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Voter Guide - Fall 2024

Prioritizing, educating and uplifting ourselves



Black votes matter: ‘Voting is self-care’

By Dana James



This election season is a hot mess. We all know that. If only it were a reality television program. Every other day, liars, manipulators and weirdos grab the headlines.

Do they want our vote, or do they want to keep us divided, bickering and upset so we stay home on Election Day, Nov. 5?

But this isn't a reality TV show. This political drama is intentional. There has always been a faction in this country working to suppress the Black vote. Is that enough to get you to the polls on Nov. 5? Or does knowing that, historically, Black people were massacred trying to vote mean something to you?

If that doesn't motivate you, what would? There's still time for you to get the information you need and make a plan to vote. So much is broken in this country. If you're waiting for someone else to fix our communities or help us, think again. It's up to you.

I hope you enjoy this voter guide and it's helpful as you go to the polls on Nov. 5, during an historic election where a Black and South Asian woman is running for president. Providing Black communities across the state with credible voter information is an important part of the mission of The Black Iowa Newspaper and Black Iowa News.



The Black Iowa Voter Guide was made possible by our advertisers, subscribers and the awesome donors who made tax-deductible donations to Black Iowa News. We sincerely thank you for your generosity.

Election Stress: Try these 3 ways to remain unbothered during the final stretch of this crazy election season

By Kellee Forkenbrock



Can you sense the fervor building? It's election season, and it's swiftly followed by the same distracting rigamarole that sprouts up every four years in our country. Signs emblazoned with candidate names have started popping up on our neighbors' front lawns. We get inundated with media clips and social media hot takes on proposed policies and daily mishaps. No one can seem to agree on anything except that their candidate is the best pick — or, in some cases, that the candidates are two sides of the same crooked coin.

Amidst the political theater and the madness that ensues, some of us feeling unsure about the upcoming voting season may find ourselves encountering what's known as 'election anxiety' — and it's more common than one may think.

According to a 2024 national survey conducted by the University of South Florida, nearly seven out of 10 registered voters experience some level of stress during election season. Fifty-three percent have spent more time than they'd prefer thinking about the election, with 23 percent losing sleep over it. Can you imagine?

Well, maybe you can, but one thing to keep in mind is that you get to choose more than your pick for president at the voting booth. You get to choose your wellness during this trying time in the country. Below are three ways you can keep your cool:

- **UNPLUG** – If deleting apps or turning off the incessant noise of the media becomes a challenge, you're not alone. It's easier said than done for most of us to get off the socials or to avoid the 24-hour news cycle during election season. Head to your app settings and block words and accounts to prevent them from coming up in your newsfeeds. Subscribe to positive vibes-only news outlets to get your dose of media without the mayhem. If redirection doesn't do the trick, log out of the social media apps on your devices so that you are greeted with a sign-in page instead of the latest political spewing. You're less likely to engage media if you aren't automatically logged in.

Inside

- **Election deadlines**
- **ID requirements**
- **Q&A with Black legislators and candidates**
- **Voting with a felony conviction**
- **Election glossary**

Visit: VoterReady.Iowa.Gov

- **UNWIND** – Along with signing out of those pesky apps and powering off the television talking heads, use this time to be with family and friends. That said, election season can bring out the worst in the people we love most. Be intentional about with whom you spend your downtime. Communicate to your loved ones that you aren't interested in discussing the election drama.

- **UNLOCK** – The best thing about this time of year is the change in season. It's the perfect weather for outdoor activity with all the cool breezes and none of the sweltering heat. Instead of turning on the news to the inevitable mudslinging, go out for a post-dinner walk. If you find yourself debating with a stranger or, most likely, a bot online, log off and go for a run instead. Not in the mood to sweat? Try some yoga first thing in the morning or before bed to release your stress. You can even use your breath to find the calm you seek without moving your body at all.

My fellow Americans, being stressed over the election is a choice, but so is wellness. Know that you can avoid the dramatics of political theater while fully participating in the electoral process. Voting is self-care because opting out with silence stifles your wellness. Get unplugged from the socials, unwind with your tribe and unlock your bodies to arrive at the ballot box on Election Day unbothered!

ELECTION DEADLINES:

Nov. 5 - Election Day

Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.



Here are the deadlines from the Iowa Secretary of State:

Vote early using an ABSENTEE BALLOT (must be registered to vote):

Request an absentee ballot from your county auditor's office.

- Wednesday, **Oct. 16**: First day of in-person absentee voting. The first day absentee ballots can be mailed to voters.
- Monday, **Oct. 21**: Deadline to request an absentee ballot is 5 p.m.
- Monday, **Nov. 4**: Last day to vote early in person.

