

# Engaging Students in the 2018 Primary Elections



The upcoming primary elections provide an excellent opportunity to increase student electoral engagement—giving them a chance to help choose who will end up on the November 2018 ballot.

The 2018 midterms will determine the outcome for 34 U.S. Senate seats, all 435 U.S. Representative seats, 36 governorships, state Senate seats in 42 states, and state House seats in all but a few states. Their outcomes will determine national and state policies on critical issues like healthcare, Medicare, Social Security, immigration, climate change, international trade, taxes, and judicial appointments. Their results will also have profound and long-term impacts on the 2021 redistricting, which will set legislative and Congressional districts for the following 10 years. Engaging students in primaries is a key as part of the larger process of engaging them in the 2018 November elections, but with distinct challenges, given that most primaries take place in summer.

## Build student awareness

As with the general election, the first step is informing students about the primaries. To help, we've created a [Primary Voting Guide](#) specific to your state. It provides a brief explanation of why primaries matter, the importance of midterm elections, detailed state requirements and deadlines for registering and voting in both elections, and key resource links.

We've also created a [Primary Voting Guide for Out-of-State Students](#) for students of yours who will be registering and voting from out-of-state addresses. This guide defines the type of primary held in each state, and relevant dates and deadlines.

Borrowing from our resource on [distributing candidate guides](#), we suggest you distribute these guides as widely as possible, if you haven't already. For example, you can post them on your school's election website, send out links via campus email and social media, publish them in your campus newspaper, create poster-size copies to display in high-traffic areas. We give some sample emails at the end of this resource.

## Register students

Use the primary election as one more reason to encourage students to register now, in preparation for fall. You can find an index of [registration topics and tools](#) plus [specific registration activities](#) on our website. When registering students, be sure to have our new [Primary Voting Guide](#) available as a hard copy or accessible via a laptop or smartphone so they know your state requirements.

## Set up a schedule of reminders

Reminding students about registration and voting deadlines is always important. But it's critical if your students will be on summer break when your state primary is held. Given that the primaries may likely be the last thing on your students' minds, it's critical to set up an advance schedule for reminders by email and social media, to ensure students don't overlook key deadlines and that they know what they need to vote, as described in [your state-specific primary guides](#).

Provide opportunities for education and discussion. It's generally harder to find nonpartisan primary candidate guides than general election guides, so this

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is a challenge. If classes are still in session encourage [your student newspaper](#) to cover the election. Go to the nearest major newspaper serving your state or district, and distribute links to articles describing the leading candidates, and also to the Wikipedia link on the race (for instance Florida Governor's primary), which will include polling data and links to candidate websites. [BallotReady.org](#) or [VoteSmart.org](#) may have guides for some of the candidates. And you can also use major search engines to find additional candidate details that are relevant to your students. Distribute through classes, residence halls, and through general email outreach.

## Get-Out-The-Vote

GOTV activities will depend on the date of your state primary election. If it's taking place while school is in session, you can select activities from the [GOTV](#) section of our website to engage your students who are on campus during the summer in the primary. If the primary takes place during the summer, you'll mostly be limited to sending out electronic reminders, although there may also be campus partners (e.g. University 101, Student Athletics) that will be able to reach students who are still on campus.



Click the following links for email templates to send to [students](#) and [staff](#).