Virtual Letter Writing with Vote Forward

Swing Left is focused on helping you take impactful action to help flip ALL the houses in 2020, from wherever you are. Sending letters with Vote Forward is one of the easiest and most effective ways to increase voter turnout remotely.

Our Swing Left college team and volunteers have hosted in-person letter writing parties that have resulted in thousands of letters! However, as we all know, social distancing is an important tactic to contain the spread of COVID-19. We encourage everyone to practice social distancing and avoid holding large in-person gatherings. (For further qualified guidance on social distancing, we recommend referring to local health authorities, like your state government's website.) The good news is that you can turn your in-person event into a virtual one, and this guide will help you do that!

Bring your friends and volunteers together in a digital space and get them excited about working on races up and down the ballot in the 12 Super States. These states are key to winning 2020's most important fights: flipping the Senate, taking back the White House, and ending Republican gerrymandering. If your volunteers want to learn more, have them check out Swing Left's 2020 Strategy.

Included in this Guide

- ❖ Adopting Letters: How to set up an account with Vote Forward and adopt letters.
- ❖ Postage Subsidy Program: How to apply for Vote Forward's postage subsidy pilot program and have stamps sent to you, free of charge.
- ❖ Letter Writing: How to correctly prepare and send Vote Forward letters.
- ❖ Virtual Letter Writing Party Resources: Important links to help you send letters and host a virtual event.

Adopting Letters

- ❖ **Register on Vote Forward**
  ❏ Go to https://votefwd.org/swingleft to sign up. You'll need to provide a bit of information about yourself (like your name and zip code) to verify your account.
- ❖ **Confirm your Vote Forward account**
  ❏ Once you register, you'll get an email to confirm your account.
  ❏ After that, you'll need to wait a day or two for approval as a volunteer. If you don't see the email, check your spam folder.
- ❖ **Get confirmed as a Super Volunteer and request to apply for postage subsidy**

❏ To be eligible for Vote Forward's pilot postage subsidy program, and to give you the ability to adopt 150+ letters, you'll need to be approved as a Super Volunteer.
❏ Do this by emailing super@votefwd.org with a request to become a Super Volunteer. When you receive your approval email, click the link to apply for the postage subsidy program.
❏ See the "Postage Subsidy Program" section of this guide for more information.

❖ **Log back into Vote Forward to adopt letters**
❏ Log back in using the "Already Have an Account?" Button. If you logged in initially with your Google or Facebook account, make sure you are using that same method of logging in.

❖ **Choose your campaign**
❏ You may see a specific campaign when you log into Vote Forward. You can click "Switch campaign" to see other campaigns that are open.
❏ **NOTE**: Please make sure you have a plan for keeping your letters safe until their send date. Most of the campaigns are Get Out the Vote (GOTV) letters for the general election on November 3rd and have a send date of late October. In order to take advantage of the postage subsidy program, only choose "GOTV2020A" campaigns, instead of "GOTV2020B" campaigns.
❏ **NOTE**: If you are applying for the postage subsidy program, make sure that the campaign you select is categorized as a 501(c)(3), which indicates they are targeting "Fellow citizens who have historically been under-represented in the electorate." Most Vote Forward campaigns are this type and you'll find a note at the bottom of each campaign page. Let Molly (msalavantis@swingleft.org) know if you have questions about this.

❖ **Adopt your voters and download letters**
❏ *Remember that when you adopt letters, you are committing to preparing and sending them. No one else will be able to adopt the letters that you have, so they are your responsibility.*
❏ How many letters do you need? Based on our experience, you can assume the average letter writer can write 20 letters per hour.
    ❏ Calculate how many total letters you need with this simple equation: 20 letters per hour **X** approximate number of letter writers **X** number of hours of letter writing = total letters to download.
    ❏ Divide that number by 20 to find out how many times you need to click the "Adopt 20 more voters" button.
❏ Click on the "Adopt 5 More Voters" or "Adopt 20 More Voters" to adopt 5 or 20 voters. You'll need to click that button multiple times to get more letters (i.e. if you click the "Adopt 20 more voters twice, you'll get 40 letters).

❏ Once you've adopted all the voters you need for your party, you can download the letters in one PDF to print. Scroll down the page to see the PDF of all of your letters is located under the "Letters to Print and Prepare" column. Click the big blue button "Download and print these letters."

❏ Since these will be digital parties, each person will likely write 20-40 letters per virtual event, but volunteers can adopt as many letters as they'd like!

