

Junior State of America



**Be the Vote Campaign:
2020 Election Activism Guide**

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About this Guide

This guide was developed to provide information and opportunities about how individuals can get involved in elections at any age and at any location! Below, you will find information about volunteering to be a poll worker, fighting voter suppression, registering yourself and others to vote, becoming an informed voter, and educating others.

If you have any questions please reach out to your State Activism Director or email activism@jsa.org.

Let's go *Be the Vote!*

Volunteering at Poll Booths For Ages Under 18

While many students can't vote this election day, don't be discouraged! You still have the opportunity to get involved by volunteering at poll booths as a student election worker on election day! This opportunity gives students the opportunity to assist with their local elections and be part of the democratic process.

Requirements vary by state. Below are some common requirements.

- Must be 16 years of age or older
- Must attend a public or private high school
- Must have consent of a principal/teacher/counselor
- Must have written consent from a parent or legal guardian
- Complete any required election worker training program

Please refer to the [U.S. Election Assistance Committee website](#) for more information about your states and county's requirements for poll workers.



Volunteering at Poll Booths

For Ages 18+

Amid COVID-19, America is facing a critical shortage of poll workers, primarily because most poll workers have traditionally been over 61, making them vulnerable to complications during this pandemic. If you are a registered voter in your county, sign up to be an election clerk to be part of and gain experience in the democratic process and ensure all voters receive adequate assistance!

Requirements vary by state. Below are some common requirements

- Must be a registered voter in your county
- Attend any required or optional trainings
- Find more requirements per county

Steps to Apply

1. Watch this [Poll Working 101](#) video
2. Find the process and requirements in your local county [here](#)
3. If selected, attend the election training class if required
4. Work at the polls as assigned on Election Day



Volunteer with a Political Campaign

Working with a campaign is a great way to make sure your voice is heard while getting a first-hand look at the political process!

Positions often include...

- Canvassing: knocking on doors
- Phonebanking: calling voters for support
- Working at events
- Data Entry
- Mailings

Steps

1. Figure out what positions and propositions are up for election this year. The [Ballot Ready](#) website can provide information about what will be on your ballot.
2. Find candidates you align with and are passionate about
 - Try to find local candidates that won't have as much support or as many volunteers with national candidates!
3. Research how to volunteer – most candidates will have this information on their websites or social media
4. Volunteer any way you can!

Resources

- Volunteer with the ...
 - [Republican](#)
 - [Democrat](#)
 - [Libertarian](#)
 - [Green Party](#)
- Find information about local elections or candidates [here](#). Check out the websites of the Senate, House, and State Legislature candidates for information on volunteering for their campaigns.



Contact Representatives

Our democracy relies on the wills and wants of the American public, but it's a necessity to convey those wills and wants. By contacting your Representatives about key issues, your voice as a constituent will be heard, and it even has the power to influence future policies. Your specific needs and wants often come up during election time and can even influence a candidate's main platform!

Finding Representatives to contact:

- Visit the website [Common Cause](#). Type in your address and a list of your district's Representatives will pop up. Call the number and advocate for what you believe your representative should do!

Other easy ways to contact your Representatives:

1. Use an app!
 - a. [5 Calls](#): Provides you a list of your local representatives and includes typed out scripts you can read from about different issues you care about.
 - b. [Countable](#): Allows you to learn about different issues, how they affect certain demographics, and educate yourself on bills being debated in Congress.
2. Send letters to your local representatives and councilmen on specific key issues that affect you and your chapter is key to advocating for legislation. Sending letters compared to emails provides a more personal connection to the officials, and they're more willing to listen. Contacting local officials also usually has better results.
3. Go to or host town hall meetings to make sure government officials know your specific concerns.



Host Speakers

Invite local politicians or political speakers to speak at your school in order to increase awareness about different issues and the democratic process!

Steps to plan a speaker event:

1. Contact a local politician or speaker and set a date to present.
2. Request school approval for the speaker to come.
3. Advertise the event around the school.
4. Hold the event and a questioning session afterwards.

You can either:

Research local politicians, but don't limit your scope of government officials. Think about reaching out to speakers with different perspectives. This could include: Bureaucrats, State House of Representatives, Councilmen, Local Circuit Judges, or Local State Judges.

