



# **Engaging Young Voters**

**LWV-Texas Summer Seminars 2011**

**★ The Woodlands   ★ Irving   ★ Austin**

**June 4**

**June 25**

**July 9**



**League of Women Voters - Texas**



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**W**elcome to the 2011 LWV-Texas summer regional meetings. We are focusing these seminars on engaging young voters to demonstrate that choosing a specific topic and a target audience is a good way for local Leagues to gain more visibility, recruit new members, interact more forcefully with other area leaders, and raise sufficient funds to do the job right. That's a tall order.

For over 90 years the League of Women Voters has been aiming high, hanging in there, and making democracy work better. This is no time to stop. This is a time to keep on climbing.

Also, for over 90 years, LWV has reached out to register all eligible voters and to inform them about issues. We need to continue this broad effort. At the same time, we need to make a special effort to motivate young voters to register, to vote, and to remain involved in civic life.

Who are these young voters? They are 18-29 years of age. Since they are the first generation to come of age in the current century, they are often called the Millennials. They are really interested in issues, but don't participate much in civic life. They are positive about doing community service, but don't do much of it. They are largely disenchanting with government at all levels, but are still hopeful about the future.

The Texas Election Code makes high school principals deputy voter registrars and requires them to give out voter registration cards twice a year to students who are 18 or who will turn 18 during the year. Despite these regulations, Millennials are greatly underrepresented at Texas polls, as they are across the nation. They represent almost 24% of the current U. S. population. In the 2008 election, 91% of the Millennials who registered to vote nationwide actually voted. Unfortunately, less than half of those eligible actually registered.

The LWV National High School Registration Project in 2010 was a research effort to discover the best ways to reach out to first-time voters in schools. Five states participated, and we have the benefit of their hard work and careful reporting. You will be hearing more about this project as well as others during this seminar.

Thanks go to Maggie Duncan, LWV Elections Specialist, who guided this project and authored the training manual for it; to Jeanette Senecal, LWV Senior Director for Elections and e-Democracy for her oversight; and to Allison O'Flinn, who designed the manual. LWV-Texas is happy that we can give each Texas League a copy of *Empowering the Voters of Tomorrow: Developing Winning High School Voter Registration Programs*.

Thanks also to the three Texas Leagues – Montgomery County, Irving, and Austin Area – for hosting these LWV regional meetings.

The sources of information for this booklet are found on page 17.

We hope the seminar, the manual, and this Texas handout help you succeed in engaging young voters and in all your League work.

Service to Local Leagues Committee – **Dee Brock, Pat Cheong, Susybelle Gosslee**

## Who Are the Young Voters?

Members of America's first generation to come of age during the 21<sup>st</sup> century are often called the Millennials. These young people from 18 to 30 years of age are our young voters – high schoolers, college/university students, and young working adults. By 2012, they will represent 24% of the population.

How are they different from other generations? What is shaping them now? How will they shape our future? Many research organizations and individuals are trying to answer these questions. Of course, generations are not monolithic. There are plenty of differences in core values and behaviors depending on ethnicity, class, gender ideology, geography, and other factors. Here are some of the observations made by respected researchers.

### **Millennials have the following characteristics.**

- They are the most ethnically and racially diverse cohort of young people in U.S. history.
- They are the most politically progressive age group in our modern history. (In the 2008 presidential campaign, 66% of voters under the age of 30 voted for Barack Obama; 33% voted for John McCain. The votes of those over 30 years of age were split 50%/49%).
- They are the first generation to regard tweeting, texting, Facebook, YouTube, Google, and Wikipedia as everyday parts of life, not as astonishing innovations.
- They are more trustful of institutions than either of their two predecessors – Gen-X and Baby Boomers – were when they were coming of age.

### **Millennials are underrepresented in the U. S. electorate.**

- Voters aged 18-29 made up 22% of all U.S. eligible voters in 2010.
- Voter turnout in 2008 showed a significant increase in participation of 19-29-year-olds. Still, while these young people made up 21% of adult citizens, they were only 17% of the voters and a whopping 29% of the unregistered population.
- While less than half of the Millennials registered to vote in 2008, 91% of those registered actually voted.
- Twenty-one million citizens under 30 did not vote in 2008. Had younger citizens voted at the same rate as those 30 and over, seven million more votes would have been cast in that year.
- Participation rates of young black voters at 27.5% were higher than those for white voters at 24.9%; Asian voters at 17.7%; and Hispanic voters at 17.6%.

### **Barriers, rather than apathy, caused voter disparity for Millennials.**

- **Color** – The number of voters of color lagged behind the number of whites by as much as 20% in 2008.
- **Education** – In 2004, the number of young citizens without college experience was 30% lower than those with college experience. In 2008, the disparity improved by only 4%. That year, 62% of those with some college voted, while only 36% of those without college voted.
- **Geographic mobility** – Between 2007 and 2008, 18-29-year-olds changed residences at a rate as high as 25% – that is 16% more than the general population. They moved out of parents' homes, entered college, went to work, and got married. Like other highly mobile groups, young people are more susceptible to being disenfranchised due to strict voter ID requirements, irregular provisional ballot counting procedures, and flawed list maintenance practices.