REGISTER TO VOTE:

- **Oct. 21**: Deadline to pre-register to vote online, by mail or in person at your county auditor's office by 5 p.m. You should receive your voter registration card within a few weeks.

Tip: Don't wait until the last minute!

VoterReady.Iowa.Gov

ELECTION DAY:

Nov. 5: Polls Open from 7 a.m.- 8 p.m. You can still register to vote on Election Day. *Absentee ballot receipt deadline by 8 p.m.*

Are you registered to vote?



Where is your polling place?



Check your registration!



REMINDER

To vote, you must show a valid Iowa driver's license or state ID, U.S. passport, tribal ID or documentation, U.S. military ID or veteran's ID or Iowa Voter ID Card. *If you don't have an ID or someone to vouch for you from your precinct, request a provisional ballot.



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**Des Moines
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U.S. Presidential Race

The presidential race matters. Think carefully about who you want to represent the U.S. and make your way to the ballot box on Nov. 5 – or vote early.

Kamala Harris, Democrat



Tim Walz, Democrat



Donald Trump, Republican



JD Vance, Republican

Find out where Harris/Trump stand on the issues



Learn more at Ballotpedia.org



Black Iowans on the Ballot

Black Iowa News posed eight questions to Black Iowa legislative incumbents and candidates. Here’s where they stand on the issues of interest to Black Iowans.



Do you support DEI (diversity, equity & inclusion?)

Do you support reparations for Black people?

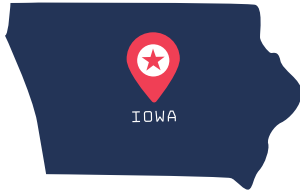
Do you support reproductive rights?

Do you believe in climate change?

Do you support LGBTQIA+ rights?

Do you support the expansion of mental health services?

Can Black Iowans count on you to advocate for their interests at the Capitol?



What is the biggest challenge facing Iowa?



House District 62

Incumbent Jerome Amos (D)

YES YES YES YES YES YES YES

“I’m a labor individual, so for me, it’s restoring the rights of individuals and their right to bargain.”



House District 34

Candidate Rob Johnson (D)

YES YES YES YES YES YES YES

“We must invest in comprehensive mental health services, ensuring that everyone, from our youth to our seniors, receives the support they need to thrive.”



House District 43

Candidate Tiara Mays-Sims (D)

YES YES YES YES YES YES YES

“Investing in our children’s education.”



House District 43

Incumbent Eddie Andrews (R)

**Per candidate, visit campaign website for more information.* NO **Per candidate, visit campaign website for more information.* YES **Per candidate, visit campaign website for more information.* YES YES

“Strong families, education, mental health, faith, economy, border.”



House District 50

Incumbent Ross Wilburn (D)

YES YES YES YES YES YES YES

“Public education. Collective bargaining. Reproductive freedom. Climate.”

Black Iowa News contacted incumbents Mary Madison and Ruth Ann Gaines (not pictured) but we didn’t receive responses by our print deadline.



Are you a domestic violence survivor who wants to vote confidentially?

Iowans who have been victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, stalking and assault can vote safely and confidentially using the Iowa Secretary of State's Safe at Home Program, which provides participants with a confidential legal address they can use so they're not listed on publicly available voter registration rolls. Contact safeathome@iowa.gov or call 515-725-7233.

Have a felony conviction and want to vote? Find out what you need to do

Gov. Kim Reynolds in 2020, signed an executive order to restore voting rights to Iowans with felony convictions who have completed their sentences. But it's still not as easy as it could be or should be for Iowans with felony convictions to figure out whether they can vote.

Black Iowa News interviewed the Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate. He said the easiest way for people with felony convictions in their backgrounds to find out whether they can vote is to call the Iowa Department of Corrections or their local county auditor's office, which can confirm eligibility.

"The biggest challenge is the timing of when they were convicted, served their time and finished out all the other requirements of their sentencing. That's where it gets confusing, and it's always best that they reach out to the department of corrections to make sure they've got all that taken care of," Pate said.

The Governor's office and the Iowa Department of Corrections didn't return emails and/or calls seeking comment.

Call the Iowa Department of Corrections at 515-725-5701.

According to the Iowa Secretary of State's website, if you have a felony conviction and have completed all terms of confinement, including parole, probation, or other supervised release for all felony convictions and completed any special sentence (Iowa Code chap. 903B), you are eligible to vote. "You need not have paid fines, fees or restitution, or be on a payment plan, to be entitled to vote, though you remain obligated to pay these." You can register to vote by mail, online or in person.

However, if you were convicted of a felony homicide or related crimes, once you have completed all terms of confinement, including parole and probation, you must apply for restoration of your voting rights from the governor. "You must have completed repayment of court costs, restitution and fines or be current on a payment plan," according to the governor's website.

