

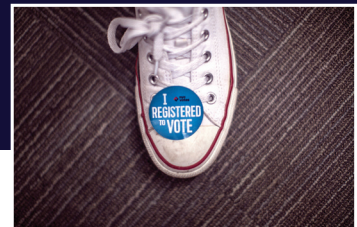
WHO'S VOTING ON **YOUR** ISSUES?

STUDENT VOTER REGISTRATION DAY

MAY 21, 2018
RESOURCE GUIDE



Student Voter Registration Day (SVRD) is a single-day program that educates New York City students about the importance of voting and civic engagement. The program is designed to increase youth voter registration and to get young people excited about being involved in the democratic process. Through interactive discussion, SVRD encourages students to see how issues at the polls affect their everyday lives.



“Always vote for principle,
though you may vote alone,
and you may cherish
the sweetest reflection
that your vote is never lost.”

-John Quincy Adams

“Decisions are made
by those who
show up.”

-Unknown

Tailoring Your Presentation

This SVRD Resource Guide is designed to help teachers and facilitators register students to vote and understand the value of voting and civic engagement through activities and discussion questions.

If you do not have enough time to cover the entire Guide, you may skip some of the activities in the middle of the Guide by choosing one activity from Activities 2, 3, 4, or 5. Activity 7, the Trivia Recap, is also optional. **Please note that Activities 1 and 6 are required.**

Please familiarize yourself with the Voter FAQ, Voter Vocabulary, and the Guide to the New York State Voter Registration Form, as they will be helpful for you in facilitating the resource guide. Please pack up everything at the end of your presentation!

- ★ **Welcome and Introduction**
 - (If short on time, you can skip the icebreaker activity)
- ★ **Activity 1: Registering Students to Vote**
- ★ **Activity 2: Your Impact on Your Community**
- ★ **Activity 3: So Why Does Voting Matter?**
- ★ **Activity 4: What Are Some Reasons People Don't Vote?**
- ★ **Activity 5: How the Issues Affect You**
- ★ **Activity 6: Becoming Civically Engaged**
- ★ **Activity 7: Trivia Recap**

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Introduction

Student Voter Registration Day (SVRD) is a nonpartisan youth voter program designed to educate students about the importance of voting and civic engagement. SVRD provides avenues for high school youth who are both citizens and non-citizens on how to become civically engaged in their communities. The goal of SVRD is to educate and empower students not only about the power of their votes, but also about their ability to take civic action by getting involved in their Community Boards, participatory budgeting, and other community initiatives. We need youth at the forefront of democracy, so that they can harness the power of their voices and make a difference on the issues they care about.

SVRD is the product of a partnership with the Office of the Mayor, the New York City Council, NYC Votes (the voter engagement initiative of the NYC Campaign Finance Board), the New York City Board of Elections (BOE), the NYC Department of Education (DOE), and the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC).

This resource guide supports a component of the DOE's new Civics For All initiative. It provides an opportunity for youth to learn about the process of voting and to register to vote while still in school.

How to Use This Resource Guide

This guide provides a menu of activities teachers or facilitators can mix, match, and combine to meet student needs.

- Welcome and Icebreaker
- Activity 1: Registering Students to Vote
- Activity 2: Your Impact on Your Community
- Activity 3: So Why Does Voting Matter?
- Activity 4: What Are Some Reasons People Don't Vote?
- Activity 5: How the Issues Affect You
- Activity 6: Becoming Civically Engaged
- Activity 7: Trivia Recap

These activities each contain discussion questions designed to help students think critically about the issues that are most important to them, and how these issues translate to public policy. The trivia recap is designed to help students sum up what they have learned.

In advance of Student Voter Registration Day, teachers are encouraged to have students record their mailing address on a note card to facilitate the completion of the voter registration forms.

Welcome and Icebreaker

★ Icebreaker

- **Standing Up for What You Care About:** Ask students to stand up for an issue that they care about, e.g., "Stand up if you care about funding for education." The goal of this activity is to demonstrate that we all care about different issues that voting can have an impact on, so by the end of the activity all or most of the students should be standing.

★ Introductions

- Today is Student Voter Registration Day!
 - » What is SVRD? SVRD is an annual one-day program designed to:
 - Register students to vote
 - Educate students about civic participation
 - Promote a voting culture among our youngest eligible citizens
- Partners involved: the Office of the Mayor, the New York City Council, NYC Votes (the voter engagement initiative of the NYC Campaign Finance Board), the New York City Board of Elections (BOE), the NYC Department of Education (DOE), and the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC).
- Select one student to read the quote from the presentation found at the beginning of this guide aloud. Call on additional students and ask them what this quote means to them.

Activity 1: Registering Students to Vote

Every year is an election year in New York. Below is an overview of this year's elections:

★ Federal primary election – Tuesday, June 26

- US senator
- US representative

★ State primary election – Thursday, September 13

- Governor
- Lieutenant governor
- Attorney general
- Assembly member
- State senator

★ General election – Tuesday, November 6

- Governor
- Lieutenant governor
- Attorney general
- Assembly member
- State senator
- US senator
- US representative

★ **Registering to vote:**

» Who can register?

- Answer: US citizens who will be 18 by the end of the calendar year (one must be 18 by Election Day in order to vote).

» What does this mean for people who are not U.S. citizens yet?

- Answer: Even if you're not eligible to vote due to your citizenship status, you can still make a difference by learning more about the city, state, or national issues that you care about and advocating for them. You can also participate in community decision making by getting involved with your local community board, taking part in participatory budgeting, or volunteering on a political campaign! (This can then be discussed at greater length during Activity 6.)

» I am an immigrant New Yorker, can I vote?

- Answer: You **can** vote if you:

- ✓ Became a citizen by naturalization.

You **cannot** vote if you:

- ✓ Have applied for naturalization but have not completed the process.

- ✓ Have a green card.

- ✓ Have a visa, other form of immigration status, or no immigration status.

