

# Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act (AB 963) Requirements and Increasing Student Voter Participation



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The California Student Votes Project is a collaborative public-private partnership including the California Secretary of State, the California Lieutenant Governor, CALPIRG, Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus, California Common Cause, and a variety of other nonprofit organizations.





# 1 Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act (AB 963) Requirements

## Requirements for AB 963 Implementation

The California Students Vote Project (SVP) is a first of its kind partnership in the nation where all major institutions of higher education in California have solidified commitments to partner with the California Secretary of State to encourage student civic engagement efforts.

In 2019, AB 963 codified the SVP into state law, allowing the Secretary of State's Office to continue the mission of engaging California students in the democratic process.

This section outlines the components necessary for fulfilling the AB 963 requirements: California Community Colleges (CCC) and California State Universities (CSU) are legally required to help inform and mobilize student voters and increase learning opportunities for civic engagement, while Universities of California (UC) are strongly encouraged to do so.

For inquiries regarding AB 963 requirements or implementation, please contact the California SVP Team at [CastStudentsVote@sos.ca.gov](mailto:CastStudentsVote@sos.ca.gov).

To learn more about the California Students Vote Project, please visit <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/caststudentsvote>.

### Six Components of AB 963:

**1. Coordinator:** Each CCC and CSU campus must hire or appoint a nonpartisan Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator, who will create an Action Plan with an interested cohort of faculty and students, and administrators from student affairs, academic affairs, government relations or a similar office.

**2. Action Plan:** The Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator will draft a Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan for the year and update the Action Plan as they see fit. The updated Action Plan is required to be submitted to the Secretary of State's Office via email to [CastStudentsVote@sos.ca.gov](mailto:CastStudentsVote@sos.ca.gov) by the first Monday of December of each November General Election. Please see page 10 for a template of an Action Plan.

**3. Events:** Each CCC and CSU campus must plan at least one event centered around civic education, voting, or registering 30 days before each November General Election. Further, each school is required to have at least three events centered around civic education, voting, or registering to vote before the end of each academic year. These events may be virtual, and may be sponsored by student groups on campus.

**4. Emails:** Each CCC and CSU campus must send out emails to the entire student body about the required voter registration, voting, and civic engagement information prior to their occurrence.

**5. Academic Calendar:** Each CCC and CSU campus must include all required civic, voting, and registration dates on both physical and virtual academic calendars for all students.

**6. Social Media:** Each CCC and CSU campus must post reminders of all required civic, voting, and registration dates on their official social media accounts at least one day prior to their occurrence.

## Responsibilities of the Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator:

### **Develop a Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan that includes:**

- A minimum of three election outreach events must occur every academic year to increase civic learning, democratic participation, civic engagement, and voter turnout consistent with all of the following:

- During each November General Election year, an outreach event must occur within the final 30 days preceding the November General Election.

- All students shall be invited to attend and participate in the coordination of these events.

- Events may be sponsored by campus-based student organizations.

- The coordinator shall invite leadership from faculty and students, and administrators from each office of student affairs, academic affairs, and government relations, or a similar office to participate in a meeting or meetings to develop the Action Plan.

- The Action Plan shall, at minimum, include a campus-specific effort to increase civic learning and democratic participation, with an emphasis on civic engagement, voter turnout, and community building.

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

**California Community Colleges are able to file claims for reimbursement on costs associated with AB 963 implementation as determined by the Commission on State Mandates.**

**Visit <https://csm.ca.gov/> to file a claim. For questions regarding filing a claim, please contact the Commission on State Mandates at (916) 323-3562 or visit their website.**

## Announcement of Critical Dates:

The following are critical dates that must be announced on the campus academic calendar (both physical and online), on social media, via campus-wide emails prior to their occurrence each November General Election:

### **1. National Voter Registration Day (Fourth Tuesday in September)**

### **2. The last day to register to vote online (15 Days before Election Day)**

### **3. Voting by mail:**

- All active registered voters will receive a vote-by-mail ballot.

