College Students and Voting

A Campus Vote Project Perspective

www.campusvoteproject.org
A Project of the Fair Elections Legal Network
Executive Summary

College students face unique barriers to voter registration and voting. As new voters who have often recently moved to their college communities and may even be new to the state, they are more likely than other voters to lack basic information about the voting process. Administrators and student organizations at colleges and universities have played an essential role in helping more students participate in American democracy by implementing institutional reforms that provide information and access to participation.

In 2012 students had to face the usual barriers to participation, such as not knowing registration rules and deadlines, lacking acceptable ID documents, and lack of transportation to the polls. In addition, a wave of new voter suppression legislation that either disproportionately affected students or directly targeted their rights compounded the challenges. In some states, new laws requiring voters to show an ID at the polls either excluded student IDs from the list of acceptable documents or placed restrictions on students IDs that left few or none of them usable for voting. Other states attempted, through legislation or public campaigns, to intimidate students by making them believe incorrectly that voting in their college community could have adverse consequences. Misinformation also hindered efforts to increase student participation on Election Day. For example, the Virginia State Board of Elections placed misleading information on its website that incorrectly discouraged students from voting in their college communities.

Despite these difficulties, college administrators and faculty, students, voting rights advocates, and others played an important role in defending students’ access to the ballot. Schools in the University of Wisconsin system and private universities in the state took extraordinary measures to distribute newly required ID documents before the law was ultimately struck down in state court. In Pennsylvania, the Fair Elections Legal Network (FELN) participated in a coalition that contacted most colleges in the state, urging them to add an expiration date sticker to student IDs so they could be used as voter IDs. The voting rights community won another important courtroom victory when a Pennsylvania judge ruled that the state could not enforce the ID law in 2012. In Virginia, FELN worked with the State Board of Elections to remove the misleading information about student voting from its website.

Young people constituted a slightly higher percentage of the electorate in 2012 than in 2008, and the work done on college campuses to encourage student voting played an important role in that achievement. Campus Democrats and Republicans joined forces at some schools to create nonpartisan vote coalitions. College administrators worked with local election officials to get campus polling places and provide them with information that would lessen voter ID burdens. FELN worked with administrators and students through Campus Vote Project to distribute essential voting information that students needed to cast a ballot that counted.

Campus Vote Project will continue to work with colleges and universities to empower students with the tools they need for democratic participation. With the high-profile partisanship of a presidential campaign behind us, we hope to work with even more schools in 2013 on state and municipal elections and lay the foundation for a robust 2014 program. For more information on Campus Vote Project, contact Dan Vicuna at (202) 331-0114 or dvicuna@campusvoteproject.org.
Introduction

Young adults (ages 18-29) constituted approximately 19 percent of the 2012 electorate, which is an increase of one percent from 2008.¹ More than other age groups, young voters face extra barriers to the ballot box. In 2010, only 22.8 percent of eligible voters under 30 voted compared to 40.8 percent of all eligible voters.² When those young adults are students, they face additional obstacles because they often move to new communities for college. These challenges include:

- not knowing voter registration rules and deadlines;
- not having acceptable ID for voter registration or voting purposes;
- confusion about where to vote;
- lack of transportation to the polls; and
- election officials or poll workers who are unaware or unsympathetic to the challenges student voters face.

Unfortunately, college students must also occasionally endure the hostility of local election officials and community members. Students spend years living in a community, frequenting local businesses, paying sales taxes, and sending tuition dollars to an important local institution. They also often work and volunteer in that community. Nonetheless, some view college students as outsiders who have no business voting locally. Fortunately, the U.S. Supreme Court settled the matter in 1979 when it affirmed without comment in Symm v. United States a lower court decision that college students have the same right to vote in their college community as any other member of that community.³ Despite the Court’s clear stance on student voting rights, protecting those rights in practice requires the commitment of policy makers, election officials, school administrators, and students.

In addition to existing barriers, state legislatures around the country pursued new laws in 2011 and 2012 that limited access to the polls. These voter suppression efforts included restrictions on voter registration drives, implementation of restrictive voter ID laws, and reductions in early voting options. Although some of these laws were stopped permanently or delayed by gubernatorial vetoes, legal challenges and ballot questions, many will be enforced in 2013 and beyond.