» I am a citizen born in Puerto Rico or another U.S. territory, can I vote?

- ✓ You can vote if you are a resident of New York State (or any of the 50 states of the U.S.).

• **Teacher or facilitator responsibilities:**

» Discuss any questions that students might have about registering.

» Distribute voter registration forms and then review each field with students using the annotated Guide to the New York State Registration Form (see pages 26-27).

» Collect and review the forms from the students, and let students know that in 3-6 weeks they will receive a confirmation in the mail with their poll site information from the Board of Elections.

» Submit forms to NYC Votes for processing.

Activity 2: Your Impact on Your Community

In this segment, the teacher or facilitator will pose two questions for students to consider about themselves to help them better understand the framework of the discussion and the function of government:

- What issues are important to you?
- What is your role and responsibility?

Circles of Life

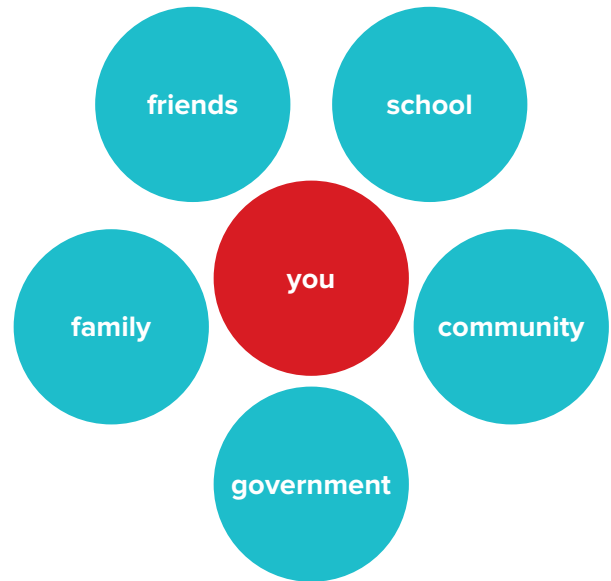
Students will examine the life circles that they are currently part of (family, friends, school, community, government) and how their interaction with each circle may begin to change as they move towards young adulthood.

★ Task:

- On a scale from 0%–100%, rate how much influence you have in these circles.

★ Questions to pose:

- What sequence of circles best describes your life right now as a high school student?
- How will this sequence change for you after high school?
- Which circles will you interact with more? Less? Why?
- How will your interaction with government change as you move into young adulthood?
- What role does voting and/or advocacy play in these circles?



Activity 3: So Why Does Voting Matter?

What is voting?

Voting is a means for citizens to choose their elected representatives. Voting is the best way for you to have an impact and make a difference on the issues you care about.

Voting Rights History

Below is a brief overview of the history of voting in the United States, covering the 14th, 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th Amendments to the Constitution. Before these changes were made, voting rights and eligibility were defined by each state. Most states allowed only white males who either owned property or had taxable incomes to vote. From 1776 to 1926, 40 states and federal territories permitted non-citizens to vote in local, state, and even federal elections. Non-citizens could also hold certain public offices, such as alderman, coroner, and school board member.

- 14th Amendment, 1868: All persons born or naturalized are citizens of the United States and the state where they reside. All U.S. citizens are guaranteed equal protection under the law.
- 15th Amendment, 1870: All men, irrespective of race, color, or previous servitude, are granted the right to vote.
- 19th Amendment, 1920: Women are granted the right to vote.
- 24th Amendment, 1964: Poll taxes for voters in federal elections are prohibited.
- 26th Amendment, 1976: 18-year-olds are granted the right to vote.

The Voting Rights Act

This act was passed in 1965 in order to overcome legal barriers at the state and local levels that prevented African Americans from exercising their right to vote under the 15th Amendment.

- Some of the discriminatory barriers that were used to deny African Americans the right to vote included poll taxes and literacy tests.
- Shelby County v. Holder, 2013: A section of the act, which required state and local governments to submit proposed changes to their voting procedures to the U.S. Department of Justice, was struck down on constitutional grounds. Since then, many state laws that make it more difficult to vote have gone into effect around the country, including:
 - » Requiring voters to show a government-issued ID to prove their identity.
 - » Reducing early voting.
 - » Purging of voter rolls.
 - » Moving polling sites out of some neighborhoods.

★ Questions to pose to students:

- Who is eligible to vote in America?
- What is the significance of the 26th Amendment as it pertains to youth and young adults?
- What were some of the recent changes made to the Voting Rights Act?
 - » What impact might these changes have in the future?
- How old does someone need to be to vote?

★ Activity

- Each student in the room guesses how the state of New York ranked for voter turnout in the 2016 presidential election by picking a number from 1-50 (1 being the best turnout, and 50 being the worst turnout). The correct guess is 41st.

Statistics

Below is a breakdown of overall voter turnout and youth voter turnout (this includes voters ages 18 to 29) throughout New York State, New York City, and the country as a whole.

- In the 2017 mayoral election, turnout among youth voters was 13.5%.
- In the 2016 presidential election, national youth voter turnout was 50%.
- In the 2016 presidential election, New York ranked 41st out of 50 states for overall voter turnout.

What do these statistics tell us about young people and voter participation?

Questions to pose:

- How do these statistics impact policy around youth issues?
- How do groups benefit when they vote?
- What are the issues that excite you?
- What are some reasons why people might not vote?

Activity 4: What Are Some Reasons People Don't Vote?

★ Top 3 reasons according to your peers:

- Feeling that your vote does not matter.
- Lack of information about voting, elections, and the candidates.
- Mistrust in government.

★ Discussion

- Which policies won't get sufficient priority without the votes or advocacy of young people?
- What are some ways to change this trend?
- What are some things from each of the life circles that students can do to change this trend?
- What are some reasons to vote?
 - So you can make decisions for yourself. If you don't vote, someone else will.
 - Because politicians are listening! They know who votes, and they focus their attention on those people.
 - It is your right!
 - To have politicians in office who represent your needs and concerns.
 - To have money put towards the issues you care about.

