

UNITE AND RISE 8.5 SERIES

POWER PLAYBOOK 5

People Power Summer

MAY - JULY 2026



We believe in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy.



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1

About Unite and Rise 8.5

In May of 2025, after the declaration of a constitutional crisis for the first time in our history, the League of Women Voters launched the Unite and Rise 8.5 initiative, which **aims to mobilize** 8.5 million people, harnessing the power of voter engagement as a fundamental part of our democracy.

Unite and Rise 8.5 is more than an initiative; it's a movement-building strategy. Each 90-day arc connects us, grows our collective capacity, and pushes us closer to a democracy that truly reflects the people it serves. By centering women, partnerships, and power, we are building not just for this election cycle, but for the generations to come

Playbook 1 (May 2025 – July 2025): *Shifting Power Narratives* invited us to elevate the stories of everyday people being harmed by new federal policies, moving away from fear toward possibility.

Playbook 2 (August 2025 – October 2025): *Holding Power Accountable* handed us the opportunity to challenge mid-cycle redistricting and equip people and governors with tools to confront injustice and demand transparency.

Playbook 3 (November 2025 – January 2026): *Building Power Through Partnerships* demonstrated how we can multiply impact through partnerships and collective action.

Playbook 4 (February 2026 – April 2026): *Deepening Electoral Power* helps us reach new audiences and deepen partnerships within our communities as we employ strategies and resources to protect, engage, and turn out a record number of voters for the upcoming primary and general elections.

Playbook 5 (May 2026 – July 2026): *People Power Summer* continues our work around primaries and election preparation while highlighting the many ways individuals and communities can vote for an inclusive democracy. Activities will also connect to the 250th Anniversary of the US Declaration of Independence and prepare Leagues for a nationwide Day of Action on August 8, marking the anniversary of the *Voting Rights Act* and connecting its legacy to the battles we are fighting today.

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Four Pillars of Unite and Rise 8.5

1

Legal & Policy Advocacy: Challenge unconstitutional actions through litigation, advocate for electoral integrity reforms at state and federal levels, fight voter suppression, and protect due process.

2

Public Mobilization & Coalition Building: Organize millions of people for quick activations and longer-planned activist campaigns, uplift local voices, and partner with grassroots, national, and international organizations.

3

Civic Education & Engagement: Launch public awareness campaigns, expand voter registration and turnout efforts, host educational forums, connect policy to real-life impact, and equip people with tools to act.

4

Democracy Resilience: Build lasting infrastructure to protect democratic values and institutions for the long haul.



3

People Power Moves Democracy

On March 15, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson introduced the *Voting Rights Act* in direct response to the violent suppression of Black Americans fighting for their fundamental right to vote. Just days earlier, the nation had witnessed Alabama State Troopers brutally attack demonstrators marching from Selma to Montgomery to demand equal access to the ballot. Their courage made clear what was at stake: not an abstract idea of democracy, but the basic right of every American to participate in it. In his address to Congress, President Johnson acknowledged the role of civil rights leaders and the many people whose persistence and sacrifice forced the country to confront this injustice:

“The real hero of this struggle is the American Negro. His actions and protests, his courage to risk safety and even to risk his life, have awakened the conscience of this nation. His demonstrations have been designed to call attention to injustice, designed to provoke change, designed to stir reform. He has called upon us to make good promise of America. And who among us can say that we would have made the same progress were it not for his persistent bravery and his faith in America.”

Setting aside the gendered language common at the time, history shows that it was everyday people who drove the government to act against deeply rooted injustice. As author Nick Kotz noted in *Judgement Days*, his book about the passage of the *Voting Rights Act*, it was a coalition of people of all races, politicians, the famous, the anonymous, and foot soldiers who, through persistent action, led the way that resulted in the enactment of the law that transformed American democracy.

Over time, the actions of the people influenced the willingness of President Johnson and like-minded elected officials to join the relentless call for equality and propose laws to protect all the people. This is the history that we invoke as today we observe and commemorate the passage of the *Voting Rights Act*, signed into law just six months after its introduction.

