

# BUILDING **thriving** COMMUNITIES

## civic engagement toolkit



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence  
**ACTION**ALLIANCE

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## BUILDING **thriving** COMMUNITIES

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# BUILDING thriving COMMUNITIES

## a campaign for our future

### an introduction

The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (Action Alliance) is a non-profit agency working across Virginia with survivors, community-based Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies (SDVAs), and other community partners. Our work includes training and supporting community-based advocates and allies, developing resources for survivors and localities, and eliminating sexual and domestic violence.

### we believe:

EVERYONE DESERVES A LIFE FREE OF VIOLENCE;  
CHILDREN SHOULD BE SAFE IN THEIR HOMES AND IN THEIR COMMUNITIES; AND  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ARE PREVENTABLE.

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IN ALIGNMENT WITH THESE BELIEFS, WE LAUNCH OUR  
**Building Thriving Communities** CAMPAIGN.

For nearly 40 years, the Action Alliance has been at the forefront of tremendous positive changes in the community response to both sexual assault and domestic violence—brought about, in large part, by people whose lives have been impacted by violence. These individuals form a collective force for good, dedicating their time and talents to ensuring a future Virginia that is free from violence.

- We helped build a statewide network of crisis and advocacy services to ensure that victims of violence have access to support, safety, and healing in the wake of violence—transforming victims into survivors.
- We helped enact laws to provide new protections for survivors of violence and to require education and effective responses from a wide variety of professionals—including law enforcement, prosecutors, health care professionals, educators, landlords and more.
- We shifted public awareness and attitudes so that blaming victims is far less common, and the stigma of coming forward and asking for help has been significantly reduced.

This progress is important—and our work to ensure positive and effective interventions for ALL victims across Virginia continues. **Still, we are concerned that sexual violence and domestic violence continues, with little change in the rates of violence across generations.**

Over the past decade, we have begun building a new network of prevention strategies throughout Virginia that are designed to give communities the tools they need to stop sexual and intimate partner violence before it starts. We see great promise in this work, and we look forward to continuing it. We know that for this work to take root and succeed, we must have an opportunity to witness healthy relationships in our homes and in our communities and we must live in communities where there is compassion, humor, generosity, and kindness—for all people.

**With this campaign, we turn to those of you in communities across Virginia who have made it possible for victims to become survivors, and for healing to transform into thriving.**

We know that you share our concern for young Virginians and their future, and we know that you share our desire to build a world without sexual violence and intimate partner violence. We invite you to be a part of Building Thriving Communities.

## our goal

Through the Building Thriving Communities campaign, we seek to transform Virginia communities by increasing public participation in the formation of public policy that promotes a healthy future. We will achieve this transformation by building authentic connections between people, across differences, and around issues that make communities healthy, safe, just, and compassionate for all. We will provide people with the tools they need to turn their vision for their community into reality. These will include tools to promote voting and civic engagement.

**This is a long-term campaign that draws upon the strength of the movements to end domestic and sexual violence:** each person having a voice that is valued and respected, sharing stories as a tool for building understanding and mobilizing action, and empowering individuals and groups to bring about change in their own lives, in communities, and in the world.

## the campaign elements

For Sexual & Domestic Violence Agencies that would like to engage survivors and communities effectively in becoming active and educated citizens, the Action Alliance has developed and collected a number of tools and strategies for those organizations to implement as part of a successful civic engagement project.





## **tools & resources for organizations**

### **a toolkit for thriving communities**

Includes tools and resources for SDVAs to increase civic engagement among survivors, allies, and community members. Tools include:

- A Community Conversation Facilitator Guide on Civic Engagement
- Sample Community Art Actions
- Voter Education Guides and Resources for Continued Learning
- The Action Alliance's Legislative Advocacy Guide
- Information on the Annual (em)POWER CHALLENGE Event
- Questions for Candidates
- Posters & Handout: Why Voting Matters

### **building thriving communities leadership training**

A training for individuals and organizations who would like to dive more deeply into promoting public and survivor participation in public policy and civic engagement work that leads to healthy, safe, just, and compassionate communities. Participants will learn about reconnecting with our movement roots and employing organizing strategies that seek to facilitate authentic connections between people, across differences, and around issues in an effort to build safe and thriving communities. To learn more and register for this training, visit the Action Alliance's Training Institute website: [vsdvalliance.org](https://vsdvalliance.org).

## **strategies for organizations to engage survivors and community members**

### **community conversation facilitator guide**

Use the Facilitator Guide on Civic Engagement to hold forums and structured conversations that focus on the elements of thriving communities and to invite participants to consider those individual and collective actions that can contribute to building the communities in which we'd like to live.

### **community art actions**

Use this guide to organize community actions and spaces intended to support individuals in visualizing thriving communities.

### **the (em)Power challenge**

This annual, statewide event engages allies and friends in raising funds for local SDVAs and builds small group connections designed to raise awareness of current issues that impact our communities.

### **posters & handout: vote for a #radicallyhopeful future**

These posters and handouts are for printing and using at community events, for hanging in community spaces, sharing with partner agencies, and for increasing community knowledge and readiness for elections and other civic engagement opportunities in Virginia.

## how you might use this toolkit

Here are some quick tips for how you might consider using this toolkit and the campaign elements to increase civic engagement among survivors, community members, and other allies.

- **Participate in a training offered by the Action Alliance.** Want to figure out how to talk to your community about voting and public policy? The Building Thriving Communities Leadership training is a good starting place for figuring out where to start, what resources to use, and how to structure an effective community-based campaign.
- **Get familiar with the Toolkit.** The Toolkit for Thriving Communities is full of resources designed to support you in increasing community engagement with voting, the formation of public policy, and becoming active participants in democracy.
- **Initiate a Community Poster Campaign.** You can use the posters and handouts included in this Toolkit to educate your community on the issues and to promote public participation in voting. Consider mapping out some hot-spots in your community – maybe a local coffee-house, social service agencies, the local college/university campus, organizational partners – and ask to place posters and handouts in these locations along with some of your agency brochures/cards/information so that folks know where to go for more information.
- **Host a Community Conversation on Civic Engagement.** Consider using the Community Conversation Facilitator Guide to host a 1 ½-2-hour structured forum or conversation on democracy, power, and increasing public participation in the development of thriving and healthy futures. You can use this in survivor support groups, with your Board of Directors, with organizational partners and allies, with a group of students or young people, or with community members.
- **Host a Community Art Action.** This is a group activity or art project intended to create a visual representation of what your vision for a thriving community looks like. This can be used as a follow up activity to the Community Conversation or it can be a stand-alone activity.
- **Pose Questions to Candidates.** Want to see where a candidate stands on the issues? Want to engage your representatives in discussions on topics like racial justice, healing and safety for sexual and domestic violence survivors, or school and education? Use the provided candidate questions to get those discussions started.
- **Participate in the annual, statewide (em)Power Challenge.** This is a great way to engage your family, church, neighborhood, or community in raising funds for the local SDVA and to connect and discuss the issues on the ballot or those impacting survivors. For more information on this annual, statewide event, check out [vsdvalliance.org](http://vsdvalliance.org).

# EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES ON **civic engagement**



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence  
**ACTIONALLIANCE**

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# voting basics

**remember, you can't vote unless you're registered!**

**to register in Virginia, you must...**

- be a citizen of the United States;
- be a resident of Virginia and of the precinct in which you want to vote;
- be 18 years old by the next general election;
- not have been convicted of a felony, or have had your civil rights restored; and
- not currently be declared incapacitated by a court.

**if you want to...**

- Check on your voter registration status
- Update your voter information, address, etc.
- Register to vote for an election
- Apply for absentee voting
- Find your polling place
- See your voting history

**...You can do all of this by visiting:** <https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation> or by visiting your local library or city or town hall.

Most community libraries have voter registration forms for public use.

## **Do I need to register with a political party?**

**No.** In Virginia strict party affiliation is not required in order to vote in a primary or general election; however, you can only vote in 1 party's primary, not both. To vote in a party primary you need to visit your polling place. They will ask which primary you want to vote in and there you can request your intended party's ballot to cast your vote.

## what documents do I need to register to vote...and to vote on election day?

When submitting a voter registration application, no additional documents are required for your registration to be processed. The state confirms your citizenship and eligibility through the information provided on your registration form, such as your state-issued license/ID number or the last 4 digits of your Social Security number.