Check RestoreYourVote.iowa.gov for more information. Click on "[Can I vote?](#)"

Basic voting requirements

- A U.S. citizen
- An Iowa resident
- At least 17 years old. A person may vote if they are 18 years old on or before Election Day.



Printed Voter
Registration
Form



Online
Voter
Registration



Election 2024: ‘We get the government we deserve, if we’re not engaged,’ say voting and civil rights experts

By Dana James
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The calendar is inching toward Nov. 5, and the pressure to vote is growing. Will Vice President Kamala Harris and her running mate Tim Walz win the White House, or will former president Donald Trump and his running mate JD Vance prevail in the close and heated race? And what about the other important races down the ballot?

Since President Joe Biden dropped out of the race, news stories and conversations have centered around voting. But what if you don’t support any of the candidates? What if you’re tired of the lies and petty bickering that have overshadowed presidential debates and the 24/7 news cycle? What if you’ve never voted and don’t really know how? What if you have a felony in your background and are unsure about the process? What if you don’t believe your vote matters?

What then?

“When you don’t feel or act like voting matters, then those who are elected treat you like you don’t matter,” said Bernice King, CEO of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center For Nonviolent Social Change Inc. and daughter of civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr. during the center’s recent voting podcast series.

The center live-streamed its two-part Voter Education & Responsibility podcast, which is part of the center’s Beloved Community Talks series. The video featured King and several national voter education and civic engagement experts.

King said people take advantage of “uninformed people.” The more educated the citizenry is, the less politicians can use “divide and attack” tactics, she said.

“Politics is a game that involves winners and losers, and in its worst sense, politics taps into the most



Source: Getty Images AI

dangerous form of human thinking, which is binary thought,” said Rohit Malhotra, a guest and the founder and executive director of the Center for Civic Innovation, which operates voter education efforts in Atlanta, Georgia.

Politics pits people against each other and can create a world of “winners and losers,” where people are “either completely for or against something,” he said.

Political action, however, is about the “moral position” people want to see in public policy, he said. Legislation and budgets are not just pieces of paper but are “truly moral documents,” he said.

“Every step of this country’s history has required us to have to modify those documents in order to make sure that people were included in the law of the land,” he said. ‘And, so to me, politics is a moment, but political action is truly the movement.”

Moderator Vonneta West, who is a senior nonviolence trainer and instructor at the center, said some people don’t believe their individual vote matters because of the Electoral College, a process used to determine the winner of the presidential election.

“If it’s the presidential race and you don’t think you have a role to play because of the way the Electoral College works, you have a role to play in electing other people in different levels of government,” said Robert Brandon, president and CEO of the Fair Elections Center, which operates the Campus Vote Project.

Malhotra said trust is broken and is at “historic lows” between people and institutions. He said accountability is lacking from candidates who show up at cookouts, kiss babies and cut ribbons during election season, but “ghost us” when election season is over.

“I think it’s very difficult to start the conversation on like: ‘Hey, it’s so important you vote. It’s so urgent.’ People are like, ‘All right, well sure, it might be urgent for you, but my neighborhood has looked the exact same under the last four presidents,’” he said.

There’s a dishonest discourse happening around voting, he said.

“I think we have to stop leading with purely this

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imaginary tale that government has been good to people,” he said. “Government can do a lot — in the hands of the wrong people - can accelerate harm much faster than it can accelerate progress.”

Malhotra said fear is not a policy position.

“When you tell people, ‘Well, you’ve got to do this because otherwise this bad thing is going to happen to you,’ is not a way to get people engaged and involved in the process,” he said.

People are “inspired by being for something” and by the possibilities of what could happen, he said.

Voters matter and ultimately decide elections. Malhotra said the last two mayoral races in Atlanta, Georgia, were close races.

“Your voice actually really does matter,” Malhotra said.

In part two of the series, West said some people don’t feel they have anyone to vote for. She said political leaders need to be cultivated.

Rashad Robinson, president of Color of Change, which was created after Hurricane Katrina, said the system is working as designed.

“Sometimes people don’t have folks to vote for because we have a system that is designed in that way — where people are drawn into districts where they don’t have really a chance to elect someone that represents them, or that there are rules around the voting in their area that makes it kind of really hard to vote,” he said. “And, this is all the more reason why we need to encourage the largest number of people to engage.”

He said telling people to vote for civic engagement purposes doesn’t work. The discussion has to include “people at the table who are accountable and voting for the Black fighters” who have been in the courthouses and legislatures “fighting and winning” on student debt reform, relief for Black businesses, making sure the justice system is more equitable and holding corporations accountable, he said.