Today, we are once again caught up in the cycle of history where we are faced with the daunting task of reclaiming our democracy from an administration that is dedicated to overturning the progress toward equality for all.

As the leaders and foot soldiers of the past built a coalition to fight back against rampant entrenched discrimination, we are being called to create or join coalitions in each of our communities. In the months ahead, we will deepen partnerships, strengthen our collective infrastructure, and prepare for a nationwide day of action – while building toward the critical work of supporting voters in the 2026 midterm elections.

4

Planning for the Midterms

People Power Summer provides a unifying framework for voters and activists. This period is not a pause between campaigns, but a time to accelerate the core work that drives voter participation: registration, education, engagement, and turnout. The actions outlined in this playbook build directly on those introduced in Playbook 4 and are designed to continue, deepen, and expand over the months ahead, ensuring Leagues strengthen their reach and impact in every community.

Throughout May, June, and July, primary elections provide a powerful opportunity to engage voters early, build relationships, and identify new leaders. *People Power Summer* turns this primary election engagement into long-term voter power by moving participants along a clear path:

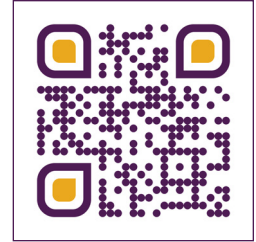


Each interaction with a voter – whether through a registration drive, a candidate forum, or a community conversation – is an opportunity not only to support participation in the primary but also to invite deeper involvement in the work ahead.

Leagues should approach this period as a continuation and expansion of their core voter engagement efforts, fortified through intentional organizing and community-building. Whether you have been registering voters, hosting educational events, building partnerships, or engaging new audiences, this is a moment to scale that work with a focus on sustained impact. The goal is to not only support voters in upcoming primaries but to build a durable base of engaged community members who will stay connected throughout the summer and into fall.

People Power Summer provides a unifying framework for our work. As Leagues plan for primary engagement, the National Day of Action, and the months beyond, the same core strategies should guide every effort: meet voters where they are, deepen local partnerships, and create clear, accessible pathways for ongoing participation. In doing so, we are not only preparing for November, we are building relationships, infrastructure, and the momentum needed to sustain democratic participation in the long term.

5



Primary to Power Pipeline

On August 8, 2026, Leagues across the country are invited to take part in Unite and Rise for Voting Rights, a National Day of Action marking the legacy of the *Voting Rights Act* of 1965 and the ongoing work required to protect and expand access to the ballot. This day serves as both a culmination of summer organizing and a launch point for intensified midterm mobilization, transforming individual acts of participation into shared, visible, and sustained civic action. While several cities will host larger signature events, the strength of this effort will come from Leagues in communities nationwide, leading locally rooted actions that engage new people and build momentum ahead of November.

To support planning, **Leagues will have access to a Planning Toolkit on the League Management Site**, which offers guidance on how to prepare, carry out, and track your action. In addition, a **Menu of Activations outlines a range of low, medium, and higher-lift ways to participate**. Together, these resources are designed to make participation practical and achievable, whether your League is planning a simple voter engagement activity or a larger community-centered event.

Leagues are invited to participate in a way that reflects local capacity, relationships, and community context. **Our first collective step is simple: review the Menu of Activations and register your League's selected action by May 15.** Early registration will help the League provide stronger support in the weeks ahead, including tailored trainings, planning resources, and data guidance based on the types of actions Leagues choose. This is our opportunity to show the scale of League leadership across the country and begin building a coordinated, people-powered effort for voting rights this summer.

6

People Power Summer: A 90-Day Guide

May

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Primary election dates are subject to change. For the most updated information, visit <https://www.vote411.org/primaries2026>.