**When you show up to vote at your polling place, you will need a photo I.D. in the form of:**

- Virginia Driver's License or other photo ID issued by Virginia
- US Passport
- Any government-issued photo ID card (issued by the US Government, Commonwealth of Virginia, or a political subdivision of the Commonwealth)
- Student ID that has a photograph and that was issued by any institution of higher learning in Virginia
- Student ID issued by a public or private school in Virginia displaying a photo
- Employee ID card that has a photograph and that was issued by the employer in the ordinary course of business
- Valid Virginia DMV issued Veteran's ID card
- Tribal enrollment or other tribal ID issued by one of the 11 tribes recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia

## If I'm in line when the polls close, can I still vote?

**Yes!** You have the right to vote if you are in line by 7 p.m. when the polls close. (Va. Code §24.2-603)

## Can I wear campaign apparel when going to vote?

**Yes!** You are allowed to wear apparel and buttons or stickers that contain a candidate's name or a political slogan to the polls. (Va. Code §24.2-604(J))

## What if I need instructions on how to use the voting equipment?

**Ask a poll worker for help.** Poll workers are required to assist you at any time you ask, even if you have entered the voting booth. (Va. Code §24.2-647)

## What if someone challenges my eligibility to vote even though I am on the list of registered voters?

**Ask for the Affirmation of Eligibility form.** You have the right to vote if you sign this form. (Va. Code §24.2-651, -651.1)

## What if I believe I am registered, but a poll worker says I am not?

**Ask the poll worker to contact the local registrar.** If the registrar is unavailable or cannot find your name, ask for a provisional ballot. You have the right to cast a provisional ballot even if your name is not on the voter list. However, know that your ballot may not be counted if the Board of Elections finds no record of your registration. (Va. Code §24.2-652, -653)

## What should I do if I make a mistake on a paper ballot, or the machine malfunctions?

**Do not cast your ballot!** Ask for a replacement ballot immediately. You have a right to as many replacement ballots as you need. (Va. Code §24.2-645). If your machine malfunctions, inform a poll worker who will direct you to a different machine or give you a paper ballot. (Va. Code §24.2-642, §24.2-646.1)

## What if I need help in the voting booth because of a physical disability or I have trouble reading or writing?

**Ask a poll worker for a Request for Assistance form.** You have the right to have a poll worker, friend, or relative help you in the voting booth if you sign this form. (Va. Code §24.2-649 (B)). If you think it will be difficult to vote inside the polling place, you have the right to vote curbside. On Election Day, if you are 65 or older or physically disabled, you can send someone into the polling place to request curbside voting on your behalf. Poll workers will bring a ballot or voting machine outside so you can vote. (Va. Code §24.2-649 (A))

## What if I need language assistance?

**You have the right to bring someone who can translate the ballot and help you communicate with poll workers.** (Va. Code §24.2-649 (C)) (Note: Fairfax County is required to provide ballots, election materials and assistance in Spanish. Ask the poll worker for help in Spanish.)

\* Some of this information has been provided by the ACLU of Virginia's voter empowerment card 2018: [https://acluva.org/sites/default/files/field\\_documents/2018\\_voter\\_empowerment\\_card\\_english\\_final.pdf](https://acluva.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/2018_voter_empowerment_card_english_final.pdf)

# sample ballot

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
SAMPLE BALLOT  
City of Richmond  
GENERAL AND SPECIAL ELECTIONS  
Tuesday, November 7, 2017**

**TO VOTE:**

1. USE A BLACK BALL POINT PEN TO MARK THE BALLOT.
2. COMPLETELY FILL IN THE OVAL TO THE LEFT OF YOUR CHOICE LIKE THIS ☒.
3. TO VOTE FOR A PERSON NOT ON THE BALLOT FOR AN OFFICE, WRITE THE NAME ON THE LINE PROVIDED AND FILL IN THE OVAL TO THE LEFT OF THAT NAME.

**Governor**  
(Vote for only one)

- ☐ Ralph S. Northam - D  
☐ Edward W. "Ed" Gillespie - R  
☐ Clifford D. Hyra - L

Write-In

**Lieutenant Governor**  
(Vote for only one)

- ☐ Justin E. Fairfax - D  
☐ Jill H. Vogel - R

Write-In

**Attorney General**  
(Vote for only one)

- ☐ Mark R. Herring - D  
☐ John D. Adams - R

Write-In

**Member  
House of Delegates  
71st District**  
(Vote for only one)

- ☐ Jeff M. Bourne - D

Write-In

**Commonwealth's Attorney**  
(Vote for only one)

- ☐ Michael N. Herring

Write-In

**Sheriff**  
(Vote for only one)

- ☐ Antionette V. Irving  
☐ Nicole D. Jackson  
☐ Emmett Johnson Jafari

Write-In

**Treasurer**  
(Vote for only one)

- ☐ Nichole Ona R. Armstead  
☐ Michelle R. Mosby  
☐ L. Shirley Harvey

Write-In

Authorized by Electoral Board of the  
City of Richmond  
P.O. Box 61037 • Richmond, Virginia 23261

The authority statement printed above **must be removed and replaced** with the appropriate authority statement for the candidate, committee, individual or group using this ballot for their own purposes. The authority statement used for this ballot must comply with the requirements of either federal or state law, as appropriate. For state requirements, see §24.2-955 of the *Code of Virginia*. For federal requirements, call the Federal Election Commission, 1-800-424-9530.

**READ BOTH SIDES**

**Ballot Style # 002**

Typ:01 Seq:0002 Spl:01

statewide  
office

local  
office



# voter checklist

## (general election)

## september

- Check voter registration
- Apply for absentee ballot (if needed)

## october

- If you are voting absentee, mail in your absentee ballot
- Confirm polling place
- Keep photo ID card in a safe spot
- Research candidates and their positions
- Know how you're going to vote/fill out your ballot come election day!
- Final day to register to vote is 22 days before the election.

## november

- Make a transportation plan – how are you getting to the polls on election day?
- Polls are open 6AM-7PM on election day. Determine when you're planning/able to go to the polls.
- **VOTE!** Election Day is always the first Tuesday in November.

# legislative advocacy guide

The Action Alliance invites you to join us to advocate for policies that empower survivors, prevent violence, and support thriving communities statewide. But first, the nuts and bolts of what legislative advocacy is, and where you fit into the equation as an engaged citizen.

## enclosed you will find these sections...

### 1. preparation

Find out who your legislators are and what you're going to say.

### 2. making contact

Explore the different ways you can engage with your legislators.

### 3. follow up & what's next?

Let us know how your visit went and let your legislators know you're holding them accountable.

### 4. Virginia's legislature

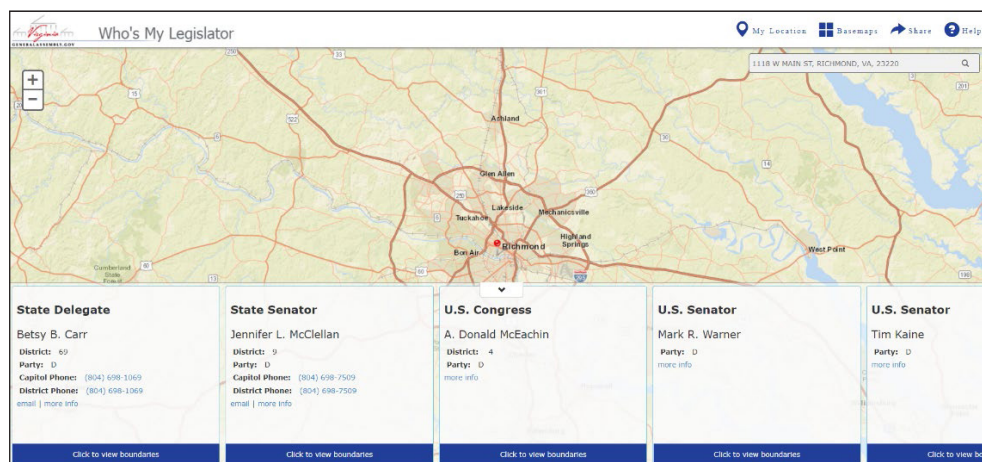
How it works, how a bill becomes law, terms to know, and other civics class highlights.

## preparation

### first things first: who are your legislators?

Members of the General Assembly want to hear from their constituents – the people they represent within their respective districts. Every Virginian has two legislators who represent them in the General Assembly: a State Senator and a Delegate. Visit this link to find out who they are if you aren't sure:

[whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov/](http://whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov/)



## craft your message

When calling, emailing, or writing a letter, it's important to have a clear message: why are you contacting your legislators? We can make contact for a variety of reasons, from expressing a desire for your legislator(s) to support or oppose a bill to urging them to adopt positions or develop policies that will support your community.

