

OUR VOTE MATTERS!

Register - Vote - Count



Registering to Vote



Registration Form



Not from Boston?



Absentee Ballot



Election Day



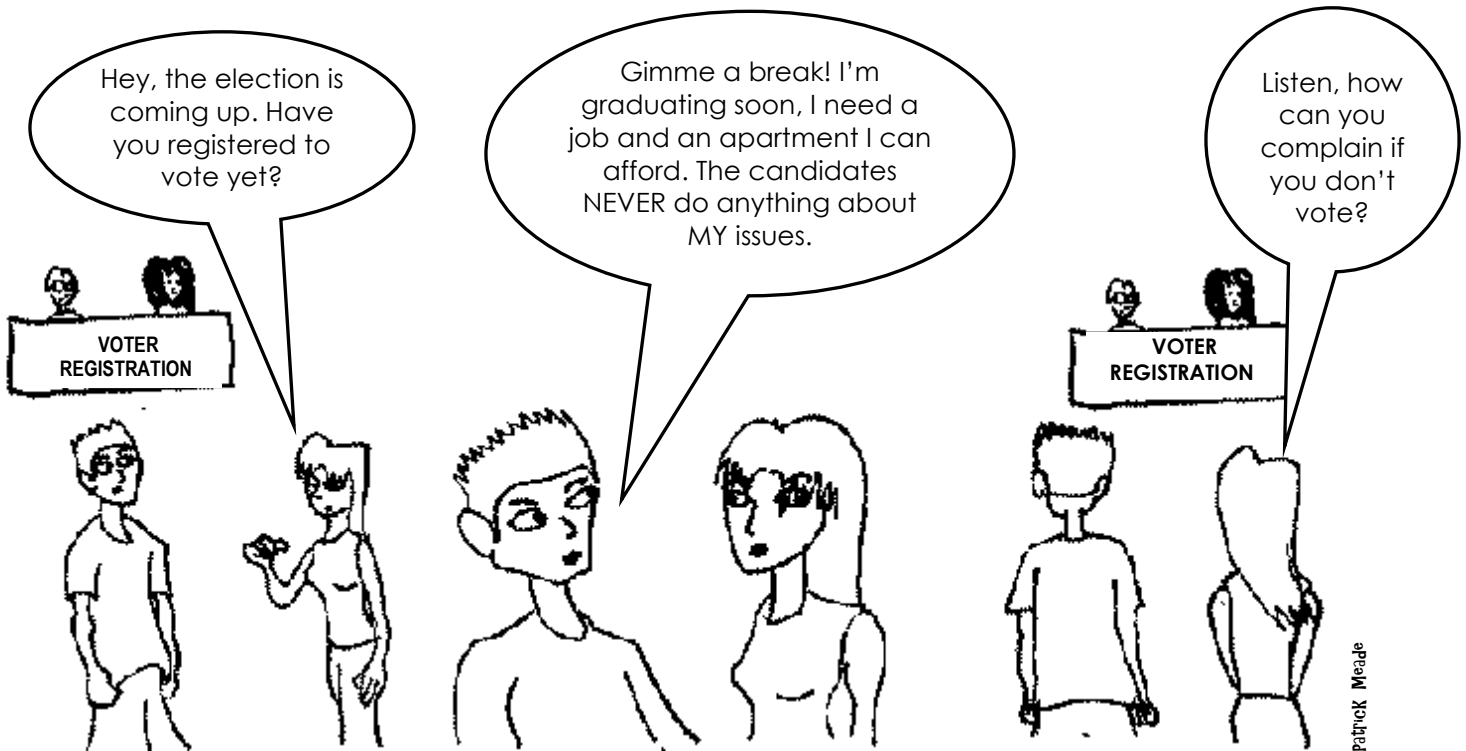
Be An Informed Voter



Links & Resources



How You Can Help



In 2008, 48.5% of 18-24 year old citizens voted, 65.8% of citizens 25 and older voted.

Youth voting surged by 11 percentage points in 2004 and continued to rise in 2008. Continue the engagement and increase voting in between presidential election years by registering and voting!



