



# The Role of Non-Citizens in Election Years: How to Permissibly Participate Politically

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As the 2024 election is fast approaching, the political atmosphere is charged with excitement and activism. While voting remains the primary cornerstone of participatory democracy, non-citizens often find themselves on the sidelines, and frequently have questions about their roles in the political process. However, non-citizens who can't vote can engage in significant ways, particularly through fundraising and volunteering.

## Understanding the Landscape

In many countries, including the United States, the right to vote is reserved for citizens. This limitation often leads to the misconception that non-citizens cannot play any role in the political process. However, non-citizens can still participate meaningfully through various forms of support.

## Lawful Permanent Residents Can Fundraise and Make Donations

Lawful permanent residents (sometimes known as “green card holders”) can engage in fundraising efforts for political campaigns and advocacy groups. While they cannot contribute directly by **voting** for candidates in the U.S., they can still participate in fundraising events and activities, as long as they adhere to local and state regulations. This includes:

- **Organizing fundraising events:** It is permissible for lawful permanent residents to organize and host events such as dinners, auctions, or social gatherings, which can draw in contributions from citizens and allies.
- **Crowdfunding:** Nearly all political campaigns use online platforms to raise funds, and lawful permanent residents can promote these campaigns on social media, share links, and encourage friends and family to contribute, amplifying the reach and impact of fundraising efforts.

## Foreign Nationals Cannot Give Money to Political Campaigns

While U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents may contribute money to and volunteer with federal political campaigns, foreign nationals, including DACA, TPS, and nonimmigrant visa holders, **cannot** give money to political campaigns. They may, however, provide unpaid volunteer services to political campaigns, so long as they are not in a decision-making role. This includes:



- **Connecting with Community Organizations:** Many non-profits and advocacy groups focus on issues that affect immigrant communities. Non-citizens can support these organizations by volunteering to help them raise funds, whether through direct outreach or event organization.
- **Campaign Support:** Volunteering for local political campaigns in non-decision-making roles is permissible, whether by canvassing neighborhoods, making phone calls, and assisting with events. While they cannot vote or contribute money to a political campaign, their efforts help mobilize voters and raise awareness about candidates and issues.
- **Voter Registration Drives:** Non-citizens can assist in efforts to register eligible voters. By participating in these drives, they help ensure that every voice is heard, even if they cannot vote themselves.

## Legal Considerations

It is crucial for non-citizens to understand the legal landscape surrounding their involvement in the electoral process. While many states allow non-citizens to engage in fundraising and volunteering, some restrictions may apply. It is always essential to be aware of local laws and regulations to ensure compliance.

## The Impact of Non-Citizen Participation

The involvement of non-citizens in election years enriches the democratic process. The unique perspectives and experiences of non-citizens contribute to a more inclusive political dialogue, and by supporting candidates and issues that resonate with their communities, non-citizens can help shape policies that affect everyone, regardless of their own citizenship status and ability to vote.

## Conclusion

While the ability to vote is a fundamental right reserved for citizens, non-citizens can participate in the electoral process through fundraising, making donations, and volunteering. These contributions are vital for fostering a vibrant democracy that reflects the diverse voices of the community. As we approach the upcoming election, it is important to recognize and support the roles that non-citizens can play, ensuring that everyone has a stake in the future of our democracy.