When reaching out, it can be helpful to begin by consulting the Action Alliance's Legislative Priorities, Policy Plan, Issue Positions, and policy resources. Your legislators' offices keep records of how many phone calls, letters, and emails they receive concerning various issues – so it can be impactful for a legislator to see a large number of their constituents reach out on similar/aligned policy issues.

When reaching out, this is the time where you can personalize an issue. If you work with survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence or with young people to prevent violence, why would you want your representative to support or oppose a bill? How does this help to shape a world that we want: a world without violence?

## stay on message

- Whatever way you engage your legislators, keep it short and stay on message. If you have 30-60 seconds to speak on the phone, what is the most important thing you want them to know? If you are calling regarding a specific bill, specify the bill and why you support or oppose the legislation. If you have a personal story to share which may take longer, try to make an appointment to speak to your legislator in person or over the phone.
- Remember that staff are very busy during legislative sessions and may not be able to read a five-page email or speak on the phone at length. If you're having trouble figuring out which details to focus on, try practicing with a friend. Based on your experience with sexual assault and domestic violence, think about what the most important message is relative to the bills up for consideration. How would your life, your family, or your clients' lives be impacted if the legislation you are advocating for is put in place?
- Most importantly – how can your legislator help? These are tough issues and it's easy to feel overwhelmed by them. There is hope, though – the General Assembly can pass legislation to help survivors and prevent violence. And your legislators really value your input, as community-based advocates, as change-makers, as survivors, and as constituents in this legislative process. Your voice is your super-power.

# making contact

## by phone

The Who's My Legislator webpage ([whosmy.viriniageneralassembly.gov/](http://whosmy.viriniageneralassembly.gov/)), which helps you identify your legislators, also provides phone numbers. Once you know who your legislators are and you are ready to call, here are some pro tips:

- Remember your message prep! For phone calls, it can be helpful to write out some bullet-point notes ahead of time to make sure you know what you want to say. Remember that calls to legislative offices are often brief, 2-10 minutes at the most, but legislative offices do take note of them.
- When you call your legislator's office, the phone will be answered by a staff member (staffer).
  1. Tell the staffer that you are a constituent and you'd like to speak to a legislative aide on sexual and intimate partner violence issues.

2. When you get an aide or office member on the phone, introduce yourself "Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a constituent of Delegate/Senator \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, Virginia."). "I'm calling to voice my support for House/Senate bill \_\_\_\_\_ and to encourage Delegate \_\_\_\_\_ to join me in supporting this issue and ensuring that all Virginians have access to safe and just communities and that we can prevent violence before it happens".

Follow your script. Talk clearly and at a measured pace and remember that the Legislative Aide that you're speaking with may not only support your issue but may encourage your legislator to take note and commit to action on the bill that you're speaking to.

3. Make sure your ask is clear and direct ("I'm asking for Delegate \_\_\_\_\_ to support House /Senate bill \_\_\_\_\_."). Your voice will be heard, but it doesn't hurt to repeat the ask to ensure that it's fully captured in office/message notes.

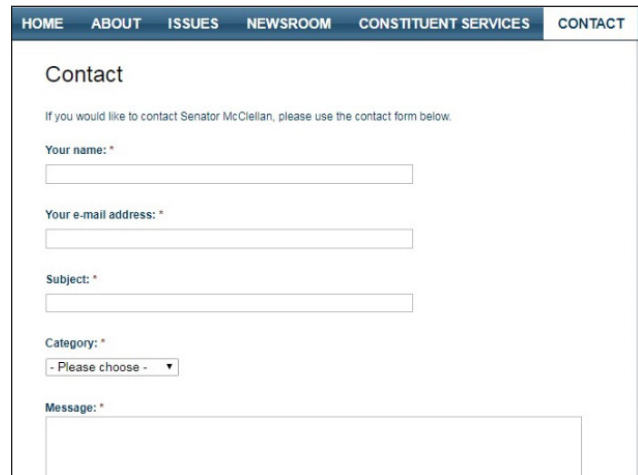
4. Be prepared to entertain any comments or questions that the Legislative Aide may have. You don't need to have all the answers; you can always direct the aide to Jonathan Yglesias, Public Policy Director at the Action Alliance ([info@vsdvalliance.org](mailto:info@vsdvalliance.org)), and let them know that he can serve as a legislative resource to their office on these issues.

## by letter

That's right! Good-old-fashioned letters through the mail. In the age of email and instant communication, writing real letters may feel outdated, but they can have much more impact on an office and the attention your message receives. There are hundreds of bills introduced each session, and many more individuals, businesses, and nonprofits contacting each member asking them to give attention to various issues. This means that email inboxes fill up quickly. A real letter on paper takes up physical space and is harder

to slip by the wayside. It's also more personal; emails are quick, but letters take more effort. And, if they receive multiple letters on the same issue, it can have a real impact!

If you don't have time to send a letter, many legislators have contact forms on their websites for constituents to leave feedback or comment on issues. Offices consistently tell us they pay attention to these messages, even if they don't have the capacity to respond to every message they receive.

A screenshot of a contact form titled "Contact" from Senator Jennifer McClellan's website. The form is part of a navigation menu that includes "HOME", "ABOUT", "ISSUES", "NEWSROOM", "CONSTITUENT SERVICES", and "CONTACT". The form itself has a header "Contact" and a sub-header "If you would like to contact Senator McClellan, please use the contact form below." It contains several input fields: "Your name: \*" with a text box, "Your e-mail address: \*" with a text box, "Subject: \*" with a text box, "Category: \*" with a dropdown menu showing "- Please choose -", and "Message: \*" with a large text area.

*This example of a legislator contact form is from Senator Jennifer McClellan's website.*

## social media

Most legislators use social media in some capacity, and it's a great way to further engage with them. This is especially true for a concentrated effort from supporters of an issue. Show legislators how much Virginians care about survivors and to tell them there are ways they can help!

Here are a few places to start:



<b>House Democrats</b>	<a href="https://twitter.com/VAHouseDems">twitter.com/VAHouseDems</a>
<b>House Republicans</b>	<a href="https://twitter.com/VAGOPCaucus">twitter.com/VAGOPCaucus</a>
<b>Senate Democrats</b>	<a href="https://twitter.com/VASenateDems">twitter.com/VASenateDems</a>
<b>Senate Republicans</b>	<a href="https://twitter.com/VASenateGOP">twitter.com/VASenateGOP</a>

\*Note: not every legislator uses Twitter or Facebook, and some use neither.

The Action Alliance Twitter account ([twitter.com/VActionAlliance/lists/virginia-state-senators](https://twitter.com/VActionAlliance/lists/virginia-state-senators)) also maintains lists of members of the General Assembly for the House ([twitter.com/VActionAlliance/lists/virginia-delegates](https://twitter.com/VActionAlliance/lists/virginia-delegates)) and Senate ([twitter.com/VActionAlliance/lists/virginia-state-senators](https://twitter.com/VActionAlliance/lists/virginia-state-senators)).

## in-person meetings with legislators

In-person meetings are often the best way to make an impact. This is how you make your advocacy personal and build the most immediate connection with your legislators. Note that during the General Assembly (typically January-early March), the best time to schedule meetings is usually between 9:00 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. However, you may have a legislator that offers a meeting later in the day. Outside of the General Assembly Session, it's easier to get a meeting with your legislator, and you're more likely to get them in a more relaxed state, ready to listen and problem-solve with you.

## helpful tips for meeting with legislators

- 1) Check in with the member's front desk staff.** If you have business cards, have one ready to hand to staff when you arrive at your legislator's office. This helps them "announce you" and tell the legislator/staff who has arrived for a visit.
- 2) Don't be disappointed if you don't get to meet directly with your legislator.** The legislative assistants/aides (LAs) will take notes and pass your message on to their boss. LAs are often experts in certain policy issues (education, healthcare, etc.) and are sometimes the best person to speak to, since their boss depends on them to navigate the hundreds of bills introduced each session.
- 3) Decide in advance on your most important message or priority and lead with that.** Schedules are often very tight!
- 4) Thank the legislator and staff for meeting with you.**
- 5) Introduce yourself and where you live and/or work.** It is important for the legislator to know that you live/vote in their district OR serve people in their district. Many offices only want to speak with constituents. However, if you represent an agency which serves their constituents, that is a great way to demonstrate why these issues matter to their district.
- 6) If you are with a Sexual/Domestic Violence Agency, provide a brief description of your program and services.**
- 7) A great way to start discussions on issues is to simply ask, "How familiar are you with sexual and domestic violence issues?"** This can help guide what you share and establish rapport – they may already champion these issues, or they may not know much and look to you for education.
- 8) Tell your personal story.** Why are sexual and domestic violence important to you?
- 9) Be prepared for tough questions and try not to take them personally.** By asking those tough questions, legislators are often seeking information that will help them in the process. As advocates, we are bringing issues to their attention and possibly educating them, so tough questions may also be an opportunity to educate.
- 10) It is ok if you don't know the answer to their questions.** Thank them for the question and tell them you will get the information they asked for and get back to them. Action Alliance staff will help you follow up.
- 11) Thank them again for their time.** Encourage them to contact you if they have questions about any sexual and domestic violence issues that come up during session and let them know that the Action Alliance can be a legislative resource to their office.

