

**Guidance on Opportunities
Promoting Student Engagement
May 2018**

In today's political climate students around the nation are playing a larger role in the democracy and activist spaces. Student activists are enthusiastic to participate in the political process and eager to find mentors and organizations to guide them. The League of Women Voters is in a great position to both guide these new student activists and learn from them.

The LWVUS Board of Directors has recently decided to waive national PMP for student members. The hope is that Leagues will be able to offer free or discounted student membership and that will result in an increase of student members. Ideally, these students will not just join but become active members now and for years to come. To that end, waiving fees is not a solution for expanding youth involvement alone, work must be done on every level to promote positive student engagement.

Thanks to efforts of the League and other organizations, the number of students registered to vote is climbing and more young people are becoming better educated in voting practices. The United States Census Bureau reported in 2010 that only 45.3% of people ages 18-24 were registered to vote, in 2017 they reported 55.4% of that age range is registered to vote. According to the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education, voter turnout in ages 18-24 increased from 45.1% in 2012 to 48.3% in 2016. There has also been a rise in youth participation in political engagement activities. We see young leaders shaping the Women's March movement and students leading the gun safety movement.

More student members in the League is not only important for the League's growth, but such an experience also influences the lives of these young people. Students who want to get involved in voter service efforts may not realize what options there are beyond voter registration drives. League members have the opportunity to mentor the next generation of League leaders by training them to reach out to local and state representatives, support Election Day proceedings and more.

Young people have many skills to offer the League. Their knowledge of organizing and outreach among their peers, and their experience with social media could increase the League's impact and engagement. Students also can educate Leagues on what the most pressing issues are for young voters in their communities.

Here are several tips and ideas to increase student engagement in the League:

- **Work on issues that are important to young people.** Think back to issues that were important to you at that age and how they were approached. It is important to work on issues young people care about to keep them interested.
- **Partner with local high schools/universities/community colleges to work on issues or speak at events.** Utilize the platform and resources to recruit more students and promote the League.
- **Organize major events on campus to engage students.** For example, a candidate debate, candidate meet and greets, a political speaker, etc. These are forms of outreach.
- **Plan voting services, voting registration, or other events that would be beneficial for young students.** Show them firsthand the influential work the League does.
- **Recruit a teacher or professor to help network with students.** Use a professor or school official to connect with students and learn more.
- **Partner with political organizations on campus and use those organizations to help reach students and learn more about them.** Again, use this as a platform for reaching out to students

and learning more about their political interests. Co-sponsor an event, or invited the club to participate in a League meeting or event.

- **Utilize social media for outreach.** Social media plays a large role in lives of students, you should use this to your advantage. Promote advertising and outreach on social media to reach a larger audience. You could use student members to help transform the social media site.
- **Ensure that there is easy access to websites, resources, and event webpages.** This seems simple but you don't want to lose a potential member because they could not simply find information online. Have these tools accessible in one place and have the links ready to share.
- **Be open to new experiences.** An event that engages students may not look the same as what the League "has always done." Be ready to accept new types of success and be ready to learn from new types of possible failure.

League Spotlight

- **LWV of Florida**

LWV of FL is supporting students in the recent student-led movement towards gun control. LWV of Florida and the Florida Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence (founded by LWV of Florida) hosted a rally in Tallahassee, FL shortly after the horrific Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting. Thousands of students gathered at the rally to express their views on the issue. LWV of Florida helped students have their voices heard and supported the students in their fight. Pamela Goodman, LWV of FL President stated, "The League of Women Voters of Florida is honored to stand with these courageous, passionate, and fierce students and this movement for safe gun legislation in Florida."

Local Florida leagues are supporting and promoting the student-led March for Our Lives and other solidarity marches across the state.

- **LWV of Illinois**

LWV of IL is educating and promoting student voices in the voting process. The state League and local Leagues have been hosting several voter registration events and mock elections to teach students the processes of casting their ballot.

RESOURCES:

LWV High School Voter Registration Kit – This comprehensive training manual, updated for 2015, provides a step-by-step guide to help you develop winning high school voter registration programs and encourage young people to register and vote. The guide comes complete with field-tested tips and a range of planning, training, and outreach tools to help Leagues succeed.

<http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/high-school-voter-registration-training-manual-3rd-edition>

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