

Vote Your Values ✓ ✓  
Fight for Your Rights



# Conversation Guide



ACLU

# How to Vote Your Values

The midterm elections are coming, and many of us would like to talk about the impact of this election but don't know where to start. So we want to make it easy for you. By voting, we have an opportunity to have a say on major issues facing our country, including abortion rights, racial justice, LGBTQ rights, free speech, and voting rights. But we need your help to ensure everyone votes their values.

Just a simple conversation with your friends and family can activate your community during this election. In fact, having a conversation with your network has shown to increase voter turnout. With our rights on the ballot, the ACLU is here to help you navigate those conversations.

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Below you'll find information about the issues that matter to you. We've also included responses to some frequently asked questions, and conversation starters that can help kick-start a dialogue.

In addition, here are some helpful tips to keep in mind when engaging in a conversation:

## Helpful Tips

- ★ Create a safe space - A safe conversation is one in which everyone feels comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings. Offer mutual respect and make the most of common ground.
- ★ Listen - Be interested in what others have experienced and acknowledge their point of view.
- ★ Advocate - Inform yourself about the issues that matter to you, so that you can share the facts. Sharing personal stories can also show what's at stake.

This November 8th, we have the power to send a message to elected officials about what we value and what we want them to prioritize. Make sure your friends and family are planning to vote, know the issues on the ballot, and have a plan to vote in place. It just takes a conversation to fight for your rights.

# Abortion Rights

## Key Points

- 1** The decision to get an abortion shouldn't belong to politicians — it should belong to individuals. Abortion is essential, lifesaving health care.
- 2** Forcing someone to carry a pregnancy against their will has life-altering consequences, including long-lasting serious health risks from continued pregnancy and childbirth; making it harder to escape poverty; derailing education, career, and life plans; and making it more difficult to leave an abusive partner.
- 3** Anti-abortion politicians won't stop at banning care in states where they're in power, they want to ban abortion entirely, nationwide. In fact, a national abortion ban was introduced in the U.S. Senate soon after the Supreme Court took away our federal right to abortion.
- 4** This upcoming election will determine if we have elected officials fighting for abortion rights in Congress, in state legislatures, or even in your local community. This is a dire moment.

- 5** More than a dozen states have begun enforcing abortion bans in the months after the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, leaving around one in three people without access to essential, lifesaving care.

## FAQ

**Q:** Can people get an abortion if they need one?

**A:** After the Supreme Court's decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the ability to access abortion depends on where you live. For those living in states where care is banned, there are two main options: seeking care in another state if you are able or being forced to carry a pregnancy against your will.

**Q:** Is abortion safe, and how common is it?

**A:** Yes, abortion is one of the safest medical procedures performed today. It's 99 percent safe, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nearly one in three women will have an abortion in her lifetime. As a matter of fact, six out of every 10 women who have abortions are already mothers.

**Q:** I live in a state that's friendly to abortion rights, so I don't have to worry about abortion bans, right?

**A:** No. Anti-abortion rights politicians won't stop with only banning abortion in some of the states across the country, they want to completely ban care nationwide and will do so if they are put into power. And if a national ban is passed, state protections for care will be wiped away completely. That's why this midterm election is so important.

**Q:** The Supreme Court just took away our right to abortion, is there anything we can do to protect abortion rights on the federal level?

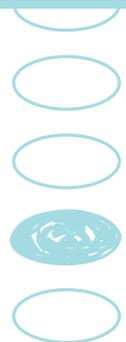
**A:** Yes, Congress can pass a law that would protect access to abortion nationwide and override many of the harmful state bans. But that won't be possible unless we elect a strong, pro-abortion rights majority in the U.S. House and Senate this November that will fight for our fundamental rights.

**Q:** What about protecting abortion rights at the local level?

**A:** In many states, state supreme courts, governors, and state legislatures – all elected officials – will be the ones making policies on abortion rights. That's why it's so important to vote your values in your local offices as well as federal ones.

## Conversation Starters

- ★ With abortion banned in states across the country, the burden falls hardest on pregnant people from Black and Brown communities.
- ★ When these bans are enforced, politicians are threatening to put doctors in jail for providing essential care and women in jail for accessing it.
- ★ Abortion is essential health care – and lifesaving in some circumstances. People from all walks of life need access to abortion care, which one in three women will receive in her lifetime. Read about some of these stories on the ACLU's website [here](#).



