Table of Contents

Introduction to Peer-to-Peer Texting

Using an online program, volunteers send text messages to voters. There is typically a personalized, authentic outgoing message containing the voter's name and identifying the sender as a volunteer. Each volunteer sends several hundred messages, within minutes, and then fields responses with pre-written scripts that cover almost any possible response from the voter. Peer-to-peer texting mimics how people already use texting—for talking to friends and family. Because recipients feel like they are talking to a real person (and in fact are), they're more likely to read, ask questions, and take action. Studies have shown that texting can increase voter turnout (positive results include a [3%] increase in turnout, [3%] again, and [0.9-1.6%]).

This manual is intended to help volunteers get familiar with the [organizations] that host texting opportunities, the [software] they use to send texts and [Slack], the collaboration tool most organizations use to train volunteers and discuss the logistics of their texting campaigns. Volunteers wishing to participate in texting should familiarize themselves with Slack, join the organizations that host texting campaigns by joining their respective Slack Workspaces and gain familiarity with the software used in order to be ready to go when texting opportunities arise.

FAQs

Do I text from my phone?

Many Texting Organizations prefer that you text from a computer so you can have multiple windows open at once, including the texting software, Slack, materials about the candidate you are texting for, etc. However, some encourage using your phone and have apps you can download (e.g. Hustle) for this purpose.

How long does texting take?

It can be as fast as 2-3 minutes to send several hundred texts. However, you'll probably need an hour to respond to all the replies you will get if you send 300+/- messages! And then, replies keep coming in over the rest of the day, the next day and sometimes occasionally days or even weeks later. So you do need a few minutes here and there in following days to reply. With some texting, you will get notified by email if you have a reply waiting for you. But, all the Texting Organizations expect you to be available to follow up with texting when they come in. If you will not be available to follow up for a couple days afterward, this may not be the best time to text. If something unexpected arises, you can usually ask on the appropriate Slack for someone to take over your conversations.

What are the expectations for texters?

Most groups will lay out their expectations in the training you participate in when you get started. Common expectations are: to be polite with voters and never engage in an argument or reply in kind to any rude or angry responses you get; to follow up promptly and to follow the script provided, which is typically approved by the campaign/candidate and has their key messages in the way they want to see them communicated to voters.

Add more FAQs here!

Add other questions and answers as they arise.

Slack

Slack is a team collaboration tool that allows for real-time messaging and file sharing that companies can use for employee collaboration across and within departments and teams. Slack offers a free version that many Resistance organizations use and it is *ubiquitous* in the Peer-to-Peer Texting world. Most of the Texting Organizations we discuss in this manual require the use of Slack to participate.

Organizations can start a Slack account, or "Slack Workspace" and invite people to join. Each time you get an invitation to join someone's Workspace, you must set up a new account on that particular Workspace, including creating a password (but you can use the same password for every Slack Workspace you join). You can access these Slack Workspaces via any web browser (be sure to bookmark or favorite your Slack Workspaces - they each have a unique URL) or you can download the Slack mobile and/or desktop apps on your device(s).

Within each Slack Workspace, there are "channels" where conversations among the members of the Workspace take place. Each channel is devoted to a different purpose or type of conversation. You can also receive "direct messages" (DMs) in Slack. These are private conversations with you and one or a handful of other people.

The above is an example of what the Slack interface looks like, with the channels to choose from on the left, as well as DMs below that, and the channel "discussion board" in the center, where you can type a message in the box at the bottom and hit Enter to participate.

[Here is a great short video](#) on how to use Slack.

What is Slack best used for?

Most Texting Organizations use Slack to have many different kinds of conversations with and among volunteer texters. Volunteers can discuss the logistics of a texting assignment, how to handle a difficult conversation with a voter, find documents housed in Slack regarding that Texting Organization's policies, volunteer training resources, FAQs and links to other resources. Some even have channels devoted to fun or off topic discussions like political news, pics of volunteer's pets or funny memes.