“Those Black fighters who are standing up every day need you to vote because they need a person on the

‘Our Project 2024 needs to be voting because their Project 2025 is to make sure that we can’t vote in the future’ - Rashad Robinson, president of Color of Change.



other side of that table that doesn’t take them away from that table,” he said.

“We also need to show the people in office that we put them in, and we can take them out,” he said.

Camille Rivera, senior partnerships advisor, of Vote Latino, said a colleague told her that voting for someone isn’t a love letter to a specific person, but: “It’s that what is important to me right now has to be important to you.”

“The people that want to narrowly control the system benefit from people — voters — deciding it’s not worth their vote, and I just think we have to not accept that,” Brandon said.

He said it’s important for voters to learn where and how decisions are made, including state legislatures, governors, county prosecutors and other offices.

The experts pushed for year-round organizing and increased civics education at the high school and college levels to educate people about the government and their role in it.

“Trying to get people to jump in right now and just be like: ‘Ok, now go educate yourself. Get ready, let’s go,” won’t work, Malhotra said, of voting.

Building greater civic engagement begins with trusted messengers already working on the ground “to make sure that we’re actually hearing people, and not just talking at people for the purposes of politically advantageous action,” he said.

King said conversations often center around “debating an issue rather than talking about what matters.”

“We don’t have to call it politics,” King said. “Let’s just talk about things that matter to us in this world . . . that impact the people we love in this world.”

The experts said increasing public trust and engagement begin well before elections — at local gatherings.

The election is looming, and the stakes are high. There’s still time to learn about the candidates and issues, register and make a plan to vote on Nov. 5.

“Our Project 2024 needs to be voting because their Project 2025 is to make sure that we can’t vote in the future,” Robinson said.

The Electoral College

There are 538 total electoral votes possible, and 270 are needed to win the presidential election. A president can win the popular vote but still not become president because of failing to receive a majority of electoral votes. In 2016, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote but lost the electoral majority to Donald Trump. Source: Ballotpedia.org.

ELECTION GLOSSARY

Absentee Voter: A voter who uses an absentee ballot to vote.

Auditor: A person who is performing an audit of any part of the election process.

Ballot Box: A sealed container that holds ballots cast by voters.

Block voting: A system in which a voter can select as many candidates as there are open seats.

Down Ballot: A political office that appears in a relatively low position on the electoral ballot.

Early voting: Voting before election day where the voter completes the ballot in person at an elections office or at other designated polling site prior to Election Day. Early voting can also include voting with a mailed or absentee ballot prior to election day.

Gerrymandering: A process that manipulates electoral district boundaries to favor one party or candidate over another.

Judicial retention election: An election where voters are asked whether an incumbent (usually a judge) should remain in office for another term.

Partisan: Member of a political party who strongly supports their party's policies.

Nonpartisan: No party affiliation.

Measure: A proposal to enact a new law or constitutional amendment that is placed on the ballot for approval or rejection by voters.

Secrecy envelope: An envelope that encloses a ballot to maintain the secrecy of how a voter marked their ballot.

YOUR BALLOT

VoterReady.Iowa.Gov

Take your time looking over your ballot. You will be asked to vote for president and federal, state and local officials and to retain or remove judges who serve on the Iowa Supreme Court, Court of Appeals and district courts. For more information about the different races, visit Ballotpedia.org/Iowa.

Constitutional Amendments

Your ballot will contain two statewide ballot measures. You will be asked to vote yes or no.

Require Citizenship to Vote in State Elections and Allow 17-Year-Olds to Vote in Primaries Amendment.

A "yes" vote supports prohibiting local governments from allowing noncitizens to vote by providing in the state constitution that only a citizen of the U.S., rather than every citizen of the U.S., can vote; and supports allowing 17-year-olds who will be 18 by the general election to vote in primary elections.

A "no" vote opposes prohibiting local governments from allowing noncitizens to vote, thereby maintaining state constitutional language that says every citizen of the U.S., rather than only a citizen of the U.S., can vote; and opposes allowing 17-year-olds who will be 18 by the general election to vote in primary elections.

Iowa Gubernatorial Succession Amendment

A "yes" vote supports providing that if the governor dies, resigns, or is removed from office, the lieutenant governor would assume the office of governor for the remainder of the term, thereby creating a vacancy in the office of lieutenant governor and allowing the new governor to appoint a new lieutenant governor.

A "no" vote opposes amending the state constitution to provide for a system of gubernatorial succession, thereby maintaining current law in which the lieutenant governor may become responsible for fulfilling the duties and assumes the powers of the governor, but does not have the authority to appoint a new lieutenant governor.

Source: Ballotpedia.org/Iowa_2024_ballot_measures