# BACKGROUND

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- **Postcards to Swing States (PTSS)**, an initiative by **Progressive Turnout Project**, runs large-scale, volunteer-powered voter contact programs to increase turnout.
- In the 2021 Virginia primary, **PTSS** partnered with **TMC Research** to measure the effectiveness of a neighbor-to-neighbor GOTV program in which volunteers left **personalized GOTV letters in their neighbors' doors**, while identifying themselves in the letter as a neighbor.
- The idea was that voters may be more responsive to signed letters from their actual neighbors than to organizations, and that this tactic might better engage volunteers uninterested in traditional canvassing.

# BACKGROUND

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- The 2021 program recruited **250 volunteers** and reached approximately **17,000 households** made of **35,000 voters**.
- The program was successful, increasing turnout by **0.9 percentage points** (pp). The program was also remarkably cost-effective, adding **37 voters per \$1,000 spent**.
- In addition, the program turned out to be a low lift for organizers, as well as a low lift for volunteers, making the tactic very appealing for further study.

# THIS STUDY

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- In 2022, PTSS partnered with TMC Research to measure the tactic's impact **when scaled to seven states** and **in a higher-salience midterm context**.
- **7 competitive states:** Arizona, Georgia, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin
- **Higher-salience context:** 2022 saw the second highest level of voter participation in decades, behind only 2018, making it a much harder test case of effectiveness than the 2021 Virginia primary.



# STUDY DESIGN

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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- Did having volunteers deliver GOTV letters to their neighbors' doors in advance of the 2022 general election increase turnout in Arizona, Georgia, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin?
- If so, what was the program's effect on turnout and how cost-effective was this program?
- How much did the program scale?
- What demographics were reached by the program?

# EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

2.8M target households in 7 states, divided into 22,631 canvassable turfs

As many turfs as possible were assigned to volunteers

*Within each turf, households were randomly assigned into 1 of 2 conditions*

**Control (20%):** Households excluded from turf lists provided to volunteers, and therefore ineligible to be canvassed

**Treatment (80%):** Households included in turf lists provided to volunteers, and therefore eligible to be canvassed

2022 general election turnout compared across treatment and control groups, excluding uncanvassed turfs



# PROGRAM



# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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- **2,269 volunteers** were recruited at a cost of **\$10 per volunteer**.
- Recruitment was focused largely on staff texts and phone calls to past PTSS volunteers, which spread by word of mouth from there.
- Each volunteer was assigned to at least one turf including **100 treatment households**.
- Volunteers personalized, printed, and physically delivered the letters in the final weeks before the election, no earlier than Oct 15.
- Volunteers self-reported whether they completed each turf — if they didn't, PTSS made numerous follow-up attempts.

# COST AND SCALABILITY

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- The program cost **\$47,955**, including staff time and recruitment costs, which is roughly \$0.40 per letter.
- Volunteer recruitment spanning **7 states** cost approximately **\$22k**, including roughly \$1k on 13,700 text messages and roughly \$21k on associated staff time.
- Importantly, **the program could've scaled further** with a larger recruitment budget and by tapping into the support of coalition partners.
- We expect per letter costs would decrease as the program scales up (e.g. automating turf assignments would have saved roughly \$10,000).

# VOLUNTEER TIMELINE

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- **Mid-Jun:** Began limited recruitment to grassroots groups
- **Jul 25:** Sign-ups launched, continuing until a few days before Election Day
- **Oct 15–Nov 7:** Volunteers delivered letters to their neighbors' doors

# The letter resembled what PTSS used in 2021

Key elements: information on the process of voting, social norming, no organization or logo, and personalized sender

Dear Neighbor,

I'm writing to thank you for being a voter! Please join me to vote for **full protections of reproductive rights** in the **Tuesday, November 8th election**.

