



## USER GUIDE SUPPLEMENT

### FOR MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATORS

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(Portions of this document have been imported from a previous guide created by Betsy Cushman, Terry Hluchyj, Eva Packard and Megan Chenowith.)

The purpose of this document is to provide supplemental guidance to Michigan Administrators who create VOTE411 online or print guides.

**Tutorials and manuals for the operational aspect of the VOTE411 system can be found at  
Voter Resource Toolkit link:**

<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/voter-services/VOTE411-resources-toolkit>.

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## GUIDE OVERVIEW

### VOTE411 - Steps to provide Voter Guides for Elections

Even years are major election years in Michigan with partisan races at the national, state and county level plus, in Presidential years, township elections, and non-partisan races for judicial offices, villages, school boards and community colleges, and a few cities.

LWVMI Director handles all statewide proposals and races for Governor/Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, U.S. Senate Representatives, U.S. Congressional Representatives, Michigan Senate Representatives, Michigan House of Representatives, State Board of Education, University of Michigan/Michigan State/Wayne State positions, Michigan Supreme Court, and Appeals Court. **The only judicial positions your local League is responsible for are Circuit, Probate, District, and Municipal Court.**

**Your League is responsible for the county, city, township, village, community college, intermediate school district, school district, metropolitan district, district library officials and millage/proposals within your county. When districts overlap counties, the local league with the most residents in the district is responsible.**

### Preparation before entering information into VOTE411

**1) Request access** to your League's VOTE411 by sending an email to the LWVMI State Director at [VOTE411@LWVMI.org](mailto:VOTE411@LWVMI.org) with your name, Local Unit name and email.

**2) LWVMI will send you a calendar** of candidate and proposal filing deadlines and relevant election-related dates. This calendar is obtained from the Secretary of State's [election site](#). Candidates must file 15 weeks prior to the election, and absentee ballots are available 45 days before the election.

**3) Decide which emails you wish to send** to each candidate and plan when you want to send each email for the upcoming election(s). [for details, click on [MAIL CENTER](#)] Use the calendar dates to calculate candidate response deadlines. It is recommended that the candidate deadline for response be no more than 3 weeks after the sending of invitation, to allow adequate time for follow-up and to prepare the published guide before absentee ballots are available.

**4) Decide on the information to request from candidates** for each office

- **Biographical info** such as Campaign website, Facebook page, Occupation, Education, etc.
- **Questions:** Do you want generic questions which can be used for any office or board?
  - An example of a generic Question Set:
    - Describe your background, experience and qualifications for this office and the reasons you are running for it.
    - What are the top 2 (or 3) priority issues that [this office] should address and what actions would you take regarding each of them, or do you want to tailor your questions for specific offices or boards?

- For example, questions could deal with topics of hot local interest such as the budget, public safety, economic development, parks and recreation, education, roads, etc.

**NOTE:** If you're creating a printed guide, you may consider limiting the number of questions to 2 or 3. It will make it easier to merge data into the guide you're creating to print locally.

**5) Determine how many characters** to allow for responses for each Bio item and each Race question. VOTE411 counts characters, including spaces and punctuation. For example, 100 words would be about 625 characters. If you plan to print voter guides, consider using lower limits compared to an online guide.

**6) Set the Order** in which you will display races, including proposals to mirror the Michigan Ballot. Michigan's ballot order standards can be found at <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/elections/admin-info> - refer to the **Michigan Ballot Production Standards** document.

**NOTE:** In VOTE411, how categories are listed on the Guide Overview Page under "Category" determines their order on your ballot. Drag and drop your categories up or down until they appear in the correct order.

**7) Determine how you will acquire the candidate lists and emails.**

- Your County Clerk's website is the place to look for county, city, township and village candidates and races, as well those for judges, school and library board, and community college offices. They may also include the federal, state, and judicial candidates relevant to their county in their list (again, local admins do not enter federal or state) on their website.
- Your City, Township or Village Clerk may put candidates for local government office on their website or have the info available in their office. Only candidates for offices covering just one local community can file with that local Clerk instead of the County or State.
- The Secretary of State website ([www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos)) contains candidate lists for all Federal and State offices as well as Judicial races at all levels of government.

**NOTE:** LWVMI Director oversees Voter Guides for Federal and State offices and the Supreme and Appeals Courts. Please do NOT send questionnaire invitations to them, unless approved by and coordinated with LWVMI. Local Leagues manage Circuit, Probate and District Court races.

- Candidate websites might include candidate emails with the candidate's name and address info.

- All candidates file an “Affidavit of Identity” to run for office and are asked for their email address and phone number. Most include their emails, but not all do. Affidavits are public documents and available for viewing. There may be a charge for copies. Check with your county or local Clerks to determine how to get affidavit information.
- If your clerk will not provide candidate emails, you may send a postcard to each candidate’s mailing address to request their email address.
- If you simply cannot obtain an email address, VOTE411 provides the option to print a hard copy of a letter with the candidate response link that you can mail to the candidate.

**8) Name your races.** Please follow the race name guidelines.

**9) Determine the Race Description** you will use for each office you are covering if you need to create a race. Include the job function or duties and term length. The term of office should be stated on the document your county provides with the list of races for the election. Many race descriptions are defined in the specific municipal code or charter.