Approximately two-thirds of students aged 18-24 who did not vote in the 2010 elections cited reasons that could be remedied by empowering students with basic information. Educating students of their right to vote in their college community, registering them locally at freshman orientation, telling them about early voting options, or getting a polling place on campus would eliminate some of the barriers that keep students from the polls. In addition to helping student voters participate in an upcoming election, these efforts will lead to a lifelong commitment to civic engagement. An Educational Testing Service study found that a young adult’s willingness to vote in a federal election was a strong predictor of the person’s willingness to vote in the subsequent federal election. For example, a young person who voted in the 2004 presidential election was 30 percent more likely to vote in the 2006 mid-term election. The study determined that young adults who actively vote in their late teens and early 20s may be more likely to vote in their mid-20s. Consequently, colleges can create more lifelong participants in our democratic system by getting individuals the information and resources they need to vote while they are students.

Helping Americans become informed and engaged citizens is one of the most important missions of higher education. Colleges and universities touch many aspects of their students’ lives while those students are affiliated with the institution. This relationship provides countless opportunities for schools to educate students about voting as part of orientation, residence hall move-in, class registration, lectures, and online information distribution. By supplementing students’ formal education with information that helps them to participate fully in our democracy, colleges can instill in the next generation of leaders a strong commitment to civic engagement.

This report will examine student voting efforts around the country during the 2012 election cycle and opportunities for even greater successes in 2013 and beyond. It will highlight the ways in

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6 Id.
which legal changes have made voting more difficult for college students and successful efforts that administrators, students, election officials, and the voting rights community used to fight back against those challenges. For more information on FELN’s student voting efforts, go to www.campusvoteproject.org or contact Campus Vote Project Coordinator Dan Vicuna at (202) 331-0114.

Report Topics

The State of the Law in 2012
- Voter ID
- Other Legislative Challenges
Success in 2012
- The Role of Technology in Reaching Student Voters
- College Administrators, Staff, Faculty, and Students Lead the Way
- The Importance of Collaborating with Election Officials
- Campus Vote Project Helps on Election Day

Moving Forward in 2013
The State of the Law in 2012

Voter ID

As new legislatures and governors took the helm in state capitals across the country following the 2010 elections, the voter suppression floodgates appeared to open. Many pieces of legislation disproportionately affected college students and some even targeted students directly. Voter ID requirements were the most popular and high-profile of the attacks on voting rights. Eleven states passed ID requirements in 2011 and 2012.7

The laws’ effects on student voting rights varied. Some states that passed voter ID laws excluded student IDs from the list of documents that could be used to vote. These laws particularly threatened the voting rights of out-of-state students and those without a driver’s license. In Tennessee, state law allows the use of faculty or staff IDs from state colleges, but the statute explicitly states that voters may not use student IDs at the polls.8 In Texas, the legislature passed a voter ID bill, which has since been denied preclearance by the U.S. Department of Justice, that would have allowed the use of concealed handgun permits as voter ID but not student IDs.9 New Hampshire’s voter ID bill allowed the use of student IDs at the polls in 2012 but eliminates them from the list beginning in 2013.10 A bill to repeal the more restrictive list of IDs is currently making its way through the New Hampshire legislature.11

Other states included student IDs but placed restrictions that rendered all or most of them unusable. Wisconsin’s strict photo ID law, which was subsequently blocked in state court, included IDs from accredited colleges or universities in Wisconsin.12 However, the law required IDs to contain an issue date, signature, and expiration date indicating that the card expired no later than two years after the issue date.13 In addition, students using a student ID to vote were required to establish that they were current students on the date they voted.14 At the time Governor Scott Walker signed the bill into law, no college or university ID in Wisconsin met all of the requirements. Many colleges in Wisconsin played a leading role in the effort to protect student’s from disenfranchisement following passage of the state’s

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8 Tenn. Code § 2-7-112(c)(2).
12 Wis. Stat. §§5.02(6m), 6.79(2)(a).
13 Id. at §5.02(6m)(f).
14 Id.
strict photo ID bill. Every school in the University of Wisconsin system and some private colleges, such as Marquette University, agreed to distribute a voter ID that could be used at the polls.\textsuperscript{15} In addition, schools made available, through students’ personalized college intranet pages, the proof of enrollment form that any person using a student ID to vote was required to show. The University of Wisconsin, Madison produced a YouTube video featuring the school’s mascot showing students how to obtain a voter ID.\textsuperscript{16}

