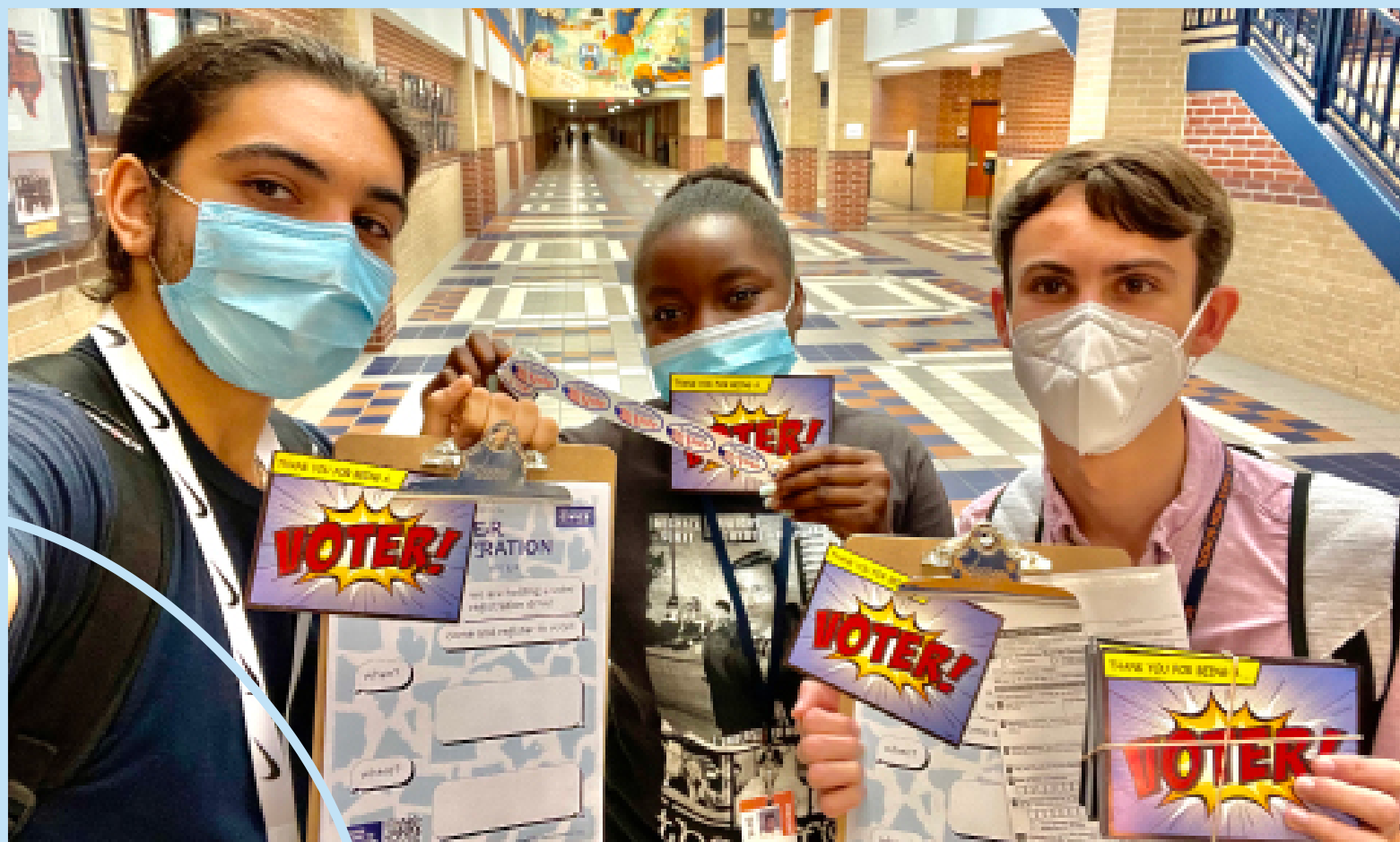


# HIGH SCHOOL VOTER REGISTRATION

THE CIVICS CENTER'S TOOLKIT FOR CALIFORNIA EDUCATORS



# WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

The strength of our democracy depends on the participation of all voters. The Civics Center's Toolkit for California Educators provides schools with important resources that will give our students a voice as registered and informed participants in the electoral process.

**Mary Jane Burke**  
Marin County Superintendent of Schools

Promoting voter registration drives in high school links students in critical ways to the electoral and democratic process that will continue to play out in their lives beyond their graduation date and the High School Voter Registration Tool Kit is filled with useful resources to make that happen.

**James Cartnal**  
La Cañada High School Principal

A very comprehensive and concise step-by-step guide for educators to assist in the voter registration process!

**Angelique Butler**  
Pomona Unified School District Principal on Assignment

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## **Philip & Muriel Berman Foundation**

We are grateful to the Philip & Muriel Berman Foundation for sponsoring our Democracy in a Box toolkits that we provide in support of high school voter registration drives.