## Log on to Home Page

After you log in you will land on the **Guide Overview Dashboard** page. Here you will find basic information about your guide, as well as links to the different sections of your guide. This is a homepage and is a great place to get an overview of where your guide stands and what other steps you might need to complete. You can always return to this page by clicking on **VOTE 411 Guide** which appears at the top left corner of each page.

Clicking on any of the tabs under the **VOTE 411 Guide** bar (**Guide Overview, Races & Measures, Candidates, Districts, Mail Center**) lets you jump between each section.

You’re ready to start creating your voter guide. There are three main sections: **Districts, Races & Measures, and Candidates**. You will need to complete each section before you publish your guide; however, the order in which you complete the sections doesn’t matter - just do it in the order that makes sense for you.

## DISTRICTS

**GIS DISTRICTS:** Candidates and Measures (Proposals) have specific voting Districts. This section details how to set up and apply these specific Geographic Information System (GIS) Districts that are used for Candidates and Measures.

These enable the voters to enter a street address and link to the correct political districts. County boundaries are preloaded in the system by National already (*except councils and commissions/wards – these must be obtained from your individual county, usually through their Equalizer Department*).

Michigan maintains an open data portal at:

<https://gis-michigan.opendata.arcgis.com/search?collection=dataset>.

**GIS DATA SETS** (also known as shapefiles) for cities, townships, villages, schools and intermediate school districts can be found on this Michigan portal. GIS data sets seldom change. **Warning: Be sure to download the most current “data set” (do not choose application).**

Depending on which races you covered in the year from which your guide was copied, your guide may already contain some or most of your GIS districts. Under the Districts tab in your user guide, “Existing GIS District Sets” should be listed.

It may be helpful to create a table of what GIS Shapefile were used for what races.



Voter Guide District  
Shapefile Index.xlsx

**NOTE:** Creating districts in the system is detailed on <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/voter-services/VOTE411-resources-toolkit> through online videos and manuals. We realize this is the most complicated concept to grasp about the system, however, it’s also where the most support is available to you. LWVUS team can assist by contacting them at [VOTE411help@lwv.org](mailto:VOTE411help@lwv.org). Your State Voter Service Director for VOTE411 ([vote411@lwvmi.org](mailto:vote411@lwvmi.org)) is also a resource that can be used – if they don’t know the answer, they’ll get it for you and work through any issues with you.



Districts:	Airport Community School District	Delete
	Clarenceville School District	Delete
	Garden City School District	Delete
	Huron School District	Delete
	Livonia Public Schools	Delete
	Northville Public Schools	Delete
	Plymouth-Canton Community Schools	Delete
	Redford Union School District	Delete
	South Redford School District	Delete
	Van Buren Public Schools	Delete
	Wayne-Westland Community School Distri	Delete

You know that you can cover the race you want, because Plymouth-Canton Community Schools is included in this shapefile.

If you do not see a GIS district for the race that you want to cover, you may be able to obtain one.

Cities, townships, villages, school districts, precincts: LWVUS or LWVMI can provide you with a shapefile that covers any city, township, village, or school district you need, or you can search online for “Michigan school districts shapefile.”

County commissions: Check with your county clerk or county information systems department about GIS data for the districts. There may be a charge, but they often give it to the League at no charge as we are non-profit, which uses it to provide voter service to the public.

Other races: If you need to cover a race that applies to more than one coverage area (for example, an ISD that includes several school districts, or a judicial seat that serves more than one city or township), see Composite Districts below.

If you have any questions, you can always contact LWVUS ([mbrown@lww.org](mailto:mbrown@lww.org) or [helpdesk@lwwmi.org](mailto:helpdesk@lwwmi.org)) or your LWVMI VOTE411 director for guidance.

If you have a shapefile for the race you want to cover, and you need to load it into VOTE411:

- 1) Download the shapefile to your computer and unzip it. You should have a folder containing several files with different file extensions.
- 2) Under Advanced Districting, select GIS Districts.

- 3) Under Create a GIS District Set, use the three “Choose File” buttons to upload three files from your shapefile folder: the ones ending in **.shp**, **.dbf**, and **.prj**. Then click Continue.
- 4) Give your shapefile a meaningful name. For the containing district, select “Michigan.”
- 5) If your shapefile contains many components (for example, all cities and townships in Michigan), you may uncheck “Select All” and then check only the ones you need. (If there are multiple components with the same name, which is common with townships, import them all and you can delete the ones you don’t need later.)
- 6) Click Save.

## 2) Composite Districts (also preferred)

Use these when you need to cover a race that spans more than one community that is found in a shapefile, for example, District Court 43 which includes the cities of Ferndale, Hazel Park, and Madison Hts. Like GIS Districts, they allow a VOTE411 user to enter their street address and automatically pull up the races that apply to them.

To check if your guide contains a composite district that covers the area you need, select Composite Districts. Under Existing Composite Districts, select Edit to see which communities each guide contains.

To create a composite district, select Composite Districts, then Create. Select each of the shapefiles and communities you want to include in your composite district. (You can combine communities from multiple shapefiles.)