- It's your money on the line.
- Your issues and your communities matter.
- You can make a big difference in close elections.

Activity 5: How the Issues Affect You

We will examine the key issues impacting NYC youth, and discuss how these issues affect the students' lives, and the lives of their family members, and their local communities. As a collective group, the students will identify the most important issues from the list, then participate in an interactive discussion about how these issues will impact their lives. The facilitators or teachers can have a white board or notepad and markers handy to record the students' contributions and ask them if their views align with how their elected representatives vote.

- **Key issues to address include:** financial aid/student loans, jobs and wages, traffic and transit, housing, gun control, immigration reform.
- **Scenario:** You are an 18-year-old CUNY student who is working full-time, attending school full-time, and living off campus. What are the life costs that you will need to consider for living in NYC?
- The teacher or facilitator can either go through each issue with the students or, if in a small enough group, can divide the class into six groups that each examines one of the issues. Students complete a T-chart writing the issue in the left column and the cost associated with the issue in the right column. While going through each issue, discuss how the issue is connected to an elected official, and to voting. The teacher should begin with financial aid/student loans (listed below) as this will provide the framework for the other costs associated with young adulthood. The cost associated with each issue should then be subtracted from the annual salary provided by the minimum wage.

★ Issue #1: Financial Aid/Student Loans

Note to teachers and facilitators: *This issue is included to begin the dialogue with the students about how the costs associated with each issue have a direct correlation with voting.*

- Questions to pose:
 - » Why is financial aid important for college-age youth?
 - » What is the current tuition for CUNY?
 - Answer: \$6,530 per year for NYC residents.
 - » Who is eligible for financial aid?
 - Answer: U.S. citizens and permanent residents.
 - » How does financial aid relate to government?
 - Answer: Federal and state financial aid is provided by the United States government to need-based students in the form of grants, work-study, and student loans.
 - » How does CUNY receive its funding?
 - Answer: It is a state-funded institution.

- » What is the average student loan debt?
 - Answer: \$37,172 as of 2016.

★ Issue #2: Jobs and Wages

- Questions to pose:
 - » What is the current minimum wage in New York?
 - Answer: \$12.00/hour.
 - » What is it expected to increase to?
 - Answer: By 2021, the minimum wage in New York State will be \$15/hour. The minimum wage is set at the city, state, and federal level.
 - » What is the role of the governor?
 - Answer: The governor can propose legislation, and submits a budget to the Legislature. The governor can veto bills passed by the Legislature, and has the power of “line-item” veto on appropriations bills.
 - » What is the role of the New York State Legislature?
 - Answer: There are two houses of the Legislature, the Assembly and the Senate. A bill passed by both houses may become law, if it is signed by the [governor](#). A veto may be overridden if there is a [two-thirds majority](#) in each house. Furthermore, it has the power to propose amendments to the [New York State Constitution](#), which must be passed by majority vote in two successive sessions. If so proposed the amendment becomes valid if agreed to by the voters of a [referendum](#).
 - » What are taxes and why do people pay them?
 - Answer: Your tax money goes to many places including paying the salaries of government workers, as well as towards common resources such as police, firefighters, maintaining roads, and funding government programs such as CUNY.
- Our city officials have a big impact on jobs and wages. Here are just some of the actions they can take:
 - » Through the city budget, the **mayor** sets the number of available city jobs and creates new opportunities for vendors and nonprofits. The mayor can also enforce workplace policies, including wage and sick leave procedures.
 - » The **public advocate** can introduce bills to establish new hiring procedures, such as prohibiting questions about salary history.
 - » The **comptroller** safeguards and invests the funds in the NYC Employees’ Retirement System, which, with over 300,000 active members, is the largest public city employee retirement system in the country.
 - » **Borough presidents** can help stimulate economic growth in their boroughs by funding new retail developments or creating programs that support local businesses.
 - » **City Council members** can pass laws to increase worker benefits or the minimum wage. They can also work to make sure that publicly-funded development projects benefit local communities and create jobs for New Yorkers.

- **Discussion Question: How might voting change the minimum wage?**

- » For the issue of minimum wage, the facilitator should write on the board the current minimum wage (\$12.00/hour), and how much someone who is working full time (40 hours per week) would make in a year (\$24,960). Then subtract \$4,938 for taxes, for a total of \$20,022. The total income per month would be **\$1,668.50**.

- Breakdown of taxes:

- ✓ FICA 7.65% = \$1,909

- ✓ Federal: 6.88% = \$1,718

- ✓ State: 5.90% = \$785

- ✓ City: 3.53% = \$526

- ★ **Issue #3: Traffic and Transit**

- Questions to pose:

- » How do we vote on an issue like public transportation?

- » What is the current MetroCard fee? Monthly MetroCard fee?

- Answer: \$2.75 base fare and \$121 monthly

- » Which elected official oversees the MTA?

- Answer: The governor appoints the chairman and vice chairman of the MTA, so he has the most direct influence on how it operates. Any changes to the funding would go through the budget process—proposed by the governor, passed by the Legislature.

- » Why do the fares increase?

- Answer: Fares increase when the MTA doesn't get enough state subsidies to support the system, so the public has to pay for the deficit.

- » How might voting change these fees?

- Answer: Voting for elected officials who are committed to finding ways to keep the fares low.

- Our city officials can have a big impact on transit and traffic issues. Here are just some of the actions they can take in this area:

- » The **mayor** can develop and influence transit alternatives to the subway, such as CitiBike, ferries, or street cars.

- » The **public advocate** can call on city agencies that oversee transportation to make the roads safer or increase access for pedestrians and cyclists.

- » The **comptroller** can issue and sell bonds, which are used to pay for roads, bridges, and other transit projects.

- » **Borough presidents** can sponsor bills related to transportation in their communities, such as increased ferry services to and from Staten Island.