- **Photo ID** – A 2008 study found that 19% of young people did not have a government issued voter ID. The Student Association for Voter Empowerment asserts it is not as easy to obtain a new ID as advocates assume, especially for students changing their state residency.
- **Provisional voting rules** – Rates at which provisional ballots are actually counted varies widely from 100% in Maine to just 15.7% in Delaware. The most common reasons provisional votes are not counted are because voters are either unregistered or have cast ballots in the wrong precincts. Voters do not necessarily know that their votes are not counted.
- **Lack of leadership by state governments, counties, and schools** – Only 16 states had state laws requiring some state effort toward registering high school students. Often the effort was informing schools about registration forms or providing those forms onsite or online. Only 10 states required high schools to participate. No state enforced its own rules statewide.
- **Lack of funding and volunteer time by nonprofits** - Though several important nonprofit groups do research about and fund programs to encourage young people to register and vote, there is still a great deal to be done.

### **How Does Texas Rank in Terms of Youth Voter Turnout in Recent Elections?**

- Millennials made up 24% of eligible voters in Texas in 2010.
- In 2006, Texas was tied in last place with West Virginia and Utah at 17% of eligible young voters actually voting. That same year only 45% of citizens 30 and over voted.
- Texas was fourth from the bottom in terms of 18-29 voter turnouts in 2008. In Texas, 39% of this group voted. Only Hawaii at 31%, Arkansas at 35%, and Utah at 37 % were lower. Sixty-two percent of Texans 30 and over voted in that year. Minnesota led the states in youth voting with a 68% turnout.

### **Hispanic Vote**

- The 2010 Texas population is 25,145,561 – a 21% increase from 2000. The Latino population is 9,460, 921 or 37.6% of the total – an increase of 42% over the 2000 census.
- Texas’ population growth means four new Congressional seats for the state – all from areas where the Latino population increased significantly.
- The Hispanic vote in Texas is the second largest in the nation.
- One quarter of eligible voters in Texas is Latino.
- Three in ten of Hispanic eligible voters in Texas are 18-29. This figure is equal to the share of all Latino eligible voters nationwide in that age range.
- In 2010, about 3.3 million Latinos were under 18.
- Nearly half of all Texans under 18 – 48% – are Latino.
- Nine of the top ten cities in terms of Hispanic residents have local Leagues.

Studies show that people who become politically engaged at a young age are likely to become lifelong voters and that a person who votes in one election is 29% more likely to vote than not to vote in the next election.

Note: Information from Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement; Institute on Politics, Harvard University; League of Women Voters; National Association of Elected Latino Officials; Pew Research Center; Project Vote. See Resources on page 17.

## Successful Projects for Engaging Young Voters

### Registering High School Students to Vote

- ★ **LWV 2010 High School Voter Registration Project** – Leagues in five states – Arizona, California, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia – partnered with LWVUS as part of the 2010 High School Voter Registration Project. The project aimed to increase registration among underserved high school youth, and it succeeded. Through Leagues in these states, thousands of nonpartisan education materials have been disseminated and thousands of high school students have had the opportunity to register to vote.

Contact: Maggie Duncan, LWV elections specialist – [mduncan@lww.org](mailto:mduncan@lww.org)

- ★ **LWV-Houston Area, Texas**, was the highlight of the LWV High School Project. LWV-Houston Area's 2010 youth engagement program included 30 elements, such as presentations, special events, and individual service projects. Eleven new and highly dedicated volunteers under the age of 30 encouraged 5,861 young people to vote and registered 1,493 of them – or on average, one in four of those they encountered. The League used online communication to recruit volunteers and to maintain contact with volunteers and young voters. The Executive Director of the League reports an incredible increase in media visibility, which led to many unexpected opportunities for more visibility and interaction with the community and its leaders. The League worked with the Harris County Tax Office to deputize young volunteer voter registrars at the League office and collaborated with other community efforts. During and after this youth engagement program campaign, over 60 new members joined the League and the Education Fund raised over \$20,000.

Contact: Christina Gorczynski, Executive Director – [lww@lwwhouston.org](mailto:lww@lwwhouston.org)

- ★ **Louisiana High School Voter Registration Day** – Robert Jackson started a project to register students in 1996. In 2002, the Louisiana legislature passed a resolution naming the first Tuesday in May as Louisiana High School Voter Registration Day. Caddo Parrish adopted the program that same year and has registered high school students every year since. The program has received high praise from many state and federal legislators and educators.

Contact: Robert Jackson, Director of First Tuesdays, Inc. – [robertjackson@hotmail.com](mailto:robertjackson@hotmail.com)

- ★ **Rock the Vote**, building on a 20-year record of registering young voters, developed Democracy Class. The interactive lesson plan, complete with music, video, and celebrity appearances on video and in person, proved to be very popular with students and schools. After polishing the pilot programs for over two years, Rock the Vote is launching a national effort to simplify and demystify voting and elections and to bring more young people into the political process. The lesson can be downloaded from Democracy Class website and used by teachers and schools, or it can be taught by Rock the Vote staff. To commemorate the anniversary of the passing of the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, which set the voting age at 18, Rock the Vote, in collaboration with the National Education Association, celebrated Democracy Day on March 23, 2011.