## 3) District Sets (not recommended)

Only use for races that cannot be represented by a GIS district or composite district. These require VOTE411 users to know their district and select it when entering their races. If an office has multiple districts and some districts, but not all, can be defined using GIS, be sure to include a **None of These** option in the District Set to handle those with GIS.

# RACES & MEASURES

## Getting Started

The screenshot shows the 'VOTE 411 Voter Guide' interface. The top navigation bar includes 'SWITCH GUIDE', 'REPORT A BUG', and 'HELP'. The user is logged in as 'Carolyn Vertin'. The main navigation menu has 'Races & Measures' selected. Below the navigation, there are buttons for 'Bulk Import', 'Create Race', and 'Create Measure'. The 'Race Setup Menu' on the left lists: Parties, Categories, Districts, Biographical Questions, and Race Questions. The 'Getting Started' section explains that it's easiest to create a race after adding parties, categories, districts, biographical questions, and race questions. A tip box states: 'If you have more than 25 races, using bulk import can save you a lot of time! You just need to know the race name and at least 1 candidate per race.'

It's easiest, if before you create a race, you've followed the steps above for: adding parties, categories, districts, biographical questions, and race questions to your guide. This way, when you start to create a race, everything will be available for you to use.

## Working With Races and Measures

“**Races and Measures**” is where you will create your candidate races and ballot measures. It allows you to assign specific information to each race (category, district, biographical questions, etc.) one by one, or you can bulk import information into the guide using spreadsheet templates (click on [Bulk Import](#) for details).

You can create races piece by piece using the “Race Setup Menu” toward the top, left of this page, or you can bulk import races using the spreadsheet upload. No matter which way you create the race, the system will help walk you through the process.

Election Races & Measures

BULK ACTIONS: Delete | Export | Publish | Unpublish | Update District with Race Name | Bulk Edit

<input type="checkbox"/>	Name ↑	Type	Category	District	Status	Actions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bainbridge Twp Clerk	Race	Bainbridge Twp Officials	Bainbridge Township	Unpublished	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bainbridge Twp Supervisor	Race	Bainbridge Twp Officials	Bainbridge Township	Unpublished	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bainbridge Twp Treasurer	Race	Bainbridge Twp Officials	Bainbridge Township	Unpublished	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bainbridge Twp Trustees	Race	Bainbridge Twp Officials	Bainbridge Township	Unpublished	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Baroda Twp Clerk	Race	Baroda Township Officials	Baroda Township	Unpublished	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Baroda Twp Supervisor	Race	Baroda Township Officials	Baroda Township	Unpublished	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Baroda Twp Treasurer	Race	Baroda Township Officials	Baroda Township	Unpublished	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Baroda Twp Trustee	Race	Baroda Township Officials	Baroda Township	Unpublished	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Benton Charter Twp Clerk	Race	Benton Charter Twp Officials	Benton Township Berrien	Unpublished	⋮

On this page you will find columns that will list out the races you currently have in your guide. You'll be able to see the race name, election type (race or measure), category, number of candidates, and publication status, all in one location. You'll also be able to edit or delete races by clicking on the "action" icon next to the race.

### Entering A Race

Contact your County/City Clerk for the list of races for your upcoming election. The next step will be to make sure ALL races have been input into the system. This step must be done *before* any candidates can be added.

Review the race names and descriptions and make sure they are part of your league district. If you have a race that overlaps another county, consult with that county unit and agree on who should enter the race into the system. In general, the unit that has **the majority of the voters in their area** should be the ones posting the race. To find a League that may have the majority of voters, click on **LWV Michigan Find a League** - <https://lwvmi.org/find-a-local-league/>

Races already in the system may be edited to reflect the current election. Make sure you check the Race Title and Race Description against County current election descriptions.

If you need to enter a race manually, start by clicking "Races and Measures" on the top left screen corner. Make sure to read the "Getting Started" information and when you're ready, click "Create Race" in the upper right-hand corner.

**1) Enter the "Type of Race."** You have a few choices: General Election, Open Primary, or Closed Primary. Click the one that best describes the race you are creating. Here in Michigan, it's

important to note there are only Open Primaries. Although listed as a choice, “Closed Primary” is not actually an option.

Just below, select the correct “Voting Options.” Your choices are: Single Vote, Multiple Selection Vote (for more than one candidate), and Ranked Choice. Again, select the one that best describes the type of race you are creating. Although “Ranked Choice” is listed as an option, Michigan does not allow ranked choice as an option so your only choice will be between single vote or multiple votes.

In “Districting”, first choose Michigan as the appropriate state. You will then be prompted to select a “District Type.” Details for creating the districts are detailed in the [District Section](#) above.

“Race Name” requires you to type in the name of the race as it will appear on the ballot. For example, “Virginia House District 7” or “Abbot Public Schools Board of Trustees Partial Term.”

**NOTE on naming a race:** it needs to be easy to find and distinguishable from other like races. For example, you might name a judge race “Abbott County Judge of the 49<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court” so that it is unique. VOTE411 recommends using the Race Naming Guidelines in the [Tool Kit - https://www.lwv.org/league-management/voter-services/VOTE411-resources-toolkit](#)

Last on this page, click on “Save & Continue”

**2) On the next page determine which “Category”** your race falls into. Some examples are Libraries, Schools, Judges, County Officials, County Townships, etc. From the drop-down menu, choose the one that best describes the type of race you are entering. If you don’t see the correct category for your race, you can create a new category. You can also reorder your categories in the same order as your ballot.

