



SUKKOT: FESTIVAL OF (VOTING) BOOTHS

This year, National Voter Registration Day, September 25, falls during the festival of Sukkot. Sukkot is traditionally a time in the Jewish calendar when we erect temporary structures, booths, reminiscent of those in which our ancestors would dwell during the harvest time. It is a tradition that we observe as Americans as well, as we enter into booths each fall (and occasionally at other moments during the year) in order to make our voices heard and exercise our right to vote.

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THE FOLLOWING RITUALS AND IDEAS HELP CONNECT THESE TWO SACRED PRACTICES AND ENHANCE THE IMPACT OF EACH. In every place that Jews observe Sukkot, the basic structure of the *sukkah* is the same, yet each of us adds our own personal touches and customs; for example, Jews in the southern United States might use cotton branches, on the West Coast or Southeast palm branches, while those in the North or Midwest use corn stalks, and still others bamboo. The fruit that hangs from the *schach* of the *sukkah* might vary depending on taste or availability. In the same way, these rituals are a foundation to which we hope you will add your own meaningful variations as you personalize the ritual.

Please be sure to research the voter registration guidelines in your area and have materials available for people to register. You can also find additional resources for Civic Engagement work at the RAC's [Civic Engagement Campaign page](#).

BRING THE CAMPAIGN INTO YOUR SUKKAH

Ushpizin

Ushpizin are traditionally those personalities of the past that we invite into our *sukkah* (patriarchs, matriarchs, and others). You can use an empty chair to symbolize the Ushpizin.

With this in mind, we consider modern Ushpizin we could invite into our sukkah:

Who are the elected leaders of the past whom we would want to invite into our *sukkah*?

Who are those individuals who were denied the right to vote to whom we provide that right this Sukkot?



Sukkah Decoration

Bring the ballot box in your sukkah

Create a ballot box using some wrapping paper and an empty shoe box. Decorate it to bring the spirit of civic engagement into your sukkah! Cut a slot into the top of the box and ask your sukkah guests to fill out an intention on a slip of paper, asking them to reflect on how they plan to bring their values to bear in the public square this sukkot and election season.

[Download this ballot box](#), print and color it. When finished hang it in the Sukkah as a visual reminder to vote.

Create a voting booth decoration: Take a piece of paper and hold it horizontally and then fold it on three sides to look like a voting booth, color and place some *schach* on top – making a mini sukkah/voting booth.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMATIC IDEAS FOR THE SUKKAH

Arba Minim

In Midrashic literature, the *Arba Minim*, or '4 species of Sukkot,' can each be connected to a part of the body. In connection to exercising our right to vote, here are some ways we can apply the *Arba Minim*, the 4 species, to this year's Festival of (Voting) Booths:

Lulav/Palm = Spine

Stand up for those not able to raise their voice/vote – registering others to vote, helping people get out there to vote

Hadas/Myrtle = Eyes

Look for opportunities to pursue justice

Aravah/Willow = Mouth

Practice what you preach. Speak the truth – Vote for what you believe!

Etrog/Citron = Heart

Act with your heart and work to ensure that others are able to act with theirs



Alternative Kohelet on Voting

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to register to vote, and a time to help others register to vote;

A time to vote absentee, and a time to pledge to vote;

A time to discuss issues and time to share ideas;

A time to talk and a time to listen;

A time to persuade, and a time to refrain from persuasion;

A time to concede, and a time to celebrate; a time to join together, and a time to dance;

A time to seek information about candidates and ballot measures, and a time to make decisions;

A time to hold onto convictions, and a time to recognize and respect the perspective of others;

A time to disagree, and a time to agree; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to heal, and a time to come together;

A time for opposing views, and a time for peace.

Textual connections

The Torah portion for the week prior to Voter Registration Day is Nitzavim.

In Deuteronomy 30:19 we read: "Choose life-if you and your offspring would live-by loving the Eternal your God, heeding God's commands, and holding fast to [God]." Thus, we are taught that it is a moral decision to choose to exercise your right to vote.

Kohelet, the protagonist of the book traditionally read during Sukkot, Ecclesiastes (Kohelet in Hebrew), famously said "there is nothing new under the sun." Similarly, one might say, if you don't vote, "You reap what you sow."

You can also [use these texts, commentaries, and discussion questions](#) to help root your Reform Jewish community's civic engagement efforts in [Jewish values and teachings](#).

Please [let us know how you used these Resources](#)

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