MAYOR'S YOUTH COUNCIL OF BOSTON
Thomas M. Menino, Mayor
www.bostonyouthzone.com/myc
617-635-2240 or 617-635-4490

Every day, elected officials decide laws, set policies, propose budgets and manage services you rely on. Your VOTE can be the difference.

This guide was created by Mayor Menino's Youth Council specifically for Boston teens. All of the information is relevant to our local elections processes and information will vary for areas outside of Boston. We've included links to information about other states for college students who want to vote in their home state. www.bostonyouthzone.com/myc/pdfs/youth_voting_guide.pdf



REGISTERING TO VOTE



Who may register?

To register, you must be:

- ✓ a US citizen AND
- ✓ a resident of Massachusetts AND
- ✓ 18 years old on or before election day (note: you can register before you turn 18, as long as you will be 18 by the next election)

How can I register to vote?

You can register in person at your local Town/City Hall, at a registration drive, or at the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles when you get or renew your Massachusetts Driver's License or State ID.

Go online or call 1-800-462-VOTE to request a voter registration form, then mail it back to your City Hall.

For Boston: www.cityofboston.gov/elections/

For Massachusetts: www.state.ma.us/sec/ele/elestu/stuidx.htm

National Registration Form: U.S Election Assistance Commission www.eac.gov

When can I register?

There is no waiting period in Massachusetts to be eligible to register to vote:

- If you move, you may register to vote as soon as you move into your new home.
- You may register before you turn 18, as long as you will be 18 by the next election.

Deadline:

- In order to vote in Massachusetts, you must be registered 20 days before the primary/preliminary (city) or election.

What if I changed my address since I registered?

- If you have moved within the same city or town, notify your local election office of your new address in writing. Be sure to include your name, date of birth, old address and new address. The notice must be signed by you and mailed to your election office. Or you can fill out a new voter registration form to update your address. If you have moved to a new city or town, you must register again.
- If you are a college student living outside of your own town, you may still remain registered in your hometown and continue to vote via **absentee ballot**.

What should I do if I registered to vote and I haven't heard from my local election official?

You should receive an acknowledgement notice in 2 to 3 weeks, which will tell you where to vote. If you have NOT received an acknowledgement of your voter status from your city or town election official within 2 or 3 weeks from the date you registered, contact your local election office to verify your voting status.

Do I have to re-register every year?

No. Your registration is valid unless you change your address or you do not vote in two consecutive state/federal elections (in the even years). You must re-register for absentee ballots.

How do I find out if I'm already registered?

Contact your local election department.

For Boston residents: www.cityofboston.gov/elections/voter/ or (617) 635-3767

Can I register to vote in Massachusetts if I attend school here?

Yes. You declare yourself a Massachusetts resident by signing the registration form. You can still receive financial support from your parents, have bank accounts, register a car, and file state tax returns from your out of home state. However, registering in Massachusetts may affect your tuition, insurance, taxes and scholarships. It is important for you to make sure you will not lose these before registering.



NOT FROM BOSTON?