Click “Continue” when you are ready to move on.

**3) Next up is race “Description.”** The easiest way to fill this in is to find a description of a race that matches as closely as possible to the race you are creating. When you find the one you want to copy, highlight it and then copy/paste to a blank Word document. You can do all your editing in the Word doc and when you’re ready, you can then highlight and copy/paste it directly back to the guide in the race “Description” section.

If you do not have a race description to copy, feel free to reach out to the VOTE411 Admin or put the question out on the [VOTE411 Admin Listserv](#) by subscribing to [VOTE411+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:VOTE411+subscribe@groups.io). Someone else has most likely made a similar description at some point along the way.

Click “Continue” when you are ready to move on.

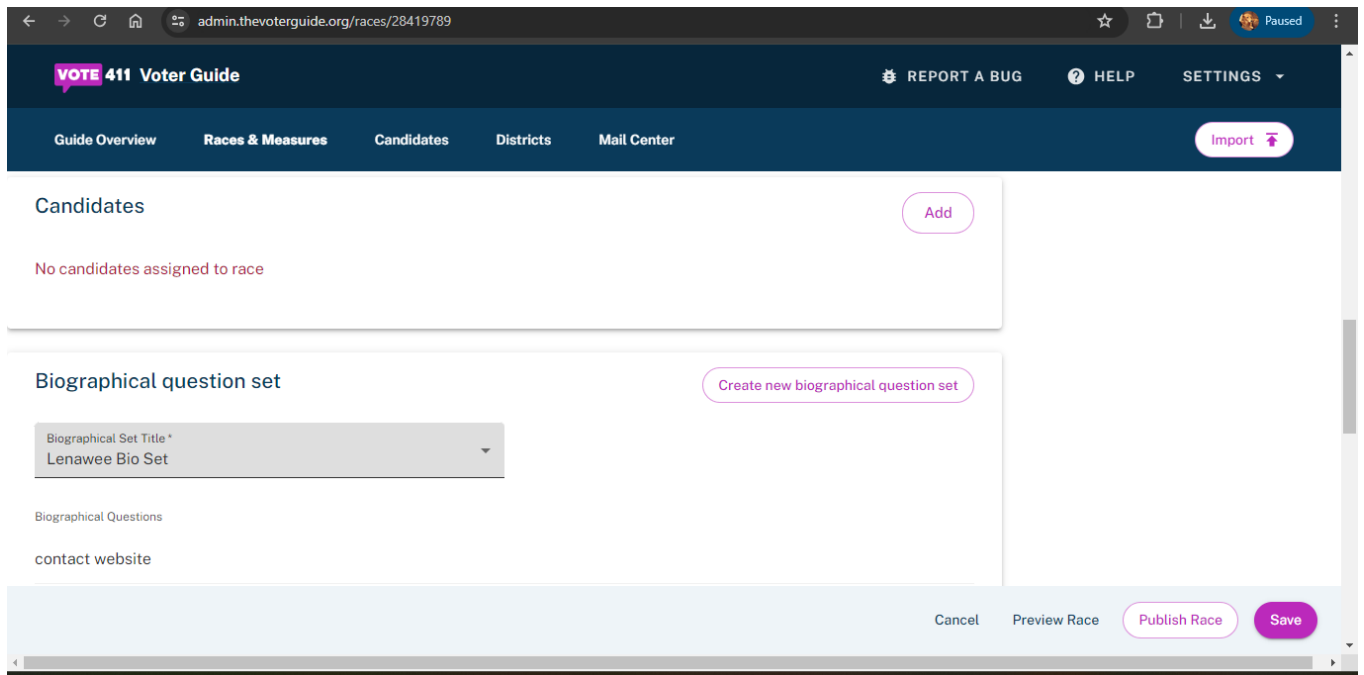
**4) The next screen allows you to manually enter candidates** for the race. If you already have your candidate information, you can enter here (see “[CANDIDATES](#)” section in this guide). If you only want to create the race at this juncture, simply click on “Skip” at the bottom and you can move on. You can always come back later to enter candidates.

**5) Moving on, the next screen allows you to select the appropriate “Biographical Questions”** for your race. Biographical questions are the information candidates provide that allow voters to find additional information about their campaigns. It includes information about their contact information, email address, and perhaps their social media sites. Only information the candidates complete will be visible online. You have three choices:

- Use an existing biographical set – choose this if you already have a set in your system that is appropriate for the race you are creating.
- Create a new biographical set – choose this if you will need to create a set.
- Use all biographical questions – this will use ALL of the biographical questions already set up within your guide.