Please consider when you plan to vote. **You can vote early in person, by mail with an absentee ballot, or on Election Day:**

- Vote early in person from Monday, October 17 to Friday, November 4
- Vote by mail by requesting an absentee ballot at **georgia.gov/voting** through Friday, October 28
- Polls are open from 7:00 AM until 7:00 PM on Election Day, Tuesday November 8th

**After the election, I'm eager to see that my neighbors joined me in voting in this very important election.** Together we can elect leaders who will make prescription drug prices, education and childcare more affordable for all Georgians. Thanks again for being a voter in every election!

**Your Neighbors in Lake Claire!**

**Matt & Michelle** [Redacted]

Personalization

Election Day

Process of voting

Social norm

Personal touch

Neighbor, not org

**Over 1,000 turfs were fully completed, according to volunteers**

**We turfed all walkable portions of 7 states for the randomization — the total turfs was not a stretch goal.**

OUTCOME	NO. TURFS	%
Complete	1,052	5%
Partial	169	1%
Unknown	653	3%
Never Assigned or Not Delivered	20,757	91%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,631</b>	<b>100%</b>



# RESULTS

## Across all seven states, up to 175,000 voters were reached

Estimates are based on volunteer self-reported data on turf-level completion, and may not be very precise.

STATE	NO. TURF (LOW)	NO. TURF (HIGH)	NO. HOUSEHOLDS (LOW)	NO. HOUSEHOLDS (HIGH)	NO. VOTERS (LOW)	NO. VOTERS (HIGH)
AZ	170	199	16,929	19,832	24,932	29,209
GA	141	168	13,988	16,690	20,615	24,595
NC	229	269	22,781	26,774	32,400	38,098
NH	33	39	3,189	3,791	4,458	5,315
NV	34	42	3,314	4,113	4,890	6,169
PA	299	332	29,800	33,100	43,589	48,312
WI	146	172	14,547	17,148	20,237	23,826
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,052</b>	<b>1,221</b>	<b>104,548</b>	<b>121,448</b>	<b>151,121</b>	<b>175,524</b>

The program largely reached its intended target demographics, except in the case of race

Completed turfs had fewer Black and Latine voters and more white voters.

