

# **VOTER REGISTRATION 101**

## **A guide for registering Oregon high school students**

### **Who can register? Who can vote?**

- To register to vote in Oregon you must be a U.S. citizen, a resident of Oregon, and at least 17 years old. If you turn 18 by the next Election Day you can vote in that election. If not, you can still register, and your name will be kept on file.
- If you have a valid Oregon driver's license or ID, you must write the number on the voter registration form. If you don't have one, then you can write the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you don't have either of these, then you can attach a copy of one of the documents listed on the form.
- If you're registering in Oregon for the first time, your completed voter registration form must be turned in or postmarked 21 days before the election in order to vote in that election.
- Once you're eligible to vote, your ballot will be mailed to you 14 to 18 days before the election. Mark your ballot, sign it, stamp it and mail it (or save yourself a stamp by dropping it off at a county library or elections office). Don't forget the last part, since your vote won't count if it's not in the elections office or drop box by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. Postmarks don't count.

### **Tips for registering high school students**

- Since teens respond best to other young people, it makes sense to encourage a student-led voter registration drive, perhaps as a project of a club or leadership group. If your school is in the Portland or Eugene area, the Bus Project ([www.busproject.com](http://www.busproject.com)) would be happy to visit your school and help with this. It's also good to know about an excellent website strictly dedicated to young voters called [www.rockthevote.com](http://www.rockthevote.com), available in both English and Spanish. Students can register or participate in a nationwide get-out-the-vote program.
- If you're coordinating a school-wide voter registration drive, have plenty of forms and black pens on hand. You can get up to 200 forms from your county elections office. It's also a good idea to do some advance publicity to let students know they'll need their Oregon driver's license OR Social Security number in order to register. Help with any questions students might have about filling in the forms, including the fact that unless they indicate a party affiliation they can only vote for nonpartisan candidates and ballot measures in the Primary Election.
- It's best if the coordinator collects all completed forms, double checks for accuracy, and then personally carries them to the county elections office (addresses on the back of the form) so that they'll arrive within the required FIVE DAY window of time. If students prefer, they can fill out the forms online and then print them out. However, they cannot be sent in electronically.
- After your voter registration drive, make sure you publicize the number of new voters. Registering to vote for the first time is a BIG DEAL, since it paves the way for future civic participation. Congratulations are definitely in order!
- Emphasize that voting is a right and a RESPONSIBILITY. Registering is the easy part. What's important is actually voting, and even more important is being an informed voter. It's the voter's responsibility to find out where the candidates stand on the issues and what the true costs and benefits are when ballot measures pass or fail. Watch candidate debates, attend forums, read the newspapers, and check out the non-partisan Voters' Guide published by the League of Women Voters of Oregon ([www.lwvor.org](http://www.lwvor.org)). Above all, decisions should be based on facts, not sound-bites.
- Moving often is a fact of life for most high school graduates and a key reason for low voter turnout among the young. Remind students that it's necessary to re-register whenever there's a change of address, name, signature or political party affiliation. A party affiliation change must be made 20 days before a Primary Election. Re-registering to vote is easy to put off but is an essential part of becoming an actively engaged member of a new community.