- » **City Council members** can pass laws about street use and set penalties for parking or traffic violations.

★ Issue #4: Housing

- Questions to pose:
 - » What is the average rent in NYC?
 - Answer: As of January 2018, average rent for an apartment in New York, NY is \$3,164, which is a 2.78% increase from last year when the average rent was \$3,076.
(For the purpose of this exercise, let's say you rent an apartment with 3 people, and your rent is \$1,000 a month.)
 - » Why is affordable housing an issue in NYC?
 - » What is considered to be affordable housing?
 - Answer: Housing deemed affordable to those with a median household income as rated by country, state, region or municipality.
- Our city officials have a direct influence on land use and housing issues in the city. Here are just some of the things they can do:
 - » The **mayor** enforces the laws that govern how land in the city neighborhoods is used and can also help New Yorkers avoid eviction by offering housing support programs.
 - » The **public advocate** can file complaints against landlords who violate city laws and create tools like the Worst Landlords Watchlist in order to hold them accountable.
 - » The **comptroller** can conduct audits to determine how the city can better meet housing needs, such as how many city-owned vacant properties could be used to create affordable housing units.
 - » **Borough presidents** can use city funds to create affordable housing units in their boroughs and influence decisions regarding new real estate developments.
 - » **City Council members** approve changes to the rules about what sorts of buildings can go in city neighborhoods, which can affect neighborhood density and affordability. They can also demand that the city's housing authority work to improve living conditions in public housing units.

★ Issue #5: Gun Control

- Questions to pose:
 - » How much gun violence is there in the United States?
 - Answer: Out of 12,664 homicides total in 2011, 8,583 homicides were caused by firearms. This means that more than two-thirds of homicides involved a firearm.
 - » How do New York City gun laws differ from the New York State?
 - Answer: New York City has its own set of laws regarding gun access, separate from New York State's. Owners of all types of guns are required to hold permits. All firearms must comply with the NY SAFE Act, which bans guns considered "assault weapons" from ownership by private citizens.

- » What are NYC elected officials doing about gun control?
 - Answer: New York City has created the “Gun Violence Crisis Management System,” a citywide initiative to reduce gun violence in the 17 precincts that account for 51% of shootings citywide. City Council has invested \$19.9 million in comprehensive strategies to reduce gun violence in these neighborhoods.
- Our city officials can impact our gun control laws. Here are just some of the actions they can take:
 - » The **mayor** appoints the police commissioner, who sets policing procedures and how gun laws can be enforced. The mayor can also approve or veto legislation on gun control issues in NYC.
 - » The **public advocate** can introduce and co-sponsor bills about gun access that are proposed in the Council. The public advocate can also report on gun violence throughout the city and call on agencies to help combat gun violence.
 - » The **comptroller** can oversee city spending on reducing gun violence and recommend ways in which the budget can be used more efficiently in gun control.
 - » **Borough presidents** can hold community meetings and see what their constituents want to be done about gun control. They can also launch learning initiatives about gun violence and gun control in public schools in their boroughs.
 - » **City Council members** can pass laws relating to gun access and increase the budget for keeping illegal firearms off the streets.

★ Issue #6: Immigration Reform

- Questions to pose:
 - » What is the immigrant population in New York?
 - Answer: Over 37% of New Yorkers were born in a different country. NYC is home to 3.1 million immigrants, the majority of whom are naturalized U.S. citizens. NYC has an estimated undocumented population of 560,000.
 - » What has New York City done to protect our immigrant population?
 - Answer: New York City is a national leader in establishing policy and enacting laws designed to support immigrant communities. For example, the City designed IDNYC, a municipal identification card for all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status. The City also operates ActionNYC, a community-based immigration legal services program.
- While the federal government is primarily responsible for immigration policy, our city officials have a lot of influence on the well-being and integration of our immigrant residents.
 - » The **mayor** can create programs and recommend policies to provide resources for immigrants.
 - » The **public advocate** can work with NYC’s immigrant communities to provide important information and make sure their rights are protected.
 - » The **comptroller** can provide information on how immigrants can obtain assistance from government agencies.
 - » **Borough presidents** can hold community meetings to see what their constituents want to be done on immigration and provide information about policies that affect immigrants in their boroughs.
 - » **City Council members** can create laws to protect the rights of immigrants, as well as laws regarding protections for undocumented individuals.

At the end of this segment, the students will have an understanding of how the key issues impacting youth and young adults are directly related to voting and government.

Before casting your vote on these issues, what questions would you ask the candidates in order to inform your vote?

Activity 6: Becoming Civically Engaged

- Get the NYC ID
 - » IDNYC is a government-issued identification card for all residents of New York City who are at least 14 years of age. Any resident of NYC may apply, regardless of immigration status, as long as they provide proof that they reside in New York City. It is free, and provides many benefits, including acting as a library card; a free membership to NYC's museums, zoos, and more; and discounts on a variety of activities, from movie tickets to gyms to supermarkets.
- Getting involved
 - » In this segment, we will review other ways students can get involved in their communities, even if they are not eligible to vote.
 - Become a poll worker or poll interpreter. For both positions you must be at least 18 years old. Poll workers must be U.S. citizens and registered to vote in NYC. Interpreters must be citizens or permanent U.S. residents who live in NYC and are fluent in English as well as Spanish, Chinese, or Korean.
 - Join a political group.
 - Contact your local elected officials about issues in your neighborhood.
 - If you're eligible to vote but you know you'll be away for school during the elections, you can vote by absentee ballot.
 - Get involved with your local community board: community boards are local democratic bodies that address neighborhood needs and concerns. Find information on your community board at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/cb.shtml>.
 - Take part in participatory budgeting: in many communities, NYC residents have real power to put real money into projects of their choice. Learn more about participatory budgeting and see what ideas your neighbors have at council.nyc.gov/pb.
 - Get involved in education councils: all New Yorkers are eligible to participate in the community education councils (CEC) in each school district and the four citywide education councils. Learn more about how you can support our schools at nycparentleaders.org.
 - Volunteer on a political campaign: even if you cannot register to vote, you can still volunteer your time on a political campaign. Find a list of current candidates at voting.nyc.

