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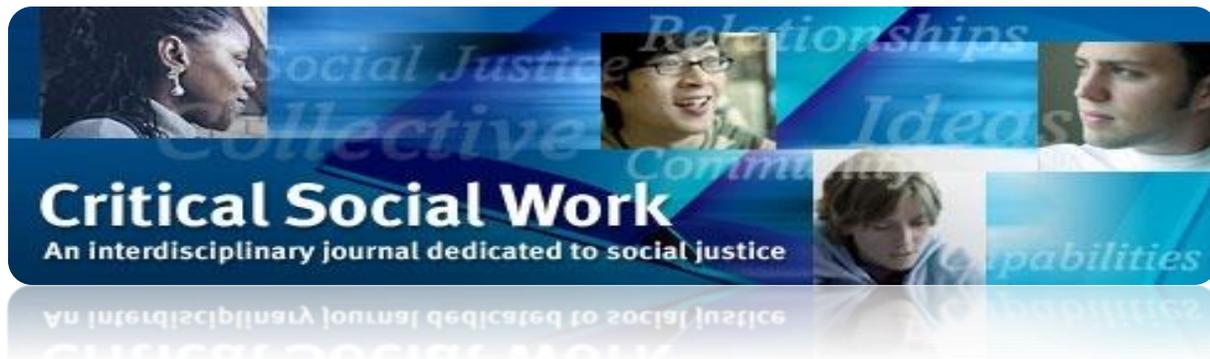
The Three-Legged Stool of Voter Engagement: Social Work's Role in Mobilizing the Vote Among Marginalized Communities

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Abstract
Disparities in voter turnout have increased significantly over the past four decades. Members of historically oppressed groups, those who are low-income, and or who have lower levels of education vote at significantly lower rates than white, wealthy and or more educated community members. These disparities correlate directly to political power and the eventual allocation of resources by elected officials. Therefore, eliminating these disparities through targeted voter engagement with client groups is particularly important for the profession of social work. This article describes the conceptualization of voter engagement as a three-legged stool, consisting of voter registration, regular voting, and basing voting decisions on self-interest. Without attention to all three legs, the potential for generating political power collapses, resulting in minimal influence on elected officials.

Keywords: voting; voter engagement; political power; voting disparities

Voting is fundamental to a just and fair democracy. It is also essential to a just and equitable welfare state. Voting allows citizens to hold policy makers accountable and, when protected by law, ensures equality of representation. Specifically, voting provides a means through which citizens may influence governmental decision making and, thereby, protect their economic and social rights. When voter turnout of any one particular demographic or social group is significantly less than other groups, that group loses its power to protect its basic economic interests and social rights. Politicians prioritize the needs of citizens who engage in the highest and most frequent levels of political participation (Leighley & Nagler, 2014). For those groups who vote less or who have historically been denied the right to vote, the consequences of not voting are significant (Rolfe, 2013; Piven, 2011).

Because of the relationship between voting and political power, engaging vulnerable and marginalized clients in voting challenges the status quo and provides the profession of social work the opportunity to ameliorate economic and social disparities. For example, when citizens with the lowest income levels vote at higher rates, politicians are more likely to increase government spending on programs important to them (Franko, Kelley & Witko, 2014). Additionally, within the United States (US), states with less restrictive welfare policies and fewer welfare spending cuts have the highest levels of voter turnout among lower socioeconomic groups (Avery & Peffley, 2005; Johnson, 2001; McElwee, 2015). Finally, members of Congress give more federal resources to the geographic areas within their congressional districts that have the highest voting rates (Martin, 2003). Conversely, they are less likely to consider policy positions of constituents in areas with the lowest voting rates (Martin & Claibourn, 2013).

Social Work and Voter Engagement

While social workers report voting at relatively high rates (Felderhoff, Hoefer, & Watson, 2016), they are less inclined to incorporate voter engagement within their practice. Rome and Hoechestetter (2010) found that voting was one of the most frequent political activities in which social workers engage. However, these authors also found that only a third of the social workers report encouraging their clients to vote. Furthermore, professional associations within social work have only sporadically led or participated in voter engagement activities such as Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) efforts (Scanlon, Hartnett, & Harding, 2006). Social work education has also been slow to include voter engagement in the curriculum (Lane, et. al., 2019). As recently as 2016, Pritzker and Burwell found that most social work programs offered "… minimal to no curricular or cocurricular opportunities … to strengthen students' electoral involvement." (p. 443). Reflecting this lack of emphasis within social work education, social work students report minimal levels of involvement in electoral activities (Hylton, 2015).