# in-person meetings: frequently asked questions

## where and when can i get legislative advocacy materials (fact sheets, talking points, policy priorities, etc)?

Around Action Alliance Legislative Advocacy Day (usually held at the end of January every year), you can find links to access/download materials on the Action Alliance's Policy website page ([vsdvalliance.org](http://vsdvalliance.org)). If you don't find what you need there, contact the Action Alliance Public Policy Director ([info@vsdvalliance.org](mailto:info@vsdvalliance.org)).

## when should i start scheduling my meetings with legislators?

If you're advocating with the Action Alliance for our annual Legislative Advocacy Day, it's best to get on a legislator's calendar as soon as session starts (the second Wednesday of every January). We recommend you start calling to schedule your visits as soon as you are able!

Those who have scheduled meetings with legislators and their staff will have the opportunity to hold a 10-15-minute meeting to share your views on pending sexual and domestic violence legislation. Because the meetings are brief, it can be helpful to practice what you want to say and how to say it both concisely and powerfully.

## what if i am unable to get a scheduled meeting?

If you cannot schedule a meeting, you are encouraged to go by your Delegate and Senator's offices and speak briefly with their staff/legislative assistant. Everyone is encouraged to leave behind information on your local agency and the Action Alliance Policy Priority Summary.

## what do i need to bring to my meeting(s)?

You should bring information and materials about your community, your program services and stories that demonstrate the impact of your services.

## what should i wear and expect when visiting the capitol?

Dress is business attire. However, you will need to walk several blocks from public parking to the General Assembly Building so wear comfortable shoes.

Please bring your ID and be prepared to pass through a security screening and have your personal items screened by an x-ray machine prior to entry to the building. Please note that all packages and bags are subject to physical search.

**Note:** We also encourage you to visit your legislators at their district offices when they are not in session at the General Assembly (typically January-March); you can find the address of your legislators' district office on the Who's My Legislator webpage ([whosmy.viriniageneralassembly.gov/](http://whosmy.viriniageneralassembly.gov/)).



# following up & what's next?

Following up with your legislators is a great way to reinforce your initial message and to stay on their radar. It also gets counted as another registered contact from a concerned constituent or a community advocate on this issue!

Your method of follow-up may depend on your initial method of contact. If you called your legislator and spoke with a legislative aide or an office rep, it may be a good idea to send a follow up email to their office (you can find their email addresses here: [whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov](http://whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov)) and just mention who you spoke with, on what date, and about what topic/bill(s). Thank them for the conversation and ask that they continue to support survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence by acting on the topic and/or bill(s) that you discussed. You might also consider giving them a call back a few days later to thank them for the discussion and ask if the Delegate or Senator has agreed to support the bill/issue that you discussed.

Of course, you can always reach your legislator in a public forum through Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. A message via social media may be a particularly impactful way to register your thanks or to reinforce their needed support on a bill or issue.

**Here are a few ideas on what you can do on the other 364 days you aren't lobbying with us!**

- 1. If you work for a Sexual and Domestic Violence Agency, or have friends and family who know survivors, care about these issues, etc., consider hosting a letter writing party.** It can be a great way to make sure everyone takes the time to sit down and spend a few minutes crafting a thoughtful letter, and then you can make sure they all get mailed at once. Plus, it's a great excuse to get together, share food and drinks, and make advocacy into a community endeavor – especially for folks who might not otherwise have the time or interest in a formal advocacy day.
- 2. You can propose your own bill.** Ask your legislator to introduce your idea. This type of introduction is a “bill-by-request,” and should be presented in writing. A short description and some points will suffice.
- 3. The best time to have your voice heard is during General Assembly subcommittee or committee hearings.** Committee hearings are packed with media, members, and the press. If you can, make time to make statements in support or opposition of the bill you're tracking during the committee hearing!
- 4. Stay persistent.** Don't forget, every General Assembly member tracks who and how many contacts they get on any given bill. That means every call, letter, visit, e-mail, and even tweet is tallied, and they are paying attention; everything you do moves the needle!
- 5. Attend townhall meetings or district office hours.** Members often hold meetings for the public to reach them in person, in their district. Keep an eye on your members' social media or sign up for their district newsletters to know when they will be in town.
- 6. VOTE!** There is an election every year in Virginia (when you take into account primaries, general, state, and local elections)!



**visit here to register to vote**

**[www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/how-to-register](http://www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/how-to-register)**

# the Virginia General Assembly

## on how bills become laws

The process of introducing legislation to be considered by the General Assembly and ultimately enacted into law is one of the most important responsibilities of a Senator or a Delegate. The following outline depicts the general process for an idea to be considered and passed by the General Assembly, and approved by the Governor.

### creating a bill

- Bills may originate in either the Senate or the House of Delegates. Staff attorneys check existing law and the constitutionality of the proposed legislation.
- The member signs his/her name on the bill and introduces it.
- The bill is assigned to a Committee.
- The members of the Committee -in public session- study, discuss, and vote on the bill.
- The Committee then reports ("approves") the bill, with or without amendments, to the originating body (Senate or House of Delegates).

### bill readings

- The Constitution requires that every bill have three readings on three calendar days.
- When passed, the bill is sent to the other house for its consideration.
- In the other body's chamber: The bill goes through the same procedure as it did in the originating body.
- If there are differences between the Senate and House versions of the bill, a Committee of Conference is created to resolve them.

### signing a bill into law

- After the bill has been passed by both houses of the General Assembly, it is printed as an enrolled bill and examined and signed by the presiding officer of each house.
- The bill is sent to the Governor for approval, where the Governor may: 1) sign the bill into law; 2) amend the bill and return it to the General Assembly for approval; 3) veto the bill and return it to the General Assembly, where the House of Delegates and the Senate may override the veto by a two-thirds vote of both houses; or, 4) take no action and the bill becomes law without the Governor's signature.

### new laws

- Bills enacted at a Regular Session are effective the first day of July, unless otherwise specified.
- Bills enacted at a Special Session (or Reconvened Session) are effective the first day of the fourth month following the adjournment of the Special Session, unless otherwise specified.

*Individually,*  
**we are**  
*one drop.*

*Together,*  
**we are**  
*an ocean.*

~ Ryunosuke Akutagawa

STRATEGIES FOR  
ENGAGING  
**communities**  
AND  
**candidates**



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence  
**ACTIONALLIANCE**

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# community conversations: a facilitator discussion guide on civic engagement

## audience for this guide

The audience for this discussion guide is eligible voters across Virginia. We seek to use the Action Alliance membership as a vehicle for reaching survivors and community members more broadly to discuss and inspire civic engagement throughout the Commonwealth.

## overview and purpose

The Building Thriving Communities campaign was designed to transform Virginia communities through increasing public participation in the formation of public policy that promotes healthy communities. We seek to accomplish this by building authentic connections between people, across differences, and around issues that make communities healthy, safe, just, and compassionate for all. We believe that through ongoing education and critical discussions focused on engaged citizenship, democracy, and power, we can invest in outcomes that shape positive change for communities, families, children, and individuals.

This conversation guide is designed for use in small group settings ranging from formal and structured (a workshop or support group) to informal social gatherings (a dinner with neighbors, a walk with friends and family). This guide is intended to support those who want to start an informed discussion.

## facilitator tips for transformative conversations

Facilitating a supportive and meaningful conversation takes intention. This is especially true when talking about topics like power, justice, and access and when working with community members who may have experienced sexual or intimate partner violence. Take a moment to prepare for this discussion by looking through the following tips.

### Find out who's who.

It's always a good idea to make sure everyone knows one another. If you are bringing folks together who may not know one another, take a few moments to have everyone introduce themselves. People are more likely to engage if you take a few minutes at the beginning of your discussion to break the ice.