All Texting Organizations have employees and/or volunteer admins and moderators that are on Slack regularly to answer questions. Volunteers can post a question at any time and get feedback from these leaders promptly, particularly when active texting is happening.

Texting Software

It helps to be familiar with each of the most popular texting software platforms, as you'll find texting opportunities on any and various of them available during peak election times. They all have some basic similarities, so learning an additional platform just gets easier! In this section, you can learn about the features of many of these texting software platforms and learn more about how to use each.

Hustle

Hustle is used for commercial texting purposes but also used for political texting by groups, due to its competitive pricing model. It can be used either through its app or a web browser (at https://web.hustle.com).

Even if you download the Hustle app and set up an account, you need to be added to a "workflow" before anything will appear in your app or on your screen. A workflow is Hustle's term for the campaign you'll be texting for. To be added to such a workflow, you'll need to complete a sign-up form through the texting organization or texting campaign to be added to the workflow.

Other important terminology in Hustle include:
- Agent - the volunteers doing the texting (that's you)
- Tag - a label for the people you text, such as "wrong number" or "strong supporter" (among others)
- Script - the pre-written responses you have the option of using in a conversation

Shown below is the Hustle web-based interface, with a list of individual conversations on the left (names of voters being texted blurred for privacy) and the rest of the screen shows the active conversation the volunteer is working on:
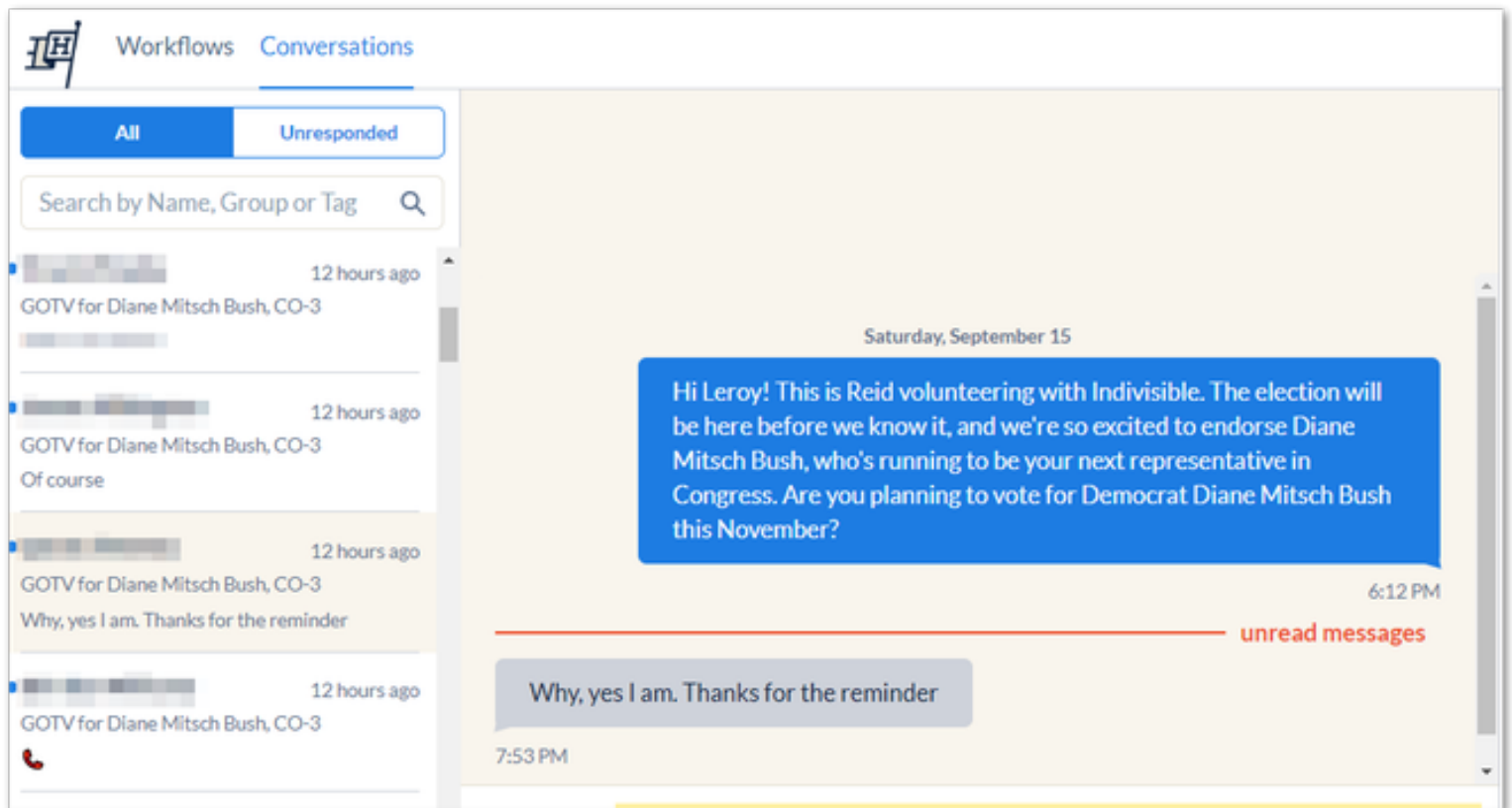