A number of perceived and actual barriers have dissuaded social work educators from embedding voter engagement in their programs. Abramovitz, et.al. (2019) found that "concerns about partisanship" were commonly cited barriers to implementing voter engagement. Other concerns included a lack of administrative support, and concerns about possible negative repercussions. Lane et. al. (2019) report that "the need for administrative approval" and "conflicting needs of clients" were two of the most common concerns articulated by field instructors in relation to embedding voter engagement in field. To overcome these barriers and to

promote increased voter engagement, Abramovitz et. al. (2019) call on the profession to engage in systemic efforts to promote voting and highlight the congruence between voter engagement and social work values.

Nancy Humphreys, founder of the University of Connecticut's Nancy A. Humphreys' Institute for Political Social Work, provides a framework for thinking about voter engagement that can help social workers create a culture of voting within practice. Humphreys conceptualized voter engagement as a three-legged stool, in which each leg is necessary for people to access the political power that emanates from voting. Humphreys posited that effective voter engagement of politically vulnerable people must include: (a) voter registration, (b) regular voting, and (c) basing voting decisions on self-interest to protect their basic human rights (Personal Communication, January 19, 2017). Without attention to all three legs, the potential for generating political power collapses, resulting in minimal influence on elected officials. Given the importance of political power in resource allocation, the Nancy A. Humphrey's Institute for Political Social Work (NAHIPSW) seeks to realize Humphrey's vision by training and preparing social workers to integrate all three legs of voter engagement within their social work practice. The Institute aims "…to transform social service delivery as well as community culture through the integration of voter engagement with social work practice." (NAHIPSW, n.d.) This article explores each of these legs and offers concrete strategies social workers can employ to increase the political power of client groups.

Leg One: Voter Registration

Before clients are able to cast a ballot in an election, they must be registered to vote. Registration refers to the process of qualifying to cast a vote and, when qualified, signing up with the local registrar of voters or secretary of state's office to vote. Elections at all levels—local, state and federal—are coordinated and run by the states, resulting in a complex tapestry of registration policies (https://www.usa.gov/register-to-vote). Within the United States, state policy sets out who is eligible to vote, how those who are eligible may register to vote, and when and how said voting may occur. Issues such as online voter registration, absentee ballots, early voting and felony disenfranchisement are established through state policy.

Access to Voting. In all but nine US states, government acts passively in relation to voting, requiring that the voter initiates and maintains his or her registration (Brennan Center for Justice, 2018). Maintaining accurate and up-to-date registration materials is particularly challenging for low-income clients of health and human services, as these clients are disproportionately mobile with large numbers of them renting or experiencing housing crises. For these populations, each move necessitates a change of address on multiple forms of documentation, including voter registration. Unfortunately, updating voter registration forms requires that the voter is aware of the need to update and is able or willing to actively seek out opportunities to update registrations. These challenges result in higher numbers of health and human service clients whose registrations are inaccurate.

These impediments to voting can be addressed through automatic voter registration. According to the Brennan Center for Justice (2018), "automatic voter registration makes two transformative, yet simple, changes to voter registration: Eligible citizens who interact with

government agencies are registered to vote unless they decline, and agencies transfer voter registration information electronically to election officials" (line 8-11). To date, nine states have implemented automatic voter registration, including: Alaska, California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, New Hampshire, Oregon, Rhode Island, and West Virginia. Additionally, North Dakota does not require voters to register prior to Election Day. Residents simply bring acceptable proof of ID and residency to the polls to vote. In these states, state agencies, such as the departments of motor vehicles, collect and share information necessary for voter registration with state election officials who then use said information to register or update the registrations of eligible citizens (Brennan Center for Justice, 2018).