- If you failed to receive a vote-by-mail ballot or you have lost or destroyed your original vote-by-mail ballot, and you are unable to vote in person at the polls, you may apply in writing for a late vote-by mail ballot. For more information, including a sample application, please visit the Secretary of State's website at:

<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/vote-mail#late>.

### **4. The last day to register to vote in person, including:**

- Same Day Voter Registration, known as Conditional Voter Registration in state law, is a safety net for Californians who miss the deadline to register to vote or update their voter registration information for an election.

- Eligible citizens who need to register or re-register to vote within 14 days of an election can complete this process to register and vote at their county elections office, a satellite office, polling place, or vote center. Their ballots will be processed and counted once the county elections office has completed the voter registration verification process.

### **5. Dates for countywide early voting at the office of elections official or satellite locations:**

- Early voting information can be found here: <https://caearlyvoting.sos.ca.gov/>

## 6. Primary and General Election Dates

### Campus Email Announcements:

The following are critical campus-wide statements and links that must be sent to all students via email:

**1. A statement that says all active registered voters will receive a vote-by-mail ballot.**

**2. A statement that says a vote-by-mail voter may vote in person at the office of the county elections official, a satellite office established by the elections official, polling place, or vote center on or before the day of the election.**

**3. A statement that includes the date, times, and locations for early voting and conditional voter registration.**

- This information may be confirmed on the internet website of the Secretary of State or at the county elections office.

**4. The link to the Secretary of State's internet web page for online voter registration.**

- <https://RegisterToVote.ca.gov/?t=s>

**5. The link for the Secretary of State's internet website address for election information.**

- <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/>

**6. The link for the Secretary of State's internet website address for the most current voter information guide.**

- <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/voter-information-guides>

**7. The link for the Secretary of State's internet website address for the voter registration status tool, or a similar web page that directs the recipient to the voter or election information for the county of the recipient.**

- <https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/>

**8. The link for the Secretary of State's internet website address for the Students Vote Project**

- <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ca/studentsvote/>

**9. The following disclaimers:**

- The civic and election information provided applies to the county where the campus is located.

- Election information varies by county.

- The recipients of the email are encouraged to check the internet website containing the Secretary of State's voter registration status tool, or a similar webpage, to find election information for the county where the recipient's voter registration is active.

**10. After the required emails are sent, the voter information guide and county sample ballot information must also be provided in an email.**

### Campus Social Media Posts:

**1. Early voting and specific Conditional Voter Registration information.**

**2. Election Day, including a reminder the day before and the day of the election. Before Election Day, a reminder shall state that a qualified person may register to vote on the day of the election at a conditional voter registration site.**

Please note: All social media content can be requested from the Secretary of State, and will be available on the Secretary of State's website.

### Special Elections:

During special elections (both local and state-wide), campuses are not required to perform comprehensive social media and email outreach, but are strongly encouraged to provide this information to students. The Secretary of State will continue to offer resources campuses can use for outreach, but campuses will not be required to submit Action Plans specific for a special election.

# 2 Creating a Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan

## Best Practices for Creating a Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan

Per AB 963, CCC and CSU campuses are legally required to submit updated Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plans to the Secretary of State's Office via email to [CastStudentsVote@sos.ca.gov](mailto:CastStudentsVote@sos.ca.gov) by the first Monday of December of each November General Election, while UC campuses are strongly encouraged to do so.

The Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator will draft a Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan for the General Election year and update the Action Plan as they see fit.

This section contains several ideas and policies which campuses can utilize or incorporate to their Action Plan to boost a culture of civic engagement among their students. Administrators and students can come together to choose to adopt whichever provisions and ideas they feel are appropriate to their campus.

### **1. Identify a point person who will manage all voter participation projects on behalf of the campus administration.**

- This person will be responsible for working to convene a campus coalition on student voting and work with students to craft and implement an Action Plan
- It is important that this person have some degree of staffing support
- This person will also serve as the contact with the Secretary of State's Office.
- This person could be the Dean of Student Life or the Vice President of Student Affairs, or a direct report of one of these individuals.