If you choose “Use an existing biographical set”, you will need to select which “Biographical Set Title” you want to use. Some examples might be:

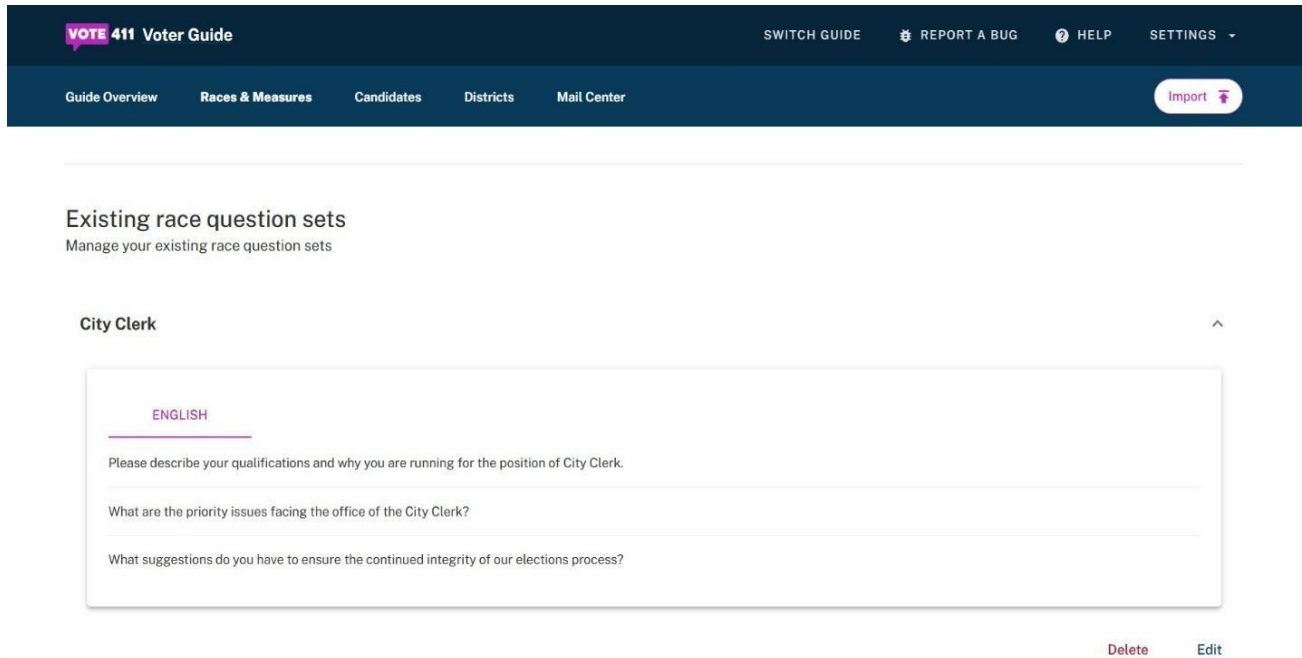
- “Generic” (a generic set of informational questions that apply to many races),
- “Bio Set” (a set of biographical questions your local league creates that relate to information voters in your area are most interested in) or,
- “Measures” (a biographical set of questions for Measures). Select the one that applies closest to your race. Once you select the most appropriate one, you will see a list of the questions that are included in the set you have chosen. When you are ready, click “Continue” to head to the next page.



The screenshot shows the admin interface for 'VOTE 411 Voter Guide'. The top navigation bar includes 'REPORT A BUG', 'HELP', and 'SETTINGS'. The main menu has 'Guide Overview', 'Races & Measures', 'Candidates', 'Districts', and 'Mail Center'. The 'Candidates' section is active, showing 'No candidates assigned to race' and an 'Add' button. Below this is the 'Biographical question set' section, which includes a 'Create new biographical question set' button, a dropdown menu for 'Biographical Set Title' (currently set to 'Lenawee Bio Set'), and a list of 'Biographical Questions' with 'contact website' as an example. At the bottom, there are 'Cancel', 'Preview Race', 'Publish Race', and 'Save' buttons.

**6) Next add your race questions.** Race questions are the questions your league decides to ask candidates relating to the race. Voters will be able to view the answers to these questions and compare the answers with other candidates’ answers. Like before, you have options:

- Use an existing race question set
- Create a new race question set



Choose the most appropriate one. If you have chosen an existing set, you will be prompted to select which set you want. Click on “Select a Race Question Set” to see the ones you can choose from. Again, using our example, a race question set might be “Village Clerk”, “Village Council”, or “Village Treasurer.” Once you select the one you want, you will see the questions listed below.

If you need to create a new race question set, you will see an area at the bottom of the page where you can do this. You will need to type in the “Set Title”, select a “Question Type”, and character limit. Next, click on “Add Question” and continue for as many questions as you need to add for the race. If you need help, your fellow admins are always ready to help.

When you are ready, click “Continue” to move on.

**7) Review: use this opportunity to review the race you have created.** Once you are satisfied with how the race looks, click on “Save Race”. You should now be able to see this race when you are on the main page of your dashboard under “Races and Measures”.

**NOTE:** when you are in review mode, there are “Edit” buttons next to each section. If you need to make any changes, click this button and you’ll be able to add/amend/delete any information you need to.

## Entering A Measure

Once you have requested and received a complete list of the measures from your County/City Clerk for the upcoming election, you can begin to input them into the system. You will see right away this is very similar to entering races with just a few distinct differences.

Review the measure names and descriptions and make sure they are part of your league district. If you have a measure that overlaps another county, consult with that county unit and agree on who should enter the measure into the system. In general, the unit that has the majority of the voters in their area should be the ones posting the measure.

**1) In “Districting”,** first you will choose Michigan as the appropriate state. You will then be prompted to select a “District Type.” Select the District Type that goes with the measure you are creating. Lastly, you will be prompted to select a “District.”