KEY: 4 PILLARS | MAY PRIMARY PILLAR

- Legal & Policy Advocacy
- Civic Education & Engagement
- Public Mobilization & Coalition Building
- Democracy Resilience*
Daily Democracy Practice

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Introduction to Playbook 5 and the 8/8 Day of Action 5 IN, OH Primary 7 Digital Democracy: Media Literacy for Democratic Participation Today 12 NE, WV Primary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 Voter Education Resources during the 2026 Election Cycle 15 Deadline to Select Day of Action Activity 16 LA Primary 19 AL, GA, ID, KY, OR, PA Primary 25 Memorial Day |
|---|--|

LEARN

PARTICIPATE

UNITE AND RISE 8.5 SERIES | Power Playbook 5

Primary education, voter readiness, and early engagement

May is a critical entry point for voter engagement. As primary elections begin across multiple states, Leagues should focus on equipping voters with the information and confidence they need to participate. This is also a key moment to reach new audiences and introduce them to the League's work.

Be sure to join the Introduction to Playbook 5 and the 8/8 Day of Action on May 4!

Proposed Actions

- Host "Know Before You Go" campaigns** with clear information on registration deadlines, voting rules, and polling locations.
- Promote "Make Your Voting Plan" tools** and assist voters in preparing for Election Day or early voting.
- Hold virtual or in-person "teach-in" workshops.** Teach communities the basics about how primaries work in their state and why they matter. This is a great opportunity to partner with local election officials.
- Utilize VOTE411.org resources** to help voters research candidates and ballot issues.
- Organize pop-up voter engagement events** in high-traffic locations such as community colleges, transit hubs, and community events like farmers markets or fairs.
- Conduct relational organizing efforts** (friend banks, family outreach) encouraging each person to reach 5 more people in their network.
- Partner with your local election officials** to build/maintain trust and ensure accurate, accessible information.

Build the Pipeline

- Invite every engaged voter** to stay connected beyond the primary.
- Begin recruiting volunteers and partners** for summer activities and the August 8 National Day of Action!

June

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Primary election dates are subject to change. For the most updated information, visit <https://www.vote411.org/primaries2026>.

KEY: 4 PILLARS
JUNE PRIMARY PILLARS

- Legal & Policy Advocacy
- Public Mobilization & Coalition Building
- Civic Education & Engagement
- Democracy Resilience*

[Daily Democracy Practice](#)

Pride Month

- 2 CA, IA, MT, NJ, NM, SD Primary
- 2 Digital Democracy: Media Literacy for Democratic Participation Today
- 9 ME, ND, NV, SC Primary
- 16 DC, OK Primary
- 19 Juneteenth
- 23 MD, NY, UT Primary
- 30 CO Primary



Primary turnout, voter follow-up, and leadership development

Proposed Actions

- Organize a “Vote Together”** initiatives such as carpools, walk-to-the-polls groups, or faith-based/community voting on Sundays.
- Launch a “Family Voting Pledge” drive** to encourage collective participation. Share photos/stories.
- Plan a Primary Ballot Party!** Invite your family, friends, and neighbors to complete their ballots together.
- Conduct post-primary follow-up with voters** to thank them and invite further involvement.
- Host “Primary Debrief” conversations** to understand voter experience, barriers, and priorities.
- Recruit and train volunteers** for roles like election observers, outreach ambassadors, and event organizers for elections and future activations.
- Continue relational organizing** through friend banks and community outreach.
- Spotlight stories** of multigenerational or first-time voters in your local community to inspire others to participate.

Build the Pipeline

- Transition voters into volunteers** by offering clear next steps (e.g., next meeting or action).
- Identify and support emerging leaders** within your community. People of all ages can participate in some way!
- Actively invite participants** to help plan or participate in the August 8 activities.

July

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Primary election dates are subject to change. For the most updated information, visit <https://www.vote411.org/primaries2026>.