Despite the automatic registration laws passed in some states, many other states have sought to limit access to the ballot through policy. Since 2010, there has been a movement within the US to limit voting rights, which has resulted in twenty-one states enacting new voting restrictions (Brennan Center for Justice, 2016). Much of this suppression involves making voter registration less accessible and voting more complicated. Before the 2012 US presidential election, a number of state policies that facilitated access to voting were eliminated, including early voting on Sundays in Ohio, voting on the Sunday before Election Day in Florida, and "day of" registration in Maine. Additionally, laws requiring government-issued photo IDs in Wisconsin, Kansas, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas passed.

The enactment of strict voting laws is not random. Eight of the twelve US states with the largest Hispanic population growth between 2000 and 2010 passed laws making it harder to vote. Seven of the eleven states with the highest African American turnout in 2008 passed new voting restrictions. As a result, large numbers of citizens are left out of the democratic process: in 2012, 26 million eligible voters of color did not vote, and among eligible voters earning less than $50,000, 47 million did not vote. In 2014, 44 million eligible voters of color did not vote, and 66 million eligible voters earning less than $50,000 did not vote (Brennan Center for Justice, 2016). Furthermore, 6.1 million citizens are prevented from voting because of laws that disenfranchise convicted felons (Chung, 2019). This disproportionally impacts communities of color because Black Americans are more than four times more likely to lose their voting rights than the rest of the adult population (Chung, 2019). Michelle Alexander (2012) compares the impact of current criminal justice policy to that of Jim Crow Laws.

Social Work's Role in Registering People. Social workers can play a pivotal role in ensuring that those qualified to vote are able to do so (see Table 1). Importantly, social workers can intervene at both the micro and macro levels. At the micro level, social workers can ensure that clients are registered, their registrations are up-to-date, and that they have access to ballots during elections. The VotingIsSocialWork.org website provides suggestions on how to launch a successful registration drive with clients as well as online resources to facilitate voter registration. More specifically, social workers and agencies can provide access to either online voter registration or hard copies of forms can be completed and mailed at the agency's expense. This can be accomplished by embedding questions about voter registration on intake forms or during the intake process (Voting is Social Work, n.d.). Questions about registration should begin with a brief statement by the social worker about the importance of ensuring clients have a voice in the democratic process; and that party affiliations and voting patterns will in no way influence service delivery. This statement can be followed by three quick questions: 1) are you

currently registered to vote?, 2) do you know if your registration is up-to-date?, and 3) would you like to register to vote today or would you like to verify that your registration is up-to-date? Social workers can assist their clients in ascertaining whether or not their registrations are up-to-date by checking registration status at Vote.org (Voting is Social Work, 2019.) As with all interventions, social workers should assess the appropriate timing for discussing registration with clients.

Table 1

Impediments to and Activities that Encourage Voter Registration

Impediments	Recommended Social Work Activities
- Lack of automatic voter registration - Difficulty in maintaining accurate and up-to-date voter registration materials - Lack of election day registration - Requirement of government-issued identification - Racial disparities in voter registration - Disparities in voter registration based on income	- Embed voter registration questions in intake processes - Ask clients regularly if they need to update their voter registration - Ensure that clients have needed accommodations to register - Advocate for automatic voter registration, early voting, and election day registration

At the macro level, social workers must play a role in advocating for policies that promote rather than restrict access to voting. Through policy advocacy, social workers can ensure election policies are just and promote equality of representation. Policies establishing automatic voter registration, early voting and same day voter registration pair well with the ethical obligation to "…promote social, economic, *political*, and cultural values and institutions that are compatible with the realization of social justice" (National Association of Social Workers, 2018, p. 29). These policies create more access to the ballot during elections and, therefore, help to ameliorate existing disparities in voting. Simultaneously, social workers should participate in advocacy to defeat bills that would create barriers to voting. In the US, NASW (2015) issued a policy statement supportive of efforts to reform and modernize voting laws and went as far as to support efforts to recognize days on which elections are held as national holidays. In advocating for just and equitable access to voting, local and or regional professional associations should also include election policies within their legislative agendas.

