

MY SCHOOL VOTES

MSV: CIVICS 101

Voter Registration Activation Guide

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My School Votes is a non-partisan action-oriented civics program where students learn by doing. We build student leadership, advocate for local issues, create exceptional voter registration campaigns, and together, launch young people into cycles of life-long civic engagement. Our mission is to close the race and age gaps in voting and increase youth participation in our democracy.

The purpose of this guide

In 2020, When We All Vote volunteers helped register and turnout voters in huge numbers: we helped over 500,000 check their voter registration status or newly register. It is estimated that 50% of young people cast ballots in the 2020 election - an 11 point increase above 2016 - and My School Votes was a crucial part of this movement. We worked with more than 1,000 high schoolers and led nearly 40,000 people to check their registration or newly register – all because of students and teachers like you!

Maintaining a democracy takes a lot of hard work and our movement has to grow. With an estimated 8 million people turning 18 every two years, young people have the power to **influence the course of history**. That's why we are calling on each and every one of you to help register your entire school community to vote.

Your mission: Realize that power! You are the best person to help register those around you. We mean that! Research shows that 65% of young people rely on information about voting from friends. That means YOU are critical to registering your peers and turning them out to vote! **This guide will give you everything you need to help get every eligible student in your school registered and ready to vote.**

Who this guide is for

Students

Administrators

Parents

Teachers

If you checked off any of the boxes above, then this guide is for you! This voter registration activation guide is meant to help student teams (MSV Clubs!) register all eligible people in their school to vote.



- If you're a student, make sure you **register your My School Votes Club** to join the MSV Community and get access to free merch!
- If you're a teacher or administrator, identify 1-2 students to start an MSV club and begin strategizing voter registration at your school.
- If you're a parent of a high schooler, pass this along to your child, their friends, and teacher.
- If you're a community member, and want to get involved in our movement, **check out this outreach template** to share with your local school to help them get started.

Why register an MSV Club?

Starting an MSV Club in your high school ensures the urgent work of voter registration and civic action can take place each and every year in your school! MSV Club members gain leadership skills, an understanding of their local government, and actionable ways to create tangible impact on their communities – all while earning community service hours and building their resumes for college.

Each MSV Club receives a Club Kit with t-shirts, laptop clings, and stickers. Students can start a new MSV Club at their school, or register an existing entity (Student Council, Key Club, National Honor Society, etc.) that is already doing civics work.

For more information check out:

MSV Civics 101

MSV Club Registration Form

#YourVoteYourPower Training Series



Why register an MSV Club?

This guide is the main accompanying tool for My School Votes' #YourVoteYourPower Campaign. This Campaign, the third part of MSV's year-long Civics 101 program, offers a training series available to schools across the country on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month, at 7pm EST. These regular trainings provide the MSV community the opportunity to receive guidance on building their voter registration efforts, connect with students and educators from around the country, and a suite of resources to support your work. To learn more and sign up for our series, [click here](#).

If you've clicked your way through the interwebs and found yourself here you can start using this guide TODAY! Make your way through the prompts, fill out your answers, sign-up for an online voter registration portal, register your club, and begin registering voters in your school. **Remember: you can use this guide at any point.** If you have any questions, hopes, and dreams you'd like to discuss, bring them to our trainings, regular office hours, or even an individual meeting with our program staff.

Weekly Office Hours for Clubs:

Every other Tuesday 3-5pm EST & every Thursday 4:30-6:30pm EST. [Sign up here](#).

Request a meeting with Yaala, Director of Student Engagement:

[Click here](#) or email: yaala.muller@civcnation.org

Request a meeting with Director of Educator Engagement

[Click here](#) or email:

If you're a community member and want to get involved with WWAV's volunteer opportunities outside of schools, learn more and [sign up here](#).



Before you get started

It's time to create your **Voter Registration Value Statement** which consists of why you're doing this work and what values your Campaign espouses.

Spend some time reflecting: Why is this work of voter registration important for you and your school?

It's important for you and your club to be able to articulate this in 1-2 sentences. Doing so will help:

- Ground you in a purpose that will energize you throughout the Campaign.
- Help you as you have persuasive conversations with other students about why it's important to register.
- Push you towards achieving a goal.

Now that you've reflected, what's your Voter Registration Value Statement for this Campaign? Don't be scared to infuse it with your personality! Remember that this work matters and can be fun – it's up to you to make it so!

Example: We, the students of Westview High School, believe that WE are the stewards of democracy and as such we have taken it upon ourselves to fight for it with everything we've got. We will register every 18 year old in our school to vote by the end of the school year. Our campaign values are: joy, equity, and tenacity!



