

Voting Resources

Why Voting Matters

“One-in-ten eligible voters in the 2020 electorate will be part of a new generation of Americans – Generation Z. Born after 1996, most members of this generation are not yet old enough to vote, but as the oldest among them turn 23 this year, roughly 24 million will have the opportunity to cast a ballot in November. And their political clout will continue to grow steadily in the coming years, as more and more of them reach voting age.” -[Pew Research Center](#)

Millennials and Gen Z will be the [largest share of eligible voters in 2020](#), but because of their lower voting rates, they have not been the largest share of the electorate in previous elections. In other words, your voice and your vote can affect change. Local, state, and national elected officials make decisions that impact your daily life, like student debt, funding for higher education, transportation, and healthcare.

[Dirty Tricks: 9 Falsehoods that Could Undermine the 2020 Election](#)

Fake election crises can undercut trust in the vote, inflame partisan tensions, and destabilize our democracy.

[Vote Like it Matters. Because Then it Will.](#)

Vote if the voices you hear don't speak for you. “Elections have consequences,” Barack Obama and Mitch McConnell have said in defense of their power plays. We shape outcomes only if we provide input.

[Why Every Vote Matters — The Elections Decided By A Single Vote \(Or A Little More\)](#)

"I feel like my voice doesn't matter," Megan Davis, 31, of East Providence, R.I., told NPR. "People who suck still are in office, so it doesn't make a difference." But a single vote can make a big difference. In fact, there have been more than a dozen races decided by a single vote or ending in a tie over the last 20 years.

[Reasons Why You Should Vote as a College Student](#)

Feel like your vote really won't make a difference? Not sure if going out and voting is really worth the effort? These reasons why you should vote as a college student should give you some food for thought -- and motivation.

[College Students, Your Vote Matters](#)

Some young voters believe one vote won't really change the outcome since the older generation historically has had the upper hand. However, a 2016 study by the Pew Research Center comparing the millennial electorate and baby boomer electorate, found that millennials, or people ages 20-35, made up almost 31 percent of the overall electorate in the 2016 presidential election, almost equal to the percentage of baby boomers at the time.

Popular vs. Electoral College Vote: What's the Difference

Popular Vote: The popular vote is simply which candidate has received the most total votes. All Senate, Congressional, state, and local elections are decided by popular vote.

Electoral College: The Electoral College is a system where citizens indirectly elect the president and vice president through a body of 538 electors. This system is only used to elect the President and Vice President. Electors are people chosen by their state parties prior to the general election who cast their vote for president in December. Electors almost always cast their vote for the candidate who wins the popular vote in their state, which is why we have election results available on Election Day. However, the Constitution does not require them to do so. There have been a few instances where electors defected from their pledged vote, but it has not changed the outcome of an election.

The Electoral College was created by delegates in 1787 as a [compromise](#) between electing the president by a vote in Congress, or electing through a popular vote by qualified citizens.

The Founders set up the Electoral College for a few reasons:

- To [balance the interests](#) of high-population and low-population states, namely the desire to include 3/5th of each enslaved person into the state population count.
- To put a buffer between the people and electing the president; a chosen group of people would be able to object to the people's vote
- They believed that not all voters were informed enough to choose a leader

[U.S Election 2020: What is the Electoral College?](#)

When Americans go to the polls in presidential elections, they're actually voting for a group of officials who make up the electoral college.

Voting In-Person, Absentee, or Early: What's better?

Whether you vote on Election Day, through in-person Early Voting, or by Absentee Ballot, your vote will be counted so long as you adhere to the appropriate deadlines.

Absentee Ballot

If you are unable to vote in-person on Election Day, or at an Early Voting polling location, you are eligible to vote in an election through the use of an Absentee Ballot. Due to the Coronavirus, all New York State voters can select "temporary illness or disability" as the reason for voting by absentee ballot. First submit the [Absentee Ballot Application](#) to request a ballot by October 27, 2020. Once you receive your ballot, mail it by November 2, 2020. Use this video guide for [a step-by-step instruction](#) to apply for an absentee ballot.

You can pick up an absentee ballot application at the Civic and Community Engagement Office, South Wing 130.

Voting In-Person

For help at the polls, call the non-partisan Election Protection Hotline at 1-866-OUR-VOTE.

Voting on Election Day

Locate your [polling location](#) based on the address where you are registered to vote. Polls are open 6:00am-9:00pm. For the November 2020 election, Election Day is Tuesday, November 3. Research [ballot races and measures](#) or use resources on the Civic and Community Engagement office's [Voter Education webpage](#).

Early Voting

In January 2019, New York State began modernizing the election law, expanding voter access by enacting a flexible in-person "Early Voting" period. Early Voting in New York is available at designated early voting sites from 10 days before the election through the 2nd day before the election. For November 2020 election, early voting runs October 24-November 1. Find your early voting polling location and its hours of operation at: <https://www.voteearlyny.org/>

Voter Suppression

Voting rights are under attack nationwide as states pass voter suppression laws. These laws lead to significant burdens for eligible voters trying to exercise their most fundamental constitutional right. Since 2008, states across the country have passed measures to make it harder for Americans—particularly black people, the elderly, students, and people with disabilities—to exercise their fundamental right to cast a ballot.