OR:

Decide on a prevalent issue that your chapter deems fit of taking action on (mental health, drug abuse awareness, etc) and contact organizations and speakers that have high knowledge of the issue as well as plans for action.



Remember:

Be sure to include your student body in the speech by opening up the floor for a Q/A Session!

Resources

- [Find a suitable speaker in your area](#)
- [Find your local representatives](#)
- [Tips on finding the right speaker](#)

Discussion Series

Oftentimes, young people are uninformed about the specificities of certain candidates' running for important positions, policies and goals, leading to clouded judgement when elections come around. In order to ensure that young people make informed decisions when it comes to elections, every person must know the specific details and stance of the candidates on important problems. To guarantee that students stay informed, I propose that we set up a series of discussions (either in person or through a meeting app) that will lead to detailed conversations concerning each candidate's specific political views and goals for the chapter.

Steps to Begin Discussions and Inform Youth:

1. Make JSA chapter members aware of discussions helping to inform everyone of the candidates specific campaign choices and goals.
2. Create a series of meetings inviting all chapter members to become more involved and familiar with elections and candidates.
3. Each meeting would focus on a different candidate in the election and go into detail of their policies and stance on issues.
4. Students would leave meetings more informed and equipped to vote decisively on who they think best fits the position.

Resources

- [Comparing the 2020 Presidential Candidates' Positions:](#)
- [Comparing Their Stances on Prominent Issues](#)
- [Midterm and State Local Election Information](#)
- Information about the 4 main political parties
 - [Republican](#)
 - [Democrat](#)
 - [Libertarian](#)
 - [Green Party](#)

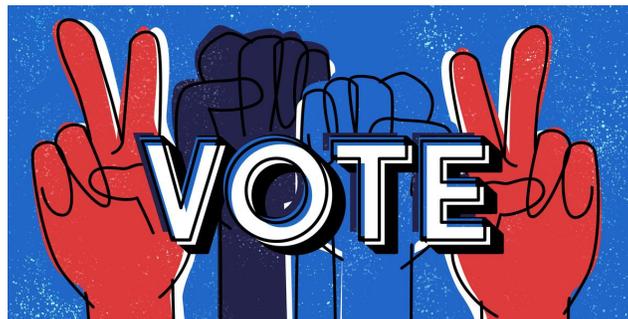
Create and Share an Issue Guide

One of the reasons only 50% of young people voted in 2016 was because they weren't acquainted with issues enough to make a well-informed decision. One solution to this issue is to create a guide including information on candidates, their specific policy proposals and what they mean, and tables comparing where each of them stand on general issues. Here are a few steps you can take to compile your own issue guide:

1. Assign members of your chapter specific portions of the initiative they will be responsible for (EX: graphic design, research, formatting, distribution, publicity, etc.)
2. Compile the research and design elements into either an electronic or paper guide; this way, potential voters can always refer back to the guide if they need clarification
3. Publicize your guide to students, teachers, parents, alumni, and elderly in your community in order to have the biggest impact
4. Be sure to make the accessibility of your guide easy as possible so anyone can refer to the information

Resources

- [Campus Election Engagement Project's Guide to Creating Your Own Nonpartisan Guide](#)
- [NonProfit Vote's Guide to Different Forms of Nonpartisan Issue Guides](#)
- [Comparing the 2020 Presidential Candidates' Positions:](#)
- [Comparing Their Stances on Prominent Issues](#)
- [Midterm and State Local Election Information](#)
- [Example](#)



Register to Vote

Use this [link](#) to check if you are registered to vote and register (by mail or in-person) if you are not!

For more information about voting in your State, please follow these instructions:

1. Visit this [website](#).
2. After the page says “I want to vote in...” click on the drop down arrow and select your specific state.
3. Click on the button “Find out how” and read through the page! All state election contact information is at the bottom of the page.

Why Register to Vote?

Many people view voting simply as a burden and insignificant. However, it is perhaps the most important way that we can **create change** in our country. Whether it's immigration policies, racial inequality, healthcare, or more, any issue that you are passionate about directly relates to voting. By voting in the election, you have the power to influence which issues politicians focus on! For those that believe their vote doesn't matter, think of it this way: *the only vote that doesn't matter is the one that was never cast*. Don't let others decide the election result for you!

