



CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TOM TORLAKSON, State Superintendent of Public Instruction
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March 29, 2016

Dear County and District Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, and High School Principals:

HIGH SCHOOL VOTER EDUCATION WEEKS (APRIL 18–29, 2016)

As we approach the June 7, 2016, Presidential Primary Election, it is important to ensure that our students are learning to become active and engaged participants in our democracy. It is never too early to motivate your students to get involved. That's why we strongly encourage your school to observe **High School Voter Education Weeks** on April 18–29 to put your students on the path to a lifetime of civic engagement and voting.

California *Education Code* designates the last two weeks of April and September as "High School Voter Education Weeks" and authorizes schools to designate students as "voter outreach coordinators." With county elections officials as partners, we provide resources to make it easy for schools to participate. Teachers can help eligible students who will be eighteen years old by the next election learn how to register to vote—either on a paper form or online. Students can even register on their smartphones. Voter outreach coordinators can lead registration drives and other school activities aimed at civic participation.

We encourage you to make High School Voter Education Weeks just the start of your school's civic engagement activities this year. Here are some ideas and resources:

- Review the High School Voter Education Weeks page on the Secretary of State's Web site: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/voting-california/help-strengthen-our-democracy/high-school-voter-education-weeks>.
- Partner with your county elections officials, invite them to visit your school, and learn from these experts how to register and vote. Locate your local official at this Web site: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/county-elections-offices/>.

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- Place a link to the Secretary of State's online voter registration application on your school Web site and e-mail the link to students and parents:
<http://registertovote.ca.gov/>.
- Continue the momentum throughout the year and participate in the October 11, 2016, MyVote California Student Mock Election Program, which allows students to cast a vote for actual candidates and measures appearing on the statewide ballot. Registration is now open on the Secretary of State's Web site:
<http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/student-mock-election/>.
Sign up early to make sure your school receives its free tool kit.
- Inform students how they can learn the electoral process firsthand—and get paid—by serving as poll workers on Election Day: <http://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/pdfs/student-poll-worker-flyer.pdf>.
- Use the California Voter Bill of Rights to teach students about rules that govern the act of voting: <http://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/voter-bill-of-rights/voter-bill-of-rights.pdf>.
- Adopt recommendations from the California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning and use lesson plans and other resources of the Power of Democracy:
<http://www.powerofdemocracy.org/>.

A Presidential election is the perfect time for students to begin their civic involvement. The excitement of voters casting their ballot at their polling place, some for the first time, is contagious. By working together, we can educate and encourage our young citizens to register to vote and turn out at the polls to ensure their voices are heard in 2016 and beyond.

If you have any questions about High School Voter Education Weeks or other civic engagement opportunities, please feel free to contact Steven Carda, National Voter Registration Act and Voter Outreach Program Manager, Secretary of State, by phone at 916-695-1570 or by e-mail at Steven.Carda@sos.ca.gov; or Jason Spencer, Principal Advisor to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, by phone at 916-319-0521 or by e-mail at jaspencer@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Alex Padilla



Tom Torlakson

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