



**ALEX PADILLA** | SECRETARY OF STATE | STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
ELECTIONS DIVISION

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August 4, 2015

County Clerk/Registrar of Voters (CC/ROV) Memorandum #15086

TO: All County Clerks/Registrars of Voters

FROM: /s/ Steven Carda  
NVRA and Voter Outreach Program Manager

RE: Civic Engagement: High School Voter Education Weeks

The California Education Code designates the last two full weeks in April and September to be High School Voter Education Weeks. This provides an opportunity for high schools and their students to partner with county elections officials to promote civic education and participation on campus and foster an environment that cultivates lifelong voters and active citizens.

Secretary Padilla is excited to partner with the California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson to be a part of this initiative to engage high school students and prepare them to become active participants in our nation's democracy. To help recognize the importance of the upcoming weeks, Secretary Padilla and Superintendent Torlakson have issued a joint letter to schools across California encouraging participation. In addition, Secretary Padilla has issued a resolution encouraging all California high schools to participate in California's High School Voter Education Weeks, September 14 to 25, 2015. Both the letter and the resolution are attached. Feel free to use these resources as a tool to gain support and recognition from your Board of Supervisors or County Board of Education.

In addition to these resources, our office conducted a brief survey of counties on their participation and ideas for this event. Some of the most popular ideas and activities are attached and have been posted to our web page for High School Voter Education Weeks at <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/voting-california/help-strengthen-our-democracy/high-school-voter-education-weeks>.

If you have questions about this or any other outreach related matter please feel free to contact me at (916) 657-2305. Thank you.

Attachments

## **California High School Voter Education Weeks**

### **Best Practices Shared by County Elections Offices**

Below are ideas that have been shared by counties to promote civic engagement in high schools around California. These projects have been used and proved to be successful. If you have ideas that would like to share, please email them to [Steven.Carda@sos.ca.gov](mailto:Steven.Carda@sos.ca.gov) so they can be included in future communications.

### **Political Party and Candidate Forum in a Mock Election Atmosphere** **(Placer County)**

- ✓ Select a school or schools that would like to encourage their staff and students to become more civically engaged.
- ✓ Contact representatives of political parties and invite them to come make a short presentation to the school about their party and its platform (set boundaries on subject matter).
- ✓ Invite local candidates that may have been elected recently and encourage them to tell their story. Have them explain the process and experience from the time they decided to run for office to the day they were elected (set boundaries on subject matter).
- ✓ Encourage a question and answer period where the students can inquire about the process of a working democracy.
- ✓ Allow teachers and students who are eligible to register to vote, to apply on site.
- ✓ Create a mock election ballot and give attendees the opportunity to cast their ballot, just as they would on Election Day.

### **Conduct a Mock Election** **(Sacramento County)**

- ✓ Select a school that is enthusiastic about giving students the opportunity to encourage their students to become involved in their democracy.
- ✓ Create a mock election ballot with issues relevant to high school students.
- ✓ Work with school to provide a “polling place” on campus. Bring voting equipment that students can use to simulate an actual Election Day.
- ✓ Use this time to encourage students to become poll workers on Election Day.

### **Host a Voter Registration Drive on Campus** **(Plumas County)**

- ✓ Select a high school with a Government teacher who is passionate about democracy.
- ✓ “Elections 101.” Present a slide show to Government classes giving the basics of participating in a democracy.
  - How to Register.

- Am I eligible to register to vote?
- What to expect after you're registered to vote.
- What the County Elections Office does.
- How does the county know which contest I get to vote on?
- Where can I find information on what I am voting for?
- ✓ Coordinate a Voter Registration Drive on campus.

**Assist High School with Student Body Elections**  
**(Plumas County)**

- ✓ Select a high school with an upcoming student body election.
- ✓ Create a schedule with the Student Leadership Instructor and school administration, and select a location on campus for the polling place.
- ✓ Work with a local ballot printer to have mock ballots donated to school.
- ✓ Provide poll worker training class to Senior class volunteers (these students were selected because they were not voting on student body officers for the upcoming year).
- ✓ Election Day! Set up a polling place! Provide the roster, badges, voting booths, ballot boxes, polling place signage, "I Voted" stickers, and of course, the American flag to make it identifiable.
- ✓ Allow student poll workers to announce results at school assembly/rally.