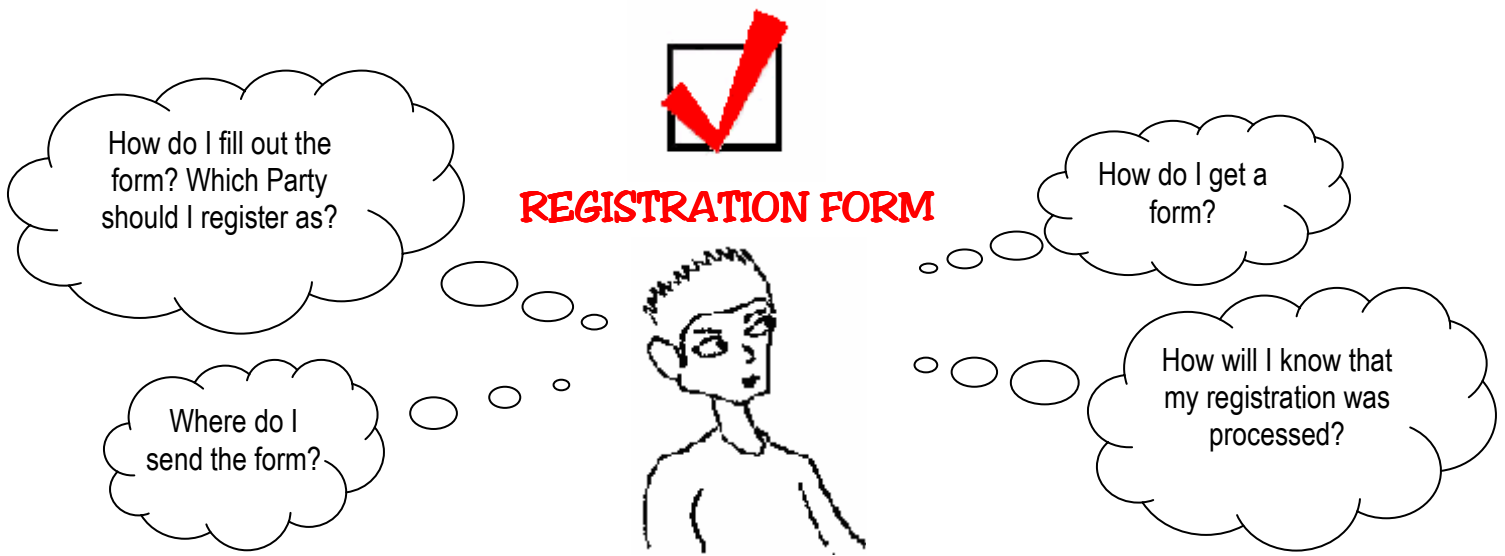
U.S Election Assistance Commission

www.eac.gov

Registration and absentee procedures vary from state to state. The United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) has a web site with the latest information and links for your state and for those living overseas and/or in the military. Make sure you follow the steps for your state, note the various deadlines and allow extra time for the mail so your vote counts.

Link to National Registration Form and specific guidelines by state

www.eac.gov/voter_resources/register_to_vote.aspx



How do I get a Voter Registration form?

For Boston, go online and print out the National Voter Registration Form:

www.cityofboston.gov/elections/voter_reg.asp.

For Massachusetts, go to www.state.ma.us/sec/ele/elestu/stuidx.htm

To register to vote in other states, you can download a National Voter Registration form and follow the instructions for your state.

How do I fill out the form?

The form has 14 questions, most of which *must* be completed. Each of the questions is explained below. Print all of the information in black ink.

1. *Check all that Apply:* You must check yes for both questions to be eligible to register.
2. *Full Name:* Fill in you last name, first name and middle name or initial. "Miss, Ms., Mrs. Mr., Jr., Sr., II, III, or IV" should be circled if appropriate to differentiate between two people at the same address with the same name.
3. *Former Name:* If you've changed your name, write your old name here. If not, leave #3 blank.
4. *Address where you live now:* Enter the street number, name, apartment number if applicable, city and zip code plus four digit number. Do not provide a post office box number. You only need to draw your address on the map above if it is not a traditional address.
5. *Address where you receive all your mail:* If the mailing address is the same as #4, leave #5 blank.
6. *Date of birth:* Include day, month and year.
7. *Identification #:* Enter either your driver's license, permit or state ID number or the last four digits of your social security number.
8. *Telephone:* You are not required to enter your phone number. If you chose to do so, it will become public record unless the box "check if unlisted" is checked.
9. *Party enrollment or designation:* You may choose only one. You can enroll in one of the three parties in Massachusetts who have qualified for official party status. In Massachusetts, you can choose to be "unenrolled", or chose a political designation. For more information on each party, visit their official websites.

- Democrat

www.democrats.org

- Republican

www.gop.com

- Libertarian

www.lp.org

- No Party / Unenrolled: You may decide not to sign up for a political party and list yourself as "unenrolled". Being unenrolled in Massachusetts means that you are registered to vote but not a member of a party. In a primary election, unenrolled voters must select the ballot of one of the three parties. You can vote in a party's primary without affecting your "unenrolled" status. After the primary, your registration will automatically switch back to "unenrolled" status. If none of the boxes are checked, you will be listed as "unenrolled" by default.

