

MSV: CIVICS IOI

CONNECTING ISSUES TO VOTING

ENTER CLUB NAME HERE ^

My School Votes is an 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.

TRAINING GOALS FOR WORKSHEET V

Section I: Reflection & Review — Page 1

Analyze your Club's activities over the last month and understand strengths and weaknesses

Section II: Why does voting matter? — Page 2

WWAV's Voting Principles

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A Useful Framework

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Understanding Your Student Body

SECTION I: REFLECTION & REVIEW

Use this section to analyze your work so far. Each worksheet will create space to reflect and understand your Club's work. This is an important part of leadership and project management.

For schools starting a MSV Club: What steps do you need to complete to establish your MSV Club?

Example: Recruit a leadership team, Create roles/committees, Register your Club (REMEMBER: If you are working with an established club, tell us about it!)

How is recruitment going for your Club? How many people have you recruited? How many more students do you still want to reach out to?

What are your Club's goals for this Spring? (Keep in mind, we will be kicking off our Voter Registration Season of Action next month in March!)

In Training IV, we discussed the importance of the local level in our lives. Have you spent some time looking into how a certain issue shows up in your community? What did you learn? (Refer back to Worksheet IV if you need to jog your memory!)

SECTION II: WHY DOES VOTING MATTER?

Maybe you're wondering why MSV even focuses on voting. After all, aren't there many ways individuals can take action on issues they care about? That is totally true, and we at MSV want to train you on as many tools as possible to create the change you seek. Voting may be one tool, but it is an essential one! Whether we realize it or not, every issue, cause, or agenda we care about relies on voting. Because of that, we think it's important to see voting as a tactic. Let's dive a little deeper into what that means!

Before we start, why do you think we focus on voting?

MSV AND WWAV EMPHASIZE VOTING BECAUSE THERE IS A BIG RACE AND AGE GAP WHEN IT COMES TO EXERCISING THE RIGHT TO VOTE.

70.9% of white voters cast ballots while only 58.4% of nonwhite voters did. **62.6% of Black voters, 53.7% of Latino voters, and 59.7% of AAPI voters cast ballots in 2020.**

50% of young people turned out to vote in 2020, and in some places it was even **closer to 30%.**

in 2020 we saw young people come out in droves to vote. **But in 2021**, when many states held elections across the country, young people didn't show up in similar numbers.

This gap is exacerbated by voter suppression. From long lines to strict voter ID laws to limits on our ability to vote early and vote by mail, these things are not a coincidence -- they are intentional decisions that make it harder for all of us to vote, disproportionately impacting Black, Brown, young voters, and voters with disabilities.

Voting – at every level of government, starting with the local level and working up to the state and federal level – is an essential tactic in creating change. Often part of a larger strategy, voting allows us to decide what issues we want to take action on, implement policies we believe in, and ensure that those who represent us are doing their jobs. Whether it's minimum wage, healthcare costs, policing in communities, or how we tackle our changing climate: voting is an essential expression of our power.

MSV IS GUIDED BY WHEN WE ALL VOTE'S 6 VOTING PRINCIPLES:

1. Ensure every American can easily register to vote through expanding online and automatic voter registration.

The United States has one of the lowest voter turnout rates among developed nations, with nearly one in four eligible voters not registered. As of February 16, 2021, 19 states and the District of Columbia have already approved automatic voter registration. If implemented nationwide, automatic voter registration could add as many as 50 million new eligible voters to the rolls – the largest group of new voters since the 19th Amendment was ratified over one hundred years ago.

2. Expand access voting through early, no-excuse in-person voting and vote by mail.

We believe Americans should have more options to vote and time off in order to vote so they don't have to choose between a paycheck and casting their ballot. In 2020, 46 states and the District of Columbia offered at least some opportunity for voters to cast their ballot early in person ahead of the designated Election Day, but the absence of a national standard means that some states have few or inconsistent early voting hours which can directly impact hourly workers, parents without childcare, and the disability community.

3. Make elections transparent and fair.

This includes making representation in government more fair by ending partisan and racist gerrymandering and also putting an end to loopholes that allow big-money contributors and special interests from hiding the true funding source of their political spending.

4. Americans should be able to cast their ballots freely and equally.

With hundreds of bills across the country that are making it harder for millions of Americans to vote, we will do whatever it takes to fight modern-day Jim Crow laws that make it harder for Black, Brown, and young people to vote. This also includes boosting safeguards against unlawful interference with voter registration and casting a ballot.

5. Give all Americans full representation in Congress.

The millions of Americans in D.C. and the territories — citizens who pay taxes, serve in the military, and contribute to our economy — must be given full representation in Congress.

6. Restore voting rights for returning citizens.

SECTION III: FINDING YOUR WHY

So now you know why we do this work! But that doesn't matter much if you don't know why **you** do this work. Not only is this important to understand in order to sustain your activism and organizing, but it's also important in order to grow your impact, increase the size of your team, and get those around you to take action. Think about it for yourself: who are you more likely to listen to – someone who is connected to their cause, or someone who is wishy-washy about it?

A FRAMEWORK TO KNOWING YOUR WHY

Step 1: Your critical incident:

What motivates you to do this work? Try to be specific!

When was the first time you remember standing up for something you believe in?

When was the first time you saw something unjust?

When do you remember feeling pride in something you worked hard for?

Step 2 - Root values: What values do you act on?

Looking at your critical incident, what are the root values that you believe in?

You can find a list of values [here](#).

Step 3 - Your voice: Why is this important to you?

Practice sharing your critical incident, as well as the root values that underlie it.

What connects the two? How can you share this in a way that resonates deeply for others?

SECTION IV: UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENT BODY

Over the next month, before we begin our Season of Action, take some time to understand what motivates the students in your community. What is their why? What issues do they care about and what values do they hold?

Try to get a sense for what issues and values your peers care about. Maybe you do it with a:

Social media survey (IG poll)

Distribute a simple Google form with 3 questions - [here's a template](#) to get you started

Put a poster up at the entrance to your school and ask students to write a short response

Print fliers! If your school doesn't allow them, make digital ones and share them out

Why is this important? Having a sense for the values and issues your peers care about will help you:

Have effective conversations on why and how your peers should register to vote.

Create messaging that will reach students & convey the importance of this work.

Inspire Action!

Ultimately, having a better understanding of your student body will allow you to **educate** your community, **register** your peers, and **grow** your **impact**! All of which are critical skills for the beginning of our national Voter Registration campaign — **next month**!

Our parent initiative When We All Vote is a nonpartisan initiative of Civic Nation, a 501c3 non profit, 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.

This worksheet is meant to support the learning and understanding of local and state systems of government. My School Votes does not support is not asking you to advocate for any specific issue area or any issue position. Lobbying done on any level around any issue should be done in your personal capacity.

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 non-partisan so we don't advocate for or against any candidate or party. We want to give everyone the change to make their voice heard!"*

CONTACT INFORMATION/OFFICE HOURS

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