Activity 7: Trivia Recap

A fun recap of the information discussed in the workshop.

★ Trivia Questions

Q How did New York rank out of all the states for voter turnout in the 2016 presidential election?

A 41st

Q What percentage of youth voters ages 18 to 29 voted in the 2017 mayoral election?

A 13.5%

Q What are three ways that you can become civically engaged if you're not eligible to vote?

A 1) Join a political campaign
2) Email your city, state, or federal elected official
3) Join a local community board

Q How old do you have to be to register to vote?

A Age 17

Q What is the current minimum wage?

A \$12.00/hour

Q What year were women given the right to vote?

A 1920

Q How often are presidential elections?

A Every four years

Q How long is a United States Senate term?

A Six years

Q How many terms can a president serve?

A Two terms

Q Which amendment gave African Americans the right to vote?

A 15th Amendment

Q What is the role of the electoral college?

A To formally cast votes for the president and vice president

Materials

Within this package, please find additional resources that may be used to complement the lesson. These resources include:

- Voter FAQ
- Voter Vocabulary
- Elected Officials: Responsibilities & Duties
- Which Elected Official Do I Need For My Issue?
- How Do I Contact My Elected Officials?
- How to Reach the NYC Board of Elections Offices
- Guide to the New York State Voter Registration Form
- Absentee Ballot Application

VOTER FAQ

Q How old do I need to be to register to vote?

A You must be 17 to register, and turn 18 by the end of the year to register. You must be 18 years old on the day of the election to vote.

Q What is the difference between primary and general elections?

A A primary election determines which candidates from each party will be on the ballot, and the general election determines which candidates get elected into office.

Q What elections can I vote in?

A If you are registered to a political party, you can vote in any primary or runoff election. Any registered voter can vote in the general election.

Q Where do I go to vote on Election Day?

A Go to voting.nyc and click on “Where to Vote” to find your poll site.

Q I am a permanent resident. Can I still register to vote?

A No. You can only vote if you are a United States citizen.

Q Should I register to vote if I don’t know my citizenship status?

A *You should only register to vote if you are sure of your citizenship status. If you register to vote when you are ineligible to do so, you may face criminal and/or immigration consequences.*

Q I don’t know if I’m registered to vote—how can I find out?

A Go to voting.nyc and click on “Voter Registration” to find out if you’re registered to vote.

Q What happens if I move out of the country or go away to school?

A You can still vote by [absentee ballot](http://vote.nyc.ny.us/downloads/pdf/forms/boe/absenteevoting/absenglish.pdf) (<http://vote.nyc.ny.us/downloads/pdf/forms/boe/absenteevoting/absenglish.pdf>). Call in to the Board of Elections to ask one to be sent to you, or fill out the form, print, and mail it in to the Board of Elections.

Q Can I register to vote if I was previously convicted?

A If you were convicted of a felony, you can register and vote as long as you have completed your prison sentence and you are no longer on parole. If you meet this criteria, you must submit a new voter registration form.

Q I am a college student. Can I register to vote at my school address?

A **Yes!** You have the right to register to vote at your school address—this includes a dorm room. Any student living in a dorm is entitled to the same rights as any other student. To imply otherwise is illegal. If you receive mail in a P.O. box you can sign an affidavit (or, in some cases, get a letter from your college’s Residential Life office) asserting that you live at your dorm address.

Q I am currently residing in temporary housing, can I register and vote?

A Yes, you have the right to vote. Write a location where you can be found as the address where you live. Write the address of a shelter, a P.O. box, or family member’s address as the address where you receive mail. Your voter card will be sent to this address and you will be assigned a poll site according to the address where you live.

Q Do I need to re-register every time I move?

A Yes. For each time you move, you will likely have a new poll site address, depending on the location.

Q What happens if I get to my poll site and I am not listed?

A First, make sure you are signing in at the correct table for your Assembly and election district. Once you confirm this, and you believe you are eligible to vote, you can still vote by filling out an affidavit/provisional ballot, and follow the instructions. After the election, the BOE will check its records, and your vote will be counted if you were eligible to vote. If not, you will receive a notice that you were not eligible to vote, and you should fill out a new registration form for future elections.

Q Does my voter registration ever expire?

A Your registration has no expiration date, but it may be moved to inactive if you did not vote in the last two federal elections, or if you moved and did not update your address with the [BOE](#).

Q I recently changed my legal name. How do I change my name on my voter registration form?

A To change your name, address, political party, or email, fill out a new [registration form](http://vote.nyc.ny.us/downloads/pdf/forms/boe/voterreg/voterregenglish.pdf) (<http://vote.nyc.ny.us/downloads/pdf/forms/boe/voterreg/voterregenglish.pdf>) and send it in to your local Board of Elections office.

Q Which political party should I select?

A As a nonpartisan initiative, we are not allowed to tell you which party to select. To learn more about the political parties in New York State, click [here](https://ballotpedia.org/Ballot_access_requirements_for_political_parties_in_New_York) (https://ballotpedia.org/Ballot_access_requirements_for_political_parties_in_New_York). In order to vote in a primary election, you must be registered in New York State with the party whose primary you would like to participate in.

Q How do I change what political party I am registered with?

A To change your party, you must submit a new registration form and indicate which party you would like to enroll in. All changes submitted prior to the deadline to register for the next general election will go into effect the following year.

Q Do I need to show identification to vote? If so, what type?

A You may have to show identification to vote if you are voting for the first time at your polling place. Otherwise, you should not be asked to show identification. If a poll worker insists on seeing your ID and you do not have it, you can vote by affidavit ballot.

Acceptable forms of ID include a current and valid photo ID, current utility bill, bank statement, government check or paycheck, or government document that shows your name and address.

