



# Student PIRGs New Voters Project

We are America's  
**Largest  
Generation**  
We **VOTE**

## Project Packet

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## The Student PIRGs

Someone once said that America has more problems than we should tolerate and more solutions than we use.

That's an especially big challenge to college students and recent graduates: After all, we're the generation that will inherit America's problems.

And perhaps that's why, on any college campus, you can find students who feel driven to take on the biggest problems facing our communities and our country. Some students feel driven to help solve global warming. Some want to get big money out of our democracy. Others feel called to help feed the hungry and house the homeless.

We need to take on these problems together. That's why the Student PIRGs recruit and train students to take on these and other pressing social problems outside the classroom.

For all of our campaigns, we combine the power of professional advocates with student activists to persuade or pressure our elected officials to serve the public interest. We do this by educating the community, building public support, demonstrating that support through petition signatures, getting media coverage and partnering with other powerful groups or individuals.

For over 40 years, students working with their campus PIRG chapters have been making a real difference in people's lives and winning concrete changes to build a better world.

We do have more problems than we should tolerate in America. We do have more solutions than we use. But to really start winning solutions, we need a new generation of people who know how to organize and advocate for change.

[www.studentpirgs.org](http://www.studentpirgs.org)

## The New Voters Project

The Student PIRGs' New Voters Project, a 501(c)(3) organization with 4945(f) status, has run peer-to-peer young voter mobilization drives to turn out the youth vote on college campuses for more than 25 years. We believe that the full participation of young people in the political process is essential to a truly representative, vibrant democracy. The New Voter's Project does not endorse, either explicitly or implicitly, a political candidate or political party for elected office. Our goal is to engage as many students as possible in each and every election cycle in order that our generation be represented in the political process, regardless of ideology or political affiliation.



## Campaign Overview

Our generation is the largest and most diverse group of potential voters in the country, with our own values, ideas and issues that we care about. We can let other people make decisions that impact our future, or we can vote this election and get a future that works for us.

This fall we are working to turn out students at historic rates by making sure that every student is given the opportunity to register and vote safely. We have momentum. [In 2018, young voter turnout doubled](#) and in communities across the country, young people are on the front lines advocating for issues that they care about.

The New Voters Project will help to register, educate, and mobilize hundreds of thousands of students across the country by organizing our college campuses, no matter if it is in person or online.

To make sure young people can safely cast their ballots, we are working with students, faculty, and administrators to make voting a part of our campus culture.

In an online world, we are uniquely set up to organize other young people. We will educate everyone we know through phone, text, email, social media and more! We are organizing virtual events and concerts to make sure students know how to vote, where, and when to vote this election.

**We have the power to shape the future of our country. It is time that we show everyone that we are America's largest generation, and WE VOTE!**



# Key Elements of the New Voters Project

Here are the steps to running a successful voter drive.

## 1. **Build a Vote Coalition**

A key part of our ability to reach the entire campus is to build a campus-wide coalition with student government, student groups, faculty and administrators. There's no group or person that can't get involved and make an impact. The administration has a particularly important role since they control resources that can help large numbers of students register to vote.

## 2. **Get StudentVote.org, our online registration tool on university websites.**

We think there are a lot of students that will register to vote if the opportunity to register is put in front of them. So, getting an online registration tool link on as many high traffic university websites as possible is an effective way to register students on campus. Some examples of great sites to have our link on:

- Email login

- University homepage

- Blackboard or similar

- Athletics page

- Libraries main page

- Campus calendar or student activities webpage

[StudentVote.org Toolkit](#)

## 3. **Recruit a Volunteer Base**

You will need your own sizable volunteer base to help the coalition achieve its goals. The number of volunteers you will need will vary depending on your school type and your goals, but either way, you will need a lot of people. For example, at a traditional 20,000-student school, you will need upwards of 250 volunteers to maximize turnout, including some experienced leaders to help with recruitment and training.

## 4. **Obtain your campus NSLVE Report**

The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement lets you know what percent of your campus registered to vote and made it to the polls in 2016 and 2014. The report will be helpful when setting your goals.

## 5. **Create a campus-wide democratic engagement plan.**

Working with the campus student vote coalition, draft and submit a written action plan for increasing your campus-wide democratic engagement that will be evaluated post-election.



## **6. Work with the Registrar or County Clerk**

A very important part of a good voter drive is having a good relationship with your local elections official. Good communication with your local registrar from the very beginning will ensure that as many people as possible are able to vote.

