

# **Building Trust With the Next Generation: Youth Engagement and National Voter Registration Day**

**NASS Winter Conference**

Friday, January 30th



# Thank you to our NASS and our Steering Committee co-chairs!

**Michael Adams**

Kentucky Secretary of State  
Honorary Co-chair



**Steve Simon**

Minnesota Secretary of State  
Honorary Co-chair



# Who we are and what we do

- **We are a nonpartisan civic holiday**
  - National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) is managed by a 501c(3) - [Nonprofit VOTE](#), which is the leading provider of nonpartisan resources to help nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services.
  - The holiday is now in its fourteenth year!
- **The holiday is a national, partner-driven effort**
  - Every year, thousands of partners of all stripes and sizes participate in nonprofits, campus and youth groups, high schools, libraries, election offices, companies, co-ops, digital platforms, media outlets, and more.
- **We provide digital and print tools and resources**
  - Our goal is to help local and national partners, campuses, etc. promote the event digitally and at in-person events in their communities.



# SETTING THE STAGE

What we know about youth engagement



# 2020 | The Voter Registration Problem

In the 2020 federal election, **25% of Americans** reported not being registered to vote or unsure if they were registered, with over **600,000 non-voters** specifically citing a registration problem as their reason for not casting a ballot.

A 2020 study found **27% of Americans** reported not being registered because they didn't know how, kept forgetting, did not have time, were too busy, or had recently moved.

And among unregistered voters ages 18-24, **this percentage was even higher at 42%.**



# 2024 | Strong Youth Engagement on NVRD

People who register to vote on NVRD are roughly **4 times as likely** to be 18-24 year olds than voters currently on the voter file.

Young voters (18–24) make up just 8% of the voter file records in battleground states (AZ, GA, PA, MI, NC, WI)\* — but they accounted for **35% of all registrations** generated on NVRD in those same states.

Voter registrations generated on NVRD in battleground states where we could access party affiliation (PA, NC, AZ) were evenly split — **50% Democrat, 50% Republican.**

\*Compared to 8/31 voter file snapshot)



# 2025 | Campus Partnerships and Outreach

840 partners **(24% of partners)** stated they would activate on a college campus.

350+ colleges, universities, and community colleges **(10% of partners)** participated in NVRD



# 2026 CIVIC STRATEGY & COMMS

Leveraging the data to build trust





# What the data tells us about young voters



- They may be underrepresented in voter files, but they're **definitely not uninterested**.
- Their engagement overlaps with **language access and equity**-- the broad reach presents an opportunity for election officials to maximize visibility.

# Leaning into campus life for trust building

- Integrating campus partnerships into year-round engagement strategies helps young voters see election officials as **ongoing, reliable resources** rather than only seasonal contacts.
- Campuses already have **infrastructure and trusted messengers** you can tap into without building new systems.
- Community colleges are especially **underutilized** and provide a broad reach across **first-generation and working students**
  - Nearly 40% of undergraduates attend community colleges
  - These students are often missed by traditional outreach
  - Partnerships here expand reach and equity
- Campus partners help election officials **anticipate practical needs** (e.g., advising on polling location placement, timing, foot traffic patterns), improving the voter experience.



# Building trust with young voters - where and how it matters

## Engagement

- **Timing is key** - Young voters' first interaction with election offices shapes long-term trust. Registration is the front door to election integrity while confusion early in the process creates downstream challenges on Election Day.
- They show comparatively higher **trust in local government** than many other institutions. That's an opening for election officials: ongoing engagement can convert baseline trust into durable confidence in official election information.
- Demonstrate understanding of their demographics. Their engagement overlaps with **language access and equity**-- the broad reach presents an opportunity for election officials to maximize visibility.



# Building trust with young voters - where and how it matters

## Visibility

- Declining trust in media increases the value of **direct, official communication**.
- They rely heavily on **digital platforms** for political information. If election officials are not visible in the places young people already get information, unofficial narratives and misinformation can fill the gap. Consistent visibility increases the chance that official guidance is seen before confusion sets in.
- Their trust is shaped by whether institutions seem to be **listening and showing up consistently**—not only when they need something. Sustained, non-crisis presence helps election offices feel like a normal part of civic life rather than a distant system.
- They trust **peers/neighbors and nonprofits** at high rates. Election officials who maintain visibility through schools, community colleges, libraries, and nonprofits can “borrow trust” via credible intermediaries—without politicizing the office.



# Building trust with young voters - where and how it matters

## Communications

- Emphasize **clarity, consistency, accessibility, interactivity, and partnership** in youth outreach especially around NVRD. These approaches help young people feel informed, engaged, and valued as participants in the democratic process.
- Craft messages that emphasize **what participation enables** : a voice on issues they care about, tangible influence, community belonging.
- Maintain an **ongoing digital presence** (not just spikes during registration peaks).
- Use **official, accessible handles** and formats (short videos, shorts, text graphics) so that information from election offices surfaces in youth information flows.
- Use polls, Q&A sessions, and interactive content to invite questions and feedback.
- Integrate endorsements and visibility via respected youth organizations (student governments, campus leaders, civic groups) in communications.
- Collect common questions and concerns from youth and publish brief, official responses — which signal listening, not just broadcasting.