Q On Election Day, if I think my rights have been violated, what should I do?

A Call (866) OUR-VOTE if you feel your rights have been violated. There will be lawyers on hand to answer Election Day questions and concerns about voting procedures.

Q Where can I learn more about the elections: political parties, who's running for office, issues, and voting rights laws?

A Check out voting.nyc to find out what candidates are on the ballot in your upcoming elections, where to vote, and information about voting laws and your rights.

Q What happens after I register to vote?

A After you register, you will receive a confirmation in the mail from the Board of Elections within 3–6 weeks that will include your poll site and voter card. Use this information to vote on Election Day. If you do not receive this card, contact your borough's Board of Elections office (see page 25) or visit voting.nyc to check your registration status and find your poll site.

VOTER VOCABULARY

Absentee ballot

When voters cannot make it to their poll site on Election Day, they have the option to vote via absentee ballot, which can be sent in by mail or delivered in person to the Board of Elections. In order to vote absentee, you must request and fill out an application for an absentee ballot in advance.

Affidavit/provisional ballot

An affidavit/provisional ballot is used to record a vote when there are questions about a given voter's eligibility. For example, if your name does not appear on the electoral roll at your poll site, you have the option to vote via affidavit ballot.

Assembly district

The state is divided into smaller districts known as Assembly districts. Each district is represented by a member of the State Assembly, one of the two bodies of the State Legislature.

Ballot proposal

A ballot proposal is a question placed on the ballot for voters to weigh in on. Ballot questions may involve bond issues, or proposed amendments to the New York State Constitution or the New York City Charter. In some cases, an individual or group can submit a petition to place a question on the ballot.

Candidate

A person who is seeking an office through an election.

Election district

The basic political subdivision for purposes of registration and voting. By state law, there are no more than 950 registered voters in an election district.

Electoral college

A body of "electors" chosen by popular vote on a state-by-state basis, who formally elect the president and vice president of the United States.

General election

A regular election of candidates running for city, statewide, or federal offices.

Gerrymander

To manipulate the boundaries of an electoral constituency so as to favor one party or class.

Nonpartisan

Not biased or partisan, especially toward any particular political group.

Participatory budgeting

A democratic process in which residents of a district directly decide how to spend public funds given to that district. In other words, the people who pay taxes in that community get the opportunity, through participatory budgeting, to decide how those tax dollars should be spent.

Partisan

A strong supporter of a party, cause, or person.

Petition

A formal request or call to action, often bearing the names of a number of those making the request, that is addressed to a person or group of persons in authority or power, soliciting some favor, right, mercy, or other benefit.

Political party

An organized group of people with similar political aims and opinions that seeks to influence public policy by getting candidates elected to public office.

Poll site

A place where votes are cast.

Poll worker

A person who is responsible for operating the polls. Responsibilities include opening the poll site, serving voters, and closing the polls. The poll worker can serve as an inspector, poll clerk, information clerk, door clerk, or interpreter.

Primary election

An election in which enrolled members of a party vote to nominate party candidates and elect party officers.

ELECTED OFFICIALS: RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

CITY OFFICIALS

Mayor

As the leader of city government, the mayor sets city policy and impacts the day-to-day lives of New Yorkers by creating the budget, appointing the heads of boards and agencies like the NYPD or the Department of Education, signing or vetoing bills from City Council, and issuing executive orders.

Public advocate

As the people's representative in city government, the public advocate can investigate complaints and make recommendations about city services, provide information that allows New Yorkers to protect themselves (such as the Worst Landlords Watchlist), and introduce and co-sponsor bills. The public advocate is responsible for acting as the mayor if the mayor is absent or unable to perform his or her duties.

Comptroller

As the chief financial officer, the comptroller issues and sells city bonds, which are used to finance public projects like roads and bridges, and monitors the city's spending by conducting audits and reports. The comptroller also manages the funds in NYC's pension system, the largest public city employee retirement system in the country, by making sure that they are protected and invested wisely.

Borough president

While borough presidents can't create or pass laws, they can fund organizations in their boroughs (about \$4 million of the city budget is set aside for this purpose); make land use decisions; appoint members of local Community Boards and the City Planning Commission, who advise on land and neighborhood needs; and advocate for residents of their boroughs.

City Council

City Council is the law-making branch of the city's government, responsible for negotiating and approving the mayor's budget, making and passing laws, deciding how to use land throughout the city, and making sure agencies are serving the people of NYC. Each City Council member represents one of the city's 51 City Council districts.

District attorney

Each borough has a district attorney that investigates and prosecutes crimes in their community.

STATE OFFICIALS

Governor

The governor has the power to approve or veto bills and enforces state laws.

Lieutenant governor

The lieutenant governor is elected in the same election as the governor and is responsible for stepping in if the governor is unable to fulfill their duties. The lieutenant governor is also the president of the Senate, but has a casting vote only.

Attorney general

The attorney general is the chief legal officer of the state of New York and is the head of the Law Department. The attorney general prosecutes and defends all legal actions and proceedings in which the state is interested.

Comptroller

The state comptroller is the head of the Department of Audit and Control of the State of New York. The comptroller is required to audit payments made by the state and all official accounts of the state.

State senator*

The State Senate is one of the two houses of the New York State Legislature. New York has 63 state senators that work to write and pass state laws and approve the state budget. Senators must be residents of the Senate districts which they are chosen to represent for at least twelve months at the time of election.

State Assembly member*

The Assembly is one of the two houses of the New York State Legislature. New York has 150 State Assembly members that work to write and pass state laws and approve the state budget. Assembly members must be residents of the Assembly districts from which they are chosen to represent for at least twelve months at the time of election.

* part-time positions

FEDERAL OFFICIALS

President

The president is the chief executive of the United States and the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces. With the approval of the Senate, the president appoints federal judges, cabinet members, and other public officials, except as otherwise provided by law.

