



SACRED SEASON OF VOTING

A Voter Action Toolkit by the
Faithful Democracy Campaign for the
2020 General Election

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The 2020 Sacred Season of Voting

Background:

This year COVID-19 will lead many people to vote early-in-person or vote-by-mail. Special circumstances call for mass voter education and mobilization efforts to amplify the importance of voting early.

Accordingly, Faithful Democracy invites you to participate in a multi-faith voter action campaign from Thursday, October 1st through the election. Each week, a simple toolkit is posted with strategic faith messaging, social media, and reflections grounded in key religious markers to communicate the significance of this season of voting to people of faith.

“As trusted messengers, faith leaders have the unique opportunity to mobilize, educate, register, protect and inspire communities to vote in the 2020 election.”

- [Faithful Voter Toolkit](#), Faith in Public Life

All three Abrahamic traditions and other major world religions incorporate seasonal celebrations, observed holy days and other markers for times of special importance to the faithful. Communally moving through these events with focused intentions serves to deepen faith and solidarity among believers. Collective observances help communities of faith maintain cohesion, fortify collective memory, and provide grounding in a greater power at work. Faithful Democracy and our multi-faith partners bring this familiar practice to bear for the 2020 general election.

The Sacred Season of Voting is meant to be a resource to ground voters in faith during a turbulent, anxious time and to energize people of faith around the power of the vote in this extended 2020 election season. Our accompanying toolkit aims to help voters take the necessary steps to ensure they cast their ballots safely and successfully while avoiding the common pitfalls seen in some 2020 primary elections. The Sacred Season of Voting moves us through the difficult weeks leading up to November 3rd and prepares us for the potential uncertainty as results are certified.

Each week we will pull from themes of holy celebrations observed by our multi-faith partners, including: Sukkot, the Feast of St. Francis and St. Luke, Mawlid al-Nabi al-Sharif, Navaratri, and the Feast of All Saints. Weekly reflections grounded in the religious holy days are combined with messaging around key election benchmarks, online resources and helpful tips that can be shared on social media.

In a secular democracy, participating in the political process through voting is a similarly sacred, communal, and familiar experience. We hope that by tying sacred themes to this period of voting, we can mobilize more voters of faith into action. We encourage participation and use of this campaign in whatever way is most helpful. Let us know how you'll use the Sacred Season of Voting: [\[link\]](#)

Week 5 Contents

- [Title & Theme for the Week:](#)
- [Faith Messaging:](#)
- [Strategic Messaging for this Week](#)
- [Engagement Opportunities](#)
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- [Sample Social Media](#)
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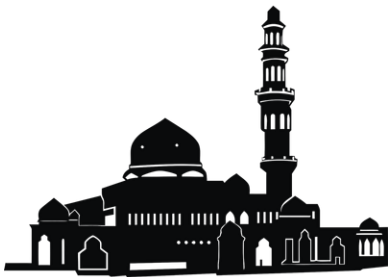
Faith Messaging:

The fifth week of the Sacred Season of Voting begins with a remarkable benchmark of [60 million](#) ballots cast early by American voters. As we celebrate this historic record, we look at the Muslim celebration of Mawlid al-Nabi al-Sharif and reflect further on the 2020 election.

Mawlid al-Nabi al-Sharif is the observance of the birthday of Islamic prophet Muhammad. Although it is not an official holiday of the Islamic faith, it marks one of the most important events in the yearly calendar for many Muslims around the world. It is a time to celebrate the founder of their faith and to remember his life and teachings as captured in their holy scripture, the Qur'an.

Islam's founding prophet was born in Mecca in the latter part of the 6th Century. Muhammed's new religion constituted a significant break from existing moral and social codes in Arabia at the time. His teachings built upon and broke away from the existing Abrahamic traditions of Judaism and Christianity. Muhammed affirmed one God, revealed throughout history by a series of prophets and messengers: Moses and Jesus were included among those ranks and were followed by Muhammad, as the culmination. An insistence on the oneness of God and on a divine obligation to accountability for social and economic justice marked Muhammad's earliest teachings.