Contact: Democracy Class – [www.democracyclass.com](http://www.democracyclass.com)

Chrissy Faessen, VP, Marketing and Communications – [chrissy@rockthevote.com](mailto:chrissy@rockthevote.com)

- ★ **Louisiana Secretary of State** buys an advertisement in a magazine that all public and private school students receive during their senior year. The ad includes the official registration card that students can complete and mail to their local election administrators or to the Secretary of State.

- ★ **Secretary of State in California** encourages high schools to add a link called “MyVote” to their websites. This site connects to the Secretary of State and gives students and staff access to voter registration forms and other information 24 hours a day.
- ★ **Several states** make voter registration a part of the required curriculum; others require high schools to register students to vote. **In Texas**, the Election Code names high school principals as deputy voter registrars and says that they should hand out registration applications twice a year to students who are 18 years of age or will be 18 during the year.

### **Educating High School Students about Voting**

- ★ **Vote 18** is a fun, fast-paced, interactive game designed for high school students, 15-18 years of age. During one class period, a facilitator takes the students through the history of voting, illustrates voting laws and voting dynamics through student role-playing, conducts a mock election, engages students in the political process, demonstrates how they can affect the outcome of elections, and leads them to see that it is in their own best interests to be involved in their government at every level. The facilitator leads, but the students drive the game. Instead of telling students they should vote, this program allows students to show themselves why they should vote. Vote18 offers the game and lesson plan free on the website. LWVUS featured Vote 18 at its 2008 convention.  
Contact: [www.vote18.org](http://www.vote18.org)

- ★ **LWV-Mobile, Alabama**, has been using the Vote 18 project successfully for the past three years. The League, in partnership with the Junior League, engages the students to become educated voters and active members of the community. The League leader emphasizes that the students need to do both for their own self-interest. For example, through the connections they make, students can expect to solicit letters of recommendation or references from community members for college and employment and to obtain valuable experience that will look good on their resumes and other applications. The League urges the students to volunteer for groups that cater to their own interests and provides specific opportunities in local Boys and Girls Clubs, Little Leagues, Habitat for Humanity, food banks, and others. Vote 18 got off to a big start in Mobile because the president of that League was excited by the project and contacted the county-wide school system and set up several presentations for local elected officials, school representatives, and students over a jam-packed two days. As a result, the school system gave the effort its blessing.  
Contact: Myra Evans – [bobalouiemom@yahoo.com](mailto:bobalouiemom@yahoo.com)

### **Registering College/University Students to Vote**

- ★ **Student Councils and Political Science Organizations on Campus** are good partners for registering college students to vote. There are many examples in Texas and other states.
- ★ **Clubs, Fraternities, Sororities, and Dorms** are also places with which Leagues can work to register students. Think of the debate team, the United Nations group, the organizations for high-achieving students, such as the Dean’s List, and others. Again, there are many examples in Texas and other states.



### **Reaching Out to New Audiences – Department of Human Services**

- ★ **LWV-Mobile, Alabama**, has forged a partnership with the Department of Human Services to reach first-time voters in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) employment program. In Mobile, it is a four-week curriculum, and the coordinator feels very strongly that being an active participant in the community, including voting, is essential. She reminds the participants that the folks they vote for have the power to continue programs such as the one they are involved in, ensuring it continues for others.  
Contact: Myra Evans – [bobalouiemom@yahoo.com](mailto:bobalouiemom@yahoo.com)

### **Employing Youth as Poll Workers**

- ★ **LWV-Montgomery County, Maryland**, assists the county Board of Elections of Montgomery County, Maryland, in the Future Vote Initiative, a project aimed at enlisting and training students from 6th grade to 12th grade to help at the polls. Students and their parents must attend an orientation session. Those who then volunteer can receive community service hours for working at polling places on Election Day. The League helps out by registering parents and any students old enough to vote. The students help manage lines, retrieve voting materials and any other tasks as assigned. Dr. Gilberto Zelaya, Community Outreach Liaison for the Board of Elections, conceived of and oversees the program. Several other states have adopted similar programs.  
Contact: Dr. Gilberto Zelaya – [Gilberto.Zelaya@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:Gilberto.Zelaya@montgomerycountymd.gov)

- ★ **Texas Teens as Poll Workers** - The State Department of Texas confirms that teenagers 16 years and older can apply to their county election administrators office to train to be poll workers.

### **Assigning College Students to Interview Candidates**

- ★ **LWV of Weber County, Utah**, includes in its membership a professor of political science at the local university. She assigned a class to interview candidates for local offices. The answers, along with the candidates' basic information, were compiled and available on the website of the Democracy Project. The League paid for a flyer about the project with directions to find the information and distributed hard copies of this local “Voters Guide” through the local library.  
Contact: Marilyn ODell, Co-president, LWV-Utah – [maodell2@gmail.com](mailto:maodell2@gmail.com)

### **Conducting High School Video Contest**

- ★ **LWV-Tyler/Smith County, Texas**, invited high school students to produce 30-second public service announcements about the importance of voting. The winners were announced at a candidates’ forum, and their work was broadcast on local TV stations. They also received cash prizes.  
Contact: Dee Brock, LWV-Tyler/Smith County, Texas – [deebrook@faqspress.com](mailto:deebrook@faqspress.com)

### **Running and Winning**

- ★ **LWV-Camden, New Jersey**, developed Running and Winning workshops for high school girls with funding from LWV Education Fund and their own League in 2002 and has continued to present them yearly. The short-term goal is to change girls’ distaste for or

disinterest in politics. The long-term goal is to increase the number of women running for office.