- Political Designation: Or, you can register under a “political designation” which is not considered an official party in Massachusetts. If you do so you may not vote in a major party primary.
10. *Address at which you were last registered to vote:* If you were never registered to vote, leave #9 blank. If you were previously registered to vote in the same city, or another U.S. city or town, your old registration address must be entered here.
 11. *Assisting Person:* If you are physically unable to complete the form, the assisting person must complete the form and sign it for you, then write his/her name and address on the form. Writing his/her phone number is optional.
 12. *Affirmation or Oath:* You must read this paragraph.
 13. *Today's Date:* Write the date that you completed the form.
 14. *Signature:* Sign your name in ink here.

How do I send the form back?

- With the correct postage (a first class stamp)
- You must mail in the original. A form cannot be submitted as a photocopy, email or fax. (Only applications for absentee ballots may be faxed or copied.)

Where do I send the form?

To your city or town hall.

- For Boston: Election Department, Boston City Hall - Room 241, Boston MA 02201
- For a list of Massachusetts city/town election office addresses outside of Boston please go to: www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/electk/clkidx.htm

How will I know that my registration was processed?

You should receive an acknowledgement notice in 2 to 3 weeks, which will tell you where to vote. If you have NOT received an acknowledgement of your voter status from your city or town election official within 2 or 3 weeks from the date you registered, contact your local election office to verify your voting status.





ABSENTEE BALLOT

If you're going to be away at college on election day, you can vote in advance by mail.



Eligibility: You are eligible for an absentee ballot if you ...

- will be absent from your city or town on election day, and/or
- have a physical disability that prevents you from voting at the polling place, and/or
- cannot vote at the polls due to religious beliefs.

1. Request the Absentee Ballot

- Boston Election Department Absentee Ballot forms and FAQs www.cityofboston.gov/elections/
- In Massachusetts: Print out the online absentee ballot request form and send it to your city/town election department: www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleivf/howabs.htm
- OR in person at your city/town election department
- Requests for an Absentee Ballot must be received by the Election Department by 12pm on the Monday prior to the election.

2. Absentee Ballot will be mailed to you

Along with the ballot, you will receive:

- a ballot envelope
- a mailing envelope
- and instructions on how to complete the ballot

3. Fill it out & seal in ballot envelope

- Fill out the ballot according to the instructions provided. Be sure to mark your votes carefully.
- Seal ballot envelope and sign outside, according to instructions.