In addition to public education and ID distribution efforts, voting rights advocates challenged Wisconsin’s voter ID statute in court. Two separate Dane County circuit court judges issued a permanent injunction preventing enforcement of the law.\textsuperscript{17} The judges determined the law violated the explicit protection contained in the state constitution. As Judge Richard Niess stated in his March 2012 injunction, “The right to vote belongs to all Wisconsin citizens, not just the fortunate majority for whom (the voter ID law) poses little obstacle at the polls.”\textsuperscript{18}

In Pennsylvania, the new photo ID law allowed the use of student IDs but only those with an expiration date showing that the ID was still valid.\textsuperscript{19} An April 2012 PennPIRG study found that 84 percent of Pennsylvania college students attended schools with nonconforming IDs.\textsuperscript{20} In response, the voting rights community committed to a strategy of public education and litigation. A coalition of national and state organizations – including FELN, PennPIRG, ACLU, Advancement Project, and Rock the Vote – contacted almost every college and university in the state to ask administrators to make accessible to students a new student ID that included an expiration date or a sticker with an expiration date that could be affixed to IDs. In addition, the coalition urged schools to commit to a robust public education campaign and outreach effort to ensure students had access to updated IDs and all of the information they needed about the ID law and other important election rules. FELN also joined with the NAACP to write a letter to the presidents of every college in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and some targeted community colleges with a similar request. At the conclusion of these efforts, almost every college and university in Pennsylvania committed to making expiration date stickers or new IDs available to students and many also agreed to proactively inform students about the ID law.

Voting rights advocates also fought back against Pennsylvania’s voter suppression in the courts. The ACLU of Pennsylvania represented 10 individual Pennsylvanians, the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania, the NAACP Pennsylvania State Conference, and the Homeless Advocacy Project in a case challenging the voter ID law.\textsuperscript{21} The plaintiffs argued that the strict photo ID law violated the state constitution’s Declaration of Rights, which states in Section 5 that “no power, civil or military, shall at any time interfere to prevent the free exercise of the right of suffrage.”\textsuperscript{22} As the plaintiffs indicated in their pre-trial brief, the Commonwealth estimated that


\textsuperscript{16} University of Wisconsin – Madison, How to Get UW-Madison Student Voter Photo ID with Bucky (YouTube 2012), available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=By4C0BocvQs.

\textsuperscript{17} Patrick Marley, Second judge rejects state voter ID law, Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, July 17, 2012.

\textsuperscript{18} Another good decision on state’s voter ID law, Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, Mar. 13, 2012.


\textsuperscript{20} PennPIRG, Survey of Student IDs at Colleges and Universities in Pennsylvania (2012).

\textsuperscript{21} Press Release, American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania, Groups File Lawsuit in Commonwealth Court to Overturn Pennsylvania’s Unconstitutional Voter Photo ID Law (May 1, 2012).

\textsuperscript{22} Pa. Const. art. I, § 5.
between 80,000 and 90,000 Pennsylvanians would have to obtain a new ID in order to vote.\textsuperscript{23} At trial, the Commonwealth admitted, while defending the ID law, that there have been “no investigations or prosecutions of in-person voter fraud in Pennsylvania; and the parties do not have direct personal knowledge of any such investigations or prosecutions in other states.”\textsuperscript{24} Pennsylvania’s lawyers added in the stipulation agreement that it would “not offer any evidence in this action that in-person voter fraud has in fact occurred in Pennsylvania and elsewhere” or that it was “likely to occur in November 2012 in the absence of the Photo ID law.”\textsuperscript{25}

The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania issued instructions to trial court judge Robert Simpson that he must issue an injunction putting the ID law on hold in 2012 if Pennsylvanians lacked “liberal access” to PennDOT IDs and if he determined that the law would result in any disenfranchisement.\textsuperscript{26} Simpson issued a preliminary injunction against enforcement of the ID law after finding the plaintiffs demonstrated both injunction requirements.\textsuperscript{27} Simpson stated that the “assurances of government officials” were insufficient evidence of liberal access to IDs, there was insufficient time to distribute IDs, and unforeseen problems would impede distribution.\textsuperscript{28} Addressing the likelihood that the photo ID law would result in disenfranchisement, he added that “I accept Petitioners’ argument that in the remaining five weeks before the general election, the gap between the photo IDs issued and the estimated need will not be closed.”\textsuperscript{29}