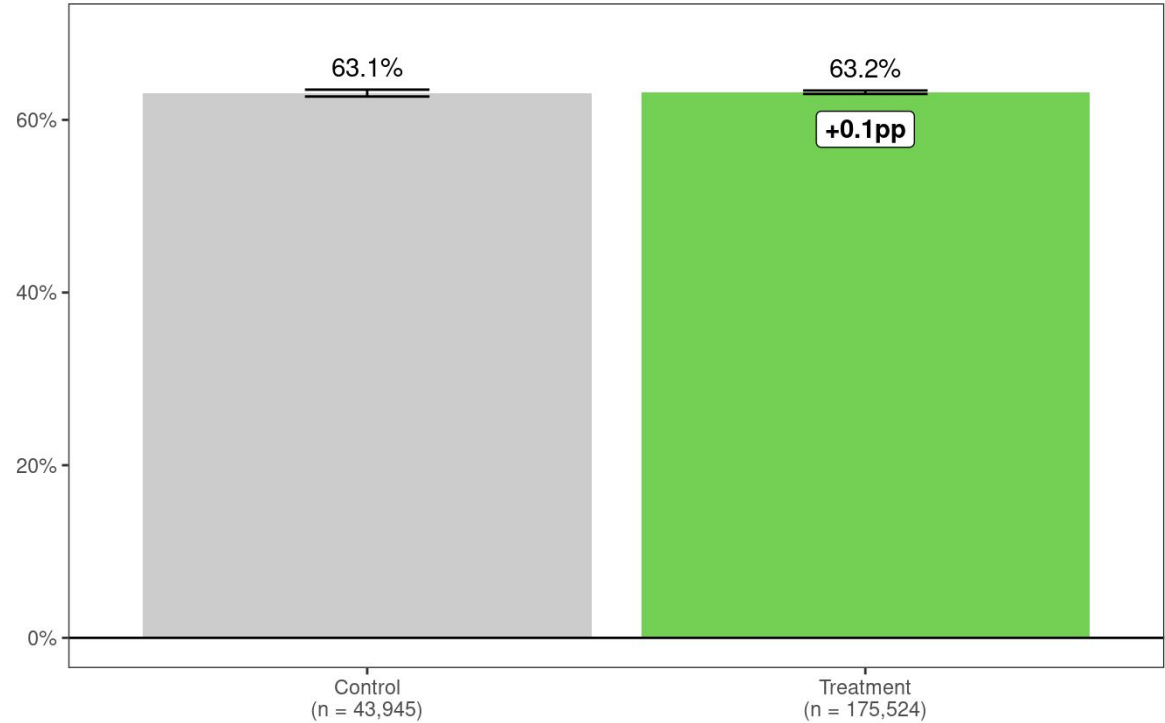
	VOTERS IN ELIGIBLE TURFS	VOTERS IN COMPLETED + PARTIAL + UNKNOWN TURFS	VOTERS IN COMPLETED + PARTIAL TURFS	VOTERS IN COMPLETED TURFS
N	4,282,904	336,846	219,469	188,971
% Black	36%	16%	15%	15%
% Latine	13%	7%	7%	7%
% Asian	2%	3%	3%	3%
% White	47%	73%	74%	74%
% Women	56%	56%	55%	55%
% Men	38%	38%	39%	39%
% Urban	37%	38%	40%	40%
% Suburban	45%	44%	44%	44%
% Rural	18%	17%	16%	16%
% Voted in 2018	54%	60%	60%	60%
% Voted in 2020	80%	85%	86%	86%
Avg. Age	56	56	56	56
Avg. Partisanship Score	93	92	93	93



If the program increased turnout, it was by a small amount

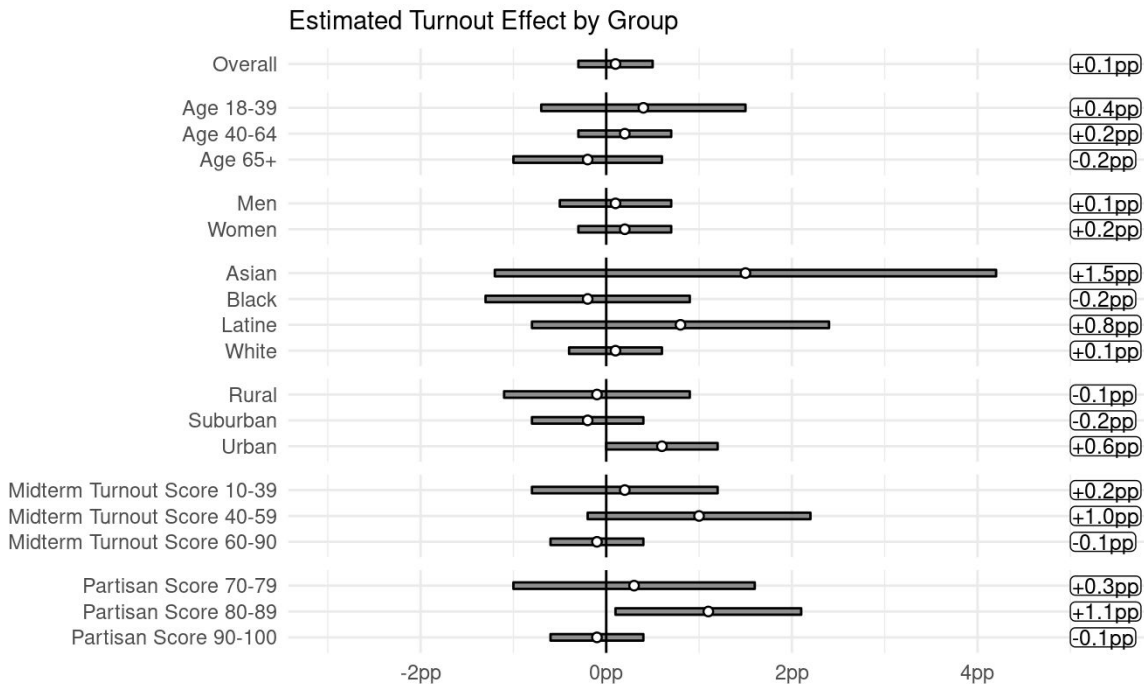
Our best estimate of the overall impact is 0.1 percentage points  $\pm$  0.4.