Leg Two: Voting

In addition to ensuring citizens' rights and abilities to vote, the second leg of the stool requires that people actually cast a ballot. This leg emphasizes a source of political power derived from voter turnout in all elections with votes cast at the top through the bottom of the ballot. Declining voter turnout rates within the US are common on the national, state, and local levels. Since 1964 voter turnout in the US has been on the decline—69.3 % of all eligible voters cast a ballot in the 1964 presidential election, 63.6% voted in 2008, and 61.8 % voted in 2012 (United States Census Bureau, 2013). While women have voted in rates higher than men since 1980's, voter turnout among women has declined as well. Sixty-three percent of eligible women and 59% of eligible men went to the polls during the 2016 presidential election (Center for American

Women and Politics, 2017). More than 120 million ballots were cast during the 2016 election, but the election was decided by 107,000 people in three states: Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania (Meko, Lu, & Gamio, 2016).

Voter turnout in midterm elections is lower than presidential elections and has dropped significantly across the United States. The 2014 midterm election had the lowest national turnout in more than seventy years with only 36.3% of registered voters casting a ballot. In forty-three states, less than half the eligible population cast a ballot, and no state had voter turnout above 60% (Roberts, 2013). For example, in the 2013 New York City mayoral election, Bill de Blasio won, but only 24% of voters cast a ballot, the lowest voter turnout in two decades.

This trend has significant consequences for local communities. Statistical findings suggest if voter turnout increased at the local level, election outcomes would be different in mayoral and city council races with more representation of Latinos and Asian Americans on city councils. Low voter turnout by Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans in local elections contributes to inadequate local resources and services (Hajnal, 2010). Ironically, literature and data suggest citizens are least informed and interested in local elections, which have the greatest potential to affect their immediate environment.

Factors that Promote and Impede Voting. Numerous and often compounding factors influence whether or not a person votes (see Table 2). Perhaps most significant to the passage and implementation of equitable polces is the influence of wealth on voting. A socioeconomic divide is evident between voters and nonvoters, with the wealthy and the most educated voting more (Pew Research Center, 2012). Data shows the greater the level of income inequality in a nation, the lower the level of voter turnout. Compared to other Western nations, the United States has both the greatest level of income inequality (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019) and lowest level of voter participation (Desilver, 2018; Uslaner & Brown, 2005). Clearly, current economic conditions in the United States fuel a context detrimental to voter participation and equality of representation.

Table 2

Impediments to and Activities that Encourage Voting

Impediments	Recommended Social Work Activities
• National income inequality • Availability of time • ID requirements • Transportation • Lack of adequate accommodations • Lack of political or civic knowledge • Lack of education • Lack of interest • Voter apathy • Social isolation	• Inform clients about elections, including election dates, polling locations positions up for election, and distinctions between primary and general elections • Provide nonpartisan information on ballot questions or initiatives • Discuss potential impediments to voting with clients • Provide transportation to the polls • Provide information on early voting locations • Assist clients in applying for absentee ballots • Create a culture of voting within agencies

Wealthier voters face fewer obstacles to voting, such as availability of time, transportation, and ID requirements. Additionally, through access to higher education, wealth, community members gain greater internal capacities for voting, including political knowledge, interest, and civic skills (Beaumont, 2011). Likewise, exposure to political experiences as well as voting in families also promote voting (Verba, Burns, & Schlozman, 2003). Family discussions about politics, current events, and government also increase political knowledge and interest. Both educational and family experiences related to voting increase self-efficacy, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of casting a ballot (Beaumont, 2011).

On the other hand, citizens with the lowest income levels are the least likely to vote. Nonvoters are more likely to be poor, less educated, younger, and non-white. Nonvoters are more likely than voters to have family incomes of less than $30,000, have trouble paying their bills, receive a means-tested government benefit, and are more likely to lack health insurance (Pew Research Center, 2014). Lower-income people are less likely to vote because of structural barriers hindering their ability to get to the polls, apathy (Piven, 2011), and their belief that politicians neither care nor address issues relevant to them. Additionally, they are less likely to be contacted by any group and urged to vote (Pew Research Center, 2017; Sandler, 2017)

Rates of voter turnout are not just related to national economic trends, but to local ones as well. Neighborhood poverty creates social isolation of entire communities to political and economic resources (Cohen & Dawson, 1993). Those living in poverty feel powerless, pessimistic about the future, not represented by elected officials, and as a result decide not to vote. Since the poor are less likely to vote, a vacuum is created in which their voices are not heard nor prioritized by politicians (Rolfe, 2012; Uslaner & Brown, 2005). And so goes the vicious cycle: the poor do not vote because they feel alienated from the political system; the system does not respond to their needs because politicians lack incentive to respond to a group who neither votes nor makes campaign contributions; and finally, income inequality increases because no social policy is enacted to reduce the income gap. This cycle maintains the status quo and benefits those with greater power and wealth at the expense of those whom the system fails.