Here is an image of the Hustle app for smartphones, displaying the home screen where you can see all the active workflows you are signed up for:
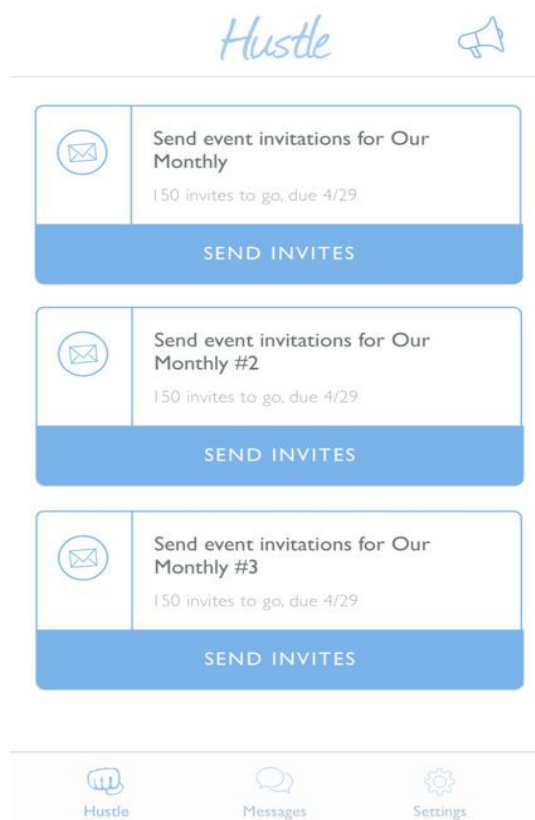
Here is a short, basic Hustle App Guide. You may also consult this 1.5 minute video on how to use the Hustle app on your phone or this even shorter video on how to use Hustle in your computer's web browser.

ThruText

ThruText (formerly known as Relay) is used by political campaigns and nonprofits as well as higher education institutions and organizations. It's used by many texting organizations we discuss here, including Red2Blue, Real Justice and ACLU People Power. It's a web-based platform best used on a computer, but can also be used on a smartphone or tablet via web browser. There is no app to download. You can log into ThruText at https://www.thrutext.io where you'll be taken to a list of all the ThruText accounts you have joined. Many candidates/campaigns have their own ThruText accounts used for just that election, although some organizations that host texting for many purposes/efforts have an account that they use for everything they do over time (e.g. ACLU People Power). This means that even if you have used ThruText (or Relay) before, you will probably have to join a new ThruText account when you start texting with someone you haven't texted with before.

A campaign or organization using ThruText will send you an invitation to join ThruText when you are going to text for them. You'll receive an email, or you can find your invitation waiting at the bottom of the screen at https://www.thrutext.io/accounts if you are already a ThruText user. This is a great page to bookmark so you can come back to it and switch between the many ThruText accounts you may be a member of, when you are texting for lots of organizations and candidates at one time.