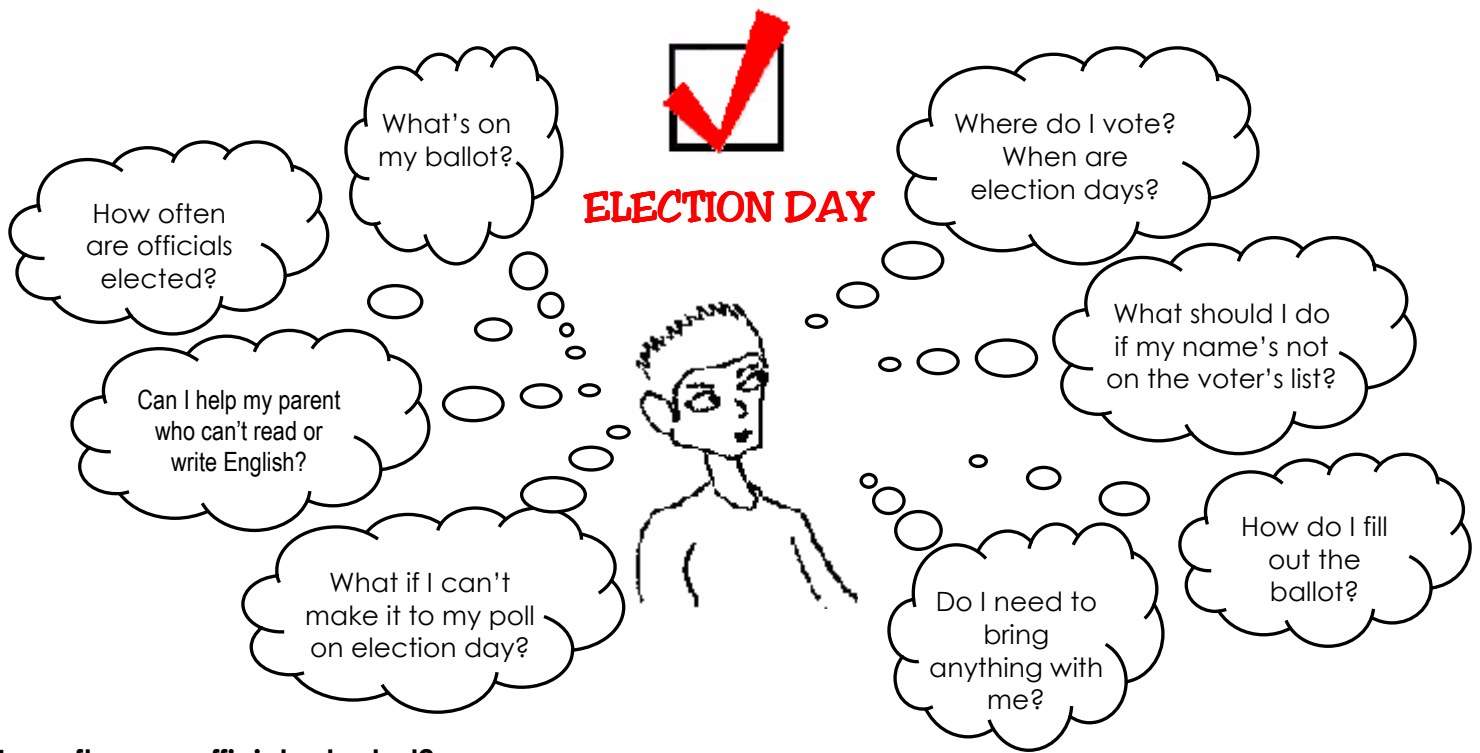
4. Mail it

- in the mailing envelope provided as soon as possible
- it may require extra postage
- it must be received by the Election Department before the polls close on election day (8pm in Boston) for it to count.

I am going to be away at school or out of town for the election(s). How do I vote?

Please visit the Boston Election Department's website at www.cityofboston.gov/elections and click on the link for Absentee Ballot Applications. You may download an absentee ballot application or call 617-635-3767 and an application will be mailed to you. You may also vote in person at Boston City Hall, during business hours, prior to the Election. If those hours are not convenient, please contact the Department to make an appointment for in-person voting. The last hour and day to vote in person is 12pm on the Monday prior to the election.

Note: Absentee ballot information varies from state to state. If you've registered to vote outside of MA, please see our ["Not from Boston?"](#) page to link to your home state.



How often are officials elected?

Boston Elections: Boston City Council, every two years (odd years)

Boston Elections: Mayor, every four years (odd years)

Massachusetts State Elections: State Representative and State Senators: every two years (even years)

Massachusetts State Elections: State-wide Offices like Governor: every four years (even years)

Federal Elections: Congressional Elections coincide with State elections during even years.

Federal Elections: United State Senators are elected for six year terms (even years)

Federal Elections: Presidential elections take place every four years during even years, leap years.

When are Election Days?

"Primary" Elections: are held on a Tuesday in September.

Presidential Primary: once every four years.

"Final" Elections: 1st Tuesday after the 1st Monday of November.

Special Elections are held to fill vacancies when an elected official resigns or passes away.

Where do I vote?

Your registration confirmation will assign you to a polling location in your neighborhood. If you need to find out where you vote:

For Boston: www.cityofboston.gov/elections/voter/

For Massachusetts: www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php

What if I can't make it to the poll on Election Day?

If you are going to be away at college or out of town on an election day, you can vote via an **absentee ballot**.

What should I do if my name is not on the voter's list?

Ask the election officer in charge of the polling place to check your registration by calling the local election office. You can ask to vote by a provisional ballot at the polling place and/or go to City Hall to verify your registration.