Other Legislative Challenges

Despite Supreme Court precedent affirming the right of college students to vote in their college communities, some states have targeted students directly. New laws placed a variety of barriers designed to discourage them from exercising their constitutionally protected right. Some politicians used legislation, misinformation, and intimidation to keep students from the polls.

New Hampshire was the site of a direct attack on student voting rights in addition to a voter ID measure. On June 27, 2012, the state legislature overrode Governor John Lynch’s veto to pass a bill to prevent students from establishing a voting domicile in their college communities.\textsuperscript{30} The goal of the bill was to conflate voting domicile with other types of residency. This law, S.B. 318, added the following sentence to New Hampshire’s voter registration application: “In declaring New Hampshire as my domicile, I am subject to the laws of the state of New Hampshire which apply to all residents, including laws requiring a driver to register a motor vehicle and apply for a New Hampshire’s driver’s license within 60 days of becoming a resident.”\textsuperscript{31} This sentence is incorrect and deceptive because the statute did nothing to link voting domicile with residency as defined in motor vehicle laws. New Hampshire’s then-speaker of the House justified assaults on student voting rights with the following description of young voters:

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\textsuperscript{25} Id.

\textsuperscript{26} Applewhite v. Pennsylvania, 54 A.3d 1, 5 (Pa. 2012).


\textsuperscript{28} Id.

\textsuperscript{29} Id. at 2.


\textsuperscript{31} S.B. 318, 162nd Leg., 2nd Sess. (N.H. 2012).
They’re “foolish,” Speaker William O’Brien said in a recent speech to a tea party group. “Voting as a liberal. That’s what kids do,” he added, his comments taped by a state Democratic Party staffer and posted on YouTube. Students lack “life experience,” and “they just vote their feelings.”

Voting rights advocates in New Hampshire led a successful lawsuit to remove the deceptive language from voter registration applications. The plaintiffs included four students attending college in New Hampshire who intended to leave the state after graduation. The students met voting domicile requirements but not residency requirements as defined in the state’s motor vehicle statutes.

If the bill had actually linked voting domicile and motor vehicle residency, it would have created a conundrum for students. It has been settled law in New Hampshire for 40 years that students cannot be required to demonstrate intent to stay in the state indefinitely in order to register to vote. However, Granite Staters must intend to remain in New Hampshire indefinitely in order to obtain a New Hampshire driver’s license and to register a car in the state. As a result, the voter registration form told students who intend to leave the state after graduation that they must do something that motor vehicle statutes forbid them from doing – register their car in the state and obtain a New Hampshire driver’s license – in order to exercise their constitutionally protected right to vote in the state.

The students’ court challenge succeeded when Stafford County Superior Court Judge John Lewis struck the language from the voter registration form in a September 24 decision. Lewis wrote that New Hampshire offered no compelling justification for the paragraph and that it “presents an inaccurate expression of the law and has a clear harmful effect on the exercise of voting rights and education in connection therewith.” Lewis added: “Those who by our laws and our constitutions have the fundamental right to vote in New Hampshire must not have that right inappropriately burdened or infringed.” The injunction also required the secretary of state to issue new forms, notify every city and town clerk of the change, and add language to his website clarifying rules about driver’s licenses and car registration.

In Maine, the chairman of the state Republican Party teamed up with the secretary of state to accuse college students of criminal activity for registering and voting locally. In July 2011, Maine GOP Chairman Charlie Webster brandished a list of 206 college students who attended and

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32 Peter Wallsten, In states, parties clash over voting laws that would affect college students, others, THE WASHINGTON POST, Mar. 8, 2011.
34 N.H. REV. STAT. § 21:6 (“A resident or inhabitant or both of this state and of any city, town or other political subdivision of this state shall be a person who is domiciled or has a place of abode or both in this state and in any city, town or other political subdivision of this state, and who has, through all of his actions, demonstrated a current intent to designate that place of abode as his principal place of physical presence for the indefinite future to the exclusion of all others.”)
36 Id. at 7.
37 Id. at 9.
paid out-of-state tuition to Maine colleges and voted in the state, which is lawful, claiming they may have committed voter fraud. After a two-month investigation, Secretary of State Charlie Summers found that exactly zero students were guilty of voter fraud. Despite finding no wrongdoing, Summers sent an intimidating letter to students strongly implying they were required to obtain an in-state driver’s license and register their out-of-state car in Maine in order to vote, both of which are false.