### Ask about pronouns.

It's important to refer to participants (and everyone else) in the way that feels best for them.

In the English language we use gendered pronouns in place of people's names (they/them, she/her, he/him, etc.). Rather than make assumptions about the pronouns people use, just ask! When introducing yourself to the group say something like, "Hi everyone! My name is \_\_\_\_ and I use \_\_\_\_\_ (they/them, she/her, he/him, etc.) pronouns. Can we go around the room so I can hear your names and pronouns too?" For more information about pronouns and their importance please refer to: [mypronouns.org](http://mypronouns.org).

## Use group agreements.

Group agreements ensure that everyone can participate and has clear expectations. Survivors (and many community members!) are often bombarded with rules on how they can and cannot move through spaces that can be oppressive. Group agreements are a great tool to empower people to name the ways they can collectively make the space feel best for themselves and create a structure for accountability. Some example group agreements include:

- One diva, one mic (when one person talks, others listen).
- Be present.
- What's said here stays here, what's learned here leaves here.
- Seek to understand before being understood.
- Suspend judgment and listen and contribute openly – without losing ourselves in the process.
- Listen for insights and solutions that bridge or transcend the core tensions that divide us (move from either/or to both/and), and in the process find new perspective that may uncover unexpected solutions.
- Bring deep honesty, curiosity, and openness so that we ourselves are changed and impacted.

## Embrace Curiosity.

Transformative movement conversations require being okay with exploring the unknown and choosing to believe that there is a path forward. We can do this through engagement with different perspectives, by being courageous enough to create space for differing views, by being open to new perspectives, by being in touch with and aware of our discomfort, and by allowing for transformative change to occur. The big thing to remember is that conversations are a way forward. You can use this opportunity to have meaningful conversations with one another!

## Ask reflective questions and dig deeper.

This guide provides some questions to guide your conversations – encourage folks to reflect on their teammate's thoughts and reactions – and to focus on the conversation moving towards collective hopes and visions. This is best achieved by reflecting what you've heard in discussion (i.e. "So what it sounds like you're saying is this...") and asking simple, reflective questions like "I wonder why that is" or "How does that make you feel?" Ask further questions to find nuances and see the bigger picture. Encourage folks to allow the conversation to deepen – encourage them to listen to the opinions and thoughts that are different from theirs – to seek understanding of those perspectives, even when they don't agree.

### Use your superpower(s).

Conversations about power and politics can be passionate and can even become heated at times. But as advocates and healers, we have a unique set of skills and superpowers in our toolbox that allow us to recognize when things might be getting tense and to respond with validation, support, and grounding techniques. If you feel a conversation becoming tense, you can help the group breathe through it. You can always hit “pause” and address what’s happening from a place of curiosity and compassion. Remember to practice active listening, reflection, and to support one another in feeling comfortable and grounded as you move through these discussions.

### Remember to provide closure.

Be sure to end with asking the group for appreciations, insights, and unanswered questions. This helps people read the temperature in the room, wrap up on a note of appreciation and connection to others in the room, and it provides the facilitator with a sense of what questions might still need answering.

### Make this guide your own.

You know your community best! Have fun, change things up, and experiment the best way to communicate these values.

## citizen power: a discussion on building thriving communities (90 mins.)

**objective:** The goal of this exercise is for people to investigate what civic engagement and voting mean in the context of building thriving communities. This is done by breaking down the components of engaged citizenship – voice, empowerment, education, and voting - into smaller pieces and discussing each. This is designed to provide many opportunities for dialogue on what community-lead policy priorities might look like, what involved and empowered citizenship means, and how voting is an essential part of building the world that we want to see.

**materials needed:** Flip-chart/Newsprint paper, markers, crayons and/or colored pencils, technology (phone, computer, laptop) to play or listen to TED talk video, handout for participants (included in this toolkit).

### a. reflection & sharing: democracy (20 mins.)

Source: Daring Democracy Discussion Guide from the Unitarian Universalist Association: [http://www.beacon.org/Assets/PDFs/UUACCommonReadDiscussionGuide\\_DaringDemocracy.pdf](http://www.beacon.org/Assets/PDFs/UUACCommonReadDiscussionGuide_DaringDemocracy.pdf)

- **Ask the group: *What is your first memory of participating in democracy?***

Invite participants to take a moment to reflect on their own democratic life, its beginnings. Say that they may close their eyes, if they wish, while you guide their reflection. Then say:

***When, where, and how did you first participate in democracy? When we think about democracy, we often think about voting, or maybe we think of something else. What was the first time you remember being aware that you were experiencing democracy? What messages from growing up in your family and community brought you to that experience?***

If the group needs a bit more guidance about what “democracy” might mean, here is an optional quote to read aloud:

**“Humans thrive best when the communities we create enable each of us, not just a privileged few, to experience a sense of power (that is, agency or simply knowing that our voices count), a sense that our lives have meaning beyond our own survival, and that we have a satisfying connection with others. Add those together, and what do you have? The essence of democracy”** (Daring Democracy, page 102).

You can ask participants to pair up or reflect on their own with paper and pen if they prefer.

Tell them they will have four minutes for reflection either on their own or with a partner (two minutes each), and then the option to share with the larger group.

You might sound a chime to begin the time of reflection. Let pairs know when two minutes have passed so they can switch speakers. After four minutes, regather the group and invite several volunteers to tell a brief version of their democracy story.

If you have time, use these questions to go more deeply into participants’ stories:

- What obstacles were involved? What opportunities?
- What did you feel?
- Do you recall feeling heard? Unheard?
- What did you believe about the system? (Fair? Effective? Wonderful? Flawed? Confusing?)

Now invite participants to return to their partner (or pen and paper) to reflect on their democratic journey since the time of the story they recalled. How have their early messages and first experiences of democracy borne out? What has changed?

You can sound a chime to begin, and again at two minutes so pairs can switch speakers. After four minutes, regather the group. Invite volunteers to comment.



## b. voting: democracy in action (20 mins.)

Explain that for many, participating in democracy means voting. And while there's certainly more to it than this, we're going to spend just a little time discussing our elected officials, what decisions they make, and how voting for them works. First, we'll start with a little power-mapping exercise....

- **Ask the group: *What are some elected positions, in your community, in the state, and nationally, that you can vote for?***

Write the group's responses up on flip-chart paper under the following categories or groupings: Federal, State, City, County. You can use the below cheat sheet to fill in other positions that aren't mentioned by the group.

<b>Federal:</b> President U.S. Senators U.S. House of Representatives Congresspeople	<b>State:</b> Governor Lt. Governor Attorney General Delegates State Senators
<b>City:</b> City Council Mayor Sheriff Treasurer Commonwealth's Attorney School board Clerk of Circuit Court	<b>County:</b> Board of Supervisors School Board Sheriff Clerk of Circuit Court Commonwealth's Attorney

- **Ask the group: *What are some examples of decisions that are made by these elected officials?***

Again, write these responses up on sticky notes and try to group these answers by the position or level of government with which they apply.

Examples might include:

- Filling potholes or funding roads and infrastructure in your community (City and State mostly)
- Decisions about criminal justice and responses to harm (City, County, State, and Federal – Commonwealth's Attorneys, Prosecutors, etc.)
- Military spending (Federal)
- Funding for education/schools (Federal, State, County, and City), etc.

**The bottom line is this:** All the decisions from where our resources are spent to how the criminal justice system will respond to harm to how to plow snow or where to fill a pothole or maybe even building a new bike-lane are decisions made by those officials who we elect when we go to the polls. So, when we as communities come together to articulate a new or maybe different vision for how to do any of these things, we have the power to make that happen through supporting candidates that share our visions and values. And we have the power to do that through voting those candidates into positions of power and holding them and their colleagues accountable to the voting power of our communities.

• **Ask the group: *Does anyone know how often elections are held in Virginia?***

**Answer:** there are 95 counties and 38 independent cities in Virginia, multiply these positions by those numbers, and it's no wonder every year is an election year in Virginia. So, it's important to know as much as we can about voting so we can make sure that our input/voice is counted.

So, let's talk a little bit more about **VOTING**. Provide group with **Voting Basics Handout** (page 9 of the Building Thriving Communities Toolkit).

Give the group a few moments to read through the Voting Basics Handout. Ask them to make notes on the handout or in a notebook just flagging those items that they're learning for the first time or that they're finding surprising.

## **Voter registration: the basics**

Remember, you can't vote unless you're registered! To register in Virginia, you must:

- be a citizen of the United States;
- be a resident of Virginia and of the precinct in which you want to vote;
- be 18 years old by the next general election;
- not have been convicted of a felony, or have had your civil rights restored; and
- not currently be declared incapacitated by a court.