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**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**TOM TORLAKSON**, State Superintendent of Public Instruction  
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August 4, 2015

**HIGH SCHOOL VOTER EDUCATION WEEKS (SEPTEMBER 14–25, 2015)**

Dear County and District Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, and High School Principals:

With another school year about to begin, and the nation celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, we are reminded of the critical role you play in preserving our democracy by preparing students for college, career, *and civic life*. Public schools are essential to an informed electorate, the foundation of our democracy. That's why we strongly encourage you to observe "**High School Voter Education Weeks**" **September 14–25** and put your students on the path to a lifetime of civic engagement and voting.

The California Education Code designates the last two weeks of September and April as "High School Voter Education Weeks" and authorizes schools to designate students as "voter outreach coordinators." With county elections officials as partners, we provide resources to make it easy for schools to participate. Teachers can help eligible students who will be 18 years old by the next election learn how to register to vote – either on a paper form or online. Students can register on their smartphones! Voter outreach coordinators can lead registration drives and other school activities.

We encourage you to make "High School Voter Education Weeks" just the start of your school's civic engagement activities this year. Here are some ideas and resources to get you started:

- Review the "High School Voter Education Weeks" page on the Secretary of State web site. <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/voting-california/help-strengthen-our-democracy/high-school-voter-education-weeks>
- Partner with your county elections officials, invite them to visit your school, and learn from these experts how to register and vote. Locate your local official at this site: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/new-voters/county-elections-offices/>
- Place a link to the Secretary of State's online voter registration tool on your school web site and email the link to students and parents. <http://registertovote.ca.gov/>



- Participate in the MyVote California Mock Election Program, which allows students to cast a ballot for actual candidates. All the tools you need are at this site: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/student-mock-election/tools-success/>
- Inform students how they can learn the electoral process first hand by becoming a poll worker on Election Day – and get paid! <http://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/pdfs/student-poll-worker-flyer.pdf>
- Use the California Voter Bill of Rights to teach students about rules that govern the act of voting. <http://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/voter-bill-of-rights/voter-bill-of-rights.pdf>
- Adopt recommendations from the California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning and use lesson plans and other resources of the Power of Democracy, which now has Civic Learning Partnerships eager to work with you in six pilot counties – Sacramento, Butte, Fresno, Alameda, Los Angeles, and San Diego. <http://www.powerofdemocracy.org/>

Voter turnout in California's 2014 general election among eligible 18- to 24-year-olds was a dismal 8.2 percent. A person in this cohort was more likely to get arrested in 2014 than to cast a ballot. Thus, your help in fostering civic engagement and participation in democracy is more urgent than ever.

The good news is that the 2015–16 school year is an ideal time to turn these statistics around. By celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act, we honor all those who fought, some giving their lives, for the precious right to vote. With candidates for President and the United States Senate on the ballot in 2016, election excitement will be high. By working together, we can encourage our young citizens to register to vote and turn out at the polls to ensure their voices are heard in 2016 and beyond.

If you have any questions about High School Voter Education Weeks or other civic engagement projects, please feel free to contact Steven Carda, NVRA and Voter Outreach Program Manager, Secretary of State, by phone at 916-657-2305 or by e-mail at [steven.carda@sos.ca.gov](mailto:steven.carda@sos.ca.gov), or contact Rebecca Barrett, Principal Advisor to State Superintendent of Public Instruction, by phone at 916-319-0203 or by e-mail at [rbarrett@cde.ca.gov](mailto:rbarrett@cde.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Alex Padilla  
Secretary of State



Tom Torlakson  
State Superintendent of Instruction

# State of California

SECRETARY OF STATE

## RELATIVE TO RECOGNIZING CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL VOTER EDUCATION WEEKS

**WHEREAS**, California's Secretary of State, who serves as the state's chief elections official, is committed to strengthening democracy by encouraging voter registration and increasing participation in all elections by all eligible Californians; and

**WHEREAS**, the strength of our democracy depends on the active participation of all of its citizens, regardless of age, and voter registration and participation of youth is historically low; and

**WHEREAS**, young people play a critical role in our democracy by helping to choose the people who will lead us and by voicing their opinions on the issues that are important to them; and

**WHEREAS**, high schools are encouraged to offer voter registration to eligible students with either paper registration applications or a link on the high school website to the state's online voter registration application; and

**WHEREAS**, high schools administrators are encouraged to name one or more students as voter outreach coordinators to encourage student voter registration during High School Voter Registration Weeks; and

**WHEREAS**, students are encouraged to participate in our democracy through civics and voter education programs and by encouraging their peers and the members of their family and communities to register to vote and participate in elections; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that I, Secretary of State Alex Padilla, encourage all California High Schools to participate in **CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL VOTER EDUCATION WEEKS** September 14-25, 2015,

Subscribed this 4<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2015



Alex Padilla  
Secretary of State

