Vote Positive

PWN-USA leverages the HIV community's power for Election 2020.

February 24, 2020 By Trent Straube

About 1.2 million people are living with HIV in the United States. That's a potentially powerful voting bloc, one that Positive Women's Network–USA is committed to engaging in 2020.

This past fall, PWN-USA, a national group of women and transgender people living with HIV, unveiled Vote Positive, a nonpartisan effort to register, educate and mobilize hard-to-reach voters and to ensure that candidates and public officials know about issues important to the HIV community.

Vote Positive is the latest element in a multipronged election strategy from PWN-USA. It follows Organizing for Power: Road to 2020, which launched in April 2019. Through intensive boot camps and monthly web-based training sessions, teams have been taught how to analyze ballot measures and policy proposals, how to elevate issues in an election cycle and, of course, how to develop and implement a field plan to mobilize voters. Since then, teams have kicked off efforts in Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Texas.

Registering voters in PennsylvaniaCourtesy of PWN-USA Pennsylvania

“We’ve been preparing for this moment for years,” says Venita Ray, PWN-USA’s deputy director. “Our folks have showed up to save the Affordable Care Act and to defend reproductive rights, trans rights and immigrant communities. We have successfully passed progressive legislation in multiple states. The HIV community is serious about organizing, and Vote Positive will make sure every voter we can reach is able to exercise their right to cast an informed vote.”

If you want to brush up on how our government functions—for example, how bills about HIV funding wind their way through Congress—then visit PWN-USA.org for a (free!) five-part tool kit titled “Claim Your Seat at the Table! A How-To Guide to Advocacy for People Living With HIV.” It’s chock-full of infographics, videos and tutorials. There’s also a helpful #PWNVotes Election Toolkit—check out the group’s advocacy poster in this issue of POZ for a roundup of tips. Remember: Elections have consequences.

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