### **If you want to...**

- Check on your voter registration status
- Update your voter information, address, etc.
- Register to vote for an election
- Apply for absentee voting
- Find your polling place
- See your voting history

**You can do all of this  
by visiting:**

**[https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/  
VoterInformation](https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation)**

**What documents do you need?** When submitting a voter registration application, no additional documents are required for your registration to be processed. The state confirms your citizenship and eligibility through the information provided on your registration form, such as your state-issued license/ID number or the last 4 digits of your SSN.

## When you show up to vote at your polling place, you will need a photo I.D. in the form of:

- Virginia Driver's License or other photo ID issued by Virginia
- US Passport
- Any government-issued photo ID card (issued by the US Government, Commonwealth of Virginia, or a political subdivision of the Commonwealth)
- Student ID that has a photograph and that was issued by any institution of higher learning in Virginia
- Student ID issued by a public or private school in VA displaying a photo
- Employee ID card that has a photograph and that was issued by the employer in the ordinary course of business
- Valid Virginia DMV issued Veteran's ID card
- Tribal enrollment or other tribal ID issued by one of the 11 tribes recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia

**You do not need to register with a political party.** In Virginia strict party affiliation is not required in order to vote in a primary or general election however you can only vote in 1 party's primary, not both. To vote in a party primary you need to visit your polling place. They will ask which primary you want to vote in and there you can request your intended party's ballot to cast your vote.

## Discuss the voting process

- Address privacy
- Laws around IDs
- Procedures in polling place
- Go over Sample ballot
- You can vote for one office (or all! or none!)

## c. understanding power and engaged citizenship (4 mins.)

**\*Note for facilitators:** This portion of the discussion requires watching a video. As the facilitator, you should watch the video ahead of time and determine where or if you'd like to cut the video off at a certain point. You can choose to facilitate a discussion on one of the two following videos:

**How to Understand Power** (7 mins): <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-to-understand-power-eric-liu>  
**Turning protest into powerful change** (5 mins): <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-to-turn-protest-into-powerful-change-eric-liu>

Begin this section by asking the group the following questions and discussing the answers (you can write answers on newsprint/flip-charts or you can keep mental track of any themes that may emerge):

**Ask: *What does this quote mean to you? What feelings or thoughts does it bring up for you?***

- *Where in your life do you feel like you have power? Or powerlessness? How does this show up and does this ever change?*
- *Where do you think power comes from?*

**Watch video on Power** <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-to-understand-power-eric-liu>  
or **video on turning protest into change** <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-to-turn-protest-into-powerful-change-eric-liu>

**Ask the group: *What are your thoughts on the video you just watched. Did this resonate?***

Ask the group to think back to the earlier discussion on what types of decisions are made by which elected positions... Now ask the following questions: What are some issues that you want to see changed in your life? Or in your community?

Examples of ideas that a group might generate or that a facilitator can prompt:

- Everyone should have control of their own reproductive health, their ability to create and support families, etc.
- Everyone should have access to jobs that pay enough for them to survive and meet basic needs.
- Children should be safe in schools.
- Everyone should have access to healthcare and/or health insurance.
- Everyone should have access to clean water.

**Pair and share activity:** Once you have a few issue areas identified, ask the group to split into pairs or smaller groups of 2-4. Then assign a different issue area to each group (i.e. Group A: clean water, Group B: safe schools, etc.) and ask them to consider the various ways that they might go about building power and influencing decisions and decision-makers on this issue.

Give the pairs or small groups 5-7 minutes to discuss this and then bring everyone back together to share out about the ideas that were generated and discussions that took place.

### **\*Note for facilitators**

- Remember that ALL politics is local and the personal IS political.
- Call back to video that the group watched and note that we can achieve radical shifts in policy and in those resources and decisions that impact our communities as a direct result

- of citizen power/engagement.
- Note the historical impact that communities of color, women, and survivors of violence in particular have had in shaping policies and practices that move the needle closer towards justice.

**Campaign sticker/button design activity:** Ask the pairs or small groups to stay where they are and provide the instruction that they will have 2 minutes to come up with a design concept for a campaign sticker or button on the issue that they've been discussing. Let them know that after this, they will have 5 minutes to illustrate their sticker or button using art materials provided (colored pencils, markers, old magazines, etc.)

- If time allows, invite pairs or groups to share their campaigns/designs when they are finished.

#### **d. closing and final thoughts** (5 mins.)

Thank everyone for participating in this discussion on voting, engagement, and power and ask them if there are any final thoughts or lingering ideas to share with the group. Provide any local resources, further reading, or relevant options for participants to remain active and engaged with this work and with your organization.

all that you touch  
*you change*

all that you change  
*changes you*

~ octavia butler

# art actions

Making art together is one of the most powerful, accessible, and enjoyable ways to build community! Art Actions help us see ourselves as creators, visioners, and collaborators. Engaging in activities like those below help us vision that another world is possible, a crucial component of building a liberatory and equitable future for all.

## collaborative world-making

**What?** Participants create a collaborative, visual representation of a world without violence.

**How?** Prior to the event, a large piece of butcher paper is cut into a circle, then split into several equal-sized “slices”. Participants, individually or in groups depending on attendance, are each given a slice of paper. In response to the prompt “What would a world without violence look like?”, each group or individual decorates their slice with images and words. Depending on materials provided, slices can be painted, drawn on with markers, collaged, and more. When all pieces are placed together on the wall, they form a round “world.”

**Why?** This activity helps us think about the specifics of what we are working toward, rather than focusing on what we are up against. Working on and talking about our “slices” as a group helps us form a collaborative vision of a future without violence.

**What next?** Consider keeping the “world” in a visible spot as a reminder, or creating multiple “worlds” and hold a gallery viewing.

## altar installation

**What?** Participants create a group altar.

**How?** A long table is covered in a cloth. Participants are asked to bring in one or more meaningful objects that represent justice, liberation, freedom, or any other concept you choose.

Some ideas: flowers/plants, small pieces of artwork, photographs, statuary, etc.

Objects are placed one by one on the altar, either spoken about in a “show and tell” moment, or just silently placed on the altar by each participant. A period of time for contemplation and observation of the altar is observed.

**Why?** Altars are significant in multiple cultures as visual representations of what is important to a person or a group of people. A collection of objects representing powerful concepts is a symbol of a group’s collective power, personality, and vision.

**What next?** Consider keeping the altar in a meeting place and adding objects periodically, forming a living, collaborative focal point for your group’s vision.

## sounding the future

**What?** Participants gather to make sound together.

**How?** Participants sit in a circle. Small instruments may be provided, or participants may use only their bodies and voices. A moment is given to consider the prompt: “What sound represents hope to you?” This can be a song, a hummed tone, drumming on the floor, or any sound folks feel comfortable with. A volunteer or facilitator may start, with others joining in at will, making an improvisatory noise together. The group may set a timer, or end when all voices and sounds have dropped out.

**Why?** Group soundmaking -- playing instruments or singing -- was once a normal part of living in community with each other, but is largely missing from modern life. Making noise together helps us build trust in one another, develop courage in our own voices and abilities, feel more comfortable in our bodies, and have fun making something as a group.

**What next?** Consider meeting regularly to make a radical noise together, or record your soundmaking session as a document of this particular time and place.

# what other art actions can you dream up?



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*Science fiction*  
is simply a way to  
**practice the future  
together.**

**It is our right &  
responsibility to  
*create a  
new world.***

**~ adrienne maree brown**

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# questions for candidates\*

\* While non-profit organizations cannot endorse or oppose any individual candidates or groups of candidates for public office, non-profits may ask candidates to respond to questions that are phrased in a neutral manner (e.g. avoiding yes/no or “would you support or oppose” questions). Candidates’ fitness for office should be judged on a variety of qualifications that go beyond their responses to the questions contained here. The Action Alliance does not support or oppose candidates for public office.