# Voting Rights



## Key Points

- 1 Democracy is free and fair only when every eligible American has the freedom to vote.
- 2 Voting is a fundamental and constitutional right, not a privilege.
- 3 Our elected officials should be reflective of all communities and represent our interests.
- 4 The right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy and the fundamental right upon which all our civil liberties rest.
- 5 Voting should be equally accessible for all citizens, no matter where they live, the color of their skin, or how much money they make.

## FAQ

**Q:** I thought everyone could vote, is voter suppression a real thing?

**A:** Voter suppression, the practice of influencing the outcome of an election by discouraging or preventing specific groups of people from voting, is a real problem. Voter suppression bills put up unnecessary barriers for people to register to vote, vote by mail, or vote in person. The result is a severely compromised democracy that doesn't reflect the will of the people. Our democracy works best when all eligible voters can participate and have their voices heard.

**Q:** I've been hearing so much about voter fraud since the 2020 election, is this a real problem?

**A:** There is no evidence that the United States has a problem with voter fraud. Studies have shown there's less than a one tenth of a percent chance of voter fraud in the United States. Many studies have found that voter fraud is extraordinarily rare in our country, yet some public officials continue to tell Americans falsehoods about the state of our elections. The true threat to our elections is voter suppression, not fraud.

**Q:** What's wrong with requiring voter ID?

**A:** Unnecessarily strict voter identification laws are a part of an ongoing strategy to roll back decades of progress on voting rights. The fact is that 11 percent of U.S. citizens – or more than 21 million Americans – do not have government-issued photo identification. Not all voter ID requirements are discriminatory or burdensome to voters, but seven states have strict photo ID laws, under which voters must present one of a limited set of forms of government-issued photo ID in order to cast a regular ballot.

## Conversation Starters

- ★ Sixty-four percent of Americans are concerned with the stability of our democracy. That's why it's important we elect leaders who want to make sure every eligible voter can access the ballot box.
- ★ In the last two years, more than 400 voter suppression bills have been introduced in 48 states. Voter suppression efforts can seem unobstructive, like strict voter ID laws and cuts to early voting, but they have a real impact. These measures make it harder for people of color, students, the elderly, and people with disabilities to register and vote.

# LGBTIQ Rights

## Key Points

- 1 LGBTQ people deserve to live without fear of prejudice or discrimination because of who they are or who they love. But politicians nationwide continue to target transgender people – transgender youth especially – with unlawful and unconstitutional attacks.
- 2 Transgender youth deserve the same chance to thrive as their peers, but face much higher rates of harassment, violence, poverty, homelessness, and suicide. Ensuring they have safe schools, loving homes, and inclusive communities is paramount to helping these vulnerable young people.
- 3 In recent years, politicians have targeted transgender youth with baseless and discriminatory laws attempting to limit their rights in school – forcing them to use the wrong restrooms, banning them from school sports, censoring stories and books about their experiences, and banning lifesaving gender-affirming health care.

- 4 Gender-affirming care is lifesaving care, giving transgender people the same chance to thrive as their peers. But the same people banning abortion across the country are fighting to criminalize this specialized form of medicine, terrorizing providers and hospitals, and even threatening to remove transgender youth from their parent’s custody.

## FAQ

**Q:** What is gender-affirming care?

**A:** Gender-affirming care is a very individualized form of health care, that will look different for each person depending on their age, gender, and other physical and mental health needs. For prepubescent transgender youth, this care typically involves a “social transition” (changing clothes, hair, name, etc.) and never involves surgery or other irreversible medical treatments. During or after puberty, many transgender youth may receive reversible puberty blockers, hormone replacement therapy, or other medical interventions as prescribed by medical professionals. Older transgender adolescents can and do access surgical care on a case-by-case basis as recommended by the World Professional Association of Transgender Health.

**Q:** Aren’t female transgender athletes cheating?

**A:** No. Transgender athletes are underrepresented at both the K-12 and collegiate level in every sport. Most professional sports leagues have been playing under trans-inclusive policies for more than a decade, and the full inclusion of transgender athletes has the support of icons like Billie Jean King, Megan Rapino, Abby Wambach, and Sue Bird.

**Q:** Is the right to same-sex marriage under threat?

**A:** In his concurring opinion overturning *Roe v. Wade*, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas raised the possibility of revisiting the Supreme Court precedent that recognized the right to marriage equality. However, the majority opinion of the court made clear the ruling on *Roe* did not impact the right to marriage, and a case doing so would need to go through the entire judicial system. We must pass the federal Respect For Marriage Act and support local efforts to protect this right to prevent any future threats.



