

# Lights in the Darkness: Faith Leaders Launch GOTV Work Despite Grid Failures

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On Tuesday, thirty-seven faith leaders representing 19 congregations convened to launch the Houston Faith Votes Civic Engagement Cohort, a new pilot project designed to take Texas Impact's existing faithful civic engagement work to the next level. Despite the widespread power outages throughout the Houston area, congregational teams prioritized the convening—strong evidence that faith communities understand the key role they can play in strengthening voter turnout.

#### **Some Background.**

Houston Faith Votes (HFV) emerged in 2022 from the vision of Texas Impact faith leaders and has since evolved into a robust voter mobilization campaign. HFV equips and mobilizes Houston's faith communities for civic engagement through strategic partnerships with numerous congregations. The campaign focuses on providing accessible, accurate voter engagement information tailored for faith communities. Central to this effort is the integration of essential election-focused technologies such as

BallotReady, a nonpartisan tool aiding voter registration, planning, and candidate research. Bolstered by support from the Houston Endowment, the new cohort marks a significant expansion of HFV's reach.

### **Who and What?**

The pilot cohort of 19 institutions include Jewish, Unitarian, and Christian congregations. Notably, twelve historic Black churches and three Hispanic churches are among them, alongside one congregation predominantly serving the LGBTQ+ community.

Each congregation has selected specific, measurable GOTV activities that they will implement between now and November. These activities include Issue Forums, Meet-a-Neighbor Walks, Postcard Campaigns, and Voter Information Booths. They will receive microgrants to cover GOTV activity expenses and intensive staff support as well as access to Texas Impact's data resources that will provide valuable guidance for future civic engagement endeavors.

### **Why and How?**

Participation in this cohort will enable faith leaders to cultivate relationships, expand networks, and acquire expertise crucial for potential involvement in a future Faith Table for faith-based civic engagement initiatives. The success of this model in Houston could serve as a blueprint for similar initiatives across Texas, integrating lessons learned during this pilot phase.

Now more than ever, a sensible, nonpartisan, faith-based approach to civic participation—particularly in voting—remains paramount. Leaders of Houston Faith Votes are determined, enthusiastic, and unified in their mission to encourage voters within their congregations and communities to engage actively in the democratic process.