KEY: 4 PILLARS
JULY PRIMARY PILLAR

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Legal & Policy Advocacy ■ Civic Education & Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public Mobilization & Coalition Building ■ Democracy Resilience* <u>Daily Democracy Practice</u>
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- 4 250th Anniversary of the USA
- 17 - 19 Good Trouble Lives On events honoring civil rights icon John Lewis
- 21 AZ Primary
- 22 Observer Corps Training



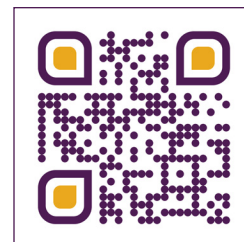
Volunteer and leadership activation, voter protection, and mass mobilization invite

Proposed Actions

- Recruit and train** election observers and voter protection volunteers.
- Host community information sessions** on voting procedures, rights, and expectations.
- Plan a Ballot Party!** Invite your family, friends, and neighbors to complete their ballots together.
- Partner with local media and trusted community partners/leaders** to counter misinformation and amplify reliable election information.
- Integrate 250th anniversary programming** (see Guidance: Navigating Nonpartisanship and the 250th Anniversary on page 14).
- Launch final recruitment pushes** for August 8 participation.
- Encourage participants** to bring 2 others into the movement.
- Host a monthly friend bank** with League members and partners focusing on registration, early voting, learning about candidates, or other voting information.

Build the Pipeline

- Activate trained volunteers** into leadership roles for August 8.
- Confirm participation and roles** for National Day of Action events.
- Use every engagement opportunity** to drive participation in the National Day of Action.



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Resources

Full resources, toolkits, and trainings for Leagues to work with partners in this micro-campaign and the National Day of Action can be found on the League Management Site at lww.org/playbook5.

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Milestones and Measuring Success

Success is not only participation in isolated events, but the number of people who move from initial engagement to sustained civic action. Over these 90 days, our milestones will measure:

- **Engagement:** the number of members and partners participating in events, trainings, and coalition activities.
 - # of primary voters contacted and re-engaged
 - # of attendees and volunteers engaged
 - # of new contacts
- **Reach:** how far our message travels through new partnerships, communities, and digital media platforms.
 - Social media engagement around VOTE411
 - Number of volunteers converted to August 8 commitments
- **Impact:** tracking voter registration efforts, community election corps formed, and stories of collective action that inspire replication.

We will measure progress with a mix of quantitative data (participation counts, partnerships formed) and qualitative stories that capture the spirit of building power through coalition.



9

League Engagement for the 250th Anniversary of the US Declaration of Independence

Many Leagues have asked how to engage with America250 this summer. The League of Women Voters is not a national partner of the America250 organization; however, we encourage state and local Leagues to engage with the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in ways that align with League principles and the framework outlined below.

The 250th anniversary will mean different things to different people – and that’s exactly why the League is well-positioned to lead. This framework isn’t a script; it’s a through-line for moving conversations beyond surface-level celebration toward something more honest and durable. The sequence matters. We begin with Commemorate with Honesty, meeting people where they are while grounding the work in the founding aspiration. We then Recognize the Expanders, those in every generation who fought to make that promise real. We close by Building an Inclusive Democracy Together, because the League exists not to curate history, but to build democracy. Leagues should adapt the language and examples to their communities while preserving the sequence and spirit.

Commemorate with Honesty

We begin with commemoration because the founding promise still matters: the idea that power belongs to the people, not those in charge. But honoring that promise honestly means telling the full story. From the start, those ideals were not extended to most people, and closing that gap has always taken work. Every expansion of democracy in this country – from ending slavery to winning suffrage, civil rights, and disability rights – happened because ordinary people organized, spoke up, and insisted the country live up to its own words. The League was founded by women who did exactly that. We are not watching democracy from the sidelines – we’ve been building it, generation after generation.

Sample Activity:

- 250 Conversations Campaign** – Each League aims to make 250 meaningful contacts in their community through conversations, outreach, or events that connect the anniversary to today’s fight for an inclusive democracy.