### **2. To better measure growth of student voter participation, register for the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE).**

- NSLVE is a study that coordinates with the National Student Clearinghouse to match public voting records with anonymous student enrollment records, allowing you to measure the registration and voting rates for your school and allowing you to track progress in student voter participation.

#### **• NSLVE is free, confidential, and protective of student privacy.**

- NSLVE reports can help civic engagement leaders on campus better assess how many eligible students are participating and where additional efforts should be made.

- More information is available at: <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/researchNSLVE>

### **3. Convene one "kick off" meeting of relevant administrators from student affairs, academics affairs, and government relations, as well as faculty and student leadership, to discuss a**

**campus-wide effort to increase student voter participation. This could be your coalition moving forward.**

- Attendees of the “kick off” meeting who choose to continue meeting can meet monthly during the spring term and weekly or bi-weekly in fall term leading up to the November general election.
- The coalition should include student leadership and several large, impactful students groups.
- Make clear to other organizations if/how they may join the coalition if they decide to join in the work later.

**4. Draft a written Student Vote Plan (example outlined below) that includes voter registration, voter education, voter access, and Get Out The Vote (GOTV) activities.**

- Combine all of the commitments made by the coalition members into one plan. Ensure that this plan receives significant input from student organizations that lead civic engagement efforts. Submit to campus leadership.
- A comprehensive plan for the November general election should be prepared, if possible, before students leave for summer break. This enables the campus to get started on implementation immediately upon student return in the fall.
- Make sure to include students who will be in positions of leadership when students return in the fall. Avoid if at all possible making plans with outgoing student leaders who will not be around to see the work implemented.
- Campuses can create an abbreviated plan for the June primary election.

**5. Participate in the California University and College Ballot Bowl.**

- The Ballot Bowl encourages students to participate in the democratic process through a friendly competition which encourages them to register to vote.

Use the competition as an additional tool to encourage students to register to vote, by using the competition platform as a public means of tracking student voter registration, and to foster friendly rivalries with other California campuses.

## Essential Pieces of an Action Plan

A Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan should strive to include many or all of the components below.

### Voter registration:

**1. Send out campus-wide emails including voter registration information and a link to online voter registration.**

- The best times to send these emails are after the first week of instruction or after move-in, the week before the voter registration deadline (15 days before an election), and the day of the registration deadline.
- If a campus uses [CAStudentVote.org](https://CAStudentVote.org) to facilitate student voter registration, all information submitted by student voters will be collected and provided to campus administrators and/or student volunteers, so those parties can follow up with student voters with GOTV reminder messages later.
- If a campus uses the standard statewide voter registration site operated by the Secretary of State ([RegisterToVote.ca.gov](https://RegisterToVote.ca.gov)), the campus should make sure to use the URL provided by the Secretary of State for higher education institutions (<https://RegisterToVote.ca.gov/?t=s>). This will enable the Secretary of State to “credit” the campus for the registrations generated, for both the Ballot Bowl competition and for the annual report to the Legislature.

- Inform students that if they register to vote at a permanent address in a different county or state (i.e. a parent’s address), they need to register as a vote-by-mail voter to ensure they get their ballot. Remind students that if they register or have previously registered at a campus address, they need to update their address every time they move.



## **2. Do on-the-ground voter registration work during critical periods.**

- Encourage staffers/volunteers to distribute and collect voter registration forms during orientation, welcome week, move-in, and similar periods/events. Incorporate voter registration into RA trainings.

## **3. Work with student affairs and/or the residential life office to distribute and collect voter registration forms in student housing.**

- Make any needed changes to housing policies to permit door-to-door voter registration drives.

## **4. Embed voter registration information in the campus's homepage, course management systems (Blackboard, Sakai, MyPortal, Canvas, etc.), and other heavily trafficked online portals/sites operated by the school.**

- The more visible the better – consider pop-up voter registration reminders close to the voter registration deadline, for example.