Once you've accepted the invitation to text for a campaign or organization, you'll be taken to a page listing your "assignments." In most circumstances, you will find that this page says "No Active Assignments" when you first log in. This is because you'll often need to coordinate with someone in the organization/campaign to make sure you are given an assignment (typically, a batch of anywhere between 100-500 or more texts). When you have been given an assignment by a moderator or admin, it will appear in your ThruText account.

The ThruText interface is shown below. The list of contacts is on the left, the individual active conversation is in the middle and on the right you can select pre-loaded script replies in the Replies tab, shown in this image, and record data about the person you are texting, such as Wrong Number or Strong Supporter, in the Survey tab:
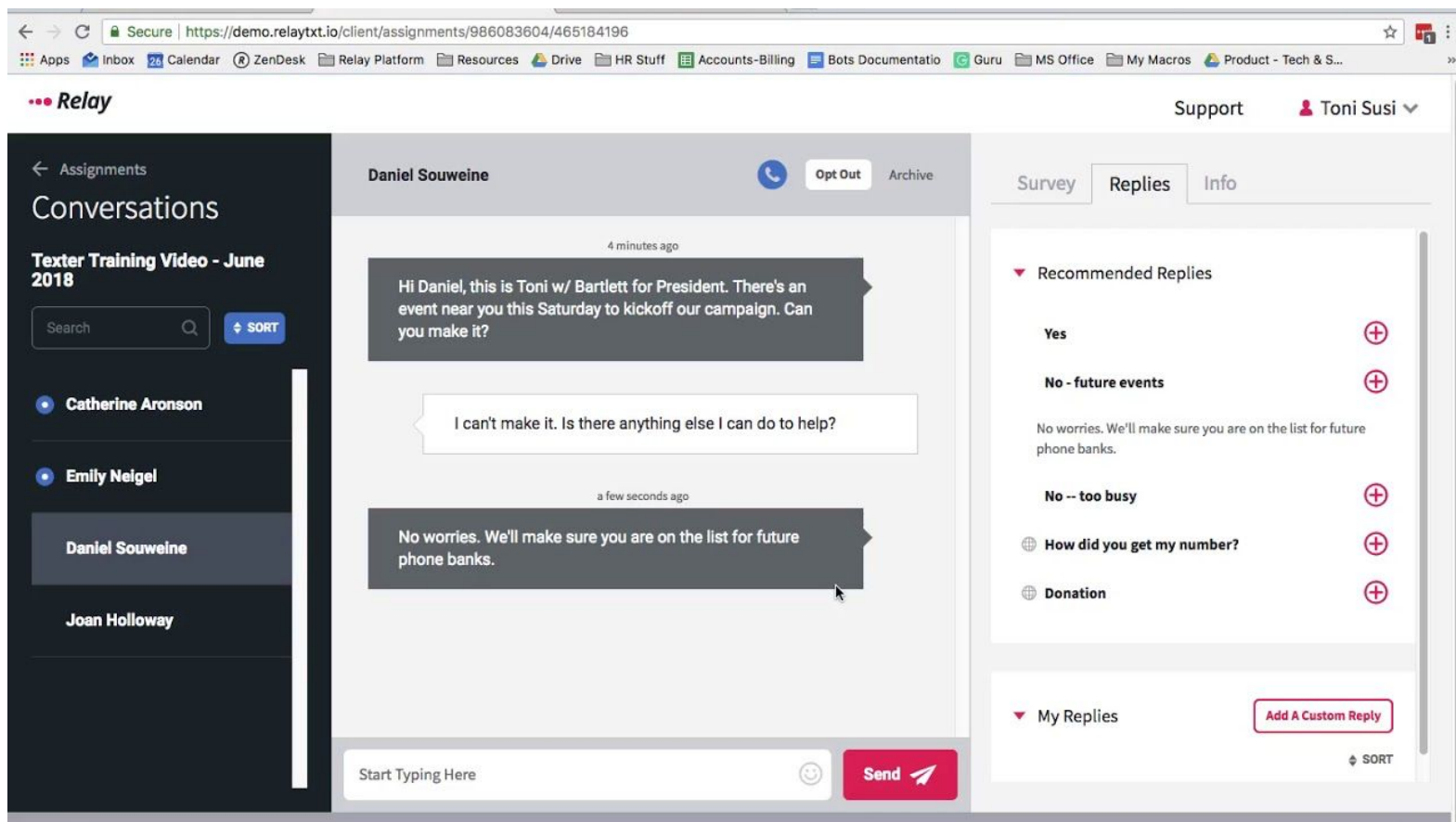
ThruText has an extensive Guide for Senders with instructions and illustrative images on each step of texting. This 8-minute video is a thorough review of how to send and respond to texts using ThruText.