Turnout Rate by Experimental Condition



The Movement Cooperative and Progressive Turnout Project, 2023

If there was an effect, it appeared to be concentrated in younger, urban, and lower to middle turnout voters



Note: 90% confidence interval shown.  
The Movement Cooperative and Progressive Turnout Project, 2023

## Zooming out, 2022 showed the tactic could scale to multiple states

The effect in 2022 was smaller than in 2021, which is to be expected in a much higher-salience year.

YEAR	STATES	ELECTORAL CONTEXT	TOTAL PROGRAM COST	ESTIMATED VOTERS REACHED	ESTIMATED EFFECT
2021	VA	Primary	\$8.5k	35,000	+0.9pp
2022	AZ, GA, NC, NH, NV, PA, WI	General	\$48k	175,000	+0.1pp



# DISCUSSION

# SUMMARY OF RESULTS

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- **Up to 175,000 voters** were reached via PTSS's scaled volunteer neighbor-to-neighbor GOTV letters program.
- The program **largely reached its intended target demographics**, except it reached fewer Black and Latine voters than expected.
- If the program increased turnout, it was by a small amount: our best estimate is that the overall impact was **0.1 percentage points**  $\pm$  0.4.
- If there was an effect, it appeared concentrated in certain groups: younger and middle-aged voters; urban voters; Asian, Latine, and possibly white voters; lower and middle turnout score voters; and voters with partisanship score under 90.

# CONTEXTUALIZING RESULTS

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- The program scaled to multiple states at **\$10 per volunteer**. Another way to assess scalability is how much it cost to deliver one letter — roughly **\$0.50** in 2021 and **\$0.40** in 2022. A larger recruitment budget could've led to more scale.
- However, the effect size was much smaller than in the 2021 Virginia primary election, undoubtedly related to the saturation we expect in any midterm year, as well as the historically high turnout in 2022.
- Volunteers predominantly lived in older, white, and suburban areas, where effects were smallest. A more diverse volunteer pool may have led to a larger overall program effect. Further testing would be required to be certain.

# PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

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- **In lower-salience elections:** It's clear that the neighbor-to-neighbor GOTV letter tactic can be deployed to impressive effect in lower-salience elections, like it was in 2021. This tactic may be an attractive option for a variety of volunteer-powered organizations looking to make an impact, in addition or as a substitute to traditional door-to-door canvassing.
- **In higher-salience elections:** It remains to be seen what may be required to guarantee that this tactic will successfully break through. The results of this study suggest that diversifying the volunteer pool might've increased the overall effect of the program. Further testing would be required to be certain.

# QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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- **Testing various social pressure messages:** What would be the impact of the tactic with various kinds of social pressure GOTV messaging? Certain social pressure messages wouldn't look like they were organically written; would these messages impact volunteer enthusiasm or the program's effectiveness?
- **How to increase volunteer recruitment:** What recruitment methods might increase the total number of volunteers, especially those living in more racially-diverse neighborhoods?
- **Qualitative:** How does the volunteer experience for the neighbor letter program compare to traditional door-to-door canvassing?





