

VOTER REGISTRATION

THE ISSUE: IN 30 SECONDS

Make your voice heard by exercising your right to vote – become a registered voter today! It only takes five minutes to take action for a lifetime.

THE ISSUE: AN OVERVIEW

In the democratic process, an individual's right to vote is a tool that wields great power. Whether voting on representatives or proposed legislation, your vote is your voice in the political arena.

Many groups that were previously left out of the political process fought to gain their voting rights, large gains most notably recognized in the **15th (1870 - all adult males given right to vote, including former slaves) and 19th (1920 – all women given the right to vote) Amendments.**

Though today, citizenship guarantees the right to vote by law, many states still had restrictive voting measures on the books well into the mid-twentieth century. One issue in the recent news is the **repeal of Section 5 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act**, which was originally passed to protect minority voters and eliminate voting barriers such as poll taxes and literacy tests. Since its repeal, several states are pushing for voter identification laws and redistricting, which can disenfranchise minority voters.

Registering to vote is a simple and powerful way to advocate for causes, as well as the elected officials who have the ability to make change happen on the state and national level. US citizens aged 18 and older may register to vote by filling out the form distributed by their state.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where should I register?

As a college student, you may choose to register in either the state/county/district of your home (permanent) address, or in the state/county/district of your college residence (**but not both**). If you move to a different dorm or address, you simply fill out a new form with your new information. Your previous registration will be rendered void upon receipt of your new form.

What if I am too far to vote in my local election?

Absentee ballots can be downloaded from your state's Election Board website, and must be mailed to the local Election Board no later than seven days before Election Day. You may also request an absentee ballot to be mailed to you up until thirty days before Election Day.

What is the deadline for registering to vote in the next election?

Voter registration applications must be postmarked by no later than October 11th (and received by October 16th) to be eligible to vote in the 2013 General Election (November 5th).

Why should I vote in a non-presidential election year?

Local elected officials often have more of a say (and sway) in the goings-on of local government. That means: though a President is powerful, he is in charge of federal (or national) matters, leaving local governments to handle issues that arise from the ground up. As many important laws vary state-to-state (driving age and marriage equality, for example), it is in your best interest to educate yourself about local politics and community issues.

THE NEED

A vote gives voice to the otherwise voiceless. Ensuring access to polling locations is crucial to protecting an individual's right to vote. Citizens must be able to trust a system that guarantees their vote as counted, without regard to one's income, age, or race. By keeping voting fair, equal, and trustworthy, individuals can have a direct effect on the laws that affect them, as well as the amount of resources allocated to their local government.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The New York State Board of Elections: <http://www.elections.ny.gov/INDEX.html>

Rock the Vote: <http://www.rockthevote.org/>

CONNECTIONS TO JUSTICE

Rights for All Citizens: Ideally, all citizens would have equal access to the vote. Recent changes in state laws (voter ID, redistricting) may disenfranchise some voters from being able to exercise their right to vote.

Advocating for Justice: Voting is a simple and powerful way to fight for justice on the local, state, and national level. Believe in a cause? Hungering for change? Your vote can put an elected official into office who can fight for the issues that affect you most.

Honoring the Past: Ensuring the right to vote for all citizens promotes justice and equality. Minority groups fought to gain their right to vote – it is now up to us to protect that right.