Contacts: Anne Maiese – [Maiese2@comcast.net](mailto:Maiese2@comcast.net) - 856-795-4367

Shirley Sandelands – [Shirsande@cox.net](mailto:Shirsande@cox.net) - 520-574-8295

- ★ **LWV-Red Bank Area, New Jersey**, in conjunction with AAUW-Northern Monmouth County Branch, the Junior League of Monmouth County, and the Red Bank Chapter of Hadassah, hosted its fifth regional Running and Winning Workshop for teenage girls in April. Sixty students from 12 area high schools attended and interacted with and learned from 19 women who either are elected officials or who provide executive support for elected officials.

Contact: Barbara Goldstein – [bobbiegold@comcast.net](mailto:bobbiegold@comcast.net)

- ★ **LWV-Greater Tucson, Arizona**, co-sponsors the Running and Winning workshop with AAUW branches of Tucson and Casas Adobes, the Pima County/Tucson Women’s Commission, and the University of Arizona Political Science Department. Since its inception, over 500 girls have attended this workshop. Political science students at the University of Arizona serve as facilitators. U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords offered student participants the chance to spend a week shadowing her and her office manager this summer, but obviously this opportunity has been postponed.

Contact: League of Women Voters of Greater Tucson – [lwvgt@aol.com](mailto:lwvgt@aol.com)

### **Reaching Young Working Adults**

- ★ **LWV-Tarrant County, Texas**, has a special unit for young professionals called “The Contemporaries.” Many Leagues across the country are organizing events and units to engage young professionals.

Contact: [president@lwvtarrantcounty.org](mailto:president@lwvtarrantcounty.org)

- ★ **Hot Topics at Hot Spots** – Local Leagues in many states, including Texas, often invite young working adults – members and potential members – to discuss hot topics at restaurants or in after work gathering places.
- ★ **Go Where They Go** – Many Leagues regularly attend meetings held by other local groups to network with other people who are also working to make democracy work better. Professional and trade organizations, PTAs, book clubs, environmental and other issue-oriented groups are good places to meet young working adults. Study up on the concerns of the groups you target so you can assure them that LWV has a lot to offer them, just as they have a lot to offer the League.
- ★ **Naturalization Ceremonies** – Many Leagues participate in local naturalization ceremonies. Registering these new citizens on the spot is an important service and a warm, welcoming experience for new citizens. If your League does not participate already, ask the Judge if you can welcome the new citizens and give them registration cards as they leave the ceremony. In some areas, the League is invited to deliver a short talk about the importance of voting. If that is not the case in your area, volunteer. Most League members are moved by the naturalization ceremony and really enjoy welcoming new citizens. Of course, not all of the new citizens will fall into the category of “young voters,” but they all will help fulfill our mission of helping all residents become informed voters.

# A Community-wide High School Voter Registration Campaign

## A high school registration campaign can be a big community building effort.

- Major selling points:
  - It is nonpartisan.
  - It's in the best interest of the whole community to engage young people in civic life.
- To get started, talk about this effort with your fellow Leaguers and develop a list of community leaders and prospective organizational partners.
- Set a date, time, and place for a meeting.
- Send invitations to explore this project to those on your list. Ask for a response so you will know you are going to have a sufficient number present. Plan on refreshments and a snappy meeting.

## The meeting needs

- Sign-in sheet to get email information
- Name tags
- Greeters and enthusiasts

## The agenda for your meeting would include

- A report on the need to register and motivate young people to vote
- Brief survey of successes of such programs
- An outline of a possible plan
- Benefits of a community-wide, nonpartisan effort with its resulting capacity building opportunities for young people and the whole community
- A request for input and personal and organizational commitment.

## Guests would take away

- An offer from the LWV to present this opportunity to the boards of organizations and others
- A one-page summary of the project and next steps

## Next steps

- Send a report of the meeting within two days to the attendees and others, including the media.
- Set a date and time for the steering committee to meet and invite those who volunteered and others you want on the steering committee.
- Follow the checklist for your campaign that begins on the next page.

## The Big "What Ifs"

- What if you plan the meeting and only a few come? Or worse yet, what if no one comes? Then your local League can decide if engaging young voters is a project you can undertake on your own or with less help than you hoped.
- What if someone else or some other organizations wants to lead the effort? That would be a surprise, but as long as it is not a political party, you can decide to participate or not.

## Challenges

- A high school registration campaign is a good one-year project. It is better, however, to think of it as an every year campaign.
- It takes time and commitment – just like any big project. After the first year, working with schools will get smoother, but it will still take time and commitment

## The Future

- Please share your experiences – the good and the bad. SLL can help make it available across the state.
- Perhaps setting aside a special day to celebrate young Texas voters would make the effort easier for you to involve schools in your community and across the state. That doesn't mean that all high school registration activities should or could take place on one day. It means that the campaign would have a certain day to celebrate young voters. Last year Rock the Vote picked March 23, the day the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment passed, as the day to celebrate.