## building trauma-informed schools

Students who have experienced trauma, either in their home or in their community, often exhibit challenging and sometimes disruptive behaviors in the classroom. More and more we are seeing schools harshly discipline these students and even refer them to law enforcement. **What would you do to ensure that teachers and school divisions have the resources needed to address their students’ trauma and meet their social and emotional needs?**

## responding to harm

Most survivors of sexual violence and/or intimate partner violence never make a report to the police, often because they believe that the police and the criminal justice system will not make them safer. At the same time, many survivors of violence have indicated satisfaction and reduced trauma symptoms after voluntarily participating in restorative or transformative justice approaches as an accountability measure for the person who harmed them.<sup>1</sup> **How might you expand access to restorative or transformative justice options for survivors of violence?**

## equity + trauma

Measures like school segregation and neighborhood redlining have negatively impacted generations of black and brown families and neighborhoods. For some children, adverse childhood experiences (“ACEs”) are layered on top of these historical traumas. **Which policy solutions would you advocate for to undo historical marginalization and oppression and to support a culture of equity?**<sup>2</sup>

## equity + income

The overall median household income in Virginia is just above \$60,000. However, there is a large disparity between median income for White earners versus that of Black earners. In 2017, the median household income for White households was \$63,704, \$49,793 for Latinx households, and \$40,232 for Black households. **What would you do to narrow the income gap and promote economic security for all?**<sup>3</sup>

## guns + intimate partner violence

Perpetrators of intimate partner violence frequently use guns to threaten and control victims. A study by the Harvard School of Public Health concluded that “hostile gun displays against family members are more common than gun use in self-defense.”<sup>4</sup> According to a 2018 medical study, “about 4.5 million women have had an intimate partner threaten them with a gun and nearly 1 million have been shot or shot at by an intimate partner.”<sup>5</sup> **What would you do to prevent the use of firearms in cases of intimate partner violence?**

## mass shootings + gender-based violence

According to an analysis of F.B.I. data on mass shootings in the U.S. that occurred between 2009 and 2017, offenders of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking accounted for 54% of all mass shooters.<sup>6</sup> **Given this connection between mass shooters and people who commit domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, what would you do to prevent mass shootings?**

## child separations + trauma

The practice of separating children from parents who care for them, as they legally seek asylum in the U.S., has a deeply traumatizing impact for children and families. **If elected, what steps would you take to protect asylum-seekers in Virginia from harmful immigration enforcement and detention practices?**

## survivor access to reproductive healthcare

A person’s sexual and reproductive health are directly impacted by experiences of sexual and intimate partner violence. Full access to non-judgmental, safe, legal, and affordable options about reproductive care, including contraceptives and abortion, are essential components of building a society where government no longer exercises power and control over how and when people care for and build families. **How would you ensure that Virginians are able to access non-judgmental, medically accurate information about a full range of reproductive options?**

## survivor access to resources + support

Access to basic resources like housing, healthcare, and transportation are crucial building blocks to achieving a thriving community. Survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence often experience housing and financial instability and inadequate access to healthcare in the aftermath of trauma.

**How would you work to ensure that community-members’ basic needs are met and that trauma survivors are supported?**

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1 Restorative Justice Victim Satisfaction Survey Research report Research and Evaluation, New Zealand Ministry of Justice September 2016. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/20170303-RJ-Victim-Report.pdf>. Retrieved 8/20/19.

2 Adapted from Voices for Virginia’s Children: Questions for Candidate: [https://vakids.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019-VVC-Election\\_Toolkits\\_Trauma\\_WEB.pdf](https://vakids.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019-VVC-Election_Toolkits_Trauma_WEB.pdf). Retrieved 8/20/19

3 Voices for Virginia’s Children: Questions for Candidates. [https://vakids.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019-VVC-Election\\_Toolkits\\_EconomicSecurity\\_WEB.pdf](https://vakids.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019-VVC-Election_Toolkits_EconomicSecurity_WEB.pdf) Retrieved 8/20/19.

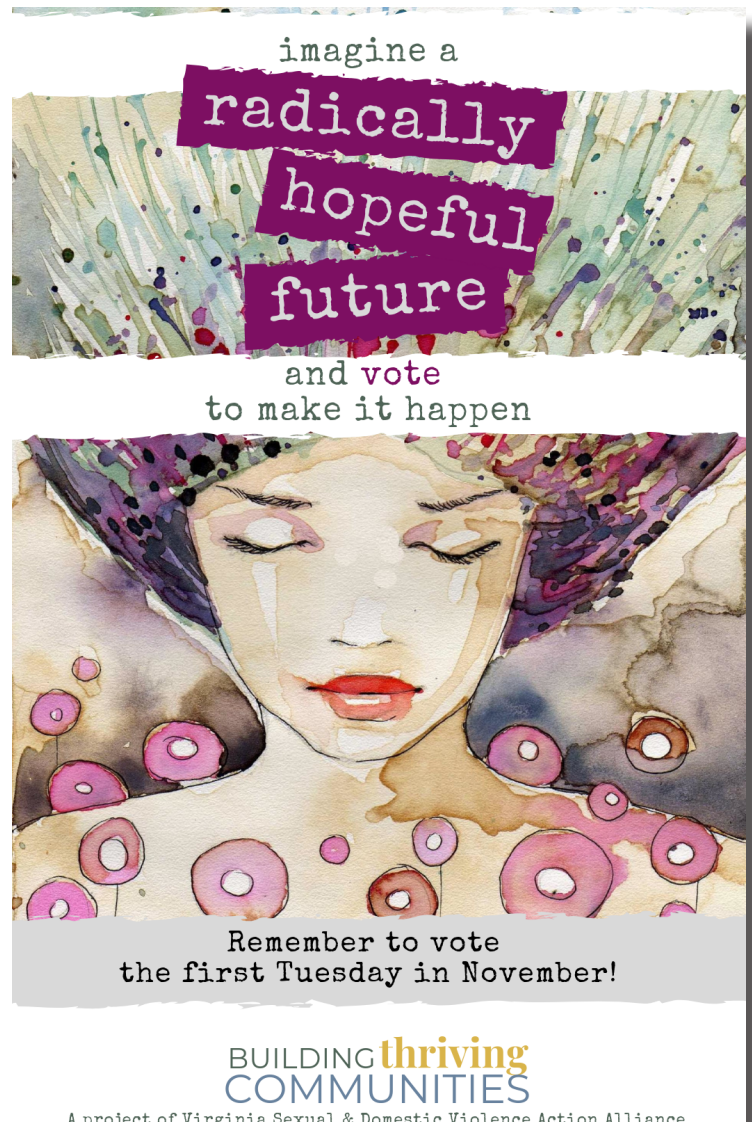
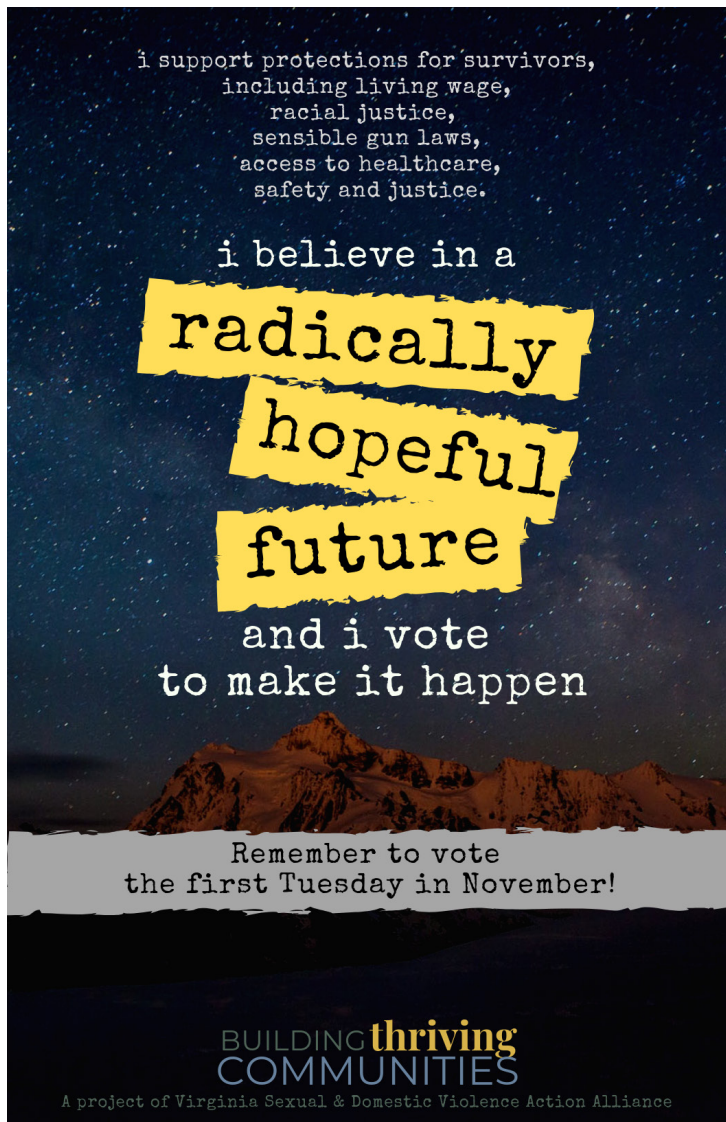
4 Violence Policy Center (VPC) study When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2014 Homicide Data (September 2016).