Social Work's Role in Getting Out the Vote. Despite the profession's ethical prerogative to facilitate participation in political processes, few social workers engage in Get Out the Vote (GOTV) activities as part of their professional roles. Scanlon, Hartnett and Harding (2006) found that less than half of the state chapters of NASW attempt to mobilize voters during elections. The lack of widespread participation in this second leg of the voting stool is a lost opportunity. Research suggests successful voter engagement activities increase social interaction around voting and embed the concept of voting as a social norm (Lehman, & Gutierrez, 2012). This is similar to findings that door-to-door nonpartisan community get-out-the-vote campaigns are effective because of the social interaction between volunteer and potential voter (Bedolla & Michelson, 2012). Engagement in dialogue about voting in general, not related to a particular campaign, changes the perceptions of nonvoters and increases their interest in voting (Sandler, 2017). People who vote are 30% more likely to vote again (Bedolla & Michelson, 2012).

Through their work with clients, social workers have the potential to impact voter turnout among low-income communities. Lehman and Gutierrez (2012) found that when employees of nonprofit health and social service agencies discussed voting with clients, these clients in turn

voted at rates higher than national averages. Social workers who, as part of their professional role, ensure their clients are aware of elections, have been provided educational materials, and have access to ballots will increase the voting among these clients. Importantly, by increasing the voting among their immediate clients, social workers can affect the turnout of larger communities as voting has a contagion effect. When one-person votes, he or she potentially influences up to four other people in his or her social circle to do the same (Nickerson, 2008).

Social workers can influence voter turnout among clients through a number of important, interrelated activities/efforts. First and foremost, clients need to be made aware of elections, including election dates, polling locations, positions up for election, and the distinctions between primary and general elections. Second, clients need to be provided with educational materials on candidates and ballot questions so they feel knowledgeable and competent to cast a ballot. Such information can be made available through public bulletin boards, discussions with clients, flyers and or emails (Lehman & Gutierrez, 2012). Election information can also be incorporated into existing psycho-educational groups or can be presented as community-building activities. Finally, social workers can talk to their clients to ensure they are aware of impending elections. These discussions can be used to assess whether or not clients foresee barriers to voting.

In addition to making clients aware of pertinent election information, social workers can ensure clients have access to ballots during elections. Depending upon the agency setting, methods to ensure access might include orienting clients to early polling places, providing transportation to polling places, and providing assistance in applying for absentee ballots. The latter is particularly important for clients who experience mobility issues, are home bound, or live in a rural local. Social workers should also take an active role in ensuring clients who have disabilities are provided appropriate accommodations that facilitate their right to vote. Social workers can work with the local registrar of voters' office to ensure these accommodations are provided. Social workers can also work with organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union, to advocate for better access via accommodations.

Finally, social workers and the agencies in which they work can create a culture of voting that excites and inspires their client populations to vote (Munn, Fisher, Lewis, Sander, & Okuda, 2019). In creating this culture, it is important that social workers address the factors that impede voting. Social workers must also address the apathy resulting from disempowerment. Clients and the communities from which they come, should be educated about the influence of their vote, in terms of election results and political power. Specifically, this education should include the importance of down-ballot races. Methods for educating clients about their political power should be context specific and may include, but certainly are not limited to, informational presentations, informal discussions, posters, and newsletters. Depending upon agency contexts, clients can also be engaged in educating their peers and communities about their political power. Finally, the alienation of clients from political processes can be reduced significantly by providing opportunities for clients to engage with elected officials (Davis, 2010), such as introductions to and or brief presentations by local elected officials to agencies.