Data from the ACLU shows who voter suppression efforts have impacted:

- Seventy percent of Georgia voters purged in 2018 were Black.
- Across the country, one in 13 Black Americans cannot vote due to disenfranchisement laws.
- One-third of voters who have a disability report difficulty voting.
- Only 40 percent of polling places fully accommodate people with disabilities.
- Across the country, counties with larger minority populations have fewer polling sites and poll workers per voter.
- Six in ten college students come from out of state in New Hampshire, the state trying to block residents with out of state drivers' licenses.

[Tell your senators to pass the Voting Rights Advancement Act](#)

The Voting Rights Advancement Act would reinstate critical protections against voter suppression left behind after the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act in 2013. In 2013, the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act in *Shelby County v. Holder*, removing vital protections against voter suppression and discrimination. Without these protections, voters of color will continue to be impacted by discriminatory election practices intended to disenfranchise or diminish their voting power based on their race.

[Know Your Rights as a Voter](#)

Refer back to the ACLU's guide to voter rights if you face registration issues, need disability or language accommodations, or come across someone who's interfering with your right to vote. Share the guide with friends, family, and on social media to spread the word. For help at the polls, call the non-partisan Election Protection Hotline at 1-866-OUR-VOTE.

[Stacey Abrams: I Know Voting Feels Inadequate Right Now](#)

Across America, would-be voters continue to turn away or opt out, discouraged by the permanence of inequality, the persistence of voter suppression. Their fear is again and again made real by stories of neighbors denied provisional ballots in Georgia and lines that wind around city blocks in Milwaukee because polling locations are shut down and alternatives never arrive...And those who are most vulnerable to suppression become the most susceptible to passing on that reluctance to others.

[Fair Fight](#)

Promotes fair elections around the country, encourage voter participation in elections, and educate voters about elections and their voting rights. Fair Fight brings awareness to the public on election reform, advocates for election reform at all levels, and engages in other voter education programs and communications.

[Block the Vote: Voter Suppression in 2020](#)

Suppression efforts range from the seemingly unobstructive, like voter ID laws and cuts to early voting, to mass purges of voter rolls and systemic disenfranchisement. And long before election cycles even begin, legislators can redraw district lines that determine the weight of your vote. Certain communities are particularly susceptible to suppression and in some cases, outright targeted — people of color, students, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

[Purges: A Growing Threat to the Right to Vote](#)

Voter purges are an often-flawed process of cleaning up voter rolls by deleting names from registration lists. Done badly, they can prevent eligible people from casting a ballot that counts.

[Podcast: Desmond Meade and Dale Ho on restoring the right to vote](#)

The 14th Amendment, ratified exactly 150 years ago, promises equal protection to everyone. But it's also used to strip the right to vote from millions of Americans who have been convicted of felonies. How did this happen, and who's affected?

[Waiting to Vote](#)

Long waits at polling places are disruptive, disenfranchising, and all too common. Black and Latino voters are especially likely to endure them

[Racism & Felony Disenfranchisement: An Intertwined History](#)

It wasn't until the end of the Civil War and the expansion of suffrage to black men that felony disenfranchisement became a significant barrier to U.S. ballot boxes.

Voter Registration What impacts my ability to vote or register to vote?

To register to vote in New York State, you must:

- be a United States citizen;
- be 18 years old by December 31 of the year in which you complete the voter registration form (note: you must be 18 years old by the date of the general, primary or other election in which you want to vote);
- resident of the state and county, city or village for at least 30 days before the election;
- not be in prison or on parole for a felony conviction (unless parolee pardoned or restored rights of citizenship);
- not be adjudged mentally incompetent by a court;
- not claim the right to vote elsewhere.

Register By Mail

Complete an accessible version of the New York State Voter Registration Form on-line by, typing the necessary information, selecting the appropriate boxes, and then printing and mailing a completed form to your [county board of elections](#). Use this guide for step-by-step assistance in filling out your [voter registration form](#) or watch this [video](#).

- [Fillable Voter Registration Form PDF \(English\)](#)
- [Fillable Voter Registration Form PDF \(Spanish\)](#)

You can pick up a voter registration form at the Civic and Community Engagement Office, South Wing 130.

[Registering Using your Campus Address](#)

Use this how-to video to register to vote using your dorm address.

[Register Online](#)

Use the [DMV Electronic Voter Registration Application](#) to register to vote or to update the information you have on file with the New York State Board of Elections. Completed applications are forwarded to the appropriate County or City Board of Elections for approval and processing. Use this [video guide](#) for step-by-step assistance.

To register you will need:

- A current New York State DMV issued driver license, permit or Non-Driver ID
- the ZIP Code currently on record with the DMV
- the last 4 digits of your Social Security Number (SSN)

[The Case for Automatic Voter Registration](#)

Automatic, universal voter registration is a comprehensive plan to sign up every eligible American to vote. It would add up to 50 million eligible voters to the rolls, save money, and increase accuracy — while protecting the integrity of elections.

Additional information about voting and forms can be found on the Civic and Community Engagement Office's website: <https://cce.buffalostate.edu/voter-registration>. Voter Registration Forms and Absentee Ballot Applications can be picked up and dropped off at the Civic and Community Engagement Office in South Wing 130.