**Q:** How can I best support the transgender youth in my life?

**A:** First and foremost, be thankful a transgender person has shared their authentic self with you. Many remain in the closet for fear of mistreatment, rejection, or even violence. Second, use the name and pronouns they request; try practicing writing about this young person using their new name and pronouns if you find it difficult. Third, ask them about their feeling of safety in other settings — school, home, with friends, or with friends' families. Transgender youth need the adults in their lives to stand up for them and defend their right to safe schools, loving homes, and inclusive communities.

## Conversation Starters

- ★ Since February 2022, Texas has been targeting the families of transgender youth and threatening to remove their children from their custody. Just think about your children being taken from you. Families should not be targeted for doing what is best for their child.
- ★ Transgender people are four times as likely to experience violence, three times as likely to go hungry, and twice as likely to live in poverty. Yet, since 2019, the number of anti-transgender bills introduced has doubled, in a coordinated campaign against some of the country's most vulnerable.

# Free Speech & Racial Justice



## Key Points

- 1 We have a First Amendment right to read and learn free from censorship and discrimination. This means the government can't ban books or censor classroom discussions about race and gender just because they disagree with it.
- 2 Since 2021, dozens of states have moved to introduce and pass classroom censorship bills that restrict students and teachers from discussing race, gender, and sexuality in public schools. At the same time, politicians and school boards across the country are moving to ban books — predominately those by Black and LGBTQ authors — from public schools and libraries.
- 3 Last year, the American Library Association recorded 729 book ban challenges targeting 1,597 titles — the highest number since the organization began recording data in 2000.

# FAQ

**Q:** What is “critical race theory,” and why has it come under fire?

**A:** Critical race theory, or CRT, is an academic and legal framework focused on how systemic racism is deeply ingrained in and shapes American society. The term “critical race theory” has been co-opted by opponents as a catch-all term to apply broadly to classroom discussions about race and racism, gender identity, sexuality, and sexism. At their core, anti “CRT” laws are thinly veiled attempts to silence discussions of race, gender, and sexuality amongst students and educators. These laws suppress free speech and deny people the right to an accurate, complete, and inclusive learning environment.

**Q:** Is banning books a violation of the First Amendment?

**A:** Yes. The First Amendment protects our right to receive information and share ideas free from viewpoint-based censorship. The government can’t ban books just because it dislikes the ideas contained in those books, nor may it do so for partisan, political, or viewpoint-based reasons. That is a violation of the First Amendment.

**Q:** How is banning books and classroom censorship a racial justice issue?

**A:** The majority of recent book ban challenges target books by Black and LGBTQ authors. These books are being targeted because they specifically discuss race, gender, and/or sexual identity from the viewpoint of an author or character who is a person of color, Black, an immigrant, queer, or otherwise from a marginalized community.

**Q:** Why is it important to defend the right to learn and read free from censorship?

**A:** Having the freedom to read what we want, explore new ideas, and encounter a variety of perspectives ensures that we all have the ability to read, learn, and form our own opinions. This includes giving people the opportunity to engage with the history, experiences, and viewpoints of all our communities in this country, both in and out of school. All young people deserve to be able to see themselves and the issues that impact them reflected in their classrooms and in the books they’re reading.

## Conversation Starters

- ★ Imagine being in a classroom where your history teacher, because of classroom censorship laws, is limited about how they can teach and even talk about critical pieces of U.S. history, including our country's history of slavery and how it continues to impact Black communities today.
- ★ The book "All Boys Aren't Blue," by George Johnson is being targeted for removal in at least 14 states just because the author talks about his experience growing up Black and queer in the book.



## Time to Fight for Your Rights



This November 8th, let's remind our elected officials that they don't have the final say when it comes to our rights — we do. We know you're ready to vote and take action, make sure your friends and family are ready too.



✓ To find out how each elected official plays a key role in defending our rights, visit:

[aclu.org/voteyourvalues](https://www.aclu.org/voteyourvalues)

Share this guide with others so that they can engage their circles too.

## ACLU

The ACLU dares to create a more perfect union — beyond one person, party, or side. Our mission is to realize this promise of the United States Constitution for all and expand the reach of its guarantees.