# CREDITS

# CREDITS

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- **Progressive Turnout Project Team:** Reid McCollum
- **The Movement Cooperative Research:** Leo Liu, Chanita Intawan, Emily Wager, Darren Kwong
- **2022 Innovation/Under-Tested Fund:** OpenLabs, America Votes, The Movement Cooperative



# THANK YOU

Contact us at [research@movementcooperative.org](mailto:research@movementcooperative.org)



# APPENDIX



**VOTE**

**FOUR STAR**  
BLACK HAWK  
COUNTY

**LETTER TEMPLATE**

# The letter resembled what PTSS used in 2021

Key elements:  
information on the process of voting, social norming, no organization or logo, and personalized sender

Dear Neighbor,

I'm writing to thank you for being a voter! Please join me to vote for [good jobs that we can use to raise our families \*] in the Tuesday, November 8th election.

Please consider when you plan to vote. You can cast vote at the polls on Election Day, or you can cast an absentee ballot either in person or by mail:

- Vote absentee in person at your county election office or designated location through Tuesday, November 1
- Vote by mail by requesting an absentee ballot at Vote.PA.gov through November 1
- Polls are open from 7:00 AM until 8:00 PM on Election Day, Tuesday November 8th

After the election, I'm eager to see that my neighbors joined me in voting in this very important election. Together we can elect leaders who will make prescription drug prices, education and childcare more affordable for all Pennsylvanians. Thanks again for being a voter in every election!

Your Neighbor,

[Handwritten signature]

[Your Name]

[Add ONE of these: your address, your neighborhood name, your city, your county]

*\*This part was personalized.*

Personalization

Election Day

Process of voting

Social norm

Personal touch

Neighbor, not org



**VOTE**

**FOUR STAR**  
BLACK HAWK  
COUNTY

**EXPERIMENTAL  
ESTIMATES**

# EXPERIMENTAL ESTIMATES

Group	Condition	N	Level	90% ±	Effect	±	p
Overall	Control	43,945	63.1%	0.4pp			
Overall	Treatment	175,524	63.2%	0.2pp	0.1pp	0.4pp	0.58
Age 18-39	Control	5,105	61.3%	1.0pp			
Age 18-39	Treatment	20,602	61.7%	0.5pp	0.4pp	1.1pp	0.58
Age 40-64	Control	31,185	60.3%	0.4pp			
Age 40-64	Treatment	124,536	60.5%	0.2pp	0.2pp	0.5pp	0.53
Age 65+	Control	7,655	75.5%	0.8pp			
Age 65+	Treatment	30,386	75.4%	0.4pp	-0.2pp	0.8pp	0.74
Men	Control	17,162	64.3%	0.5pp			
Men	Treatment	67,615	64.4%	0.3pp	0.1pp	0.6pp	0.81
Women	Control	24,150	63.5%	0.5pp			
Women	Treatment	97,524	63.7%	0.2pp	0.2pp	0.5pp	0.47



# EXPERIMENTAL ESTIMATES

Group	Condition	N	Level	90% ±	Effect	±	p
Partisan Score 70-79	Control	4,326	53.8%	1.1pp			
Partisan Score 70-79	Treatment	17,460	54.0%	0.6pp	0.3pp	1.3pp	0.73
Partisan Score 80-89	Control	6,483	54.4%	0.9pp			
Partisan Score 80-89	Treatment	25,650	55.5%	0.5pp	1.1pp	1.0pp	0.08
Partisan Score 90-100	Control	33,136	66.0%	0.4pp			
Partisan Score 90-100	Treatment	132,414	65.9%	0.2pp	-0.1pp	0.5pp	0.83
Asian	Control	1,145	55.1%	2.5pp			
Asian	Treatment	4,645	56.6%	1.2pp	1.5pp	2.7pp	0.37
Black	Control	6,632	52.3%	1.0pp			
Black	Treatment	26,079	52.1%	0.5pp	-0.2pp	1.1pp	0.8
Latine	Control	2,942	46.7%	1.4pp			
Latine	Treatment	11,856	47.4%	0.7pp	0.8pp	1.6pp	0.44