Copy the “Measure Name” from the list of Measures received from the Clerk. The measure name needs to be exactly as it will appear on the ballot.

Last on this page, click on “Save & Continue”

**2) Choose your “Category.”** Select the category for your measure (for example: Measure or Proposal). If it does not exist, follow the “**Create a Category**” directions to create it.

Click on “Continue” when you are ready to move on.

**3) The “Enter a measure description”** field must match the description of the measure precisely as it appears in the information provided by your County Clerk.

When you have completed this you can click on “Continue.”

**4) “Add candidates to this measure”:** **SKIP THIS PAGE!!** Scroll to the bottom and click “Continue”.

**5) “Assign biographical questions”** to a Measure. This is either no questions for a Measure or can be used to explained what a “yes” or “no vote means on a measure. Choose one of the following:

- **Option 1)** You have no additional information on the measure, choose the blank biographical question set named “Measures” you created in ***Biographical Questions & Sets***.
- **Option 2)** You do have additional information that explains what a “yes” or “no” vote means on the measure, you choose the biographical questions for that measure, you created in ***Biographical Questions & Sets***. Contact the LWV MI VOTE411 Director if you use this option and have questions.

Click “Continue” when you are ready to move to the next page.

**7) Last, you will be prompted to review the measure you have input.** If all looks good, you can click “Save Measure.”

You will note that each section can be edited from this page.

# CANDIDATES

## Working With Candidates:

After the candidate filing deadline has passed, obtain the list of candidates running for office from your county/city clerk. Deadlines are usually set 15 weeks before an election. (Nominating petitions and Affidavits of Identity are generally due, in Michigan, on the fifteenth Tuesday **before** the election by 4 p.m.).

Candidates are entered within the race that you have previously created. They can either be entered manually or through a bulk import.

**NOTE:** candidates cannot live in the system without being assigned to a race, so you need your races set up before you can start adding candidates.

## Manual Candidate Input

At the top of the Candidates landing page, you'll see an "Add candidate" button toward the top, right hand corner of the page. If you click that you'll see where you can manually add the candidate and assign them to their race.

The screenshot shows a form for adding a candidate. On the left, there is a profile picture placeholder with a 'Change Photo' link and a pencil icon. The form fields are as follows:

- Full Name \***: Amy W. Cox
- Last Name \***: 02Cox (with a note: "This field is used to alphabetize and won't be shown on the guide.")
- Race \***: Clerk of Court, Spartanburg County (dropdown menu)
- Status**: Created (dropdown menu)
- Candidate Type**: Race (with a help icon)
- Security Code**: 9XKMRCAU
- Party \***: Three radio button options: Megan, Unaffiliated, Cst. Below the options, it says "1 Party Selected".
- Contact's Name**: (empty text field)
- Contact's Email**: amywcox@icloud.com

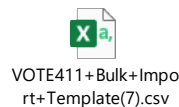
When entering a candidate's full name, last name, political party must be added.

- Ballot order is determined by adding a prefix number to the candidates last name (explained below - **Candidate Order on Ballot**). For example - **02Cox** above in Last Name.
- A Candidate can be added without email, and it will show on the ballot; however, an invitation to participate cannot be sent through the system.

## Bulk Import

The Bulk Import you'll use most often is through the Races and Measures landing page. You can import all your candidates at the same time.

**To bulk import**, click on the "Races and Measures" landing page and then click the Bulk Import action (to the left of Create Race). You'll land on the bulk import page with ALL the information you'll need to complete this process. Use the Bulk Import csv template below to add all the information you are importing.



Minimally your spreadsheet should include candidates full name, last name (preceded by appropriate ballot order prefix number - see Candidate Order on Ballot), race name, party and email address (if available).

**NOTE:** The **race name** in your spreadsheet must match **IDENTICALLY** the one you created in the system. Any little thing in the race description that does not match (... an extra space or comma - anything) will cause a duplicate race to be created. This duplicate will be easy to spot because it will not have a district or category attached - you'll need to delete these duplicates, once you've found your error, and re-enter correct information.

**After uploading your .csv file and clicking 'save,' the system will automatically send you an email with the status of your upload. If it was successful, your imported races should now appear in your guide. If there are any issues with the upload, you will also receive an email letting you know what errors you need to fix before attempting to import your spreadsheet again. If you continue to have issues, please email [VOTE411help@lww.org](mailto:VOTE411help@lww.org).**

### Candidate Order on Ballot:

- The order in which political parties are presented on the ballot is determined every 4 years. Michigan election law, MCL 168.703, stipulates that the party whose candidate receives the greatest number of votes for the office of Secretary of State shall be placed first on the ballot. The position of other political parties on the ballot is determined based on the same rule; the political party of the candidate that receives the second highest number of votes appears second and the political party of the candidate that receives the third highest number of votes appears third, etc.
- To establish this order in the VOTE411 system a number is assigned to each political party and that number is put "before" their last name when entering that data. If you're importing a spreadsheet this should also be indicated there. The number before a candidate's last name for **ballot order through the 2026 election** is as follows:
  - Democratic Party - 01
  - Republican Party - 02
  - Libertarian Party - 03
  - U.S. Taxpayers Party - 04

- Green Party - 05
- Working Class Party - 06
- Natural Law Party - 07

### Handling Write-Ins:

Your county clerk is not obligated to enter or provide any write-in candidate information. (Candidates do have to file paperwork in order to participate in an election, but you'll have no way of knowing that they did, unless the clerk verifies). If you have verification they have, and you intend to enter them into the system you, in fairness you should include all write-ins participating throughout your county. In VOTE411 you would enter the candidate's full name per the following example: Joe Smith (write-in).