## **5. Coordinate with academic affairs to have faculty or a student representative make announcements and distribute voter registration forms in classes.**

- Send messaging to faculty and TAs twice, once before the start of the school year and once in the week leading up to the voter registration deadline, encouraging them to allow voter registration to occur at the beginning of classes.

## **6. Actively promote and participate in voting related holidays, including National Voter Registration Day (<https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org>), National Voter Education Week (<https://votereducationweek.org>), and Vote Early Day (<https://www.voteearlyday.org>).**

## **7. Permit student voter registration drive organizers to table and clipboard at high-traffic campus locations.**

## **Voter education:**

### **1. Consider hosting events that draw student attention to key races.**

- Host an issue forum on a prominent ballot initiative or a candidate forum for local candidates.

- Host a debate watch party for major state or federal races.

- Host a voting-related Q&A virtual, live event with student leaders.

### **2. Consider distributing nonpartisan ballot guides.**

- The League of Women Voters usually provides rigorous, non-partisan ballot guides that include local measures and races. The organization helps create Voter's Edge (<https://votersedge.org/ca>) a nonpartisan resource for voters that may be useful to share with students.

### **3. Use campus media and posters/flyers to inform students about what candidates and issues are on the ballot in upcoming elections and about the voter registration deadline.**

### **4. Utilize the California Students Vote toolkit created by the Secretary of State, which includes a variety of resources (<http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/castudentvote/college-students/>).**

## **Ballot access:**

### **1. Consider hosting an early vote site and/or polling place on campus.**

- Work with the County Registrar of Voters early - many months before Election Day - to make this happen.

- Site the voting location in a highly visible location on campus, like the student center/student union. Accentuate the visibility with things like signs and balloons.

- For assistance in communicating with your county elections office, please do not hesitate to contact the Secretary of State's Office.

### **2. Invite local election officials to campus to train relevant parties on how to do voter registration.**



- Voter registration can be difficult. Students assume mandatory fields are optional, forget to date and sign the form, etc. Well-trained voter registration organizers can correct or avoid these mistakes.

**3. Make sure the mailroom is ready for a potentially large number of vote-by-mail ballots leading up to Election Day, and make sure it works to get vote-by-mail ballots to the students even if they have moved.**

**4. Provide Election Day rides or organize walks to early vote sites or polling locations, if they are not on campus. Have a plan for dealing with long lines, common questions and problems, etc. on Election Day.**

## **Get Out the Vote (GOTV):**

**1. Send out a campus-wide email with information about vote-by-mail and early voting a month before Election Day (when vote-by-mail ballots start arriving), so students can make an informed choice as to how they want to vote.**

- Provide information on and the deadline for signing up to be a vote-by-mail voter. (Ask the Secretary of State's office if you have questions.)

**2. Hang posters/flyers and utilize campus media to publicize upcoming elections and to provide information on how to register to vote and how to cast a ballot.**

**3. Consider assisting the Registrar of Voters in recruiting student poll workers.**

- Campus administrators and student leaders can use email, social media, and other means to explain to students that they can make \$100-200 in service of democracy on Election Day. The local Registrar of Voters can provide additional information.