## Tips for Successful High School Registration Visits

The LWV National High School Registration Project was a research effort. The data shows several important planning preferences:

- Small rooms with fewer than 35 students are a better venue for registering high school students than assemblies or other large spaces.
- Involving groups in a dialogue, rather than just setting up a table with registration cards, is more effective in getting students to sign up.
- Spring is the best time of the year to register high school voters.

The teams also provided tips for having greater success and more fun for all:

- Plans for the campaign need to be developed early. Try to get the project accepted by school administrators and election administrators during the summer, even though your target dates are in the spring. It often takes many phone calls to get the schedule set up in the right way.
- Search for student helpers in high school clubs and from teacher recommendations. Peer-to-peer communication is very effective.
- Assign someone, perhaps a young volunteer, to handle the online and social media communications.
- Engage students in the classrooms in conversation about things they care about. (See pages 7-11 in the training manual *Empowering the Voters of Tomorrow* for good examples of questions and activities. If you need additional copies of the manual, contact Maggie Duncan, elections specialist at LWVUS – [mduncan@lwv.org](mailto:mduncan@lwv.org).)
- Be prepared to answer questions about voter registration laws in Texas. (Remember that there will be changes in the Texas Election Code now that Photo ID legislation has been signed into law.)
- Focus on the registration form. For some students, this form may be the first time they have filled out an official government form. Go slow. Be patient. Welcome student questions. Walk around.
- Try to get every student who is eligible to fill out a card and leave it with you. (Reminder: let the election official know when you will turn in a big batch.)
- Be sensitive to the fact that some students may not be eligible to vote because they are not citizens or because they are felons. Advise the students about this problem without acknowledging that it might exist in this group. Affected students can turn in cards to you so long as they do not complete them, for that would be illegal.
- Check every card to make sure it is completely filled out.
- Be sure one of your volunteers is at every door so that students do not leave with their completed cards. (You are more likely to turn them in than students are to mail them in.)
- Keep track of your efforts. How many students did your team register, where, when? If your election administrator approves, copy the registration cards so that you can contact students later to encourage them to vote. You can use this information to contact students about voting in a nonpartisan way, but for no other purpose.
- Thank students, teachers, administration, and others who help. Thank them for engaging young voters in civic life, not for helping the League.

# High School Voter Registration Campaign Checklist

## First things first

- Decide if your League wants to make this campaign a community-wide effort or a local League project.
- If you want it to be a community-wide effort, please see “Community-wide High School Voter Registration Campaign” on page 9.

## Before your registration days

- Name a chair and a committee to get things rolling.
- Recruit your leadership team – include young people such as college students and young working adults.
- Set goals.
- Meet with your county’s election administrator.
  - Pick up registration cards.
  - Learn the rules for distributing the cards and getting them to that office and for copying the contact data (to be used to talk to young voters about elections and voting).
  - Create a short guide for young voters that explains the rules for registering to vote. These rules are a part of the Texas Election Code. We deleted the Guide we prepared for this booklet once the Texas Legislature passed the Photo ID card law. The rules for college students and others who move from one location to another, absentee voting, and others will have to be revised.
  - Set up a photo op of your county election officer deputizing your team as voter registrars.
  - Work with schools to set dates, times, activities, and permission to invite the media.
  - Provide a written statement of your purpose and goals.
  - Remember that high school principals in public schools are automatically deputy registrars by the Texas Election Code. They are supposed to hand out registration cards twice a year to high school students who are 18 or will become 18 during the year. We can help them by sharing information about best practices determined by the national project and by actually helping students sign up.
  - Note that the research shows that classroom time works best.
  - Ask for time in spring, since research shows spring is the best season for the campaign.
  - Secure names and contact information for districts and individual schools.
  - Distribute fliers for schools about registration drives at their locations.
- Announce your plans to the media, on your website, and through social networks as soon as you can, again at the end of your campaign, and wherever feasible during the campaign.
- Develop a plan for your interaction with high school students.
  - Encourage young people on your team to take the lead in each school visit.
  - Write out or outline your key messages.
  - Involve the high school students in a dialogue.
- Recruit and train volunteers about the following
  - Election rules and laws
  - Filling out registration forms
  - Making presentations
  - Collecting and saving data
  - Submitting registration cards to county election office. Be sure the office knows when you are dropping off a big lot of completed cards.
  - Reporting on the event

### **At each school for each presentation on each day of your drive**

- Send at least two people for each occasion – three is better. Here’s what they will do:
  - Communicate with school personnel
  - Make presentation(s) to and engage students in dialogue
  - Bring materials
  - Register students
  - Collect and check registration forms for legibility and completeness
- Bring the following materials to each school on each day
  - Voter registration forms
  - Volunteer name tags
  - Pencils/pens
  - Talking points
  - Election information – dates, rules for absentee voting, etc.
  - LWV information – sign-in sheets for students, membership brochures with website and other information, “5 Things You Should Know” cards

### **After each of your drive days is over**

- Collect data from registration forms and give to team leader.
- Record number of cards.
- Note questions that came up and suggestions for improvement offered.
- Turn in registration cards by deadline.
- Follow up with school – say thanks and ask for feedback and future dates.
- Later, check with the election office to see that students were registered without problems, and check with students to see that they received their registration cards.