Know the rules

Now for some nitty-gritty voting details. **Every state has different rules regarding voter registration** so it's very important to check out your Secretary of State's website before getting started. Spend some time looking through your Secretary of State's website and call 866-OUR-VOTE with any questions. If your state has online voter registration we urge you to use that method instead of paper registration forms.

What do you need in order to register as a first-time voter in your state?

**What age do you have
to be to register to vote?**

**What forms of
identification do you need
to show to register to vote?**

**Can you register
to vote online?**

Register for an online voter registration portal

In many states there are restrictions and regulations on registering voters with paper forms, which is why we will be using an online voter registration portal when registering voters, which is just a fancy way of saying: a website! In order to get your voter registration portal, here's what you'll need to do:

1. Have your club supervisor or school administrator fill out this portal request form
2. Look out for an email from a member of the MSV Team within 5 business days with the portal link and QR code – all portal links will look like this: **weall.vote/msv_schoolname**
3. We'll update you on your progress!



Why we use an online portal for voter registration

- The portal is a universal way to check your voter registration.
- It's quick, easy, and can be accessed anywhere from your cell phone or laptop.
- Ensures accuracy and allows us to confirm if you've completed your registration.
- Allows us to recognize & celebrate the work you do!

A note on When We All Vote and paper forms

When We All Vote does not accept paper forms or information off paper forms, we encourage you to help voters check their registration and register themselves using a QR code. Our voter registration portal directs voters to their Secretary of State webpage to register voters.

If you live in a state that does not offer online voter registration (like AR, ME, MS, MT, NH, OK, SD, TX, WY) or if someone does not meet the state requirements or have the documentation to register online, you can still use our VR portal to check your voter registration, then follow your Secretary of State guidelines to register voters, including completing any training or pre-requisites mandated by state, county, and local voting officials (that information lives on their website). While When We All Vote does not accept paper forms or information off them, you can still let us know how your efforts are going via the **Report Back form**.

Be sure to check the rules in your state that apply to distributing and collecting paper voter registration forms. If you have questions please call 866-OUR-VOTE. If you need assistance with obtaining appropriate documentation to register to vote, go to our partner, **VoterRiders' webpage here** to receive support.



What you'll be doing

Over the course of this Campaign you have two things you'll need to do:

1. Prepare your Campaign - strategize & get creative on how to make your campaign successful.
2. Register eligible students to vote.

Who is an eligible student?

A student eligible to vote is one that meets the legal requirements of age and citizenship. But while you need to be of age and citizenship to actually register, there are no restrictions on who can participate in creating and executing this campaign! ALL students are welcome to take action with My School Votes in support of the democratic process.

So how do you actually register someone to vote?

When We All Vote and My School Votes use a voter registration portal (website) that allows you to efficiently help voters register themselves. Using your voter registration portal link, voters can check whether they are registered to vote in their state. Voters are asked to fill out basic information in order to locate their voter registration information. Our portal provides links to each states' Secretary of State websites if they need to update or newly register.

****Please note that our portals ONLY checks voter registration status. When it is time to register voters they will be directed to their state's Secretary of State website where they can register.**

Voter registration step by step

1. Use the link or QR code to access your portal
2. Input the names/details of the person registering
3. Follow instructions on the Secretary of State's website!



There are many different ways to integrate voter registration into your school day to reach your school community—this can be as simple as providing voters with access to your school's voter registration portal link or QR code to register online. Visiting classrooms with a voter registration message, reserving a spot at a school event, or even creating a challenge to see who can register the most voters are great ways to ensure you register all eligible members of your entire school. **Remember: It is key you familiarize yourself with what's required by your state before you start helping people register!**

What else should you think through before you start?

No matter when you join our campaign, we suggest you take the following steps:

1. Gather your team

Who are your top dogs for this Campaign?

2. Decide on your goals

How many voter registrations will you get by the end of the Campaign?
Find a yearbook and see: how many seniors are there who are already or soon turning 18?

3. Plan for at least 3 upcoming activations

What are the dates of your activations and what will you be doing? These can range from a single day event, to one that takes a week or longer! It is wise to plan for dates where seniors will already be gathering and where there is little distraction - think canvassing senior classrooms or advisory periods, varsity practices or senior club meetings, selling of prom tickets, sign-in during testing week, graduation events, etc. Low distraction areas like classrooms allow for peer-to-peer conversations where questions can be asked and answered.



What's an activation?

An activation is an event! Specifically, one where you activate other people towards a larger goal. The use of activate is intentional: it assumes that everyone has everything required to join the movement or larger cause you're mobilizing for, and that all they need is for someone to meet them where they are at and clearly describe how they can take action. A specific activation is something you can create ~hype~ around and build momentum towards. Being strategic and hosting an activation on a date where seniors are already doing something allows you to tap into existing hype and add your own!