Leg Three: Voting and Self-Interest

Although the most difficult to achieve, the third leg of Humphreys' three-legged stool is the most significant. Eligible voters must base voting decisions on their self-interest to protect their basic human rights (Nancy A. Humphreys, personal communication, January 19, 2017). Self-interest in relation to voting encompasses the benefits individual voters perceive in relation to casting their vote and from their election choices (Medema, 2013). These benefits can be financial, political, social, civic, or altruistic. Research shows that few eligible voters truly understand how elections impact policy and their lives (Sandler, 2017). For example, low-income, blue-collar workers who identify as white may vote for candidates based on their positions on wedge issues such as immigration while not examining the positions these candidates hold on bread-and butter issues such as affordable healthcare, wage protections, and progressive tax policies. Without this information eligible voters cannot make informed voting decisions that reflect what is in their best interest. It is not enough for social workers to register eligible voters or to get out the vote, if voters are not informed as to how their voting decisions impact upon their self-interests. Without this third leg the true political power of social work clients may never be realized.

The incongruence in voting choices and self-interest of eligible voters is common and results from a myriad of complicated factors, including the mistaken belief that elections do not matter, low-levels of civic literacy among all voters, the growing influence of special interest groups and the use of "wedge issues" to distract voters from issues or positions relevant to their self-interest (see Table 3). Recent studies of civic literacy illuminate significant deficits in political knowledge within the general US population. In 2013 the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (2013) reported that only 53% of the American population could identify the political party that espouses a more conservative ideology. Furthermore, only 36% of US adults could identify the three branches of federal government (Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2014) and less than half could identify the political party holding the majority within the United States House of Representatives (Pew Research Center, 2012). Studies of civic knowledge among youth find these deficits are increased among low-income people (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). When clients do not understand how elections effect their access to public services related to their elementary survival and well-being (food, shelter, income, etc.), basic political ideologies, political leadership or the structure of government, they may struggle in wading through the rhetoric of campaigns to determine which candidates and positions most align with their self-interest.

Table 3

Impediments to and Activities that Encourage Voting in One's Self Interest

Impediments	Recommended Social Work Activities
• Low rates of civic literacy • Influence of special interests' groups • Use of wedge issues to divide the electorate	• Foster critical awareness of self-interest among clients • Promote group identification • Promote civic literacy

The voting behavior of all Americans, including low-income clients, is also subject to powerful influences emanating from special interest groups. Through advanced marketing strategies and the use of multiple media forms, these special interest groups seek to shape public understandings of candidates and election issues in ways that promote their group's self-

interests. In 2014, campaign spending by these groups topped $1.1 billion to influence state and local races (Freed & Currinder, 2016). While all Americans are influenced by these media campaigns, their influence on voting behaviors among low-income clients are particularly concerning as the positions they are selling frequently contradict with the interests of low-income communities and clients. For example, healthcare related industries, whose profit motives often conflict with the need for affordable and accessible healthcare, contributed $9.5 million to presidential candidates during the 2016 election (Kounang, 2016).

Voters and nonvoters have different policy interests, especially regarding economic and redistributive issues. According to Pew Research Center (2014), 51% of nonvoters versus 43% of voters believe governmental aid to the poor does more good than harm. Additionally, nonvoters are more likely than voters to favor government spending for health care and education (Leighley & Nagler, 2014), support free community college and a $10.10 minimum wage, and believe government aid to the poor is beneficial (McElewee, 2015). Therefore, the socioeconomic divide between voters and nonvoters is significant because it prioritizes the policy positions of the wealthy, who vote at higher rates. As President Obama said in 2015, "It would be transformative if everybody voted -- that would counteract money more than anything…" (Yan, 2015). In other words, elected officials would have incentive to represent all their constituents, not just the wealthy.