TextOut

TextOut is owned by Open Progress and another non-profit called the Progressive State Leaders Committee. In addition to Open Progress, TextOut is used by IndivisiText. TextOut is used through a web browser, best on a laptop; it is not recommended for use on a smartphone.

You can get a TextOut account by going through the Slack of the group you want to text with and participating in the preliminary training they require. You'll then Request Texts in the TextOut account and a moderator/administrator for the organization you are texting with will send you a batch to work on. These mods/admins review your texting work as you go and provide feedback on improvements within TextOut (they may also tag you on Slack to let you know there is feedback waiting). You must review this feedback before getting additional batches of texts to send.

The TextOut interface is shown below. The list of contacts is on the left, the individual active conversation is in the middle and on the right you can select pre-loaded script replies that are automatically linked to the data the matches that reply, so that you are "tagging" your voters and replying to them all in one step. The data tag is the teal-colored tag on the upper right of the texter's speech bubble in the screenshot below.

TextOut has a Support button in the upper right for technical support and questions about how to use TextOut can be answered by the mods/admins on Slack, as well.
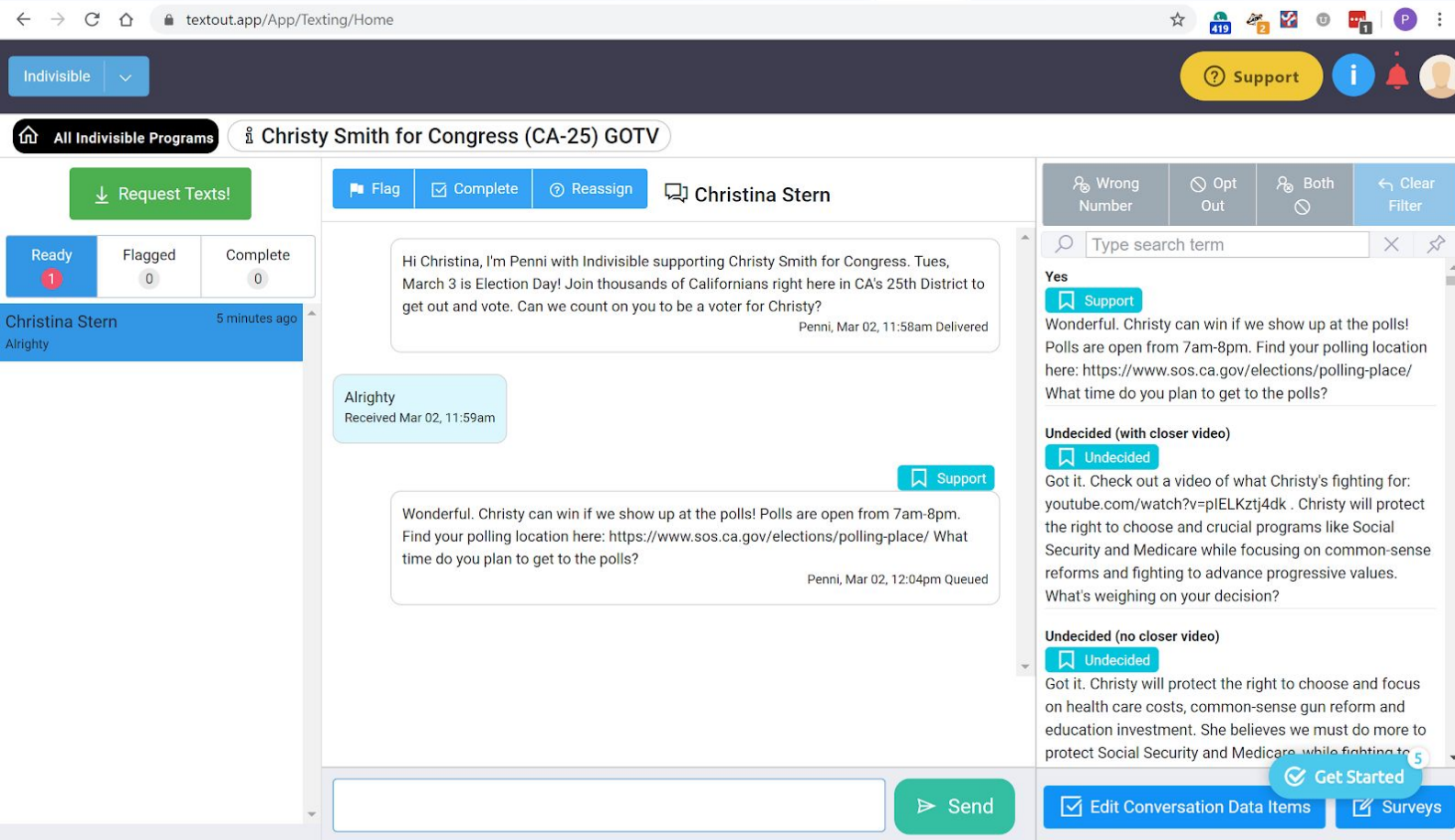
Spoke