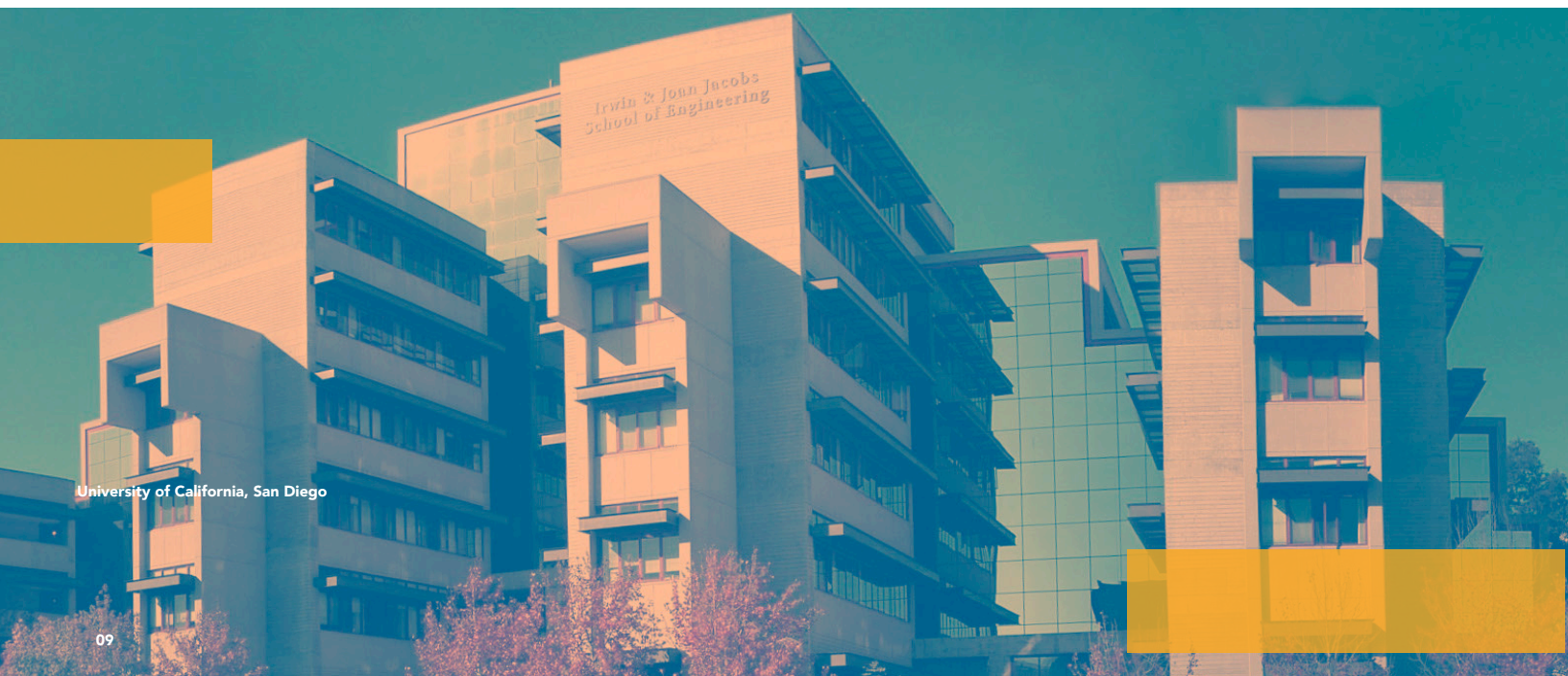
**4. Send week-of, day-before, and day-of reminders about Election Day – the more visible and the more personal, the better.**

- In-person outreach, phone banks, texting campaigns, all-campus emails, and social media should all be utilized.

- Consider having some of these messages come from prominent members of the campus community, including student leaders, famous faculty, athletic coaches, etc.

- Include information about easy polling place lookup tools and about where polling places are located on campus and immediately off campus.

**5. Strive to create a celebratory environment on Election Day throughout campus and for those waiting in line to vote at the polls.**



# 3 Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan Template

A Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan should include the following components: voter registration, voter education, ballot access, and Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts. To aid your campus in creating a successful plan to engage your student body, the California Students Vote Project has designed a template of the Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan (shown below) for your campus to use as reference to create your own plan. Please note that submitted action plans and reports will be made available on the Secretary of State's website. Contact us at [CastStudentsVote@sos.ca.gov](mailto:CastStudentsVote@sos.ca.gov) for questions.

## Leadership:

- Include the contact information for the Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator to serve as a point of contact for the Secretary of State's Office. If working with a group of student leaders, faculty, or staff members, please include their contact information as well.