Social Work's Role in Promoting Self-Interest. Freire (1969) postulated that oppressed populations accept the status quo of their existence because they accept the "truths" of the elite and internalize their own oppression, which stop the masses from acting in their self-interest. Freire described how critical dialogue could reveal social, political, and economic contradictions leading to the (critical consciousness) of oppressed groups. Typically, social problems are defined and presented from the standpoint and interests of the powerful, not the masses, and are frequently defined and presented at the expense of those with the least power (Blau, 2014; Heiner, 2013). They are messaged to the public through political frames and discourse, and ultimately become embedded in culture, social institutions, and policy. Those without power accept the existence of certain problems because they believe the messaging and accept the cultural norms, beliefs, and values (Heiner, 2013). The dominant/powerful group enforces their social order on vulnerable groups through politics, law, policy, media and social institutions to promote the status quo, which maintains their privileged status. It is paramount that social workers work in solidarity with marginalized populations to disrupt these false political frames and ensure all eligible voters have access to information needed to make an informed voting decision. Social workers can play a pivotal role in facilitating an understanding of self-interest by fostering critical awareness, group identification, and civic literacy among the clients we serve. This is the missing leg of the three-legged voting stool.

Unfortunately, not only do wedge issues lead to divides between those with wealth and power and those without, they also frequently serve to divide low-income communities. The first step in reducing this alienation is to facilitate an understanding of the widespread use and purpose of wedge issues within political campaigns. A second step is to foster an understanding of the shared experience and interests of client groups. Finally, a sense of belonging or community needs to be developed to counter the divisiveness of the national political narrative. These three steps must be included in critical consciousness raising groups and in community

organizing efforts. Given that these activities might be beyond the scope of many social or health service organizations, social workers in such agencies can become knowledgeable as to what is available within their clients' communities and refer clients thereto. Social workers should also seek to create organizational cultures in which attention to issues of power and oppression are visible, overt and driven by organizational mission statements.

One of the easiest methods for social workers to help their clients with informed voting is to provide candidate guides or scorecards. Candidate guides typically focus on issues of interest to a specific group and then compare the positions of candidates running for the same office. These guides or scorecards are frequently available through non-profit advocacy organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, American Association for Retired People, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Human Rights Campaign, and American Civil Liberties Union. Candidate guides or scorecards help voters ascertain whether or not candidates support issues of importance to them.

A final element in raising an awareness of self-interest is the development of civically literate voters. In order to recognize the connection between self-interest, public policy and voting, clients must be assisted in understanding the roles performed by the people for whom they are voting, the nature of public policy in general, and the potential effects of public policy decisions on low-income communities. Public forums that include community building and focused advocacy opportunities can provide low-income communities and clients the ability to build civic knowledge while working towards a relevant cause.

Conclusion

Recent political events both in the United States and globally have led to a resurgence of political awareness and engagement of the public in organized political protests. The profession of social work can seize this political window of opportunity to assist marginalized populations in gaining political power via one of the most fundamental rights in a democracy, voting. Voter engagement is an important component of political power, and is, therefore, a pivotal professional responsibility. Fortunately, there are several organizations that provide support to social workers who want to integrate voter engagement into their practice. Founded in 2016, the National Voter Mobilization Campaign provides useful resources on its seminal website VotingisSocialWork.org. This website includes resources for social work educators, students, and social service organizations, such as fact sheets, training materials, sample assignments, and research related to voter engagement. In addition, the Nancy A. Humphrey's Institute for Political Social Work provides trainings and consultation to social work educators on how to prepare the next generation of social workers for voter engagement. This article sought to expand on these resources by providing a framework and practical suggestions for how social workers can address three pivotal components of voting into their work with clients.

Humphreys' three-legged stool provides social workers a framework to guide voter engagement work. Leg One directs social workers to the importance of working directly with clients to ensure they are registered to vote while also directing attention to the profession's position on polices promoting access to voting. Leg Two calls on social workers to play a role in increasing voter turnout by reducing the barriers to voting clients may experience, including

transportation, access to absentee ballots, and accommodations. Additionally, this leg orients social workers to the importance of creating a culture within our agencies that promotes voting. Finally, the third leg of Humphreys' stool illuminates the role social workers can play in overcoming the negative messaging of campaigns. Overcoming this rhetoric is essential to assisting clients in becoming informed voters, who vote in alignment with their self-interests. Through attention to these three elements of voter engagement, social workers can significantly increase the political power of the clients and low-income communities and, thereby, enact the profession's ethical mandate to pursue social justice.

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