**Note:** Leagues may choose not to enter any write-in candidates. It is the decision of the individual leagues on how to handle write-in candidates as they do not appear on the ballot.

# Candidate Dashboard

**VOTE 411 Voter Guide** REPORT A BUG HELP SETTINGS

Guide Overview Races & Measures **Candidates** Districts Mail Center Import

## Candidates

View the candidates that have been set up on your guide. Review our training materials for help to get started.

PAGE ACTIONS View Archived Candidates Add Candidate

Candidates							BULK ACTIONS: Archive
<input type="checkbox"/>	Name ↑	Party	Race/Initiative	Category	Campaign Finance	Status	Actions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alex LaPorte	NON	Vicksburg Community Schools School Board	Uncategorized	No Data	Created	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alyssa Schwili	NON	Climax Village Trustee	Uncategorized	No Data	Created	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Amy W. Cox	Rep	Clerk of Court, Spartanburg County	Uncategorized	No Data	Created	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Andrea Clark	NON	Comstock Township Library Board Trustee	Uncategorized	No Data	Created	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Andrew Ackley	NON	Augusta Village Trustee - Partial Term	Uncategorized	No Data	Created	⋮
<input type="checkbox"/>	Angela L. Geter	Dem	SC Senate District 11	Uncategorized	No Data	Created	⋮

Once a candidate has been entered into the system, from the candidate landing page you can click on a candidate’s name or click the “edit” link from the action icon to go to the candidate detail page. On this page you’ll see all the candidate information you added when you created the candidate, and any answers the candidate has submitted for the guide, in any language that the candidate submitted replies.

There are some actions you can do on this page that will directly affect the candidate. These include:

- Delete
- Archive
- View Activity Log - Details and screenshot
- Send an email
- Edit candidate information
- Save any changes

# MAIL CENTER

## General Instructions

**Note:** When you want to create a new template using the verbiage of an existing template, click on “**edit templates**” and open the existing template and copy the template text into a word/google doc. This will preserve the original template text without accidentally overriding it. Go back and click on “**Create a Template**” and then copy the text and edit as desired.

Select **Create a template** or **Edit templates**, to create or edit email templates for:

- Invitations to participate,
- Receipt (used for all races and the system automatically sends it out),
- Reminders,
- Bulk Emails, and
- Publish notices.

Be sure to **SAVE** each template frequently (at least every 3-4 minutes) while creating it.

The top of each template will have the following fields:

- **Name:** If you have more than one template of any type, label your template with a unique descriptive name so that you will know what its use is and can select the proper template for the Preview or Send.

(This title is only for internal use, and it’s not shown to candidates.)

**Examples:**

- Invitation: August Primary
- Invitation: School Board
- Reminder: Deadline extended
- Reminder: Response due by 6/2

**NOTE:** If a Candidate responds, the system sends an email response which is the “Receipt Template”.

- **Subject:** Let the candidate know what this email is about.  
**Examples:** LWV Voter Guide Questionnaire for VOTE411,  
LWV Questionnaire response due 6/2,  
LWV Voter Guide posted on VOTE411.org
- **Sender Name:** The email address used is [lwv.vote411@thevoterguide.org](mailto:lwv.vote411@thevoterguide.org)  
Use a Sender Name to identify that email ID with your League.  
**Examples:** LWVMI, League of Women Voters Flint.
- **Reply-To:** Email address you want any emailed responses sent to – usually sent by candidate who has a question. Ideally, this is an email which more than one member can access.

- **BCC:** Your personal email, your helpers' emails. This shows you exactly what the candidate received. You may or may not wish to receive a copy. BCC is handy if a candidate says they did not receive your invitation and asks you to resend it. You can just forward it.

## Invitation Templates

You may create one or several Invitation templates for generating email messages to send to candidates inviting them to participate in the League of Women Voters voter guide.

Macro fields are available to customize an Invitation template as it is sent. You will likely need to use #candidate\_name(), #race\_name(), #question\_list(), #response\_link(), and #security\_code().

If requesting photos, inform candidates of the requirements: Head shot with width: height ratio approximately 2:3 (i.e. taller than wide) in JPEG, JPG or PNG format and less than 2 MB in size.

Please include this text in your invitations:

*Guidelines: By participating in this activity sponsored by the League of Women Voters, a candidate agrees to the following:*

- *I will not upload false or defamatory words tending to harm another's reputation, business, or means of livelihood.*
- *I will not upload copyrighted or other legally protected material without the permission of the owner of such material*
- *I will not upload statements that include an incitement of violence, threats to any person or group of people, obscenities, or slurs.*
- *I will not upload any knowingly false information.*

*If you are in violation of these rules, you will be given the opportunity to update your response to comply with these rules. If you fail to comply, all or part of the statement(s) will be redacted.*

**NOTE:** If you have multiple Invitations, it will be important that you select the template with the proper NAME for the race or races being invited.