5 Sorensen S, Schut R. Nonfatal gun use in intimate partner violence: A systematic review of the literature. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. 2018 Oct;19(4):431-442.

6 Everytown Research study Mass Shootings in the U.S.: 2009-2017 (December 2018)

# posters!

Choose any of these free posters to hang in your lobby, office, meeting space, shelter, or anywhere the public might see it. Posters are available in small (8.5" x 11") or large (11"x 17"). See the next page for an accompanying print-ready handout about "Why Voting Matters".







working for a  
radically  
hopeful  
future

why voting matters

All of the decisions about how your community is shaped - including how tax dollars are spent, how we respond to harm, where to fill a pothole or where to build a sidewalk, what school safety looks like, and more - are decisions made by the officials you vote into office.

Ask your elected officials where they stand on issues like:  
protections for sexual and domestic violence,  
living wages for all,  
racial justice,  
sensible gun laws,  
access to healthcare,  
affordable housing,  
and safety and justice.

When you raise your voice with others in your community, you have POWER:  
the power to create a new vision for your community,  
to support candidates who share your vision and your values,  
to vote those candidates into office,  
and to hold them accountable when they get there.

Lift your voice. Lift your world.  
Vote the first Tuesday in November!

BUILDING thriving  
COMMUNITIES

A project of Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance

# (em)Power challenge

The annual (em)Power Challenge is designed to encourage movement and movement building, to raise funds for the Action Alliance and local sexual and domestic violence agencies who provide frontline support, advocacy, and prevention programming to survivors of violence and their communities, and to bring folks together in a public display of solidarity in support of a Virginia free from violence.

This is just one step in our collective journey towards building inclusive, safe, and healthy communities in Virginia where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential and dignity, down to the last child.

## what we're asking you to do

We ask folks to come together in teams (however large or small) to walk, talk, and/or vision in public together. Teams are encouraged to plan a 30-60-minute walking or running course that matches mobility and fitness levels. And we want you to make it special! Explore an area of your city or town that you've never explored. Stroll through your neighborhood and invite neighbors to join you. Check out a nature trail in a nearby park. Whatever makes you feel energized and connected to your friends, neighbors, and community!

We encourage you to be creative. This could be a grandparents-grandkids stroll, a dog walk, or an event for your office, sorority, religious or community group, etc. If walking isn't an available option, we encourage you to plan a gathering or a neighborhood meeting and to use our Walk & Talk Guides as a conversation starter designed to encourage visioning, civic engagement and supporting community.

## what you get when you register

The entrance fee is \$25 per person and youth under the age of 14 are free. This is a fundraiser for the Action Alliance and local Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies. You can select the name of the agency that you wish to support during registration, and we will share half the proceeds from your registration with them!

**If you register before the deadline, we will send you an official (em)Power Challenge t-shirt** so that you/your team will be visible and connected on the day of your walk or gathering. We will also share suggested playlists to set the tone and inspire your team. You will also receive our Walk & Talk Guides filled with suggested topics for guided discussion.

We invite you to share information about your activities with us on our Facebook event page and to use the hashtag #emPowerChallenge.



# Why Participate in the (em)Power Challenge?

1

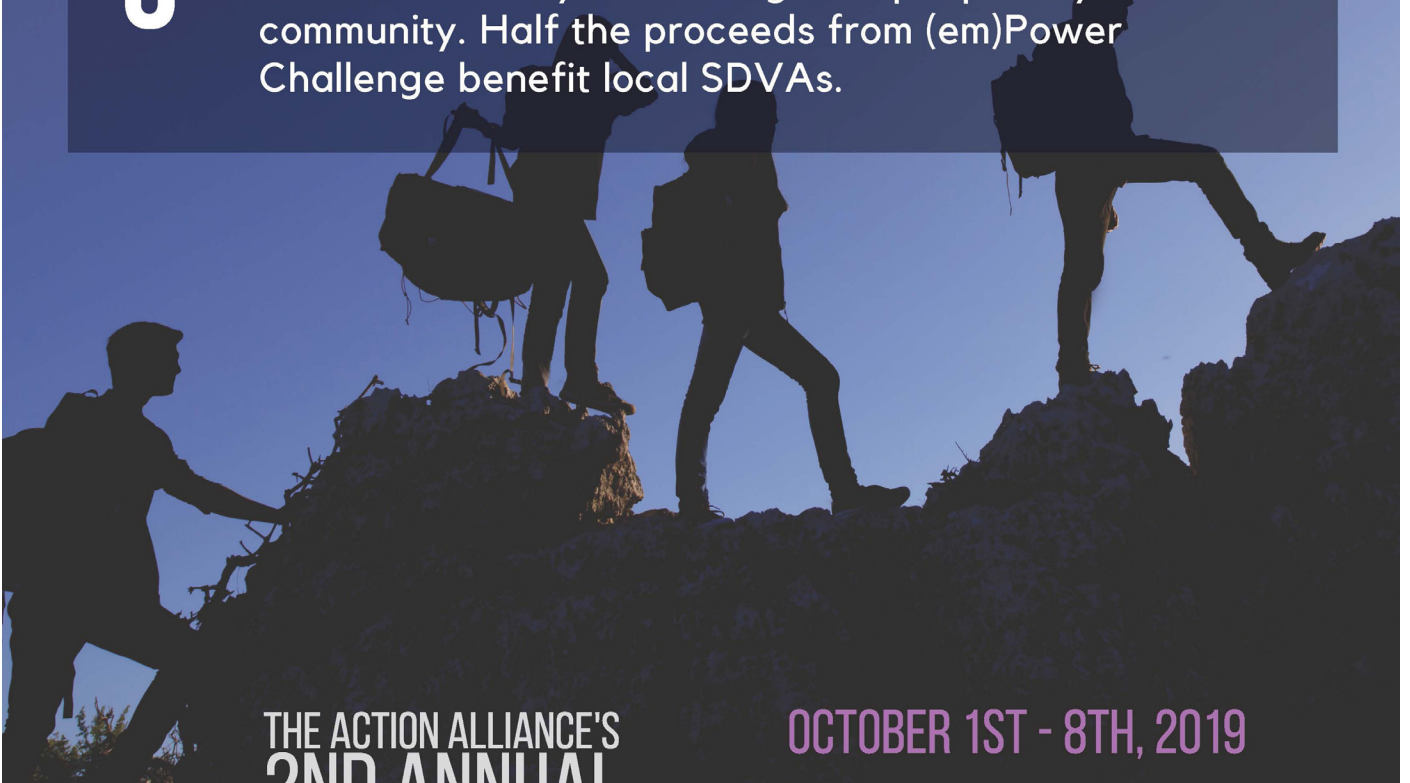
Engage people in your neighborhood and encourage them to add their voices to build solutions to end sexual and domestic violence. Each and every vote makes a difference.

2

Raise awareness in the community about sexual violence and intimate partner violence, and the ways to prevent it.

3

Find new supporters and raise money! Share stories about the work you're doing with people in your community. Half the proceeds from (em)Power Challenge benefit local SDVAs.



THE ACTION ALLIANCE'S  
2ND ANNUAL  
**EMPOWER**  
**CHALLENGE**

OCTOBER 1ST - 8TH, 2019

EMPOWERING SURVIVORS AND CHALLENGING  
COMMUNITIES TO BUILD SOLUTIONS TO  
SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

[HTTPS://WWW.EMPOWERCHALLENGE.COM/](https://www.empowerchallenge.com/)



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# How Do We Encourage Participation in the (em)Power Challenge?

## Recruit Team Captains and Network

1

### Social Media

Share posts on social media calling for volunteers to lead teams of friends, family, neighbors, and community groups in talking about ways to prevent and end Sexual and Domestic Violence. #empowerchallenge

2

### Email

Send email blasts to your lists and let your supporters know how they can help raise awareness about SV and IPV prevention and the importance of voting, all while helping raise funds for your organization.

3

### Word of Mouth

Generate some buzz and hype by getting your ambassadors to talk about the importance of engaging the community in building solutions to end SV and IPV. Each and every vote is important.

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# BUILDING **thriving** COMMUNITIES



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence  
**ACTIONALLIANCE**

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Richmond, VA 23220

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@VActionAlliance