Accordingly, many Muslims aim to fulfill civic duties out of a shared religious mandate to engage in the political process to advance the common good. *Shura* in this sense emphasizes the responsibility of civil society to engage and for the state to in-turn ensure a representative process. In *Surah ash-Shura* (42:38), the Qur'an emphasizes *shura* as a critical concept on a par with prayer (*salah*) and charity (*zakat*). As such, *sharia* functions as a guide for Muslims to exercise their judgment in discerning and engaging with contemporary civic and political realities.



The Qur'an calls believers to advance together towards all notions of good (*birr*)—to resist and subdue modern manifestations of corruption, inequality, rejection, exploitation and degradation in the social order. The faith obliges Muslims to apply their creativity and reason in discerning what is good and to take action to bring it about. This obligation of believers that undergirds the Islamic faith lends clarity and may encourage us within our contemporary reality and circumstances. We may be called to reflect deeply on our democratic obligations beyond simply voting.

Soon after Election Day, voting will end and the window for counting ballots will diminish over time and will vary by state. The national focus will pivot to the process of tallying votes to assess election results. As faithful citizens we may need to discern how to engage with that process.

Accounting for unprecedented levels of voter turn-out and a deluge of mailed ballots under new COVID protocols could take time. Fraught political dynamics in a high-stakes election may mean a tense period of waiting for results. While the administrative process of counting those votes plays out, what is our responsibility to ensure a representative, transparent process? After Election Day we must remain vigilant and ready to publicly call for accountability from our election administrators and decision-makers. **What will we accept and what we will demand as those votes get tallied?**

Week 5: The Final Push Before Election Day

October 26 - November 1, 2020

[60 million](#) people have voted thus far in the 2020 general election. The unprecedented surge in early voting is due in large part to the rise in vote-by-mail, but many states are also seeing high levels of [early in-person voting](#)--at least 19 million went to early polling stations to vote in person. This is despite an overall [20%](#) reduction in the number of polling places from 2016. Six states have eliminated at least half of their polling places for the 2020 election: California, Kentucky, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, and North Dakota. While some states have reformed their election systems to compensate for the pandemic, like expanding vote-by mail accessibility, others have not, like Texas and Georgia. These failures result in voter suppression. While we are seeing high voter engagement in spite of increased barriers it unfortunately suggests that a greater number of people were disenfranchised, as well. This is a moral failure of our election system.

This week of the Sacred Season of Voting will center on pushing out and lifting up the remaining opportunities to exercise the right to vote before Election Day comes. There is still ample time to vote early. In this final push before election day, we want people to arrive fully prepared to vote early in-person; alternatively, we want to ensure they submit their mail-in ballot successfully and on time.

We anticipate an upsurge in in-person voting over the coming days. With more people at the polls, there are likely to be incidences of conflict with social and political tensions so high. Faith leaders have a unique and important role to play in helping overcome these challenges which also present opportunities to protect and insulate against attacks on democracy. Equipping voters with information to know their rights and to push back against voter intimidation will be needed and combating disinformation will be critical. Maintaining confidence in our election systems is key. Misinformation and false narratives about the integrity of vote-by-mail is corrosive to our democracy and for turnout. People of faith are called to bolster faith in our democratic systems and patience with the process. Publicly modeling patience and composure during this time will help temper anxieties.

There are still many opportunities to energize, inform, register, protect and inspire communities to vote in the 2020 election. The following resource provides opportunities for engagement along with interreligious spiritual grounding.

Strategic Messaging for Week 5:

It's Not Too Late to Vote Early: You can vote in-person now in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Early voting is a safe way to guarantee your vote is counted and avoid crowds on Election Day.

Registration Deadlines Have Passed - But Same Day Registration is Still An Option in Some States

Register to Vote: Registration deadlines have passed--although some states offer same-day registration. Many states allow voters to register in-person on election day.

- Always [double-check](#) to make sure you're registered--if you've moved, lost your home, or haven't voted in a while. If you're not, check if you can register the same day you vote!