Obstacles to student voting also came in the way of misinformation. In Virginia, the State Board of Elections placed a misleading questionnaire for students on its website that was purportedly designed to help them determine whether they should vote back home or in their college community. It instead implied incorrectly that a student should consider how long they had lived in the college community, their tax dependency status, whether they paid in-state tuition, and their financial aid package. These factors were presented in a patently false or incomplete manner and discouraged students from registering to vote in their college communities. FELN drafted a memo to the board detailing legal problems with the questionnaire’s characterization of Virginia’s voting residency rules. As a result, the board removed the questionnaire from its website.

In addition to passing a strict photo ID law that made voting more difficult for students, Wisconsin also changed its residency laws. Beginning with the July 12, 2011 legislative recall elections, voters were required to reside in their community for 28 days in order to establish voting residency. The previous requirement was 10 days. This created confusion among students, who are frequent movers, during the 2012 gubernatorial recall. At the University of Wisconsin – Madison, dorm leases ended on May 20, 2012, which was 16 days before the election. As a result, no students who lived in the dorms could reestablish residency at a new location before Election Day. The confusion led the Government Accountability Board, the state government entity responsible for administering elections, to issue a two-page memo clarifying student voting residency.

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38 Eric Russell, GOP chairman says university students behind voter fraud, BANGOR DAILY NEWS, July 25, 2011.
39 Eric Russell, Secretary of State finds no student voter fraud but still pledges to improve system, BANGOR DAILY NEWS, Sep. 21, 2011.
40 Lyndsay Tice, State tells students: Register your car in Maine or don’t vote here, LEWISTON-AUBURN SUN JOURNAL, Oct. 4, 2011.
42 Id.
Success in 2012

Turnout among young voters was one of the great success stories of the 2012 election. Many believed young people would be less engaged in electoral politics relative to 2008 and, as a result, they would not make their voices heard on Election Day. Despite the predictions of an enthusiasm gap and the inability of any campaign to generate the energy that President Obama’s 2008 campaign generated, turnout remained virtually unchanged between 2008 and 2012.\textsuperscript{45} Fifty percent of eligible Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 years old voted in 2012, which is only one percentage point lower than 2008 totals.\textsuperscript{46} Turnout among all voters dropped 2.7 percentage points between 2008 and 2012.\textsuperscript{47}

Incredible work was done across the United States to reduce the barriers to registration and voting that disproportionately affect young people. This section of the report will highlight some of that work with a focus on college campuses.

The Role of Technology in Reaching Student Voters

Creative use of online tools and social networking platforms play a key role in encouraging youth participation in elections. Twelve states have functioning online voter registration.\textsuperscript{48} Connecticut and Hawaii passed online voter registration and will implement it by January 2014 and August 2016 respectively.\textsuperscript{49} Individuals who register online tend to be much younger than those who register using a paper application. A study of online voter registration systems found that 55 percent who registered online in Arizona were under age 40 and 60 percent who registered online in Washington were under age 34.\textsuperscript{50} This suggests that states with online voter registration are more effectively bringing young people into the political process. Washington made creative use of its online voter registration process by creating the first voter registration Facebook application, which it housed on the secretary of state’s Facebook page.\textsuperscript{51} Washingtonians used the app to register to vote and then recommend online registration to their Facebook friends. According to a University of California – San Diego study, a nonpartisan “I voted” button on Facebook that people clicked on to place in their friends’ newsfeed may have increased voter turnout in the 2010 election by more than 340,000.\textsuperscript{52}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{56} Rachel La Corte, \textit{Washington state to unveil voter registration on Facebook}, USA TODAY, July 18, 2012.
\bibitem{57} Zoe Corbyn, \textit{Facebook experiment boosts US voter turnout}, NATURE, Sep. 12, 2012.
\end{thebibliography}
Other nonpartisan organizations have also used online tools to register voters and remind them of important dates and deadlines. These are just a few examples:

- Almost 35,000 individuals registered to vote through the TurboVote online registration tool that 58 college campuses customized and promoted to their students. The University of Florida had the most success using TurboVote when it helped 3,428 individuals register, which represented the largest number of people and the highest percentage of enrolled students at a large school. Hobart and William Smith College helped 38 percent of their students register to vote using the tool, which is the highest percentage of any participating college or university. FELN assisted TurboVote in this effort by providing state-by-state legal research concerning third-party registration rules, important dates and deadlines, early and absentee voting options, and ID requirements.

- Rock the Vote helped both college and non-college youths register to vote with an online tool. More than 697,000 young people registered using Rock the Vote’s tool or through their partner portal.

- More than 300,000 young people registered to vote through the Our Time voter registration tool. The organization also collected 50,000 vote pledges through social media and educated many more by distributing important voting information online.

- Voto Latino helped more than 76,000 individuals register through digital campaigns. Their social media, email, PSAs, and educational efforts about the importance of voting reached over 78 million young people.

In addition to online voter registration, states are increasingly linking individual records to their websites to help voters confirm their registration status and check their polling place. CanIVote.org, a project of the National Association of Secretaries of State, links to every state website with a voter lookup tool. The Voting Information Project (VIP) is another comprehensive resource. VIP is a collaboration of state and local officials, the Pew Center on

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the States, and Google, Inc. that is designed “to bring official voting information – polling place locations, ballot content and information about registration and absentee ballots – directly to voters via the Internet.”

Colleges and universities can help students make a voting plan by publicizing government or other nonpartisan resources such as these that will centralize information about voter registration, early and absentee voting, ID requirements, and polling place locations. Schools can also customize information to address issues that are particularly important to their students, such as informing them about which polling places students living in certain dorms must use. By partnering with organizations that are engaging young people and informing them about the voting process through the creative use of technology and social media, colleges can ensure their students have the tools they need to make their voices heard on Election Day.

**College Administrators, Staff, Faculty, and Students Lead the Way**

College administrators played an essential role in helping students register and vote in 2012. For example, some administrators distributed to students the documents they needed to vote. Campus Vote Project worked with schools in North Carolina to ensure counties had rosters of on-campus students to prove residency during the state’s one-stop early voting period. These rosters, or letters which were provided directly to the students, allowed students who live on campus to prove their residency in North Carolina and use their student IDs to register and vote at an early voting location. Pitt County, the home of East Carolina University, reported a surge in the use of one-stop voting at the campus location following the receipt of a student roster. In Ohio, letters from government entities can be used as voter IDs. Ohio State University, a state institution, students a PDF letter which many of them printed and used at the polls on Election Day.

Campus Vote Project collaborated with student and youth organizations to inform students about important election information. This included running ads in student newspapers at 40 schools in Colorado, Florida, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Campus Vote Project placed the ads in conjunction with the Nevada Youth Coalition, New Era Colorado, United Council of Wisconsin, and student governments at North Carolina A&T University and North Carolina Central University. As examples from the University of Nevada – Las Vegas and Colorado State University demonstrate, these succinct half-page ads clarified potentially confusing issues and conveyed the most important information students needed in the weeks leading up to Election Day.

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55 Telephone Conversation with Aaron Lu, Pitt County Board of Elections (Oct. 2012).
56 OHIO REV. CODE § 3505.18(A)(1).
Many organizations distributed Campus Vote Project palm cards that outlined basic voting information. The Andrew Goodman Foundation, NAACP, the New Hampshire Citizens Alliance, PIRG, the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, the Fair Share Alliance, New Era Colorado, Ohio Campus Compact, the Penn State Graduate Students Association, Black Youth Vote, Wisconsin United Council, and others distributed these palm cards in Colorado, Florida, Michigan, New York, Ohio, New Hampshire, Texas, and Wisconsin.