### **After your campaign is over**

- Debrief, evaluate, and write it down.
- Recount your challenges and how you overcame them.
- Remember your successes and how you achieved them.
- Decide how you can improve your efforts.
- Record your follow-up plans.
- Announce your successes to the public.
- Thank your team and the schools.
- Set your initial plan of action for next year.
- Celebrate!

### **Challenges**

- It will probably take more time than you expect to set the right school schedules. Start this summer and start at the top with such people as superintendent, school board, high school principals, PTA, and curriculum leaders.
- Since the LWV project demonstrated that classrooms are better than other settings to get through to students, try for that venue. Know that this decision means more work and more volunteers to cover the high school seniors. It also means more registered students.
- As often as possible, get your volunteers together to share experiences and suggestions. Keep a record.
- Make it fun for students and for volunteers. **Nothing is more fun than success!**

## Communications – Website, Email, Facebook, and More

Millennials are a tech-savvy generation. They are the first generation that has always had computers, email, website, social networks, and cellphones. They do not find these new technologies astonishing. Rather technology is just an ordinary part of their culture. A 2010 study reveals that 88% of 18-29-year-olds are online; 70% use the Internet daily. They are connected.

**Website** – Your local League website is incredibly important and needs to be a regular part of your League’s contact information, along with your telephone and street address, even if your site can only be reached via [lwvtexas.org](http://lwvtexas.org). About half of local Leagues have individual websites; about half have a web presence only through LWV-Texas.

- LWV-Texas provides every League a presence on the web through [www.lwvtexas.org](http://www.lwvtexas.org). This service is free to your League. At that site, people who click on *Local Leagues* will find a link to every local League in the state.
- For those 15 that have their own websites, each link goes to your individual website. So anyone searching the Internet for your local League should also be able to find both the independent site, as well as your presence on the state site.
- For those who have no individual website, the [www.lwvtexas.org](http://www.lwvtexas.org) site provides basic information, such as president’s name and contact information and a link to your county elections website. You can email your news and your *VOTER* to [lwvtexas@lwvtexas.org](mailto:lwvtexas@lwvtexas.org) for inclusion on your site.
- If you want to create your own website, LWVUS offers you a template called League EasyWeb. It is free of charge and very easy to originate and update. Go to [www.LWVnet.org](http://www.LWVnet.org) for directions.
- Designate a League member who keeps up-to-date about what is going on to be webmaster and thus responsible for updating the website. All copy should be vetted by the webmaster or designee. Consider adding a capable intern or other young volunteer to make the additions and subtractions on your website and other communications technologies. It will be worth the recruitment effort. You may want to offer a “scholarship membership” or even a stipend or seek a donor to underwrite your hiring a professional.

**About Your Site** – Your website does not have to include everything. Think through the information you want to share with the public.

- Your site must be up-to-date, easy to read, and helpful to those seeking information. Looking good is important. Being fancy is not necessary and can be distracting.
- Your webmaster must keep it current and pass along questions and comments to the right people in your League.
- Add links from your website to LWV-Texas and LWVUS and Texas Secretary of State and others that you think will be important to your League and your readers.
- Your League probably does not want to include your members’ names and contact information, your financial records, nor your Board minutes.

**Reading online** – People don’t read copy online the same way they read text on paper.

- Reading a block of text online takes 25% longer than text on paper.
- Reading online is not linear. Readers “scan and skim.” Instead of reading every word, they read snippets, headlines, hyperlinks, graphics, special fonts, bullets, and other visual standouts.
- After 7-10 seconds, a website viewer decides whether to dive deeper or move on.

**Writing online – for websites and emails** – The reading characteristics cited above call for writers to make changes, too. Make online copy more concise, use techniques that break up blocks of type, make the main points stand out, and provide links or other avenues for more information.

**Email** – Email messages are an effective way to reach Millennials. Many people and products owe their success to email communications. Two-thirds of those 18-29 say they check their email every day. The writing and reaching tips above apply to email as well as your website.

**Facebook** – Most young people are familiar with all the latest technological means of communication, but they do not find them all equally attractive or useful. Facebook is the overwhelming favorite. In a 2011, study 80% of those 18-29 surveyed use Facebook. For those enrolled in college, the figure jumped to 90%. Though some research indicates that the interest in Facebook is fading, the decline is marginal. As soon as possible, add Facebook to your communications plan.

**MySpace and Twitter** – 36% of Millennials use MySpace. 24% have Twitter accounts.

**Texting** – Children under 18 are the biggest texters. Young adults 18-24 are next with 95% using it. Adults 25-34 are not far behind with 87%. The use of this technology goes down with every older group.

**Mobile Telephone** – Young adults from 18-24 are the biggest users of the telephone with 25-34 just barely behind.

**YouTube** – This website is very popular, but mostly for comedy. Millennials are drawn to it for politics and causes – if the postings are funny or shocking.

Note: Statistics taken from a 2010 Pew Research study and a 2011 Institute of Politics, Harvard, study. See Resources.

## **A Case Study - LWV-Houston Area's Award-Winning Online Engagement Plan**

*The following is a copy of LWV-Houston Area's description of the online engagement plan. LWV awarded it the top prize in that category at the 2010 national convention.*

Our approach to Online Engagement is multi-faceted: traditional online communication and new social media communication. We launched a major update to our website in December 2009, adding content and increasing functionality. In August 2009, we created a Facebook page. By November, we had 20 fans; we now have over 1,000. In December, we created a primary Twitter account to anchor our Twitter activities. Additionally, we live tweet special events on Special Twitter Feeds.