Spoke is an open source texting tool maintained by MoveOn.org that was started by Bernie Sanders' campaign staffers for the 2016 race. It can be very inexpensive and skilled developers can customize it for their campaign's purposes. Spoke is used in a web browser on any device and there is no app to download. To access Spoke, you'll need to be invited to a particular campaign that has a texting program running. Administrators will send volunteers a URL to get set up to text. You can learn more about MoveOn's use and maintenance of Spoke here.

Because Spoke can be customized significantly and there are fewer resources available to learn how to use Spoke independent of a given texting campaign, we suggest learning how to use Spoke with one of the Texting Organizations that uses it (see Working Families Party or Resistance Labs).

Texting Organizations

While some campaigns will get a texting program up and running on their own, most (especially the smaller, down-ballot races we work on at EBAA) work with organizations that specialize in texting. These organizations may be consulting services, activist groups or texting leads within the Democratic party itself. In this section, we'll provide an overview of some of the significant texting organizations, how they work and how you can sign up so you can be notified when they have texting opportunities.

ACLU People Power

People Power is the ACLU's grassroots arm - a way volunteers can help the ACLU defend civil liberties and civil rights. They often run texting in support of ACLU events or civil liberties and civil rights causes in different areas of the country. They also coordinated some candidate texting during the 2018 midterms. Learn more about ACLU People Power at https://peoplepower.org/ and join the texting team here.

People Power uses ThruText for texting and Slack for internal communication with volunteers. This is their Texting Guide. Once signed up, check in on their Slack to see what texting opportunities are available when you are ready to text.

IndivisiText

IndivisiText is the texting arm of Indivisible. In 2020, they are focused on holding the House and taking the Senate.

IndivisiText uses TextOut for texting and Slack for internal communications with volunteers. You can join their Slack at http://bit.ly/JoinIndivisiSlack and you'll receive further direction when you arrive. Their texting calendar is here.

NextGen Organizing

NextGen America mobilizes young people to vote in crucial elections. In 2020, NextGen is focusing on turning out young people to take back the White House and the US Senate in 11 battleground states, including Michigan, North Carolina and Arizona. You can learn more about them here. Sign up for their text team here.