## **LA2050**

This Toolkit is supported by a generous grant from LA2050.

## **The following individuals contributed to the preparation of this Toolkit:**

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# INTRODUCTION

Thank you for helping to increase youth civic engagement and participation! Our high schools have the ability to reach and educate all of our youth about civics and voting. Importantly, the California Elections Code supports high school voter registration efforts.

Through the Student Voter Registration Act of 2003, the Legislature stated its intent that “every eligible high school ... student receive a meaningful opportunity to apply to register to vote” and that every school do “all in its power to ensure that students are provided the opportunity and means to apply to register to vote.”

**Unfortunately though, as of August 2021, only about 13% of California youth are preregistered to vote.**

With your help, we can do much better to prepare our students for a lifetime of civic participation. We prepared this Toolkit to provide useful resources and a step-by-step guide for high school voter registration activities.

# WHO CAN PREREGISTER OR REGISTER TO VOTE?

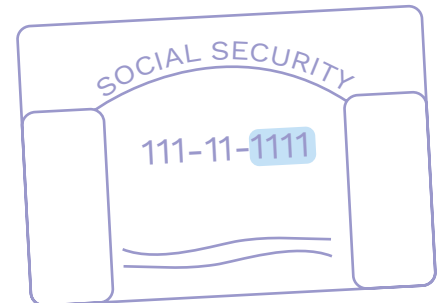
**In California, students can preregister to vote at 16 and 17 years old, or register at 18.**

To preregister or register to vote in California a student must be:

- A United States citizen and resident of California;
- Not currently serving a state or federal prison term for the conviction of a felony; and
- Not currently found mentally incompetent to vote by a court.

In order to preregister or register online, students should have the following information on hand. We recommend that students supply **both pieces** of information if available as it will simplify the process of verifying their identity for the county:

1. A California-issued driver's license, learner's permit or a CA identification number; and
2. The last four digits of the student's social security number.



If a student provides only the first piece of information, the county elections office should be able to verify the student's identity through the DMV, and no further action should be needed. If they provide only the last four digits of their SSN, they will receive a letter in the mail from the county asking for a signature and whatever information the county needs to verify their identity. If they provide neither piece of information, they will receive either a new voter registration card or a questionnaire, depending on the county.

# GETTING STARTED

## **Make sure your high school has a Voter Registration contact:**

California law requires every high school to identify a contact person to whom the Secretary of State can provide voter registration forms to distribute to students. Elec. Code § 2148(a). If you have not already done so, you can email the Secretary of State Elections Divisions ([MyVote@sos.ca.gov](mailto:MyVote@sos.ca.gov)) with the name of the school, and the contact information for the VR contact. Most commonly, schools identify the principal, government teacher, or ASB supervisor.

## **Identify students to serve as voter outreach coordinators:**

High school principals may designate students to serve as voter outreach coordinators to coordinate election-related activities such as registration drives, mock elections, and debates. Educ. Code § 49041.

## **Create a calendar for voter registration and education activities that includes at least these important events and dates:**

- Fall Student Registration: The California Elections Code specifically authorizes high schools to provide voter registration forms with orientation materials. § 2146(e).
- High School Voter Education Weeks: Under the California Education Code, the last two weeks in September and April are designated as High School Voter Education Weeks. Ed. Code § 49040(a). The Civics Center's High School Voter Registration Week falls on the fourth week of September, coinciding with National Voter Registration Day.
- Graduation: The Elections Code also specifically authorizes high schools to provide voter registration forms with graduation materials. Elec. Code § 2146(e).



## YEAR ROUND VOTER REGISTRATION ACTIONS

While voter registration drives and education sessions will take planning and occur at specific times, voter registration information should be available to students throughout the school year. The relevant California law specifically describes some of the ways to inform students about voter registration. Elec. Code § 2146(e).

- **Make voter registration forms available** in central school locations, such as at the library, the administration office, and the cafeteria.
- **Keep a voter registration link posted** at all times on the high school and district websites. Here are some links that can be used:
  - [The Civics Center preregistration and registration link](#)
  - [California Secretary of State preregistration link](#)
  - [California Secretary of State registration link](#)
- Make clear that eligible students who are at least 16 can preregister. The California Secretary of State website contains a [PSA](#) (“Our Time is Now”) that can be linked, as well as a [poster](#) that can be downloaded or linked.
- On the dates marked on your voter registration calendar, **send emails to students and parents, and provide school announcements in the newsletter or bulletin, regarding voter registration.**
- Complement these outreach efforts with on-site voter registration drives.
- Please note that you may not provide extra credit or any other incentive to students for registering (or for voting).