Vice president

The vice president is elected together with the president and is responsible for stepping in if the president is unable to fulfill their duties. The vice president is also the president of the Senate, but may only cast a vote to break a tie.

U.S. representative

The House of Representatives is one of the two houses that compose the U.S. Congress, with the power to enact laws, impeach officials, and determine budget priorities. The number of representatives for each state is apportioned according to the population of that state, based on the census, which is taken every ten years. Representatives must be an inhabitant of the state from which they are elected at the time of election.

U.S. senator

The U.S. Senate is one of the two houses that comprise the U.S. Congress. The Senate enacts laws, approves presidential appointments, and also has the sole authority to try all impeachments. The Senate is composed of two senators from each state, each of whom must be an inhabitant of the state at the time of election.

WHICH ELECTED OFFICIAL DO I NEED FOR MY ISSUE?

If there is time, conduct an interactive exercise with the students by running through each issue and then asking them to guess which elected official(s) would be able to have an impact on that particular issue.

ISSUE	ELECTED OFFICIAL
My building has had no heat or hot water for the past month.	City Council member
My school is in danger of closing and needs funding to stay open next year.	State senator State Assembly member Public advocate City Council member
The cost of rent is too high, and my family is about to lose our apartment.	Public advocate City Council member
I'm a college student, and I can't afford tuition.	State senator State Assembly member
I want to see changes made to our city's gun laws that will keep my school and community safe.	U.S. representative State senator State Assembly member Mayor City Council member
There are not enough healthy food options in my community.	Mayor Borough president City Council member
My community garden needs funding to continue into next year.	City Council member
I have a criminal record, and I want to see the laws for minor convictions changed.	State senator State Assembly member
I want to be able to vote early and online.	Governor State senator State Assembly member
I am concerned about climate change and pollution in NYC.	Mayor City Council member
I can't afford a MetroCard, but I need public transit to get to work and/or school.	City Council member Public advocate State senator State Assembly member

HOW DO I CONTACT MY ELECTED OFFICIALS?

Step 1: Find your elected officials. There are a number of websites that make it easy for you to find your elected officials.

Here are a few:

- [Common Cause](http://www.commoncause.org/take-action/find-elected-officials/) (<http://www.commoncause.org/take-action/find-elected-officials/>)
- [MyGovNYC.org](http://www.mygovnyc.org/) (<http://www.mygovnyc.org/>)
- [New York City Council](https://council.nyc.gov/find-my-district-widget/) (<https://council.nyc.gov/find-my-district-widget/>)

Step 2: Search online for the official websites of your elected officials. Within the official websites, the elected officials may have their email addresses listed, as well as the street addresses for their district offices.

Step 3: Find their social media accounts. Their official websites may also list links to their social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. You can use these accounts to contact your elected officials directly, or their press managers.

HOW TO REACH THE NYC BOARD OF ELECTIONS OFFICES

Bronx

1780 Grand Concourse, 5th Floor
Bronx, NY 10457
Tel: 1.718.299.9017
Fax: 1.718.299.2140
Hours of Operation: 9am–5pm

Brooklyn

345 Adams Street, 4th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201
Tel: 1.718.797.8800
Fax: 1.718.246.5958
Hours of Operation: 9am–5pm

Queens

118-35 Queens Boulevard
Forest Hills, NY 11375
Tel: 1.718.730.6730
Fax: 1.718.459.3384
Hours of Operation: 9am–5pm

Manhattan

200 Varick Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10014
Tel: 1.212.886.2100
Fax: 1.646.638.2047
Hours of Operation: 9am–5pm

Staten Island

1 Edgewater Plaza, 4th Floor
Staten Island, NY 10305
Tel: 1.718.876.0079
Fax: 1.718.876.0912
Hours of Operation: 9am–5pm



GUIDE TO THE NEW YORK

You may register to vote at age 17 as long as you will be 18 by the end of the year.

2

Write the address where you live in Box 8. To receive mail at a different address, write it in Box 9.

8

If you are currently residing in temporary housing:

- write a location where you currently reside in Box 8.
- write an address where you can receive mail, such as a shelter or P.O. Box in Box 9.

9

If you are updating your voter registration, fill in your previous name, address, or county/state to help the BOE find your existing registration.

12

You must choose one of the parties listed, write in the name of a party, or choose not to enroll in any party. You must enroll in one of the listed parties to vote in that party's primary elections, unless state rules allow otherwise.

14

You may change your party once a year by completing a new registration form and submitting it no less than 25 days before the general election. This will go into effect 7 days after the election.

15

If you are unable to vote at your poll site on Election Day, check the box to receive an absentee ballot application. You may request an absentee ballot from the BOE after registering to vote whether or not you check this box.

1 Qualifications

1

Are you a citizen of the U.S.? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If you answer *No*, you cannot register.

2

Will you be 18 years of age or older on or before election day? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If you answer *No*, you cannot register.

Your name

3

Last name

First name

More information

Items 6 & 7 are optional

4

Birth date M M / D D / Y Y

6

Phone - - - - - - - - - -

The address where you live

8

Address (not P.O. box)

Apt. Number

City/Town/Village

New York State County

The address where you receive mail
Skip if same as above

9

Address or P.O. box

P.O. Box

City/Town/Village

Voting history

10

Have you voted before? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Voting information that has changed

Skip if this has not changed or you have not voted before

12

Your name was

Your address was

Your previous state or New York State

Identification

You must make 1 selection

For questions, please refer to Verifying your identity above.

13

☐ New York State DMV number☐ Last four digits of your Social Security number☐ I do not have a New York State ID

Political party

You must make 1 selection

Political party enrollment is optional but that, in order to vote in a primary election of a political party, a voter must enroll in that political party, unless state party rules allow otherwise.