## **7. Voter Registration**

There is no more effective way to turnout voters than to help them register to vote. To do this well, you need a team of committed volunteers, interns, and student groups that use four major tactics: online visibility, phonebanking, class/group presentations, and organizing large events. While helping people register to vote, you should database the information from the completed voter registration forms, to use for get out the vote efforts.

## **8. Get Out The Vote (GOTV)**

While you should focus on GOTV mainly at the end of the campaign, building your list of students to contact starts during the registration drive and continues all fall. All of that build up will turn into a huge outreach effort in the final two weeks to boost voter turnout on your campus. You can use a number of tactics to make this happen, including activating email listservs, posting on social media, relational organizing phone calls and text messages.

## **9. Media**

One way to show the whole campus is voting is by getting it in the media, so make sure you invite the media to every event you organize throughout the campaign and that you host events the media will want to cover. Examples would be hosting large events, education panels, kickoff meetings. Members of the media may also want to join your campaign events like phonebanks. You can also alert the media at each major milestone, like the completion of your voter registration drive.

## **10. Dealing With Election Problems**

There are some areas of the country where no matter how much preparation you do, elections procedures and laws create obstacles to students registering and voting. Although we advise that you focus most of your energies on registering and turning out as many voters as possible, there are some additional things you can include in your vote program that can help document systemic problems and build the case for longer term reform. First, meet with your local elections officials before you start your voter registration drive. During the conversations with the registrars, take good notes so that you can identify problems early.



## Setting Your Goals

There are a lot of factors that determine your success: cooperation from the campus administration, the size of your coalition, the number of volunteers, and the fact that none of this is an exact science. But we have a lot of information from the past 30 years that can help you set meaningful goals, and we suggest you aim high.

The two main goals you should set are **voter registration goals** and **Get Out the Vote (GOTV) contacts**.

The most important is voter registration. 80% of college students who are registered will actually vote. So helping a large number of voters register to vote is the single most important thing you can do. Once the voter registration deadline has passed, the most important part is making personalized Get Out the Vote reminders.

Here are some basic statistics to help you understand this more:

### For Voter Registration...

- 80% of college students who are registered will actually vote.
- It is possible to achieve 90% registration on your campus, assuming: 25% of the average college campus is registered to vote at the start of classes; 10% of the average campus will never register to vote no matter what (non-citizens, etc); and 65% of the campus is “registrable”.
- These “registerables” are made up of two kinds of individuals: those who are likely to register to vote on their own, and those who will only register if asked by another student in person.
- You probably can’t get all of the “registerables” to register to vote because a lot of them will actually want to register to vote on their own. At the most you can help 50% of the campus to register to vote through your efforts.
- However, the more “registerables” you help to register, the more likely it will be that the remaining people will simply register on their own since that large of a voter registration campaign will make the election highly visible and make registering to vote seem like the norm.

### For Get Out The Vote...

We know the following from our research:



- A text message to someone who gives us their cell number can increase turnout by about 4%.
- A personalized phone call from one student to another increases turnout by about 5%
- A personalized face-to-face contact at someone's dorm or house increases turnout by 11-12%.
- While there are no studies on GOTV tabling, we think that every contact at a table is a little better than the phone but not as good as at the door – we predict a 6% increase in turnout from tabling.

## Sample Campaign Timeline

### Set-up (before the semester):

- Meet with administrators like the Dean of Students and ask them to promote StudentVote.org by putting it on major websites and sending an all-campus email.
- Build the core of your vote coalition. Start by contacting the Student Government and get them signed on first. Then, work with the Student Government to contact the biggest and most active groups on campus and the groups you already know.
- Meet with the local elections official to get to know them and learn your voter registration rules.
- Recruit some friends or work with your existing volunteers to help register voters during welcome week or freshman orientation. Shoot to help at least 100 people register to vote during this time (or more if you can get a lot of volunteers to help!)

### First 2 Weeks of Classes—Recruitment:

- Identify and start to train our volunteer base for the rest of the semester. Do class presentations, activate listservs, post on social media, and call the people that express interest and ask them to come help at an event or come to a meeting.
- Add the remainder of our coalition partners to the campaign and identify faculty members who are willing to have 3 waves of class presentations throughout the semester—recruitment, voter registration and get out the vote. [Draft faculty Toolkit](#)
- Finally, help people register to vote through welcome week events and freshman orientation. This is a great opportunity to register new students at their new address. You can expect to register 15% from freshman orientation, welcome week events, and another 15% from a recruitment drive action.