Recognize the Expanders

The Expanders are the people who were left out of the founding promise and refused to accept that exclusion. They organized, marched, testified, and fought to make voting and citizenship real for themselves and others. They didn’t reject America; they held it to its word. From suffragists to the civil rights movement, from Black and Brown communities to disability rights, LGBTQ+ equality, immigrant justice, and Asian American and Pacific Islander organizers, democracy has grown because people demanded it. These efforts are the heart of the American story, carried forward by those who believed in the promise even when the country lagged behind.

Sample Activities:

- Shine a light on lesser-known civil rights foot soldiers by hosting events that share their stories and impact.
- Invite newly registered voters to record a short video sharing why they plan to vote in 2026.

Build an Inclusive Democracy Together

This is where we turn history into action. Commemoration and recognition matter, but they only mean something if they move us to act today. Voting rights are still under threat. Access to the ballot is still unequal. And too often, the same communities pushed to the margins in the past face the highest barriers now. The 250th anniversary isn't a moment to look back and move on — it's a call to show up again. The League was born from people who organized, refused to wait, and demanded change. That tradition continues when we take action now, with urgency, because the stakes are high and democracy only works when people do.

Sample Activities:

- Invite voters at events, tables, or online to make a simple public commitment: *"I commit to vote for democracy in 2026."*
- Ask participants to sign a commitment card, write their reason for voting, or record a short video sharing why participation matters to them.
- Encourage participants to bring one or two others to register, vote, and join the August 8 National Day of Action.

Participating in Protests

As more League members and partners engage in public demonstrations this summer, it's important to prioritize both safety and nonpartisanship. The League affirms the right to peaceful protest while recognizing that even well-planned events can carry risks.

Our Protest Safety Guidance offers key reminders on how to prepare, stay aware, and protect yourself and others — from making an exit plan and bringing essentials, to understanding how to de-escalate tense situations and knowing your rights.

We encourage all participants to review the full guidance, available via the League Management Site, before attending any protest or rally.



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What's Ahead

To help Leagues plan ahead, this brief preview of future micro-campaigns highlights upcoming efforts designed to build momentum over time, support local planning, and align our collective work around key civic moments.

Playbook 6: Power Rising (August – October 2026). Our final micro-campaign shifts our focus to mobilization and making our voices heard at the ballot box. This period will include a League-wide August 8 activation celebrating the anniversary of the *Voting Rights Act*, in partnership with partners and allies, to underscore the importance of the November election.

November: Protecting the Vote. Following Election Day, we will concentrate on protecting our collective power by responding to and defending against attacks on election results, ballot counting, and democratic processes.

11



Closing Inspiration

As we enter this next phase of Unite & Rise 8.5, we are stepping into a season that demands visibility, energy, and action. *People Power Summer* is where preparation turns into powerful activism. It's where our work moves into communities, into conversations, and into the spaces where democracy is strengthened — person by person.

We believe in the power of women and all allies who stand with them to create a more perfect democracy, and that power is most visible when it is shared. This summer is about showing up together, reaching voters who have been left out, bringing new voices into the process, and making participation feel both possible and urgent.

This moment calls for bold, collective action. It calls on us to meet people where they are, to build trust at scale, and to turn connection into commitment. Whether you are hosting an event, partnering in your community, or preparing for our National Day of Action on August 8, every step you take builds momentum heading into the fall.

People power is not abstract — it is built in real time, by all of us, together.

And that truth is not new. It is part of this country's long tradition. In 1920, when women won the right to vote, and in 1965, when President Johnson addressed Congress after Selma, progress came not through institutions alone but through ordinary people acting with courage and persistence — people who believed deeply enough in the promise of America to demand it live up to its ideals.

That same spirit carries us forward now. Our charge is to honor that legacy not just with words, but with action – by turning out a record number of voters who believe that access to the ballot, affordable living, and freedom are worth fighting and *voting* for.

I invite you to lean into this work with urgency and intention. Bring people in. Build something bigger than any one effort. And carry this momentum forward so that when we enter the next phase, we are not just ready – we are unstoppable.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CWS', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Celina Stewart, Esq.
CEO, League of Women Voters