We use our website to announce upcoming events and to publish our Voters Guide and other publications. We also use the site to raise money and sign-up members. Our Facebook fan page is our primary volunteer and youth engagement forum. Twitter is a space for casual communication with the general public. We use our Event Twitter Accounts to engage the virtual membership; followers can retweet, allowing them to share the event with others on the web. Website content is maintained by members, who submit text and photos to a web designer. The executive director maintains Facebook and the @LWVHouston Twitter account.

Using new social media enables us to grow efficiently. Recently, we conducted two social media experiments. We hosted a young professionals' event that was exclusively published online: a Facebook event, Twitter updates, and a Vertical Response email blast. Forty people attended, and ten new members signed up. We hosted a Spring Break Volunteer Day that was only advertised online: a Facebook event and Twitter updates. Six community college students came to our office and volunteered for a total of 30 hours.

We are now able to communicate with a wide range of people – new and returning volunteers and members; outside observers – the general public and media; multiple generations – folks from 85-18 years old. Older members can stay plugged into the energy of the League without having to be completely mobile. Younger people can learn more about the organization at varying times of day and access information on mobile devices. We believe the possibilities are endless.

*Intended Consequences: LWV-Houston gained 60 new members in 2010-2011, largely because of the heightened visibility of the High School Registration Project.*



## Where the Bucks Start – Fundraising Tips

LWVUS offers many excellent materials about fundraising. Use them all. On this page, however, you'll find tips that will be particularly helpful in seeking funds for your Engaging Young Voters campaign. You may already know most of what follows, but a review is often a good starting point for action.

- ★ Relax. Fundraising is not brain surgery. On the other hand, don't get too comfortable. It still takes commitment and work.
- ★ Replace the word *fundraising* with *friendraising* in your thinking about this campaign. (We borrowed this term from *Fundraising 101*, available at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org).) Actually, relationship building is at the heart of all fundraising.
- ★ Develop a very specific case for the support you need by answering these questions:
  - What are your goals?
  - What are the community needs?
  - How will your campaign serve these needs?
  - What impact will the campaign have on the present and the future?
  - Why is this campaign the best way to achieve the success you hope for?
  - How much money will it take in all?
  - What are you asking of your friend?
- ★ Prepare an overview page about the project and be prepared to hand it to those you meet in person and to mail with solicitation letters.
- ★ Set up an appointment with a prospective supporter if you can. At the meeting, give an overview of your campaign; then converse with your new or old friend about the importance of engaging young voters. See if she/he has a special interest or has suggestions about procedures and overcoming obstacles.
- ★ Once you have explained your project and its importance, ask for funds to help make it happen. Do not apologize, and do not feel apologetic. This request is not about you, nor is it for you. You are asking for support to reach a goal you think your friend also wants to reach. It cannot happen without the support you seek, and the odds are the funds will not be offered if you do not ask. Again, be very specific.
- ★ In pursuing your *friendraising*, remember that money is not the only thing you need from this relationship. You may need help in gathering community partners. You certainly need public approval, promotion, volunteers, mutual interest in the effort, and mutual pride in the success. This *friendraising* can be helpful later in another effort.
- ★ Remember, too, that as a friend, you have to give something back. First of all, succeed in your campaign. Along the way, make sure you praise your friend for her/his help and that you keep him/her informed of your progress.
- ★ Always write a formal thank you letter to those who give you money.
- ★ Reach out to local corporations and foundations. Do a little research to find out what kind of projects they fund. Write a letter and a brief proposal according to their rules. Write these letters as early as possible. It is important to add to any letter: "I will call you during the week of \_\_\_\_ unless I hear from you first." Then follow through.
- ★ Remember – 84% of all nonprofit giving comes from individuals. So concentrate on people and remember your League members.