National organizations representing college administrators were also active in helping students vote. The American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) hosted a Campus Vote Project webinar and offered member schools the opportunity to request a state-specific student voting guide. As a result, schools from 42 states requested guides. AACRAO also emailed their 2,600 members asking them to send individual emails to their students with the facts on where and when they could vote (or still register in Election Day registration states) and what, if any, ID they needed. Campus Vote Project also gave webinars for eight state Campus Compact chapters and the Campus to Community Coalition of Texas, which consist of college presidents who are committed to improving civic engagement opportunities for students.

At some schools, students put aside their partisan differences to join forces and help classmates register and vote. The University of Florida’s College Republicans and College Democrats joined other political organizations to form the Gator Coalition for Civic Engagement. The coalition held voter registration drives and organized shuttles to take students to the polls. At Vassar College in New York, the Moderate Independent Conservative Alliance, the Vassar Democrats, and Democracy Matters jointly founded R.E.V. Up, a voter mobilization organization. R.E.V. Up encouraged voter registration, distributed candidate information, and provided transportation to students on Election Day.

Many colleges and universities recognized that information is the key to increasing student voting and distributed essential election information to students. For example, Campus Vote

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Administrators, staff, faculty, coaches and student groups, both partisan and non-partisan, worked to register, inform and encourage students to exercise their right to vote.

administrators also provided support for voting initiatives by setting aside space and access for election events on campus. At Eastern Michigan University, the state’s Campus Vote Project coordinator worked with students to hold “What’s Your Plan?” tabling events on campus. During these events, volunteers gave students palm cards with their polling location and asked them to choose a time to commit to going to the polls on Election Day. They also provided students with sample ballots, information on ballot initiatives, and general voter information. Campus Vote Project helped plan and participated in a student voter rally at Valencia College in Florida. The campaign also worked with Florida State University’s student government to develop creative strategies to boost student voter turnout, which resulted in a registration project in which every incoming freshman received a voter registration form. At East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania, a Campus Vote Project fellow organized a National Voter Registration Day event with tables where volunteers distributed voter commitment forms, registration applications, and candidate information.

Election activity was not limited to administrators and student governments at some schools. At Florida A&M University, head football coach Joe Taylor made sure every member of the team registered to vote. Donald Hill-Eley, head coach at Morgan State who played for and coached with Taylor, followed suit and ensured that his players were registered to vote. A commitment to student voting can come from a diverse array of campus leaders and organizations.

The Importance of Collaborating with Election Officials

Many students lack the means of transportation often required to get to polling places, so colleges and universities across the country fought to get or keep polling places on their campuses. San Francisco State University’s effort to keep its polling place demonstrates the importance of coordination and communication among college administrators, students, and election officials. Although the university had a long history of having a polling place on campus during presidential elections, the city Department of Elections decided in August of 2012 to move the polling place off campus. The department expressed concerns about campus locations that the university was not aware of before the department announced its decision.

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60 UNC – Charlotte, J. Murrey Atkins Library, Campus Vote, [http://library.uncc.edu/campusvote](http://library.uncc.edu/campusvote).
62 Id.
64 Id.
Fortunately, San Francisco State University administrators and students sprung into action. The university president and staff in her office contacted Mayor Ed Lee, Supervisor Eric Mar, and State Senator Leland Yee. Student organizations also contacted Mar expressing concern about the polling place change. Mar took his concerns directly to the Board of Elections and, within a week, the university and the board outlined a strategy for returning the polling place to campus. This episode demonstrates the importance of effective cooperation between government, campus administrators, and student organizations. At San Francisco State University, administrators and students formed a united front in their support for a campus polling place that would ensure greater student participation in the elections. Following Supervisor Mar’s intervention, they began an instructive dialogue with the Board of Elections to prevent the difficulties that led to the board’s initial decision to move the polling place. These relationships are essential to institutionalizing a wide range of reforms on college campuses that will reduce barriers to voting that disproportionately affect students.

