



Barriers to Student Registration and Voting

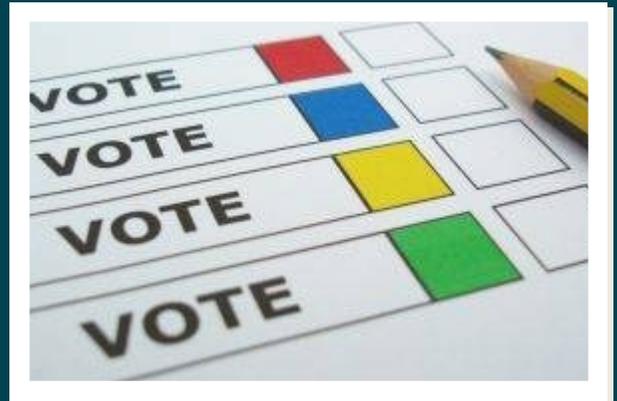
Voters have to comply with a variety of rules and procedures to successfully register and vote. Due to unique circumstances, students sometimes face extra challenges when confronted with the requirements.

Residency

Some students consider their primary residence to be their college address, whereas other students continue to think of a pre-college address as their primary residence. Students have the right to vote in their college town if they meet the same residency requirements as everyone else. However, the rules can be confusing and students may have to take steps to demonstrate or prove their residency. This is sometimes challenging, especially for students who live in untraditional housing like dorms, fraternities, or sororities. In addition, local community members or election officials occasionally express disapproval of student voters and the residency rules can be easily misinterpreted or misapplied to discourage students from voting.

Documentation

A state may require proof of residency or certain identification at the time of registration or voting. This can be challenging for students, especially when they are not aware of the requirements until the last minute, when it may be too late to get the right documentation in time to register or vote. In addition, proof of residency or identification rules sometimes require that a student produce certain identification showing the student's current address. For students who have just arrived at their college address or who live in non-traditional housing such as a dorm, this can add an extra challenge. Finally, a few states have started requiring documentary proof of citizenship for voter registration.



Myths

Students are sometimes given misleading information to discourage them from voting in their college communities. The myths include claims that registering to vote at school may jeopardize eligibility for financial aid, their parents' ability to claim them as a dependent on their tax returns, or their ability to remain covered by their parents' insurance plans. In reality, insurance coverage and tax status are not directly related to voter registration, and for the vast majority of students, financial aid eligibility is not impacted.

www.campusvoteproject.org

A Project of the Fair Elections Legal Network

Public v. Private Schools

IDs or other documents issued by state schools are sometimes helpful because they might be considered government documents that meet a state's voter ID requirements. Unfortunately, the same thing issued by a private school might not be accepted.

Registering By Mail

Regardless of other identification requirements, anyone who registers to vote in a new state must provide certain identification before voting for the first time if they complete their registration by mail.

Insufficient Resources

When local election officials make decisions about resource allocation for polling places, they don't always account sufficiently for increases in the number of registered voters as students flood campus in the fall and registration drives begin. This can result in inadequate numbers of voting machines, ballots, or poll workers in student-heavy polling places, leading to long lines and insufficient resources for dealing with problems.

Inconvenient Polling Places

Polling place locations can pose problems for students if they are located off-campus in places that are difficult for students to reach.

Poll Worker Training

Poll workers in student-heavy polling places may not be aware of the specific issues students face, or how to best respond. This can lead to longer lines, confusion, and inadequate steps being taken to ensure that students are able to cast ballots that will count.

Absentee Voting

Students who wish to vote absentee from a pre-college address will face specific deadlines for requesting and voting an absentee ballot. If a student intends to vote absentee in another state, the student will have to comply with a different set of residency and identification requirements, and may have to include a copy of identification when submitting a registration form or absentee ballot. Also, some states require a new voter who registers by mail to vote in person the first time they vote, which may be difficult or impossible for students.

According to the U.S. Supreme Court, students have the right to register and vote in their college towns if they meet the same requirements as everyone else. Misinformation, such as claims that registering to vote at school may jeopardize eligibility for financial aid or insurance, are sometimes used to discourage students from voting locally.

www.campusvoteproject.org

A Project of the Fair Elections Legal Network