**NOTE:** In **even year elections** insert the following text in your Invitations:  
*Through a partnership with local news agency MLive, responses may be featured in articles on MLive.com and/or appear in print guides produced by MLive.*

## Receipt Template

One Receipt template is used for ALL races. **It must be set up BEFORE you send Invitations.** The system automatically sends the Receipt email to candidates when they click on Finished.

It is recommended that the receipt list the candidate's responses to the Bio info and Questions, so they have feedback on what they entered.

Use macro fields #bio\_responses() and #question\_responses().

Put your Email address in the BCC of the Receipt template so you are always alerted when a candidate replies or updates responses.

## Reminder Templates

Those candidates who have not responded should be sent a Reminder email a few days before the due date for responses. VOTE411 macros can again be used to customize one reminder for different races, etc. It is recommended that the list of bio items required, question set, and photo requirements be included in the reminder. (This email can be created later after invitations are sent.)

## Bulk Email Templates

These emails (also referred to as Email Blasts) are used to send messages for a variety of reasons that don't fit into one of the other categories. For example, to send a heads up notice before an invitation or to inform candidates that VOTE411 responses have been published.

**Congratulations!**

**This is a good time to ask someone to review your work.**

## PUBLISH

To **PUBLISH** the guide, there are several steps. Do this a few days prior to the 45 days prior to election, to be available when absentee ballots are issued to voters.

1. On the **Guide Overview** page, click the Submit Guide button at the top right. Please wait one business day before you proceed to the next step to Publish. You may send an email to LWVUS at [VOTE411help@lww.org](mailto:VOTE411help@lww.org), stating you are ready to publish your voter guide and have submitted it.
2. Click the **Publish** action next to each race and measure on the ballot. It is in the 3 dots section.
3. After 24 hrs. or so, put in some addresses from those communities to check and see if things look correct online.
4. Once things look okay online, send all the candidates an email noting that VOTE411 has been published and is able to be viewed online. Use the 'VOTE411 Responses Published' email template.

**NOTE:** Candidates can always edit their responses. You can also edit the questions (e.g. to fix a spelling error) even after the Guide is published, without affecting the candidate responses in the system.

**NOTE:** Candidate forum video links can be added to VOTE411.

- 1) You can send LWVUS at [VOTE411help@lww.org](mailto:VOTE411help@lww.org) links to candidate forum videos. The video links will appear on the voter's Plan Your Vote page. Unfortunately, the videos do not appear on the Ballot page.
- 2) You can also embed the link in the Race Description box for the appropriate race.

## ARCHIVING AN ELECTION

1. To save a copy of your races, including candidates and their responses, export the data. Go to **Races & Measures**, click on any of the races or measures you want to save (see below for how to filter), then at the **BULK ACTIONS** near the top of the section, click Export. You can save to a tab-separated or comma-separated file format.

To export only the races and measures you've published, you can filter the Election Races & Measures by Status (click the column of 3 dots that appear when you mouse/point over 'Status' in the header, then type 'Published' as the Value to filter on), then select all using the top checkbox, then click Export in the **BULK ACTIONS** area. Alternatively, you can select your races by clicking on them manually, then Export.

2. To unpublish races and measures, select published races/measures and use 3 dots to select Unpublish. If LWVUS has uploaded election-specific videos to VOTE411, contact them again to take them down.

3. After a primary, archive losing candidates and set winners to Uninvited (so can track for the general election).

4. To archive candidates, go to the Candidates section, then click on all the candidates you want to archive, then click 'Archive' at the top right BULK ACTIONS area. We recommend archiving candidates since they might run for another race in the future. They will be 'removed' from the guide, but they are still in the system.

5. **Delete all Measures and Proposals** for the election since they will not appear again. Also delete any partial term or special election races that will not be used in future. However, **do not delete your races**, except for special election races. This way you never have to create the race again

# APPENDIX

## HELPFUL LINKS FOR REFERENCE WHEN USING VOTE411

### For GIS/Shape Files

- Michigan Open Data – <https://gis-michigan.opendata.arcgis.com/search?sort=Title%7Ctitle%7Casc&tags=boundaries>
- Shape files resulting from US Census - <https://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/geo/shapefiles/index.php>
- Map of Michigan School Districts - <https://michigan.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=438dc453faf749d786e0c6e8be731cfd>

### For Township and Village Race Description:

- For townships - <https://michigantownships.org/about-townships/getting-involved/running-for-office/>
- For villages – Section 2, Chapter 5 of Michigan Municipal League Handbook for Municipal Officials (<https://mml.org/resources-research/handbooks-and-reports/>)

### Race Naming Guidelines: -

- <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/voter-services/VOTE411-resources-toolkit>

### For Ballot Order:

- Downloadable PDF of Ballot Standards through 2026 - <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/-/media/Project/Websites/sos/01mcalpine/BallotStandards.pdf?rev=b23f283983794d0bbaf539b764434c99&hash=9FD22B63E5D058DFC11919A77CBA1F11>

### For VOTE411 US Resources:

- Voter Resource Toolkit - <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/voter-services/VOTE411-resources-toolkit>