# VOTER EDUCATION ACTIONS

California's Department of Education has set forth guidelines for teaching students about voting. Its [Grade 12 California Social Science-History Framework](#) (in Chapter 17, pages 446-447) provides that students should know:

- How to register to vote—both online and by mail;
- What the requirements are for registration;
- How to request, fill out, and return an absentee ballot;
- What to expect on election day;
- How to find a polling place; and
- Where and how to access and understand the voter information pamphlet and other materials to become an informed voter.

Here are a few Sample Resources for Voter Education (not including textbooks):

- [Santa Clara County Department of Education Youth Voter Toolkit](#)
- [iCivics Voting Rights Powerpoint](#)
- [Nearpod Voting Deck](#)



# VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES

At least twice per school year, during California's September and April High School Voter Education Weeks, high schools should facilitate student voter registration drives. The Civics Center celebrates High School Voter Registration Week for students around the country during the fourth week of September.

The most successful drives are those organized and led by students, with support from educators. The Civics Center has created a [Guide](#) for students with steps to create a Future Voters Club and hold school-supported voter registration drives. Educators can encourage students to set up a Club and plan drives at their high schools.

## STEPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL DRIVE:

1



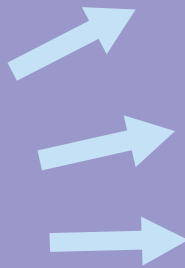
Determine which students and educators will be in charge of the drive, and when and where it will take place.

2

Register your school's voter registration drive with The Civics Center [here](#). The Civics Center can create a unique registration link for your school to use, which means you can keep track of how many people register online.



3



Consider working with local non-partisan organizations (such as The Civics Center, League of Women Voters, or the local Elections Office).

4

Provide training to the students and educators responsible for the drive:

- The Civics Center provides free, online [Workshops](#) for students and educators, taking them step by step through the process of organizing and holding a drive.
- The Civics Center will provide schools with its "Democracy in a Box" kit, which contains useful materials for the drive (including clipboards, table decorations, treats, voting stickers, and more).
- The Secretary of State's website also provides [guidance for educators](#) about holding a registration drive.





# 5

## Promote the drive using:

- Fliers around the school
- Social media (examples [here](#))
- Classroom announcements
- Emails to students, parents, and staff
- PSAs from TCC or the Secretary of State
- Links on school websites and in newsletters



# 6

## Spend time in class to walk students through the registration process and allow eligible students to preregister or register online or on Voter Registration cards. Advisory periods present a perfect opportunity for this outreach.

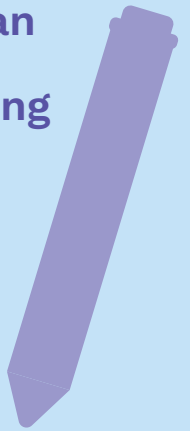


- Pairs of student leaders can visit classrooms to talk about the drive and to distribute forms. With enough volunteers, you can cover entire grade levels in a matter of minutes.
- Students can also table during lunch periods.
- Physical cards should be counted, folded, sealed with a piece of tape, and delivered either to your county's election office or placed in the mail (the forms are pre-stamped and addressed).

# 7

## Fill out The Civics Center's post-drive survey (or create your own report) about the drive. Student organizers can receive community service certificates and a report of registrations obtained through your custom link following completion of the survey. You should report on:

- The logistics (where, when, how it was set up, the resources required, and the training obtained);
- The promotional material used (emails, social media posts, posters, etc.) and their effectiveness;
- The number of registrations obtained through the online and What worked well, and what could be improved for next time.



# 8

## Consider these suggestions as ways to enhance your voter registration efforts:

- Social media competition among schools; see [sample](#).
- Connect with your county elections office for more support.
- Sign up for National Voter Registration Day (the 4th Tuesday of each September).
- Tie voter registration to sporting events and holiday celebrations.
- Be sure to include students who aren't eligible to register or preregister. They can help organize and lead drives and encourage others to register to vote.



# INCLUDE VOTER REGISTRATION ACTIVITIES AS PART OF YOUR STATE SEAL OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

The State Seal of Civic Engagement was created pursuant to the [California Education Code \(Sections 51470-51474\)](#). The criteria for awarding the Seal to students include participating in one or more civic engagement project(s). Projects around voting and elections should fit perfectly within the criteria as set forth in your district. Student activities could include:

- Start a [Future Voters Club](#)
- Organize and/or work at a student voter registration drive
- Organize a mock election
- Organize event with local elections official
- Serve as a student poll worker (described in the [Secretary of State website](#))



Please note that The Civics Center offers free [Workshops](#) to train high school students to lead voter registration drives. In addition, The Civics Center offers an in-depth program called “Youth Democracy Leaders” and also has fellowship and internship programs. We believe all of these can support students in their efforts to obtain the Seal.