## What's Next? What Can You Do Now?

- ★ **Excite your League about engaging young voters.** Make a plan and make it happen.
- ★ **Make engaging young voters a community-wide project.** Registering first-time voters while they are still in high school is a nonpartisan idea. Even people who live in communities with overwhelming membership in one political party can support getting young people involved in civic life. Take the lead in calling a group of community leaders together to plan and implement a high school registration campaign. Remember to include local and private high school officials and your county election administrator in the group. You will find a generic plan of action for such a project in this handout (page 9). If you like the idea, just adapt the plan to your community.
- ★ **Recruit students to help register other students and prospective voters of all ages.**
- ★ **Get voters to the polls.** Recruit young adults with cars and driving licenses to help people without transportation get to the polls to vote.
- ★ **Help voters get Photo ID cards.** Help prospective voters secure photo ID cards at the Texas Department of Public Safety (TxDPS) office in your county.
- ★ **Participate in the Promote Texas Voting high school video contest.** LWV-Texas is exploring the possibility of a statewide Promote Texas Voting video contest for high school students in 2012. Participating students will produce public service announcements about voting. LWV-Texas will announce winners at the LWV-Texas state convention or at another event in September 2012. Television and cable channels will put the winning public service announcements on channels across the state. Plan to be part of it! Contact: LWV-Texas – [info@lwvtexas.org](mailto:info@lwvtexas.org) (Put Video Contest in the subject line.)
- ★ **High School Registration Day Celebration.** Consider adopting – locally or statewide – March 23, the anniversary of the passage of the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the U. S. Congress, as Democracy Day. (Rock the Vote and the National Education Association did so last year.) Though voter registration drives would go on year round, March 23 would be a special day to celebrate first-time voters.
- ★ **Beyond registration.** Plan now to involve young voters after they register and beyond elections. Many schools and colleges require students to do community service. Try to get on these lists for volunteers. Think of the importance of your League's studies, positions, and events to young voters and reach out for their help and participation. Your use of online and social media can really help engage young voters. If those communications tools are not your favorites, recruit a young volunteer team to help set up your sites and keep them going, too.
- ★ **Build your League.** Build your League through engaging young voters: (1) recruit volunteers and members; (2) collaborate with other leaders and organizations; (3) recruit members; (4) call on LWV-Texas Service to Local Leagues Committee to help expand the capabilities and effectiveness of your board and membership. Put SLL in your subject line. Contact: [lwvtexas@lwvtexas.org](mailto:lwvtexas@lwvtexas.org).
- ★ **Share your ideas and actions.** Send your ideas and plans about engaging young voters and the way you implement them to LWV-Texas. Please include photographs if you have them. Use "Engaging Young Voters" as your subject line. We will proudly share your work with others. Contact: [info@lwvtexas.org](mailto:info@lwvtexas.org).

## Resources

### Resources for information included in “Engaging Young Voters” seminar booklet

- “Best Practices for Implementing Effective High School Voter Registration Programs,” by Lauren Forbes. Project Vote, September 2010. [www.projectvote.org](http://www.projectvote.org).
- *Empowering the Voters of Tomorrow: Developing Winning High School Voter Registration Programs*, by Maggie Duncan. League of Women Voters, 2011. [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org).
- “Enfranchising American Youth: Policy Paper,” by Erin Ferns Lee. Project Vote, September 2010. [www.projectvote.org](http://www.projectvote.org).
- “Engaging American Youth through High School Registration Programs.” Project Vote. [www.projectvote.org](http://www.projectvote.org).
- “The Latino Electorate in 2010,” by Mark Hugo Lopez. Pew Hispanic Center, April 2011. [www.pewresearchcenter.org](http://www.pewresearchcenter.org).
- “Latinos in the 2010 Elections: Texas.” Pew Hispanic Center, October 15, 2010. [www.pewresearchcenter.org](http://www.pewresearchcenter.org).
- LWV-Houston Area Report on High School Vote Registration Project.
- “Millennials,” by Scott Keeler and Paul Taylor, Pew Research Center, December 11, 2009. [www.pewresearchcenter.org](http://www.pewresearchcenter.org).
- “Survey of Young Americans’ Attitudes toward Politics and Public Service,” Institute of Politics, Harvard University. 19th Edition: February 11-March 2, 2011. [www.iop.harvard.edu](http://www.iop.harvard.edu).
- “2010 Census Profiles: Texas.” National Association of Elected Latino Officials. 2010.
- “Youth Voter Turnout in the 2008 and 2006 Elections: A State-by-State Comparison,” by Surbhi Godsay, Amanda Nover, and Emily Hoban Kriby. CIRCLE, November 2008. [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org).

### Web resources about engaging young voters

- Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools – [www.civicmissionofschools.org](http://www.civicmissionofschools.org)
- CIRCLE (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) – [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)
- Democracy Class – [www.democracyclass.com](http://www.democracyclass.com)
- FELN (Fair Elections Legal Network) – [www.fairelectionsnetwork.com](http://www.fairelectionsnetwork.com)
- Institute of Politics at Harvard University – [www.iop.harvard.edu](http://www.iop.harvard.edu)
- League of Women Voters - [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)
- League of Women Voters of Texas - [www.lwvtexas.org](http://www.lwvtexas.org)
- NALEO (National Association of Latino Elected Officials) – [www.naleo.org](http://www.naleo.org)
- National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP) – <http://ncbcp.org>
- Pew Hispanic Center – [www.pewhispaniccenter.org](http://www.pewhispaniccenter.org)
- Pew Research Center – [www.pewresearchcenter.org](http://www.pewresearchcenter.org)
- Project Vote – [www.projectvote.org](http://www.projectvote.org)
- Smackdown Your Vote – [www.smackdownyourvote.com](http://www.smackdownyourvote.com)
- State Voices – [www.statevoices.org](http://www.statevoices.org)
- Student Association for Voter Empowerment (SAVE) – [www.savevoting.org](http://www.savevoting.org)
- Texas Coalition, an Affiliate of NCBCP – [http://ncbcp.org/who/affiliates/texas\\_coalition/](http://ncbcp.org/who/affiliates/texas_coalition/)
- Texas Secretary of State – <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/>
- U.S. Census (voting statistics) – <http://census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting>
- Vote 18 – <http://vote18.org>
- VotoLatino – [www.votolatino.org](http://www.votolatino.org)
- Youth Leadership Initiative – [www.youthleadership.net](http://www.youthleadership.net)



# League of Women Voters-Texas

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Membership in the League is open to men and women of all ages. With more than 850 state and local affiliates nationwide, the League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

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