Can I help my parent who can't read or write English?

Non-English speakers can bring someone with them to the polling place or can ask one of the election officials at the polling place for help.

Do I need to bring anything with me?

As a newly registered voter, you should bring some form of identification, with your name and address, to the polls with you.

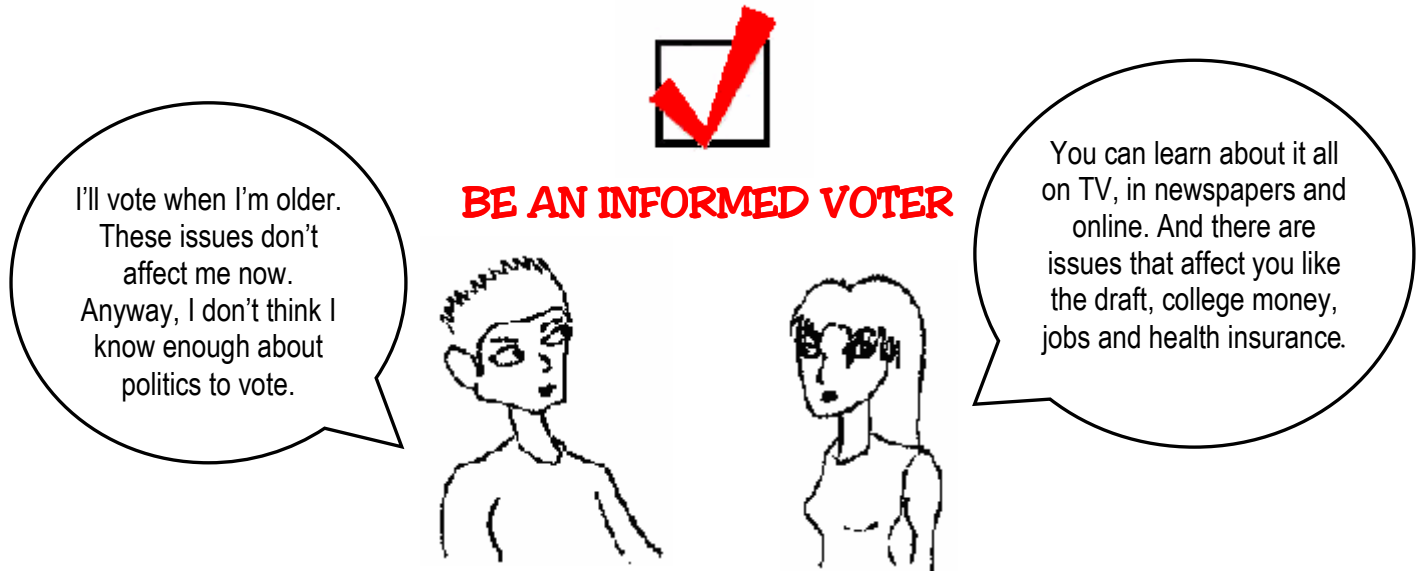
How do I fill in the ballot?

Boston now uses optical scanners, so all you have to do is fill in the ovals with the marker provided at the polling location or any dark pen. To find out more about new optical scanners:

www.cityofboston.gov/elections/voting_machines.asp

What's on my ballot?

To find out which candidates and questions will be on your ballot before any election, visit the state elections website: www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/



Learn about the candidates and the issues

- Candidates' websites
- Daily and Local Newspapers
Boston Globe: www.bostonglobe.com
Boston Herald: www.bostonherald.com
Internet Public Library of Online Newspapers: www.ipl.org/div/news/
- TV news
Channel 4 – WBZ/CBS: www.wbz.com
Channel 5 – WCVB/ABC: www.thebostonchannel.com
Channel 7 – WHGH/NBC: www1.whdh.com/
Channel 25 – WFXT/FOX: www.fox25.com
New England Cable News – NECN: www.necn.com
CNN: www.cnn.com
BNN: www.bnntv.org/

Know your elected officials:

You can enter your address and find out the names of all of your elected officials.

www.cityofboston.gov/myneighborhood/

www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php

City of Boston Election Department's Email Updates:

www.cityofboston.gov/subscribe/

Sign up to receive notices about voter registration deadlines, election dates, polling location changes, poll worker job opportunities, and other election-related news.



