

Harvard Votes Challenge

The Harvard Votes Challenge is a **university-wide non-partisan** initiative working towards **100% eligible voter registration, engagement, and turnout** across all 12 degree-granting Harvard schools and beyond. Created by students, administrators, and faculty members in 2018, the initiative is coordinated by the Institute of Politics and the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the Harvard Kennedy School. Through a diverse coalition of students, staff, and faculty from across the university and creative organizing, we strive to institutionalize voter readiness and build a culture of full participation in all elections.

Voting at Harvard

PRIORITY Voting is often seen as an extracurricular student activity — our goal is to make participation an **institutional priority** in which everyone has a role.

CHOICE If students live on campus or consider Cambridge their most recent home, they can register to vote on Campus. If away from home for school, students can also vote by mail (absentee).

PARTICIPATION Only 1/2 of eligible students vote at our institution priding itself on civic leadership. Fortunately, our culture is changing. **Harvard student voter turnout increased from 22.4% in 2014 to 48.6% in 2018**, ten percentage points above the national average and on par with presidential election turnout in previous cycles. If we double again, we can hit 100% engagement. Participation translates education into action. Voting as a student is a proven pipeline into lifelong civic commitment and engagement.

CULTURE Since many students University-wide vote by mail, there are barriers (moving deadlines, stamps, multiple step processes, etc.) that can make voting difficult for students. Our goal is to **build a culture of engagement**, while mitigating these barriers, to push forward participation. Becoming voter-ready as early as possible is critical.

Voice & Tone

REGISTRATION · ENGAGEMENT · TURNOUT

When talking about voting, be sure to focus on the three core components of voter readiness: **registration, engagement, and turnout**. In 2018, 75% of eligible Harvard students registered to vote while only 48.6% cast their ballot, creating a turnout gap. We request communications include all three components instead of saying solely “voter registration.”

NON-PARTISAN

Voter engagement is **non-partisan**. Per the **Higher Education Act of 1965**, universities must make a “good faith effort” to provide voter information to students.

HVC is a **non-partisan** organization. We do not endorse parties or candidates or tell people how to vote. Helping people vote is non-partisan!

INCLUSIVE

The Harvard community includes many ineligible voters, such as international and undocumented students. We want to acknowledge that casting a ballot does not apply to everyone in our community while also underscoring that **everyone, regardless of eligibility, is impacted by elections** and has a role to play in getting out the vote.

We encourage using language such as “**If eligible**, check your voter registration” AND “Even if you are not eligible to vote, reach out to friends and ask them to check their voter registration status. Elections affect all of us.”

DOWN BALLOT **Elections at all levels are incredibly important**. Encourage students to research all candidates and elected offices.

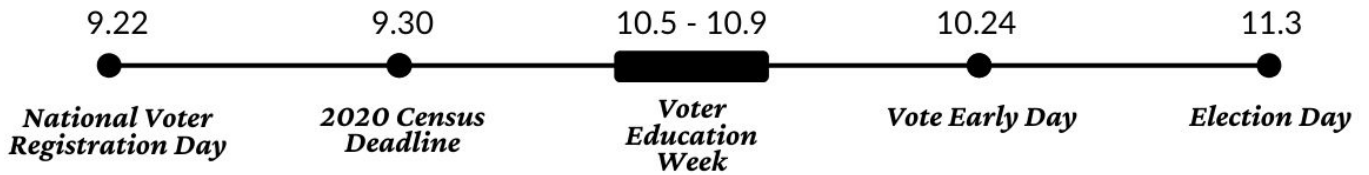
Do's

- ? Ask voters what issues or communities are important to them
- 🎉 Celebrate voters on taking this important action
- 🗳️ Clearly explain all of the steps they will need to take in order to cast a ballot
- 👩♀️ Share your civic experience: document your voting process (from requesting to submitting your mail ballot), share why voting is important to you, and celebrate taking civic action
- 😊 Make voting sound fun and important

Don'ts

- 🙅♀️ Make voting sound difficult or like a chore
- 🙅♂️ Shame voters for their past actions
- 🙄 Make assumptions about an individual's voting history, knowledge about the voting process

Key Dates



Key Voting Messages

Evergreen Voting Actions • Voter Education • Team Recruitment • ‘Why I Vote’ Campaign

EVERGREEN VOTING ACTIONS

One of the most critical ways that individuals can influence decision-making and impact our communities is through casting your ballot and making your voice heard. Voting is a core part of what it means to be a member of the Harvard community.

5 Easy Steps members of the Harvard community can take today to be *voter-ready*.



Register.

[Check](#) your voter registration status or [register](#) to vote*



Get ready.

Identify your next election and [polling location](#)



Request your

[absentee ballot](#)



Learn about what candidates or issues are on your [ballot](#)



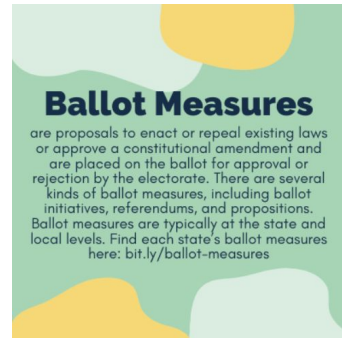
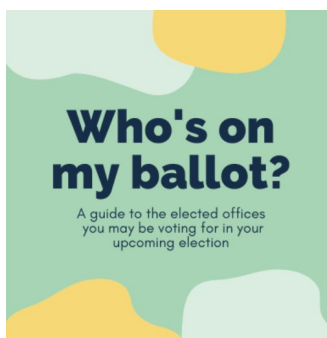
Become a voting leader

Sign-up to become a [poll worker](#) and/or join your school's [voting team](#) to ensure full participation in all elections

*Even if you are **not eligible** to vote, elections affect all of us. Reach out to your friends and community to make sure they are voter ready. Take these actions today by visiting voteschallenge.harvard.edu/be-a-voter or join the team by filling out [this form](#).

VOTER EDUCATION *Download these information campaigns and share them with your community!*

Who is on Your Ballot ([here](#))



How To Vote By Mail ([here](#))