Campus Name:

Full Name(s):

Position Title(s):

Email Address(es):

Phone Number(s):

## Introduction:

- Discuss the importance of civically engaging your students, and what your campus has previously done. Any learned lessons from the previous election or findings from the NSLVE may be included in this section.

## Civic Engagement Plan Goals and Action Steps:

- Identify the specific goals your plan is trying to address, and what are the concrete steps your institution is taking to get there.
- What strategies are you using to educate and engage your students? Examples include social media outreach, PSA videos, campus flyers, concerts, etc.
- What events are planned to educate and engage your students? What are the specific dates you would like to highlight?

## Community Partnerships:

- To successfully activate your student body, it would be beneficial to create partnerships with on-campus and off-campus organizations that serve your students, or organizations your students are already involved in. This can include the following types of organizations:
  - Educational Equity
  - Food and Shelter
  - Health and Wellness
  - Immigrant Advocacy
  - Creative and Restorative Practices
  - Environmental Sustainability
  - Policy and Human Resources

## Evaluation and Reporting:

- What is your institution's plan for a follow-up evaluation and report, and who will oversee this?
- After the creation of your engagement plan and the completion of the election, someone from your institution should be ready to provide a written update to the Secretary of State's Office about the election that includes lessons learned by your institution, and any other helpful information learned. Usually, the Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator oversees submission of the action plan and report.

# 4 Additional Campus Civic Engagement Resources

## **Campus Vote Project, “Resources”**

The Campus Vote Project provides resources for students and administrators on campuses to develop and enhance democratic engagement programming, including guides on voter registration drives and engagement activities for students, guidance on developing student engagement plans and handbook language for administrators.

(<https://www.campusvoteproject.org/resources>)

## **Idea42, “Graduating Students into Voters, Overcoming the Psychological Barriers Faced by Student Voters: A Behavioral Science Approach”**

A simple guide that looks at why students may fail to register and vote, based on ideas42’s behavioral science. Evidence-based solutions college leaders can use to improve the effectiveness of their registration and turnout efforts.

(<http://www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/ideas42-Student-Voting-Brief.pdf>)

## **Civic Holidays, “Campus Takeover”**

Campus Takeover is a nation-wide effort to mobilize students around elections and to create a culture of civic engagement on college campuses during the Civic Holidays. The Campus Takeover team, co-led by the Alliance for Youth Organizing and the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, provides specialized resources and support to college campuses through toolkits, webinars, and mini grants.

(<https://civicholidays.org/campus-takeover/>)

## **The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), “Youth Voting”**

Includes statistics and analysis on youth voting in 2020, several reports, and information about what affects youth voting.

(<https://civicyouth.org/quick-facts/youth-voting/>)

## **David Hill and Paul Lachelier, “Can Face-to-Face Mobilization Boost Student Voter Turnout? Results of a Campus Field Experiment,” Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 2014**

Journal article in which the authors examine the impact of a face-to-face college student mobilization effort on a small, private university in Florida. The authors find a difference in turnout between those students contacted and those not contacted. Brief recommendations are offered for steps university staff can take to make elections a more established part of college students’ experience.

(<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1024167.pdf>)

## **Students Learn Students Vote, “Resource Library”**

Several resources and reports on how campus leaders and administrators can boost civic participation, compiled by Students Learn Students Vote, an organization that works to promote civic learning and engagement on campuses across the country.

(<https://slsvcoalition.org/resource-library/>)

## **Ask Every Student, “The Ask Every Student Toolkit”**

The Ask Every Student Toolkit is a growing resource of strategies, tools, and tactics that are designed to assist campus leaders in implementing full student voter registration strategies on their campuses. The Toolkit was developed using a human-centered design process in collaboration with the Ask Every Student Codesigner Cohort, a diverse and deliberately selected group of leaders from 30 campuses across the country.

(<https://www.studentvoting.org/toolkit>)





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