# LEANING INTO NVRD

Visibility and engagement tactics to celebrate the holiday



# NVRD as a trust-building moment

- **NVRD = Visibility + Credibility + Consistency**
- The holiday creates a moment when youth are already paying attention, and is a consistent and repeatable moment.
- Leverage the media and press opportunity to cross-promote the day on your own platforms and through youth-driven partnership platforms in your states.
- Provides a safe, nonpartisan moment for election offices to engage publicly without advocating



# The strengths of our Secretaries in promoting the holiday

Trusted

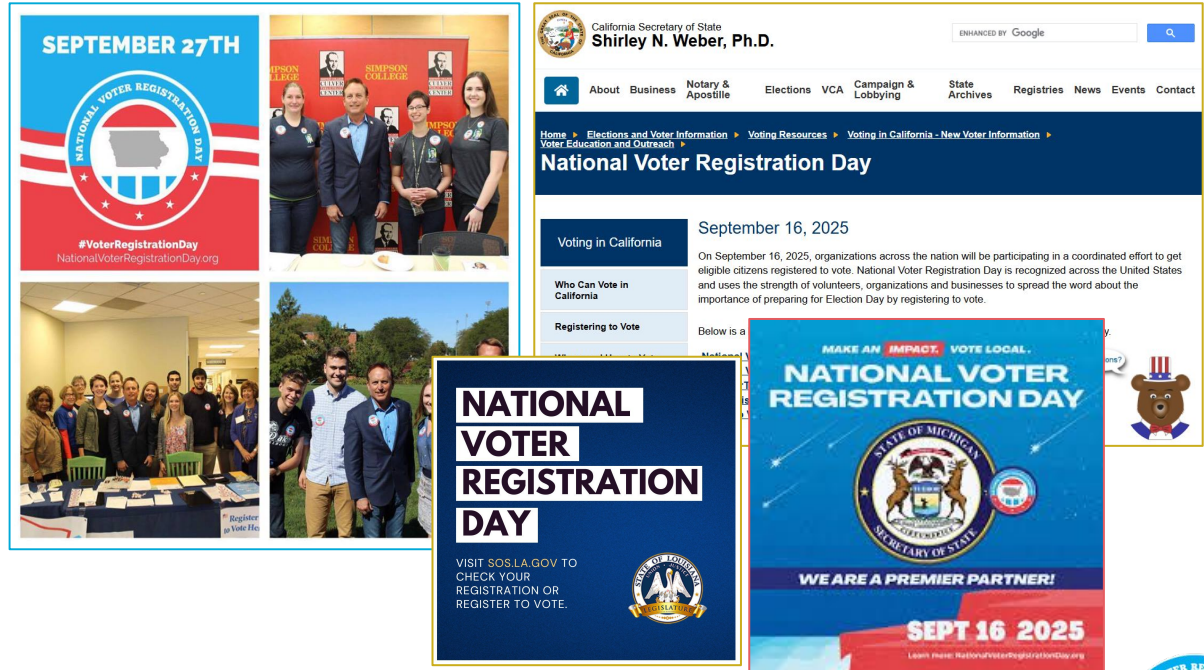
Connected to Community

Outreach

Local Knowledge

Broad Networks

Community Roots





# Practical ways to use the holiday to reach young voters

- Align your outreach with the NVRD rollout - beginning in March
- Encourage local community members to sign on as partners
- Share posters digitally / around offices / at events
- Host voter registration drives on NVRD held at local locations
- Cross-promote NVRD on social media
- Produce recurring “How elections work in our state” explainers (short video + captions)
- Partner with community colleges / universities for info sessions each semester
- Create an always-on “trusted info” / engagement guide for youth-serving orgs



# Practical ways to use the holiday to reach young voters

- Create a pre-election rumor control pages + quick-response posts
- Participate in webinars and take advantage of resources, toolkits, etc.
- Issue an NVRD proclamation or video message
- Co-brand official voter registration materials
- Partner with community colleges for on-campus registration
- Share “How elections work in our state” content
- Highlight election security and integrity efforts



# 2026 | NVRD timeline

- Community partners can sign up beginning in **mid-March**
- Digital resources will launch starting in **April**
- Webinar calendar runs **April - December**
- Community partners receive print materials (posters and stickers) beginning in **August**
- National Voter Registration Day is **Sept 15**



**National Voter Registration Day offers a proven, nonpartisan moment for election offices to show up **early, clearly, and consistently** for the next generation of voters.**

**As we look ahead to the year, this is a **shared opportunity** to welcome new voters, strengthen trust, and reinforce confidence in our election systems.**





## Contact Us

Questions about introductions to local partners, resources,  
etc.

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# Thank you

See you on September 15!