LINKS & RESOURCES

ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT WEBSITES:

City of Boston Election Department

www.cityofboston.gov/elections

Mass Elections Division

www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleidx.htm

ORGANIZATIONS TARGETING THE YOUTH VOTE:

MassVOTE

www.massvote.org

MassVOTE is a non-partisan coalition of community-based organizations, religious organizations, and neighborhood associations working to increase voter participation in traditionally underrepresented neighborhoods in Boston, promote a participatory democracy that connects voting with the issues people care about and the communities they live in and address barriers to full voter participation and develop new models for voter education. It provides resources, materials, training and staff support to its member voter participation sites across the city.

Kids Voting USA

www.kidsvotingusa.org

Kids Voting USA is a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that fosters an informed, participating electorate by educating and actively engaging young people and their families in voting and other elements of effective civic engagement. Kids Voting USA enables students to visit official polling sites on Election Day, to cast a ballot similar in content to the official ballot. Kids Voting USA teaches youth -- through a special curriculum, family participation and community involvement -- the importance of being informed and the responsibilities of voting.

League of Women Voters Massachusetts

www.lwvma.org

Massachusetts League of Women Voters is the non-partisan, grassroots organization in the State of Massachusetts committed to influencing public policy through education and advocacy.

Youth Vote Coalition

www.youthvote.org

The Youth Vote Coalition is a national nonpartisan coalition of diverse organizations dedicated to increasing political and civic participation among young people.

Project Vote Smart

www.vote-smart.org/

Project Vote Smart, a citizen's organization, has developed a Voter's Self-Defense system to provide you with the necessary tools to self-govern effectively: abundant, accurate, unbiased and relevant information. As a national library of factual information, Project Vote Smart covers your candidates and elected officials in five basic categories: biographical information, issue positions, voting records, campaign finances and interest group ratings.

Rock the Vote

www.rockthevote.com/rtv_register.php

Rock the Vote engages youth in the political process by incorporating the entertainment community and youth culture into its activities. Rock the Vote harnesses cutting-edge trends and pop culture to make political participation cool. Rock the Vote mobilizes young people to create positive social and political change in their lives and communities. Rock the Vote coordinates voter registration drives, get-out-the-vote events, and voter education efforts, all with the intention of ensuring that young people take advantage of their right to vote.

INFORMATION ON YOUTH AND VOTING:

Harvard Institute of Politics

www.iop.harvard.edu

The Institute's website provides great information on how to vote, particularly resources – like the IOP's "State by State Guide to Absentee Voting" – designed to help first-time voters, as well as our acclaimed national survey examining the political views of America's young people. The John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum regularly hosts heads of state; leaders in politics, government, business, labor and the media; academics; community organizers; and artists.

Project Vote

<http://projectvote.org/youth-voting-.html>

Research on Registration and Voting Among Young Americans

Panetta Institute

www.panettainstitute.org

The Panetta Institute provides a variety of study opportunities in government, politics and public policy. Each year the Panetta Institute commissions and publishes a nationwide survey of college students to gauge their level of interest in politics and civic involvement.

Trust for Representative Democracy

www.ncsl.org

National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) launched the Trust for Representative Democracy program in 2000 to combat cynicism toward government and to educate young people about American democracy.





HOW YOU CAN HELP

Even if you're not old enough to vote, there are ways you can get involved!



Get your friends to register!

Attend political forums

Pay attention to local newspapers and advertisements for candidate and social issue forums. Forums are a great way to find out more information and an opportunity to ask questions about candidates and issues.

Work on a political campaign

Campaigns need hundreds of volunteers who perform many different tasks. You can join a campaign by contacting its volunteer operation to help with phone banks, field organizing, stand outs and mailings.

Election Day: Get Out The Vote

GOTV groups may promote specific candidates and issues or may just encourage people to vote.