Unfortunately, young voters, including high school students, historically vote in far fewer numbers than any other age group in America. In fact, over **15 million** eligible voters from the ages of 18 - 24 did not vote in the 2016 election. What's even worse, is that **62%** of eligible young voters say they've never been asked to register. To top it off, amid the current pandemic, registration numbers are far lower than normal.

So to recap:

1. Youth voter turnout is lower than any other age group.
2. A major cause of this is that we aren't registered to vote.
3. We aren't registered because nobody is asking us.
4. **This work is now more important than ever.**

How to Hold a Voter Registration Drive

Holding a voter registration drive is one of the most effective ways of getting as many people registered to vote as possible. While this is traditionally done in person with paper registration forms, they can be done just as effectively online. In fact, holding a drive is incredibly simple!

STEPS:

1. Virtually get together with your chapter or even just a group of friends.
2. Find a list of people to contact. This can include your classmates, friends, or family members. One way to obtain contacts is to request a list of names of your Senior classmates who would be eligible to vote through your school's administration. Make a copy of [this spreadsheet](#) to track the people that your chapter has contacted and their progress in registering to vote.
3. Set a goal - how many people are you aiming to get registered?
4. Reach out to them through text, DMs, etc. Remind them that it only takes 2 minutes to register, as well as the importance of voting
5. Most importantly: **Send them the link to register to vote: jsabethevote.org!**

Other ways to get people registered:

- Making virtual class announcements. Ask your teacher at the start or end of class to make a quick announcement. This can also be done through online forums like Google Classroom.
- Individually contact family members or friends. Even without a coordinated chapter effort, individually reaching out to people is just as helpful!
- Share registration information on social media.

Tips and Reminders:

- Stay nonpartisan and noncommercial. This means neither endorsing nor denouncing a candidate or a party.
- Be short and concise with your pitch.

Voter Suppression Discussions

Civic engagement and candidate education remain critical steps towards confronting political lethargy, America cannot forget about an entirely separate demographic of the population: the marginalized, disenfranchised would-be voters. There are a few ways in which voter suppression makes an appearance that we should be cognizant of:

- Stringent Voter ID Laws
- Voter Purges
- Felony Disenfranchisement
- Gerrymandering

Widespread voter suppression – particularly against historically marginalized groups – is a recurring problem in the United States. That being said, here is how your chapter can execute an education campaign that takes tangible steps to combat rampant voter suppression:

1. Pick a campaign focus
 - Voter suppression as a whole, gerrymandering, etc.
2. Assign responsibilities (research, writing, graphics design, publicity) to chapter members.
3. Research & Dissemination
 - Research statistics, facts, examples, and current events relevant to voter suppression into digestible and nonpartisan sentences/bullet points.
 - Design easy to understand graphics and disseminate them to your school and community
4. Discuss solutions and sign petitions that fight voter suppression

Resources

- [What is voter suppression?](#)
- [Voter Suppression in 2020](#)
- [Voter Suppression in 2018](#)
- [Suppressed: The Right to Vote Film](#)
- [Informative Post Example](#)

Voter Suppression

Volunteering

While it's easy to spread information and create discussions about voter suppression, it's also important to join the fight. Here is how you can individually contribute to combat voter suppression!

Steps

1. Educate your community, school, and peers by hosting a series of discussions as shown above
2. Make a plan and determine (if you're eligible to vote) how you'll be voting
3. Be prepared
 - Wear a mask, bring sanitizer, keep your distance, and be respectful of others around you
 - Bring multiple forms of ID and check your local requirements [here](#)
 - Call your polling locations beforehand to check if they have curbside assistance if you or someone you know needs disability assistance
 - If you notice issues that unfairly affect vulnerable groups, say something about it!
4. Follow through by voting
5. Volunteer with or donate to an organization dedicated to saving voting rights

Organizations to Work With

- [And I Still Vote](#)
- [Black Voters Matter Fund](#)
- [Let America Vote](#)
- [American Civil Liberties Union](#)
- [League of Women Voters](#)
- [Voto Latino](#)
- [NextGen America](#)
- [Reclaim Our Vote](#)
- [National Voter Registration Day](#)