NextGen Organizing uses ThruText for texting and Slack for internal communication with volunteers. Once signed up, check in on their Slack to see what texting opportunities are available when you are ready to text.

Open Progress Text Troop

Open Progress (OP) seeks to make progressive change through the power of human-to-human digital conversation. Their Text Troop engages in issues-focused conversations with voters to register them to vote and to persuade and identify supporters for OP's causes and candidates. Learn more about Text Troop and join here and see more about OP here.

OP uses TextOut for texting and Slack for internal communications with volunteers. Check out their texting calendar here and visit their Slack to participate. To hone your skills, visit their Text Troop Wiki here.

Red2Blue Texting

Red2Blue is a group of volunteers working with campaigns to elect progressive Democrats in strategic areas. Red2Blue offers a suite of services to candidates, including creative services, social media administration, phone banking and canvassing, primarily with local volunteers in Brooklyn. However, their texting program has grown exponentially, with volunteers from across the country as well as expats living abroad. Red2Blue has texted for U.S. Senate and House races, but specializes in state legislature races and other down-ballot races like County Commissioners, City Council and Mayor. Learn more about Red2Blue here and their texting program here.

Red2Blue uses ThruText to text and Slack for internal communication. Once signed up, visit their Slack to stay up-to-date on texting opportunities for future elections.

Resistance Labs

Resistance Labs' goal is to "help progressives run and win everywhere." They host texting almost constantly, since they often have workflows to text voters in red states to call their Senators or Representatives about an important issue, or to attend an important rally or march. Resistance Labs also does texting for candidates in elections, and they have started an award-winning program, Contest Every Race, texting purple and red state voters to recruit candidates for local public office. They also partner with Black Voters Matter on all their texting. Learn more about Resistance Labs here and volunteer for their texting team here.

Resistance Labs uses Spoke to text. (Some long-time texters may recall that they used to use Hustle, but they switched vendors in early 2019 and no longer use Hustle.) They do have a Slack workspace that some volunteers use as well as a Facebook group where they post info on workflows, but neither Slack nor Facebook are mandatory for participating with Resistance Labs. You can find that Facebook group here. Here is their Volunteer Training.

Real Justice

Real Justice PAC is an organization that focuses on criminal justice reform and, with respect to elections, works primarily to elect progressive District Attorneys. Shaun King, a prominent activist and journalist, is one of the founders of Real Justice PAC. Learn more about Real Justice PAC here. You can find info on how to join their texting team and instructions on how to use the tools they use here.

Real Justice uses ThruText for texting, Slack for internal communications and a tool called Calendly for volunteers to sign up for texting shifts in advance. Calendly allows you to select a day you wish to text. You don't have to be available all day to text, just sometime on that day to send initial texts (and, as with all texting, several days afterward to check replies and be responsive to voters). You can also usually show up in their Slack and request a batch (without scheduling ahead on Calendly) if there is texting at that time. Visit their Slack to learn more about the group and their texting opportunities.

Working Families Party

Working Families Party (WFP) works to elect the next generation of progressive candidates across the country. Learn more about them here. Their Text4Resistance Team has frequent texting available. Sign up with them here and check out their Text Team Orientation here.

WFP uses Spoke for texting and Slack for internal communications. They have an orientation for how to use Spoke with them here. They often hold live webinars on getting involved with their texting team. Check out their calendar at the bottom of this page for upcoming opportunities. On their Slack team, join the #text4resistance channel.   You can also get involved in their other efforts, such as Social Media and Phone Banking, through their Slack.

Others

During the 2018 midterms, other texting opportunities popped up and were spread by word of mouth. For instance, our group contributed significantly to texting on behalf of Proposal 2 to end gerrymandering in Michigan and Sam Bagenstos, candidate for Michigan Supreme Court. We expect to see a lot of these opportunities in 2020. Where we find opportunities like these for our candidates or target states, we'll recruit volunteers who have expressed an interest in texting to participate when these come along and we feature these opportunities at our text-banking parties. Please join our list by visiting our website.