# EXPERIMENTAL ESTIMATES

	Group	Condition	N	Level	90% ±	Effect	±	p
	White	Control	30,456	68.1%	0.4pp			
	White	Treatment	121,745	68.2%	0.2pp	0.1pp	0.5pp	0.77
Midterm Turnout Score 10-39		Control	6,590	25.9%	0.9pp			
Midterm Turnout Score 10-39		Treatment	26,380	26.2%	0.4pp	0.2pp	1.0pp	0.7
Midterm Turnout Score 40-59		Control	6,728	41.1%	1.0pp			
Midterm Turnout Score 40-59		Treatment	26,710	42.1%	0.5pp	1.0pp	1.2pp	0.15
Midterm Turnout Score 60-90		Control	30,627	75.9%	0.4pp			
Midterm Turnout Score 60-90		Treatment	122,434	75.8%	0.2pp	-0.1pp	0.5pp	0.65
	Rural	Control	7,188	62.4%	0.9pp			
	Rural	Treatment	28,545	62.3%	0.5pp	-0.1pp	1.0pp	0.87
	Suburban	Control	19,343	61.8%	0.6pp			
	Suburban	Treatment	77,148	61.7%	0.3pp	-0.2pp	0.6pp	0.68

# EXPERIMENTAL ESTIMATES

<b>Group</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>90% ±</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>±</b>	<b>p</b>
Urban	Control	17,414	64.7%	0.6pp			
Urban	Treatment	69,831	65.2%	0.3pp	0.6pp	0.6pp	0.15



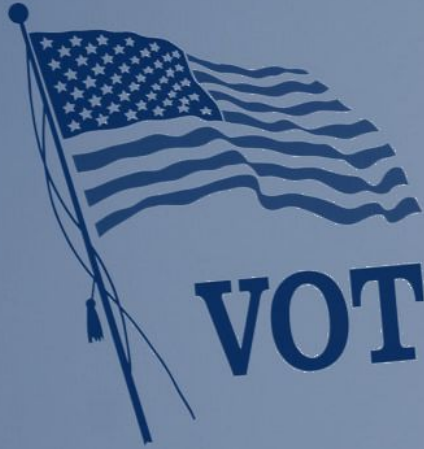
**VOTE**

**FOUR STAR**  
BLACK HAWK  
COUNTY

**COSTS**

**Staff time  
comprised 98%  
of the cost, and  
recruitment  
texts 2%**

LINE ITEM	AMOUNT	NOTES
Hourly Staff Expense (inc. experiment set-up)	\$41,905	
Overhead Support	\$5,000	Recruitment video & program direction
Volunteer Recruitment Texts	\$1,050	13,700 text messages to past volunteers
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$47,955</b>	



**VOTE**

**FOUR STAR**  
BLACK HAWK  
COUNTY

# **VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTIONS**

# The volunteer instructions gave clear directions on personalization and optimal timing

Thank you for signing up to deliver letters to rally your Democratic neighbors to vote! Please read these instructions before you get started.

### Step 1: Download the letter template and list of voters

Both the letter template and your list of voters are linked in the same email that has these instructions.

*NOTE: The letter template file is "view only" so you'll need to download it to your computer, or you can copy and paste the text. Do not request edit access.*

### Step 2: Personalize the letter

The first paragraph of the letter template includes a prompt to add your personal motivation for voting in a few words. Please keep it **nonpartisan**, **positive**, and **focused on outcomes** rather than specific bills or slogans. Don't mention candidates or assume that the recipient agrees with you on specific policy stances:

Use Effective Framings Like These	Avoid Less Effective Framings
full protections for reproductive rights	a federal law to reinstate Roe
equal rights for Black, Indigenous, and people of color	stop Trump's MAGA allies
access to healthcare	passing Medicare for All expanding the Affordable Care Act
common sense gun regulations	fighting back against NRA Republicans
ensure free and fair elections	save democracy from Republicans
clean energy, air and water	passing the Green New Deal banning fracking
honest leaders who fight for working	Jane Doe for Senate

families	
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Edit the end of the letter to add your name and address so voters know you're their neighbor. When adding your address, you only need to include information you are comfortable with. It is OK to just put your street, neighborhood name, town, or county.