Election Day Registration

These states offer same-day registration on Nov.3

Alabama	no	Mississippi	no
Alaska	yes	Missouri	no
Arizona	no	Montana	yes
Arkansas	no	Nebraska	no
California	yes	Nevada	yes
Colorado	yes	New Hampshire	yes
Connecticut	yes	New Jersey	no
Delaware	no	New Mexico	no
District of Columbia	yes	New York	no
Florida	no	North Carolina	no
Georgia	no	North Dakota	no
Hawaii	yes	Ohio	no
Idaho	yes	Oklahoma	no
Illinois	yes	Oregon	no
Indiana	no	Pennsylvania	no
Iowa	yes	Rhode Island	no
Kansas	no	South Carolina	no
Kentucky	no	South Dakota	no
Louisiana	no	Tennessee	no
Maine	yes	Texas	no
Maryland	yes	Utah	yes
Massachusetts	no	Vermont	yes
Michigan	yes	Virginia	no
Minnesota	yes	Washington	yes
		West Virginia	no
		Wisconsin	yes
		Wyoming	yes



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States That Offer Same Day Registration

[\[Download Graphic\]](#)

Vote by Mail - Return Your Ballot, Today!

Request a Mail-in Ballot and Turn it in: Vote-by-mail (VBM) or "Absentee voting" looks different in each state. All but three states have some system for dropping off your ballot--many have easily accessible drop-off locations or dropboxes. Missouri, Mississippi, and Tennessee do not have remote drop off returns at all. In some places you may be able to deliver your mail-in ballot to your Board of Election, or drop it off at a polling place.

Return your mail-in ballot by Election Day at a secure drop-off location if at all possible, deliver via USPS **if you have to and do it now**. Don't forget to follow the instructions carefully and be sure to use the security envelope.

VBM Deadlines: It's getting late in the season, but the deadline to request a mail-in ballot is different for each state, and can differ if you're requesting a VBM ballot online or by mail. Requesting a mail-in ballot may be possible online, consider going that route to avoid any possible delays.

- Visit <https://www.voteamerica.com/vote-by-mail-deadlines/> to see these deadlines.

Options for Returning Your Ballot:

- Research Your State's Drop-off Options.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1LLT35dKXTUohlSx3dGuBDKjZRXwd4Xc7fdJPwuF0ghI/edit?usp=sharing>

Voting In-Person if You Change Your Mind: Though vote-by mail is a secure and safe process, some policy decisions at USPS have created uncertainty about the expediency of the process. If you have concerns about your mail-in ballot arriving on time to be counted (some states allow counting ballots after election day if postmarked by Nov. 3), you may want to consider voting in-person. We encourage you to stick to your voting plan, but if you change your mind to vote in-person, this should be possible with little hassle. According to ProPublica, in some states, you'll be allowed to cast a regular ballot, and in others you'll cast a "provisional" ballot, which is just a ballot that is kept on hold until eligibility is confirmed.

You'll want to bring your mail ballot with you to the polling place or election office in case it needs to be voided or destroyed, and you might be required to sign an affidavit stating that you did not already vote by mail.

- Research Your State's Voting Guidelines if you do change your mind:
<https://www.propublica.org/article/what-to-do-if-you-change-your-mind-about-voting-by-mail>

Vote Early In-Person At Your Convenience

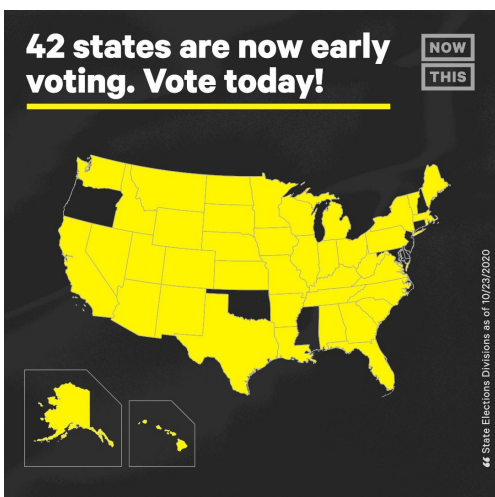
Where to Vote: Many states are currently offering early in-person voting so voters may visit early-voting polling locations to cast their ballot before election day, saving time, and possibly saving lives. There is likely to be a surge in in-person voting in the coming days. Consider the best time for you to head to the polls and come prepared.