❖ **Check out the "Letter Writing" section of this guide for help on preparing your letter**

Postage Subsidy Program

Vote Forward is piloting a postage subsidy program to help offset the main cost of letter writing (buying stamps!) for eligible Super Volunteers. Students involved in the Swing Left College Programs are encouraged to apply. If this is your first time requesting letters, please start by following the instructions for adopting letters above.

If you have written letters in the past and want to apply for the postage subsidy program or want more details on this process, follow the steps below.

❖ **Become a Vote Forward Super Volunteer**

❏ To be eligible for the postage subsidy pilot program, you have to become a Super Volunteer first. Email **super@votefwd.org** with a request to become a super volunteer.

❏ After that, you'll need to wait another day or two to be approved.

❖ **Apply for the postage subsidy program**

❏ Your approval email will have a link to the postage subsidy program application. Fill out the form to apply and don't forget to include your mailing address.

❏ You should receive an email from Vote Forward once you've been approved.

❖ **Wait for your stamps to arrive**

❏ Stamps can take up to two weeks to arrive. However, this shouldn't stop you from writing letters right away. Prepared letters can be stamped once you receive them.

❖ **Follow Vote Foward's instructions before sending your letters**

❏ You will receive an email from Vote Forward with a couple of quick steps to complete to verify that you have used your stamps. Please read those instructions carefully and complete the necessary steps BEFORE sending your letters.

Letter Writing

❖ **Print your downloaded letters**

❏ Letters will print as one page each. It's not necessary to print in color and Vote Forward doesn't think it's worth the extra printing costs. Make sure they are NOT double sided.

❏ Voter names, addresses, and information about the UPS mailbox you'll use as the return address will be on a cover page, which is part of the same file (print this too).

❖ **Personalize the letters** ([see diagrams](#))

❏ *NOTE: The recipient's address and the return address are at the bottom of each letter in small print. Use this information to ensure that you are filling out the right letter and addressing it correctly.*

❏ Handwrite:

❏ The recipient's name (found in the footer).

❏ Why you vote. Be sure not to mention candidates by name. The goal of these letters is to encourage low-propensity voters to cast a ballot.

❏ Your signature (just your first name works).

❏ Unsure of what to write? Vote Forward says: "Heartfelt personal messages are best. Some people mention civic responsibility ("it's my duty as a citizen…"). Others talk about how hard-won the right to vote has been. It's fine to mention specific issues, just be careful not to assume the recipient agrees with your policy preferences.

❖ **Address, stamp, and seal ([see diagrams](#))**

❏ *NOTE: The recipient's address and the return address are at the bottom of each letter in small print. Use this information to ensure that you put each letter in a correctly addressed envelope.*

❏ Handwrite:

❏ Your first name & the return address (a UPS mailbox that is rented by Vote Forward for this purpose).

❏ The recipient's name and address.

❏ Place a stamp on the addressed envelope.

❖ **Mark your letters as "Prepared" in your dashboard**

❏ On the Vote Forward website, click the green arrow on each completed letter so we know it's ready to go.

❖ **Set letters aside and keep safe until send date**

❏ Find a safe place for all of your prepared letters. As the person adopting these letters, you are the one responsible for stockpiling letters and sending them on or before their send date. We suggest using this method to ensure that all letters are kept track of until the send date.

❖ **Send letters!**

❏ The "send" date will be displayed on the campaign that you choose. You will also receive an email reminder from Vote Forward when it's time to send your letters.

❏ If you participated in the postage subsidy pilot program (and you should, so you don't pay for your own stamps), be sure to follow Vote Forward's emailed instructions on how to verify that you used your stamps. This will include taking a photo of your letters BEFORE they are sent and sending them to stamps@votefwd.org.

❖ **Mark your letters as "Mailed" in your dashboard**

❏ On the Vote Forward website, click the green arrow on each sent letter so we know it's been delivered to your adopted voters.

Virtual Letter Writing Party Resources

❖ [Set up your virtual event in MobilizeAmerica here](#)
❖ [Instructions for turnout letters](#) (most common -- for the majority of letters you'll be writing)
❖ [Instructions for voter registration by mail (VRBM) letters](#) (less common -- for the smaller Vote Forward labs tests)
❖ [FAQs from Vote Forward](#)
❖ [How-To video from Vote Forward](#)
❖ [2020 Super States information](#)
❖ [Swing Left's Super State Strategy](#)