City of Boston Poll Worker:

www.cityofboston.gov/elections/pollworkers.asp

One day positions (additional training required) to assist in staffing the City's 254 precincts for upcoming Elections. There is also a critical need for bilingual individuals to serve in all the Poll Worker roles: Wardens, Clerks, Inspectors and Interpreters.

Get involved in your own community

- Local civic organizations
- School council
- Youth council
- Youth leadership groups
- Youth advocacy programs

Encourage others to Register to Vote by Running a Voter Registration Drive

Step 1: Be Prepared! Organize your voter registration drive:

Set up a time and place for the drive

Voter Registration Drives work well at large public events with lots of people such as music and art festivals, parades, community events, etc. Contact the event organizers for permission ahead of time. Set up in a prominent location!

Arrange to have a table, chair, voter registration forms, clipboards and lots of pens.

Get Voter Registration Forms: Call 1-800-462-VOTE or 617-727-2828 to order voter registration forms.

Don't be shy – have some volunteers standing with clipboards and registration forms in-hand, ready to ask passers-by if they are registered to vote.

Step 2: Get the word out! There are many ways to get the word out:

Design your own posters;

Many radio stations (campus stations!) will run free public service announcements;

Ask neighborhood, civic and religious organizations to announce the drive in their bulletins and at their meetings.

Step 3: Have Fun! You are helping people fulfill one of the most important civic responsibilities – feel good about what you are doing!

Step 4: After the Drive - Completed registration forms must be returned to the town clerk or election office where the applicant lives.

(see the following page for complete Guidelines for Boston Voter Registration Drives)



BOSTON ELECTION DEPARTMENT
One City Hall Square, Rm 241 Boston, MA 02201 • 617-635-3767
www.cityofboston.gov/elections

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING A VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE

When registering people to vote, please ensure that they complete the forms correctly. Please note that the **Massachusetts Mail-In Voter Registration Form** can **ONLY** be used to register to vote in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and that photocopies of the registration form are **NOT** allowed. Persons seeking to register to vote in another state should complete a **National Voter Registration Form**.

When conducting a voter registration drive, please be mindful of the following (all numbers correspond to boxes located on the **Massachusetts Mail-In Voter Registration Form**):

- ★ On **#1**, if the registrant fails to answer either or both questions, the form will be rejected and the person will not be registered.
- ★ On **#4**, the registrant must use his/her residential address (including zip code). If the registrant completes #4 with a P.O. Box number, the form will be rejected.
- ★ On **#7**, the registrant must include his/her Massachusetts driver's license number. If the registrant does not have a Massachusetts driver's license, s/he must enter the last four digits of his/her social security number. If the registrant has neither, s/he must write "NONE."
- ★ If the registrant does not complete **#9** "Party Enrollment or Designation," s/he will be listed as "Unenrolled." Please note that Massachusetts does not use the term "Independent." Registrants who do not wish to be affiliated with a political party should check the box for "No Party (Unenrolled)."
- ★ If applicable, the registrant should complete **#10**, so that his/her previous registration will be canceled. It is illegal to be registered to vote in more than one place.
- ★ Please make sure the registrant signs and dates the form (**#13 and #14**).

Other helpful reminders:

- ★ Remind voters to bring identification to the polls on Election Day. Acceptable identification must include your name and the address at which you are registered to vote, for example: a current and valid driver's license, photo identification, current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check, or other government document showing your name and address.
- ★ Completed voter registration forms must be sent to the City or Town Hall in which the person is residing. A list of City and Town Hall addresses is available online: www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elecclk/clkidx.htm. If the registrant lives in the City of Boston, please return the form to: **Boston Election Department; One City Hall Square, Room 241; Boston, MA 02201**.
- ★ If you are assuming responsibility for the completed forms, please ensure that the forms are mailed or delivered in a timely manner to the appropriate City or Town. In order to participate in an Election, **you must be registered 20 days prior to the date of the Election**.

Please note: You will be asked to provide your name and contact information for blank (new) registration forms request. Please return any unused forms to our office. If you have any questions, please call **617-635-3767**.

www.cityofboston.gov/Images_Documents/Guidelines%20for%20Voter%20Registration%20Drives.pdf