Early Voting Starting Times: You do not need an excuse to vote early.

- Visit <https://www.voteamerica.com/early-voting-calendar/> to see if early voting is underway in your state.
- Contact your local election official for details: <https://www.voteamerica.com/local-election-offices/>.
- Find your [local polling locations](#).

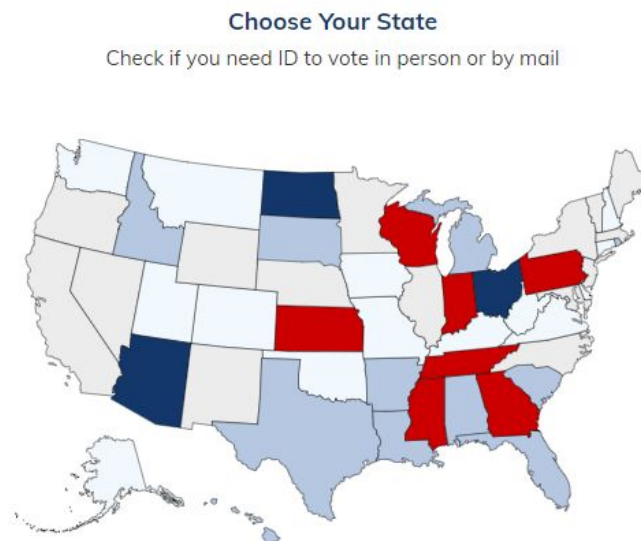
Be Prepared to Vote Early In-Person: Expectations about in-person voting differ by state, county, and even local polling station. Geographical location is one factor to consider. There are also: Voter ID requirements, weather, and COVID-19 regulations to keep in mind as you plan to visit the polling station. Bad weather is known for depressing turn-out, even on election day, but may be an incentive in COVID if you want to avoid crowds.

- Visit <https://www.voteriders.org/staterules/> to research your state's Voter ID Requirements.
- View this [list of supplies](#) before you brave those long lines and stay safe.
- Visit <https://www.vote.org/covid-19/> for an overview of your state's COVID-19 changes to election procedures



Early in-Person Voting States (As of 10/23) by NowThis

[\[Download Graphics\]](#)



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Managing Election Day Expectations

Project Confidence in Your Messaging: This year has also raised new questions around election security. With the likely delay of the election results past November 3rd due to the historic levels of vote-by-mail, there are concerns about public demonstrations and disorder. It is important to express confidence in the electoral process. Expressing doubt about the results before the process has unfolded may dissuade voters from casting their ballot. Sharing worst-case scenarios can engender fear and anxiety and discourage voters by making them feel as though their vote won't make a difference. As your communities prepare messaging to help manage election day expectations, lean into messaging that strengthens voter confidence.

Initiate Positive Community Dialogue: Begin the process of talking to your communities about what to expect on election day and the days after. Share the resources below to discern the best way for your community to help uphold the integrity of our elections.

If it takes time to count ballots for the results that indicates that our systems are working! The time it takes to certify the results of the election is a huge unknown. The extent of mail-in voting and unprecedented voter turn-out means it could take several days or even weeks before the final outcome is known. We need to be patient and allow election officials the grace to count every last vote in line with their administrative procedures.

Promote Honest Election Systems: As with all election systems, there are openings for abuse. We encourage everyone to research their state's Ballot Collection Laws and Ballot Harvesting Prohibitions to ensure that all activities promote safe and honest elections and that they are complying with local and state laws if working to deliver ballots for voters that need assistance.

→ <https://lincolnpolicy.org/2020/ballot-harvesting-laws/>

General Resources

Audiences are increasingly looking to faith leaders for guidance on election security. These election protection resources for the religious community are available as trustworthy guidance.