Remember: Activations should be opportunities where you will interact with all eligible students. Think offering voter registration for each student that picks up a prom ticket, or going into classes with a high concentration of 18-year-olds and talking them through each step of the process.

4. Get approvals and support

Which teachers or school administrators do you need to talk to? To execute some activations you may need approval or participation by administration or other teachers. Be sure to work with your club advisor to map out what authorization or participation you may need and how to go about getting it.

Building your voter registration campaign

It's time to talk tactics! There are many ways to get your community registered & ready to vote using our voter registration portal. **Here's what you will want to consider:**

Physical Materials

Integrate the voter registration link or QR Code into physical materials like school newsletters, flyers, pamphlets, and posters. You can use these materials to advertise your activations or directly include the portal link and QR code on them!



Digital Tools

Include the voter registration link or QR code in your everyday communication - emails, social media posts, and mobile apps. Text or DM it to friends and family. Make sure you have our partner VoteRiders' website handy to help students who need support with any documentation required to vote!

Canvass

The best way to register people to vote is by canvassing them directly! Go to classrooms where there are lots of seniors (senior classes, varsity team meetings), introduce the opportunity to register, and register each eligible student! You can use the QR code or short link so every student can register simultaneously and you can support them.

Tabling

Set-up a table with When We All Vote signage and QR codes outside/within a space where a big moment is happening (prom tickets are being sold, yearbooks are being passed out, etc). Use the Table as a way to draw people's attention to your efforts, but don't just sit behind it! Make sure you go up to people and canvass them directly to be successful.

High-Traffic Areas

While this is not an activation in and of itself, think of places in your community where a lot of people visit at different times. Less formal than tabling, all you need is a clipboard/tablet with the QR code and a phone. This is a more outgoing way to engage potential voters as they wait in line or pass by. Examples: bus stops, lines in the cafeteria, and school events.



Remember: The most successful voter registration campaign in your school will be one that uses a combination of tactics that are implemented regularly and repetitively!

What you will need to be successful:

1. A Smartphone / Tablet & charger for any students that may be unable to register directly on their phones
2. Wifi Access (if needed)
3. A sign with the Voter Registration Portal link or QR Code. (If you're in a classroom, ask the teacher to put it on the screen!)
4. Pens / Paper (for notes)
5. WWAV Posters, Flyers, & Postcards
6. Approvals: if you're going into classrooms or tabling at an event, whose approval do you need to get?

Best practices for in-school voter registration

Successfully registering voters takes a combination of persistence, strategy, and great conversation skills. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

Be proactive

Greet people, smile, and use open and friendly body language to start the conversation. Get up from your table or chair if you are able and walk with others or wait in line with them as you're having the conversation.

Be safe

Set up your voter registration table outdoors or in a well ventilated space, keep a safe distance from others. Don't have close conversations, and print out our flyers with the QR code so that voters can register themselves instead. Please follow local health and safety guidance as it pertains to COVID-19.

Be resilient

Sometimes, life doesn't go according to plan. Write out backup plans in the event that you encounter location changes, bad weather, or any other unexpected obstacles. A good best practice is to plan out 2-3 contingency plans, in addition to the primary plan you're making.



Be nonpartisan and don't provide any incentives to register to vote

We're not asking people to vote for a particular candidate or issue—we just want them to vote! No part of the event or outreach for the event should advocate or be coordinated on the behalf of any candidate, political party, or measure on the ballot. Federal and state law prohibits providing incentives, no matter how small, to encourage or reward voting or registering to vote.

Be patient, but persistent

A helpful tip is to ask a question when your impulse is to say a statement. Don't assume you understand why someone is expressing disinterest or apprehension, respond nonjudgmentally and share stories to humanize the conversation.

Be realistic

There are a number of factors that go into someone's decision to get registered or not. Be realistic about how many folks at your school your campaign can register on any given activation.

Be consistent

You won't contact every eligible student doing one activity one time. Set up a routine and continue until you have connected with all eligible students. After each activation, be sure to reflect on how to improve for the next time (using the Report Back form!)

Be prepared

Review the rules for voter registration in your state, practice your script, have any hotline phone numbers and additional resources ready to go, and all your materials with you.

Important: Federal and state law prohibits providing incentives, no matter how small, to encourage or reward voting or registering to vote. For example, you can set up a table that has free pizza and a tablet for applicants to use to register to vote, the pizza must be available to everyone, not just applicants.



If you read and understood that last statement, email Yaala to receive a prize!