14

I wish to enroll in a political party

☐ Democratic party☐ Republican party☐ Conservative party☐ Green party☐ Working Families party☐ Independence party☐ Women's Equality party☐ Reform party☐ Other _____

I do not wish to enroll in a political party

☐ No party

Optional questions

15

☐ I need to apply for an Absentee ballot application☐ I would like to be an Election Day voter

WRITE LEGIBLY IN BLOCK CAPITALS

STATE VOTER REGISTRATION FORM

☐ Yes ☐ No
ster to vote.

☐ Yes ☐ No
ster to vote unless you will be 18 by the end of the year.

Suffix
Middle Initial

Y Y Y 5 Sex ☐ M ☐ F
7 Email

Zip code

Zip code

Yes ☐ No 11 What year?

ate County was

ecurity number x x x - x x -
driver's license or a Social Security number.

!
16
party
Sign
Date

Affidavit: I swear or affirm that

- I am a citizen of the United States.
- I will have lived in the county, city or village for at least 30 days before the election.
- I meet all requirements to register to vote in New York State.
- This is my signature or mark in the box below.
- The above information is true, I understand that if it is not true, I can be convicted and fined up to \$5,000 and/or jailed for up to four years.

1 You must be a citizen to register to vote.

3 Your name must match the name on your ID.
6 Writing your phone number and/or email allows the BOE to contact you if there are any problems with your registration form. It is not required.
7

10 If you are updating your voter registration, this information will help the BOE locate your voting record. It is not required.
11

13 Provide either a New York State ID number or the last 4 digits of your social security number.
If you don't have either, check the third box.
The first time you vote, you will need to present identification at the poll site: (1) a photo ID or (2) a proof of address, such as an electric or gas bill that shows your name and address.

16 Please read the terms of the affidavit carefully before you sign and date to validate your form.
Someone can assist you with filling out the rest of the form, but you must sign it yourself.

UE OR BLACK INK!

ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION

New York State Absentee Ballot Application

Please print clearly. See detailed instructions.

This application must either be personally delivered to your county board of elections not later than the day before the election, or postmarked by a governmental postal service not later than 7th day before election day. The ballot itself must either be personally delivered to the board of elections no later than the close of polls on election day, or postmarked by a governmental postal service not later than the day before the election and received no later than the 7th day after the election.

BOARD USE ONLY:

Town/City/Ward/Dist: _____

Registration No: _____

Party: _____

☐ voted in office

1. I am requesting, in good faith, an absentee ballot due to (check one reason):
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> absence from county or New York City on election day | <input type="checkbox"/> patient or inmate in a Veterans' Administration Hospital |
| <input type="checkbox"/> temporary illness or physical disability | <input type="checkbox"/> detention in jail/prison, awaiting trial, awaiting action by a grand jury, or in prison for a conviction of a crime or offense which was not a felony |
| <input type="checkbox"/> permanent illness or physical disability | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> duties related to primary care of one or more individuals who are ill or physically disabled | |

2. absentee ballot(s) requested for the following election(s) :
- ☐ Primary Election only ☐ General Election only ☐ Special Election only
- ☐ Any election held between these dates: absence begins: ____/____/____ absence ends: ____/____/____

3. last name or surname _____ first name _____ middle initial _____ suffix _____

4. date of birth ____/____/____ county where you live _____ phone number (optional) _____

5. address where you live (residence) street _____ apt _____ city _____ state **NY** zip code _____

6. Delivery of Primary Election Ballot (check one) ☐ Deliver to me in person at the board of elections
- ☐ I authorize (give name): _____ to pick up my ballot at the board of elections.
- ☐ Mail ballot to me at: (mailing address)
- street no. _____ street name _____ apt. _____ city _____ state _____ zip code _____

7. Delivery of General (or Special) Election Ballot (check one) ☐ Deliver to me in person at the board of elections
- ☐ I authorize (give name): _____ to pick up my ballot at the board of elections.
- ☐ Mail ballot to me at: (mailing address)
- street no. _____ street name _____ apt. _____ city _____ state _____ zip code _____

Applicant Must Sign Below

8. I certify that I am a qualified and a registered (and for primary, enrolled) voter; and that the information in this application is true and correct and that this application will be accepted for all purposes as the equivalent of an affidavit and, if it contains a material false statement, shall subject me to the same penalties as if I had been duly sworn.

Sign Here: **X** _____ Date ____/____/____

If applicant is unable to sign because of illness, physical disability or inability to read, the following statement must be executed: By my mark, duly witnessed hereunder, I hereby state that I am unable to sign my application for an absentee ballot without assistance because I am unable to write by reason of my illness or physical disability or because I am unable to read. I have made, or have the assistance in making, my mark in lieu of my signature. (No power of attorney or preprinted name stamps allowed. See detailed instructions.)

Date ____/____/____ Name of Voter: _____ Mark: _____

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the above named voter affixed his or her mark to this application in my presence and I know him or her to be the person who affixed his or her mark to said application and understand that this statement will be accepted for all purposes as the equivalent of an affidavit and if it contains a material false statement, shall subject me to the same penalties as if I had been duly sworn.

(address of witness to mark)

(signature of witness to mark)

Board Use Only
2010 regular ab app2_rev (6/15/10)

Helpful Links

[Voting.nyc](http://voting.nyc) (<http://voting.nyc>)

[NYC Votes and the CFB](http://www.nycctfb.info/nyc-votes) (<http://www.nycctfb.info/nyc-votes>)

[NYC Participatory Budgeting](https://council.nyc.gov/pb) (<https://council.nyc.gov/pb>)

[NYC Board of Elections](http://vote.nyc.ny.us/html/home/home.shtml) (<http://vote.nyc.ny.us/html/home/home.shtml>)

Stay Connected

For more information about voting and elections, follow us **@nycvotes** and sign up at **nycvotes.nycctfb.info** or text **NYCVOTES** to **+1 917-979-6377** to receive email or text alerts about important election dates.

Acknowledgments

SVRD PLANNING COALITION

The Office of the Mayor

The New York City Council

NYC Votes and the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB)

The New York City Board of Elections (BOE)

The New York City Department of Education (DOE)

The New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC)