Interview Local Candidates

Although national level elections often receive the most press coverage, it's the local ones that have the most immediate impact on our lives. Local school quality, policing and public safety (and holding police accountable), and public transit are all under the jurisdiction of local governments. However, it can be extremely difficult to find information on the candidates of your local elections. The lack of news and information about local political candidates and issues is the primary reason millennials give for why they do not vote in local elections according to the Knight Foundation. Here are a few steps that you can take to publicize local elections:

Steps

1. Research the candidates that are running in your local elections and their primary forms of communication.
2. Compile a list of questions about local issues in your communities that you want to see answered. These questions should be general enough so that any candidate can answer them instead of specific, targeted questions.
 - a. Make sure your questions are non-partisan/biased towards any political party
3. Reach out to the candidates in your local election with the list of questions to see if they are willing to answer them.
4. Compile their responses into a guide and publicize it to members of your community to create a more informed vote!



Resources

- [Ballotopedia's guide for candidates in local elections](#)
- [Vote411's example interview guide w/ questions & answers](#)
- [Contact information for candidates in your local elections](#)

How-To-Vote Pamphlets

Election season is coming, and for many people within our communities, it'll be their first time. Yet for many first-time voters, their lack of preparation and knowledge of how to participate in one of their most important civic duty is one of the biggest reasons they decide to stay at home. Luckily, by providing them with accessible information about the election, you can make a change!

Some information to include in your pamphlets is:

- Your local voting place
 - Copy a map down to show a wide variety of options
- Directions on how to reach certain locations
 - This only needs to be for the most relevant 4-5 ones, in order to help guide voters
- That place's hours (especially for early voting)
- Reminders telling people to get there on time and make a plan
- OPTIONAL: The main points for the main 2020 candidates to help educate people on who they're voting for.

Resources

- [An example voting pamphlet](#)
- [Texas specific ballot resource](#)
- [Good start for polling locator](#)
- [Voting Station locator](#)
- [Hub for candidate info](#)



Mock Election Debate

More times than not, students are uninformed about candidates and their policies, goals, and specificity of each candidate. Another major problem is that students don't take your time to watch the election debates, which leaves them to have a bias towards a candidate based on what the media says. This ultimately leads to students choosing or voting, without having the proper knowledge about that candidate. In order to make sure every student knows who they're voting for, I propose that we implement a mock debate to ensure every student knows the policies of each candidate, as well as his/her mannerisms. These debates will allow all students to be engaged, as well as have a form of visual entertainment to attract all JSA members to join. These debates will be done online and be modeled off of the presidential debate from Fall State. This will not just inform students about the candidates and their policies, it will also bring a sense of unity between all chapters in JSA. The ultimate goal is to make sure that every student is educated about every possible candidate.

Steps to Implement

1. Allow every member of JSA to join this model debate, as well as allowing students to invite other students.
2. Students who are interested in being a mock candidate will have to fill out a survey and list qualifications on why they should be elected.
3. Allow JSA members to ask questions during the round, as well as come up with questions that could be asked. This allows all students to be engaged, as well as be part of the conversation
4. Students who are portraying the candidates should copy the candidates' mannerisms to portray them as correctly as possible.
5. The students are portraying the candidates and should also clarify what policies official candidates are going to implement, as well as explain them as thoroughly as possible. This will allow every student to be aware of what policies are going to be possibly implemented.



Teacher Debates

Debating is a great way to get out your anger, sadness, love, and passion, which is why we all love it! Want something to make it even better? Get your chapter to organize a Teacher Debate! What a teacher debate entails is getting 2-4 teachers who are willing to participate in a friendly debate about politics, satirical topics, or school-related topics. You may need to get approval from your admin, but there's also the possibility of making the debates a fundraiser; you could sell snacks or tickets. That way, not only do you and your best pals get to see your favorite teachers debate, but you also get to raise money for your chapter or an organization that you support!

Steps:

1. Pick two passionate teachers.
2. Get approval from your administration.
3. Hold a chapter vote for your debate topic.
4. Plan a date and choose a charging fee and method.
5. Pick a venue and a time.
6. Have the debate!
 - a. Note: It is suggested for teacher debates to be less structured and more casual.

Resources

- [Different debate structures and possible topics](#)
- [More debate topics!](#)