Campus Vote Project Helps on Election Day

Ideally, campus efforts will begin long before Election Day, but important work can be done that day as well. At Ohio State University, Campus Vote Project volunteers worked with election officials and campus administrators to help students vote on Election Day. By mid-morning, confusion and lines were threatening the ability of students to cast a ballot. Many students faced wait times exceeding two hours before they could vote and some discovered after reaching the front of the line that they were supposed to be at a polling place two blocks away. Franklin County election officials asked Campus Vote Project to deploy volunteers to the on-campus polling location at Ohio Union to help direct traffic and provide information. Campus Vote Project volunteers played several important roles to protect students’ voting rights at Ohio State University. Many students mistakenly believed that all Ohio State students were required to vote at the same on-campus polling location. Campus Vote Project volunteers used smartphones to determine for all of the approximately 1,000 students in line whether they were at the correct polling place. Volunteers also alerted students to an email administrators sent that provided students with access to a document that could be used as voter ID. At the beginning of the day, students printed the document themselves and returned to the polls if they lacked one of the other forms of required ID. Later in the day, student voters forwarded the document to volunteers who received permission from university administrators to use a printing station to print the document and give it to each student in line who needed it to vote.

Campus Vote Project’s experience at Ohio State demonstrates the many problems that plague young voters and the importance of getting students correct information. Although all of the students who showed up on Election Day were enthusiastic about participating in the election

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65 Id.
66 Id.
67 Id.
process, their inexperience almost derailed their ability to do so. They were not aware that students who lived in certain locations near campus had an off-campus polling location. Those who waited in line for two hours may not have anticipated needing more time to then go to their correct polling place. Students who did not know about Ohio’s voter ID law and lacked one of the required documents would have been required to vote a provisional ballot and return in person to the board of elections within 10 days in order for their ballot to count. A robust effort to get students the information they need about voting will help to prevent the difficulties that threatened the voting rights of students at Ohio State and across the country.

Moving Forward in 2013

Through Campus Vote Project, FELN worked with college administrators and students across the United States to implement reforms that helped students overcome the traditional barriers that make registration and voting difficult for them. Playing a role in keeping youth turnout similar to 2008 was an incredible accomplishment, but FELN believes even more can be done. The end of a presidential election cycle does not mean civic engagement work on college campuses is over until 2014.

Increasing student voting rates is a long-term project that will require a permanent commitment from colleges and universities to facilitate student participation in the political process. FELN will further refine Campus Vote Project in 2013 to provide more effective support to schools committed to that goal. The lessons of 2012 and the conclusion of the presidential election will aid our efforts.

The lower profile of the 2013 elections relative to the recently concluded presidential and congressional campaigns will benefit Campus Vote Project’s continued progress. Although Campus Vote Project was strictly nonpartisan, some college administrators were reluctant to participate in extensive student voting efforts out of concern they would appear to favor certain candidates. State legislative and gubernatorial elections in two states along with judicial, county, municipal, and special elections throughout the country will generate far less of the high-profile partisan rancor that made some colleges reluctant to embrace Campus Vote Project reforms in 2012.

Restarting the work of Campus Vote Project almost two years before the next national elections in 2014 will also allow a more realistic timetable for some of the reforms in the Campus Vote Project toolkit. For example, establishing a program to encourage students to work as Election Day poll workers would benefit from a longer implementation period. Colleges in jurisdictions with 2013 elections could establish a relatively small trial program to refine organization and recruiting methods. This would also allow schools to build trust with local election officials by developing an established pattern of supplying poll workers before the fall of 2014. The Election Assistance Commission estimated that the average age of a poll worker is 72 years old, which demonstrates an underrepresentation of young people. Colleges can create effective structures and incentives through service learning and other academic programs to provide a steady flow of poll workers who will be more likely than other poll workers to be cognizant of student voting rights on Election Day.

Bringing a polling place to campus is another Campus Vote Project toolkit reform that would be implemented more effectively over a two-year period. The determination of polling place locations concludes months before Election Day in most communities. This requires colleges seeking a polling place on campus to establish a dialogue with election officials far in advance of the election. Schools will be able to do more research into the suitability of various campus locations. Campus leadership will also have more time to garner the support of helpful advocates such as administrators, student organizations, elected officials, and community leaders.

70 Go to www.campusvoteproject.org/toolkit to read the CVP Toolkit.
Colleges and universities did outstanding work in 2012 to encourage voter registration, distribute information, provide voter IDs, and accomplish other goals that increase student participation in elections. FELN was proud to help many of them with this work through Campus Vote Project. We look forward to building on that success by establishing long-term relationships with more colleges to support those who will make the facilitation of voting and political participation a permanent part of their educational mission.