

# The History of Hartals: October 15 Event Modeled on Technique Used by Gandhi

*October 2 is celebrated as the International Day of Nonviolence to commemorate Gandhi's birthday.*

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, October 2, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The American Union of swing voters, which has called for a one-day general strike on October 15, recently clarified the origins of the details surrounding it. The action is a demand that Congress pass the group's crowdsourced legislative package, [the Blueprint for a Better America](#), within 10 days.



Fasting has a long history with nonviolent social change

Although a general strike is commonly intended to continually disrupt an economy, Gandhi used targeted days, called hartals, to unify his countrymen for nonviolent political change. The initial event took place on April 6, 1919, and in a letter to the press written March 23, Gandhi advised that three things should take place to make the hartal successful.

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I am going without food for 21 days to end poverty, mass incarceration, and the endless wars. Join in October 15 for the last 24 hours to demand Congress pass our legislation before the midterms.”

*Brian Winters, founder of the American Union*

First, he wrote, “A twenty-four hours’ fast counting from the last meal on the preceding night should be observed by all adults, unless prevented from so doing by consideration of religion or health.” Members of the American Union, as well as those who support immediate passage of the Blueprint, are asked to do the same starting the evening of October 14th. The fast is a water fast; abstaining from food and only drinking water for the 24 hours. Gandhi suggested that those unable to do so safely take fruit or fruit juice as needed, but anyone with

concerns should check with their doctor.

Brian Winters, founder of the American Union and self-described student of Gandhi’s, began a

fast on September 24, to conclude on the night of October 15. "I am going without food for 21 days to end poverty, mass incarceration, and the endless wars," Winters said. "Join in for the last 24 hours to demand Congress pass our legislation before the midterms." Public pressure will be directed toward Congress by use of the hashtag #fastforpeace.

Second, Gandhi indicated "All work, except such as may be necessary in the public interest, should be suspended for the day. Markets and other business places should be closed. Employees who are required to work... may only suspend work after obtaining previous leave." The general strike calls for these actions as well as an additional one: refusing to spend money on October 15, thus disrupting the economy for a single day. Winters stressed that participation was voluntary. "As Gandhi wrote, 'No pressure of any kind whatever should be put upon those who do not fast or suspend work.'"

Gandhi also suggested that public meetings should be held across the country to pass resolutions demanding the specific political reforms. In the 21st century, Americans can contact their elected representatives directly, and should do so on October 15 to demand the passage of the Blueprint within 10 days.

The Blueprint for a Better America was developed through a consensus-driven process informed by national survey data. It contains more than 50 policies under three planks; end poverty, end mass incarceration, and end the endless wars. "No one is expected to like everything in the Blueprint," Winters said. "Fasting and compromise are two sides of the same coin; willingly giving something up."

The legislation would meet one of President Biden's campaign promises, the establishment of a public option for health insurance, which, along with 18 weeks of paid family leave and \$1,300 monthly universal basic income, is part of the 'end poverty' plank. Mass incarceration is addressed through robust police and prison reforms, including halting the federal war on drugs. The legislation also reduces the defense budget by one-third over five years, closes some foreign military bases, and repeals decades-old authorizations for the endless wars.

The American Union is a PAC committed to nonviolent political change. Its members make a good faith pledge to vote for the Republicans and Democrats who receive the group's endorsement. On Twitter, this willingness is demonstrated with the hashtag #VoteAU, calling others to oppose partisan politics and vote together in November.

To determine the endorsements, the group intends to scrutinize the Twitter accounts of the more than 1,000 members of Congress and their challengers for use of these hashtags on October 15. These public statements would signal their support for immediate passage of the Blueprint and a desire for the American Union endorsement, with the corresponding bloc of swing votes. It has been calculated that a 3.5% bloc of voters will be able to control the balance of power in Washington, creating leverage over Congress.

As a nonpartisan group, the American Union ignores party affiliation in making endorsements. Instead, candidates are divided into two groups; incumbents and challengers. According to the endorsements page of [their website](#), incumbents get the first chance on the American Union endorsement. After its passage, all members of Congress who supported the legislation will receive the group's endorsement. However, if Congress refuses to act by October 26, their major party challengers who supported the general strike and urged passage of the Blueprint will receive the endorsements.

To decide any unresolved contests among the 470 Congressional races, members of the American Union are scheduled to vote October 16 on how endorsements should be awarded, including the possibility of random selections. "Getting a seat in Congress as the result of an arbitrary event would undercut the legitimacy of the win," Winters said, "The American Union can demonstrate political power while firmly rejecting the lesser-of-two-evils game that Americans are tired of playing."

Gandhi is not the only practitioner of nonviolence that has influenced the American Union. Martin Luther King Jr. challenged Americans to "declare eternal opposition to poverty, racism, and militarism." The three planks of the Blueprint correspond to his triple evils.

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