- [This clearinghouse](#) includes voter education information, tips for countering voter intimidation and suppression at the polling station, guidance for active measures to protect the vote, and more. This is a live working document, updated daily. Contact Maggie Siddiqi (msiddiqi@americanprogress.org) for feedback or questions.
- [This one-pager](#) of important messaging guidance to help manage post-election expectations.
- [This toolkit](#) helps prepare people for unknown results on election night with reminders that counting every vote is more important than speedy election results.

Engagement Opportunities:

The Voting Anti-Disinformation Week of Content

Starting Monday Oct. 26, Common Cause, in partnership with the Election Protection coalition, is joining with the Digital Defense League for #DisruptDisInfo week by launching the Voting Anti-Disinformation Week of Content to counter the dissemination of disinformation.

Messaging calendar & toolkit links:

- Monday 10/26: [Trust Vote by Mail](#)
- Tuesday 10/27: [Choose One Way and Make Your Plan to Vote](#)
- Wednesday 10/28: [Do Your Part to Stop DisInformation](#)
- Thursday 10/29: [Have Trust in the System/Your Vote is Secret](#)
- Friday 10/30: [Count every vote/Election Results Take Time](#)

Toolkits include:

- Graphics with captions
- Social Media post templates (can be branded/translated)
- Talking points to be adapted for interviews/PSAs/Radio spots/Custom Messaging/Content
- Debunking Links
- Other Helpful Resources

Faith in Public Life

Faith in Public Life continues to create spaces and opportunities for real engagement from communities of faith with diverse resources and hands-on trainings.

FPL is co-hosting multiple trainings on election engagement, led by experts in the field.

- [Media and Messaging Training for Faith Leaders](#): Tuesday, October 27th, from 2-3 PM ET

Lawyers and Collars

L&C are recruiting clergy, poll workers and lawyers in the following states: GA, PA, MI, WI, FL, AL, OH, and NC

- Focus has been on faith leaders of color but they are welcoming/seeking allies at this stage
- Sojourners and the National African American Clergy Network will also be hosting de-escalation trainings for clergy that are serving as chaplains at the polls on Election Day.
- www.lawyersandcollars.org
- www.turnoutsunday.com

Election Protection During the Sacred Season of Voting

[Faithful Democracy](#), the Washington Interfaith Staff Community, and the Religious Action Center recently held a webinar for religious and congregational leaders on election security. [If you missed that webinar, you can watch it here.](#)

Additional election security resources from The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights:

1. Brennan Center for Justice, "Dangers of 'Ballot Security' Operations: Preventing Intimidation, Discrimination, and Disruption," 2020. [Here](#).
2. ICAP, Addressing the Rise of Unlawful Paramilitaries," 2020. [Here](#).
3. Everytown for Gun Safety, "Preventing and Responding to Illegal Armed Voter Intimidation and Election Interference," 2020. [Here](#).
4. 1st Amendment Implications re: Voter Intimidation, the following from ICAP has a helpful Q&A: ICAP [sheet](#).
5. CJI Report, "Preparing for the 2020 Election." [Here](#).
6. Giffords Law Center: Preventing Armed Voter Intimidation: A State-by-State Analysis. [Here](#).
7. Georgetown Law's Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection (ICAP) [fact sheets](#) for 50 states about militias and paramilitary activity near polling places.
8. ICAP's [fact sheet](#) on voter intimidation laws
9. ICAP's 50-state [catalog](#) of anti-paramilitary laws
10. ICAP's legal toolkit, [Protests and Public Safety: A Guide for Cities and Citizens](#)
11. ICAP's [successful litigation](#) against unlawful paramilitary activity, Charlottesville, Virginia, August 2017.
12. Safeguarding Your Vote: A Joint Message on Election Security, Chris Wray. Video available [here](#).

Advocacy:

ADVOCATE FOR A FAITHFUL DEMOCRACY

This election is like no other. A successful election will rely on advocacy targeting all levels of decision-making.



Federal Level Advocacy (As of Sept 27, 2020):

The most pressing need is for federal funding in the upcoming stimulus package for resources and programs at the state and local levels that will protect our health and ensure voters can safely cast their ballots. Call your U.S. Senators at 1-888-415-4527 to urge them to pass \$3.6 billion in the next package.