### Week 3 and 4 —Post Kick Off Voter Registration Push “Test Blitz:”



- Coming out of the recruitment drive, we run a 2 day test voter registration blitz. This is a great way to get some experience running a blitz, while figuring out systems for managing volunteers and registrations. This is also your chance to turn volunteers into coordinators by letting new folks take on more responsibility and leadership so they'll be experienced and confident for the big blitz.
- Between you and your coalition, you'll want to help close to 20% of your voter registration goal over the 2 days.
- In addition, we'll start signing up volunteers for the final—shoot for getting ½ of your volunteer hours needed signed up.
- With good campus set up work, we should get 50 - 150 (will vary by the size of your campus) commitments to send out StudentVote.org. We then think 70% will actually turn that form in and register to vote. This week, we'll get the word out about the website and schedule the remaining hours we need for the blitz. To promote the website, we'll:
  - Confirm that the student government president or college president's office is sending an all-campus email about registering to vote and linking to the online voter registration form.
  - Ask everyone who has been involved so far to message their friend list on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms. We'll also ask everyone to change their status to say they're registering to vote at [www.studentvote.org](http://www.studentvote.org), ask everyone to change their profile picture to a button for the website, post on their stories, and more.
  - Confirm that all of our coalition partners are sending an email to their email lists, that 10 departments are sending an email, and that 1/3 of the faculty that let us do recruitment raps also sends an email to their class lists.
  - We'll do raps in 1/3 of the classes that let us do a recruitment rap.
- We'll sign up the rest of the volunteers for the blitz and run trainings for those volunteers.
- We'll also take care of setting up the logistics for next week's blitz—reserving tabling locations, making materials, ensuring we have enough voter registration forms, etc.

### **Week 5—Final Voter Registration “Blitz” (week of the deadline):**

This is it! We'll do the bulk (50%) of our registration this week. It is most effective to start your registration blitz starting 5 days before the registration deadline. To make sure we nail it, you'll want to:





- Confirm volunteers nightly
- Collect and send out the totals daily
- Think through any tech and logistical challenges
- Confirm your StudentVote.org emails are going to be sent out
- Celebrate your success.

In most states, this week will line up with National Voter Registration Day (9/22). You should utilize this national day of action to build a ton of online visibility for your blitz and StudentVote.org. Use this toolkit for more info on organizing a successful National Voter Registration Day.

Note: When the voter registration blitz happens could vary depending on your state's voter registration deadline so adjust this timeline as needed. For more information, check your Secretary of State's website.

### **Weeks 6 and 7— New Voter Education Week & Pledge to Vote Safely:**

During the first week of October, you should participate in national weeks of education to make sure students know how to navigate the new voting process. Many states have passed election policies that make it easier and safer for people to vote, like vote-by-mail. It is important that all voters know exactly how to request an absentee ballot, where to turn it in, and all of the important deadlines.

For the two weeks heading up to early voting, we'll continue to build our list by asking people to pledge that they'll vote safely. We'll also sign up all of our volunteer hours for the big get out the vote push in the final two weeks.

### **Weeks 8 and 9—Get Out the Vote & Vote Early Day:**

These last two weeks (both during early voting and in the lead-up to Election Day) are dedicated to reminding people to vote and reminding them what to bring to the polls. Do the following:

- Call and text the entire list of potential voters we have so far (registered voters, people that pledged to vote). We'll ask everyone we contact to text their friends a reminder too.
- Class raps—we'll go back and do a "remember to vote" rap in classes and ask everyone to text their friends a reminder as well.
- Finally, we'll build online visibility using email and social media to remind people as well. We'll remind people to vote by getting the administration to send an all campus email, getting reminders put on major school websites (homepage, blackboard, email login, etc.),



and posting on all social media platforms

In states that have early voting, participating in National Vote Early Day (10/24) encourages students to vote early to ensure their ballot is safely cast. Note: Early voting (also known as in-person absentee balloting in some states) time periods and rules vary from state to state – check the Secretary of State’s website and with your local city clerk/registrar to learn whether it is offered and what the guidelines are.

Contact NVP Director, Manny Rin ([manny@studentpirgs.org](mailto:manny@studentpirgs.org)) if you need any additional materials or resources.