You can also add a personal touch or make other minor changes. For example, it's OK to sign the letters by hand with a short note of appreciation.

**OPTIONAL TIP:** Consider asking recipients to email you so you can create a neighborhood list of Democrats. Start a neighborhood activism group!

### Step 3: Print the letter and list of voters

The list of voters has a total number of "Doors" listed at the top of the map on the first page. That's how many copies of your letter you'll need to print and deliver. There are about 100 households on most lists.

### Step 4: Deliver the letters

Please deliver your letters in the final few weeks before the November 8th midterm election. Deliver them no earlier than Oct. 15. If you deliver them before the recipient can vote or request a mail-in ballot in your state, they will be less effective. It's OK to deliver them all at once or over a few weeks as you have time.

The ideal letter delivery windows for states are as follows:

States	Ideal Letter Delivery Window
Arizona, Georgia, Nevada & North Carolina	Fri. 10/21 — Wed. 11/2
Pennsylvania	Fri. 10/21 — Mon. 11/7

It also gave  
volunteers  
instructions on  
self-reporting  
results, as well  
as answers to  
common  
questions

New Hampshire	Sat. 10/29 — Mon. 11/7
Wisconsin	Tue. 10/25 — Mon. 11/7

Place letters at the doors of each household on your list. Rolling the letters and sticking them in door knobs or screen doors works best. **Do not place the letters in mailboxes**, as they do not have postage.

You can mail the letters instead, but you'll be responsible for the envelopes and stamps.

**Step 5: Please confirm your participation**

IMPORTANT: Please visit [bit.ly/PTPLetters](https://bit.ly/PTPLetters) to confirm your participation. You can also send us an email to let us know at [postcards@turnoutpac.org](mailto:postcards@turnoutpac.org).

We're measuring how effective the letters are at increasing Democratic turnout, so it's very important we know whether or not you deliver your letters. Thank you!

**Answers to Common Questions:**

**Who are the people on the list?**

These are households of registered voters who are highly likely to vote for Democrats. We just need to encourage them to vote!

**What if some of the homes are not accessible?**

We do our best to exclude buildings with inaccessible units (e.g. apartment highrises). If you can't access some of the households for any reason, you can either mail those specific letters, or you can just skip them. You do not need to report back to us on which ones you couldn't send. In addition, it's possible one or two of the addresses are far outside your neighborhood; just skip those.

**What if the resident of a household has moved?**

While we use the most recent voter file data available, there will be people who have moved since the last update. If it's clear that no one currently resides at a home, just skip it. You do not need to report back to us in those cases.

**I don't have access to a printer - can I still participate?**

Yes. Please email us right away and we'll get you set up.

**If you have other questions, please email or call us anytime!**

email: [postcards@turnoutpac.org](mailto:postcards@turnoutpac.org) phone: (630) 541-9749

Thank you for your support and activism!

Postcards to Swing States Team  
[www.turnoutpac.org/postcards](http://www.turnoutpac.org/postcards)





**VOTE**

**FOUR STAR**  
BLACK HAWK  
COUNTY

**VOLUNTEER  
FEEDBACK**

**Volunteers reported that they'd be likely to recommend the program to others**

HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO RECOMMEND THIS PROGRAM TO SOMEONE? %

Likely or Very Likely 76%

Neutral 15%

Unlikely or Very Unlikely 10%

HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO CONNECT WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE? %

Likely or Very Likely 25%

Neutral 42%

Unlikely or Very Unlikely 33%