State Level Advocacy:

Since all states have their own rules that determine voting requirements and procedures, find out what is most needed in your state. Our Faithful Democracy partners at the Mormon Women for Ethical Government (MWEG) have created a portal for state specific advocacy actions where you can personalize your message. Visit their CTA advocacy page to find out the priority actions in your state.

<https://www.mormonwomenforethicalgovernment.org/protectthevotecoordinatecta>

Advocacy in your Local

Jurisdiction:

Many choices and responsibilities are left to your local election official, which is why building relationships now can be pivotal. Sometimes your county or other local officials will have jurisdiction over critical decisions to make the election run smoothly. Your local election official can also help identify problematic rules and shortages to help target local advocacy.

[\[Download Graphic\]](#)

Sample Social Media:

Every Vote is Sacred

Insisting that every vote counts—and that every vote is counted—is a testament to the deeper truth of our ideals as a nation.

Trust #VoteByMail
Vote this #SacredSeasonOfVoting


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4 Ways Religious Communities Can Ensure a Safe and Fair Election

voter registration 

 mail-in voting

voting early 

poll watching 


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[\[Download Graphics\]](#)

Additional Resources:

Key Accounts To Follow

Faithful Democracy	Facebook: /FaithfulDemocracy Twitter: @Faith_Democracy Instagram: @faithdemocracy Website: faithfuldemocracy.us
Vote.org	Facebook: /votedotorg Twitter: @votedotorg Instagram: @votedotorg
Declaration for American Democracy	Facebook: /DFADCoalition Twitter: @DFADCoalition Instagram: @dfadcoalition
Democracy Initiative	Facebook: /democracyinitiative Twitter: @Unite4Democracy Instagram: @unite4democracy
Election Protection	Facebook: /866OurVote Twitter: @866OURVOTE Instagram: @866ourvote
Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights	Facebook: /civilandhumanrights Twitter: @civilrightsorg Instagram: @civilrightsorg
Common Cause	Facebook: /CommonCause Twitter: @CommonCause Instagram: @ourcommoncause
The Civics Center	Facebook: /TheCivicsCenter Twitter: @TheCivicsCenter Instagram: @thecivicscenter
Verified Voting	Facebook: /VerifiedVoting Twitter: @VerifiedVoting Instagram: @verifiedvoting

Hashtags

- #FaithfulDemocracy
- #MyVoterPlan
- #2020SacredSeasonOfVoting
- #SacredSeasonOfVoting
- #VoteEarlyDay

Partner Resources

- The Episcopal Church, "Vote Faithfully Tool-Kit"
 - ◆ https://episcopalchurch.org/files/vote_faithfully_2020_election_toolkit_updated.pdf
 - ◆ <https://episcopalchurch.org/posts/ogr/plan-your-vote>
- United Church of Christ, "Our Faith Our Vote" Election Engagement Toolkit
 - ◆ <https://p2a.co/zv3KyiE>
- Islamic Relief USA "Your Vote, Your Voice" Election Toolkit
 - ◆ <https://irusa.org/govote/#POSTCARDS>
- Faith in Public Life "Faithful Voter" Toolkit
 - ◆ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vR6euVliPINlixOkYtzYY1xbfBMYBEqmzg-j0Lf0zZRXgzkiO-qxTVOjVli5ZLGcLIb4PObjQ94sJp/pub>
- Friends Committee on National Legislation "Headcount" Election Resources
 - ◆ <https://www.fcni.org/vote>
 - ◆ <https://www.fcni.org/updates/elections-2020-2562>
- Social Media Toolkit: Make A Plan To Vote, Vote Early, & Be An #OctoberVoter
 - ◆ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jGFYtiBHzFb6W-18LFcMiQL3Q0ghwoA3choeDQ7C9ug/edit>
- Social Media Toolkit: Managing Expectations for Election Results & Why We Must #CountEveryVote
 - ◆ https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MFTIx3PBn0x7wxQ_kAHWDqz1e57r07A70Jsysv3AS1E/edit#