Sample conversation flow

Here is an example of a conversation about voter registration. We do not recommend you read from a script as engaging and natural conversations are always more effective. But here's one to help you get started! As you prepare for your Campaign, take some time to practice this conversation with another Club member to get comfortable!

Introduction

(You are sitting at the prom ticket pick-up table)

"Hi, how are you? My name is Ari! Happy Prom ticket buying day!! I'm with the Westview Votes Club and we are working to register all eligible students to vote today! Do you have a few minutes to check your registration status or register with me now?"

If "yes"

Yay! Okay, all you need to do is scan this QR code [PULL OUT FLYER] or head to [weall.vote/msv_schoolname] on your phone. **(Register the person to vote. Do not fill out the information for them, they must do it themselves. Move to Closing)**

If "already registered"

Ahead of the game! Are you planning to move somewhere new after high school?

If "Yes": Cool! Do you plan on staying registered here, or are you going to want to register in your new location? If you're planning on registering somewhere else make sure you look up your voter registration status before upcoming elections. It only takes one minute. Also, do you have 3 friends you could send this link to?

If "No": Cool! Do you have 3 friends you could send this link to? Send it to them right now! We'll be here all week if you need any assistance or you can DM us at our club's IG page [Insert Social Media handle]. **(Direct them to use the QR code or weall.vote/msv_schoolname. Once they're complete, move to Closing.)**



Other frequent responses:

If “I don’t have time”

I understand you are really busy. Checking your registration online only takes one minute. You can save time by checking it with me today.

If “I don’t vote or not interested”

I understand. There are a lot of challenges out there. Our country is strongest when everyone has a say. It is OUR responsibility to protect our democracy, and your vote matters. Here’s a flier for later if you change your mind about registering to vote. Thanks so much for stopping by!

“I can’t register to vote. I’m not eligible”

Not a citizen: I understand. You can make a difference by making sure friends and family members are registered. Do you have 3 friends you can text this link to?

Not old enough: Will you be 18 by Election Day? If so, you may be able to register now. (Check the rules in your state for registering before you are 18)

Is MSV partisan?

I’m focused on getting everyone in our community registered to vote — regardless of their political views! I would love to help you update or check your voter registration so that you can make your voice heard.

Closing

Thank you for registering to vote with me! Remember that if you move to another state, you’ll need to check your voter registration before the Midterm elections! **(When done with any interactions, always go back to closing.)**



Reporting back

Because we are students and scholars first (and always), we want to learn from each activation over the course of the Campaign. Please fill out this quick **report back form** after each activation you do. This form should help you answer: what went well, what can be improved for your next activation, and how do you generally feel about your work! Remember, if you are using paper forms, you can update us on your progress via the report back form as well!

Remember:

1. Take lots of photos and videos during your activation to build hype on social media and to share out with us so we can build hype around YOU (tag us: @myschoolvotes on Instagram)
2. Be thinking critically about the experience and share your feedback back with us so we can better support you now and in the future
3. HAVE FUN! No one said voter registration can't be a party



Our parent initiative When We All Vote is a nonpartisan initiative of Civic Nation, a 501c3 nonprofit, on a mission to increase voter participation in every election and make sure EVERY voice is heard. This means we don't refer to any candidates or positions at any time. We will never advocate for either but only that you get active and involved. As members of the My School Votes community, our communication must be strictly nonpartisan, and cannot include any mention of candidates or specific positions. MSV does not support or oppose candidates for public office or take a stand for or against any political party. We encourage active and informed participation in American democracy.

Example language you can use:

If someone asks whether your club is planning to support certain candidates or how it plans to act on a specific issue, you can say: "I'm hearing that that is important to you. MSV is nonpartisan we don't advocate for or against any candidate or party. We want to give everyone the chance to make their voice heard!"

Resources:

Printable flyers

Use these flyers with When We All Vote's logo and voter registration QR code to register voters!

Election Protection Hotline

Encourage voters to call the Election Protection Hotline at 866-OUR-VOTE if they have specific questions about their voter registration, or run into issues in voting or registering to vote.

When We All Vote

website where voters can register to vote, check their registration, pledge to vote, and learn more about how When We All Vote is working to increase voter participation in every election.

When We All Vote's store

Get your swag and additional materials from our online store.

MSV's Civics 101 webpage

Our one-stop-shop for all things MSV!

Sign Up for our Spring Training Series

Sign up for our #YourVoteYourPower Campaign training series here.

Weekly Office Hours

Every other Tuesday from 3-5pm and Thursdays from 4:30 - 6:30pm EST! All clubs are welcome to join.

Sign up for a 1:1 with Yaala

Have a question that you want to talk through 1:1? Sign up for a meeting with our Director of Student Engagement!

Student GroupMe

Join our community of students!