

Voter Registration Information for High School Students

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The right to vote is afforded to every citizen of the United States of America. The New Jersey Department of Education mandates that the board of education of each school district provide voter registration information to their eligible high school students. N.J.S.A. 18A:36-27 states that districts must provide a voter registration form, a summary of voter registration eligibility requirements, and materials describing the role of a citizen and the importance of voting to high school students prior to the graduation date for each school year.

Being a citizen means you have the right to work in the country where you live and the ability to participate in political activity. If you were born in the United States, you are a U.S. citizen. If your parents are U.S. citizens, but you were born in another country, you are also a U.S. citizen. Citizens have certain freedoms and rights of the country in which they were born like the right to vote and run for a political office. Citizens pay taxes and defend their country in times of peace and war.

Voting is important to all citizens. If you want to make a difference in the world and have your voice count, you must vote. In order to exercise your right to vote you must be registered. High school students who are at least 18 years old can register to vote. Once you are a registered voter, you can vote in state and local elections.

Students can still register at the Essex County Board of Elections office where you will need to show a photo ID and proof of address. You can also go [online](#) to learn more about how to register. Just click on the [link](#) to fill out your voter registration form online and read the voters bill of rights. The registration form must be printed out and mailed, or hand delivered to a local voter registration facility near you. If you have questions, you can contact the Bergen County Superintendent of Elections or 1-877-NJ-VOTER (1-877-658-6836).

You are important. Your vote is important. Register today!

To register in New Jersey you must be:

- A United States citizen
- I am at least 17 years old, and understand that I may not vote until reaching the age of 18.
- A resident of the county for 30 days before the election
- You are NOT currently serving a sentence, probation or parole because of a felony conviction

The registrant must complete a Voter Registration Application and/or Party Affiliation Form. Mail or deliver the Voter Registration Application and/or Party Affiliation Form to the County

Commissioner of Registration or Superintendent of Elections for your county.

<https://www.nj.gov/state/elections/voting-information-voting.html>

Why is it important to vote?

You can't win if you don't play. Election outcomes are determined by those who participate. Elected officials make important (often life and death) decisions about how our society will expend its collective resources and the restraints it will place on individual behavior. The drinking age, the age at which you can get a driver's license, and the amount of money your teachers receive are some of the decisions made by elected officials. In making those decisions, elected officials respond to people who bother to vote more than to those who abstain. Voting does not guarantee that one's preferences will prevail, but choosing not to vote denies a person one of the key tools of having a say in a democracy.

How can a young person get involved in the voting process?

The first step is registration. All 18 year old American citizens have the right to register in the community where they live, usually by going to the city hall. Many young voters register when they get their driver's license. Some states allow mail-in registration or mobile registrars who set up tables at shopping centers or community events.

The Web sites mentioned below all provide information, and in some cases direct Web links, to voter registration processes.

For those who wish to go beyond voting, most campaigns are always on the lookout for volunteers. Stopping by a candidate or party headquarters or Web site will often provide a number of volunteer opportunities.

How do you know who to vote for?

Elections seldom provide perfect choices between good and evil. The first step toward informed voting lies in determining your own personal preferences as to the public problems you are most concerned with and the solutions you prefer. What solutions to current societal problems do you prefer? Should we be spending more money on schools or for national defense? Would it be better if government limited pornography or hate speech on the Internet, or is one's right to free expression more important? Is abortion a mortal sin or a right some women might choose in desperate situations? There are not "right" answers to these questions on which everyone agrees, so the informed voter looks for candidates who share their preferences on the issues of most importance to them. Above and beyond shared preferences, informed voters look at the personal characteristics of candidates to help determine how they will perform in office. We usually prefer candidates who are hardworking, honest, moral and skillful since we are entrusting them with decisions that affect our futures.

Sorting out the information about candidates from their speeches, campaign ads, media coverage

and Web sites is one of the real challenges to citizens in a democracy. Many voters use short cut aids, such as relying on a candidate's political party label. Over the years, political parties have taken relatively consistent packages of policy stands (see below). Candidates for more important offices have usually served in previous positions, making it possible to assess their policy preferences and capabilities. A number of nonpartisan Web sites (see below) provide useful information for voters. Talking with friends and relatives about politics helps define one's own outlooks and understand the available options.

Resource Links:

Voter Registration Information <http://nj.gov/state/elections/voting-information.html> New Jersey
[NJ Voters' Bill of Rights](#)

League of Women Voters of New Jersey www.lwvnj.org

Vote by Mail applications: <http://www.njelections.org/voting-information-vote-by-mail.html>

County Election Officials: <http://www.njelections.org/voting-information-local-officials.html>

Video for first time voters: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bbmod3PG8M&feature=related>

Information about what's on ballot, election dates, more: www.VOTE411.org

League of Women Voters of New Jersey toll-free voter assistance hotline: 1-800-792-VOTE
(8683)