
CAMPUS VOTING ACTION PLAN:

FOR UT VOTES SPONSORED BY THE ANNETTE STRAUSS INSTITUTE FOR CIVIC LIFE AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN



WHAT ARE UT VOTES AND THE ANNETTE STRAUSS INSTITUTE FOR CIVIC LIFE?

- **UT Votes** is a student organization at the University of Texas at Austin that invites students, campus wide, to increase electoral participation and create more voters and better citizens. Each election cycle, UT Votes, in partnership with the Annette Straus Institute, organizes and coordinates Get Out the Vote activities including registration booths, deputization sessions, and campus competitions. During off election cycles, UT Votes educates the UT community and engages in respectful and civil discourse on important issues.
- **The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life** is aligned with the University of Texas' public role of designing and testing new ways of increasing civic involvement. It benefits from the collective expertise of scholars who are nationally renowned for their contributions to the study and development of civic participation and the conditions that give rise to or suppress engagement. Dedicated to applied research, the institute focuses on how new technologies of communication and innovation outreach can be used to increase political understanding and participation.

IMPORTANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM THE 2015-2016 SCHOOL YEAR

2016 ELECTION CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ALLIANCE

In 2015, UT Votes established the *2016 Election Civic Engagement Alliance (CEA)* . The CEA is a coalition of non-partisan student groups brought together to increase civic engagement on campus. At least one member from each student group is deputized, so they can return to their respective groups and register their members to vote. As part of the CEA, members support one another's efforts when help is needed. The CEA offers student organizations the opportunity to join a community-building activity and provides more leadership opportunities within the organization. During the 2015-16 school year, ten different organizations joined the Civic Engagement Alliance to help start a successful year of voter registration and engagement. Over 4,000 students were registered to vote by CEA members and 26 individuals were trained as Travis County Volunteer Deputy Registrars. Moving into its second year of existence, the CEA is an intricate part of the planning process.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- **Received Foundation for Civic Life Grant:** Received small grant from the Foundation for Civic Life to pursue civic engagement activities
- **Harvard IOP National Campaign Conference:** UT Votes President, Zach Foust, and Program Coordinator, Kassie Barroquillo, attended the Harvard Institute of Politics National Campaign Conference.

- **Students Learn! Students Vote! Checklist:** In 2016, we completed the SLSV Checklist. The checklist was created as a way for schools to organize their voter engagement efforts.
- **Pienary:** UT Votes made over 100 pies to hand out to voters after they participated in the primary election.
- **“Pick Your Politician” Contest:** Students around campus guessed which politician they thought would win the Texas primary from local to national elections. We offered League of Women Voters’ Voting Guides to assist in discovering who was running for which seats. The winner received a Kindle Fire.
- **National Voter Registration Day:** Celebrated National Voter Registration Day through voter registration tabling, social media campaign, and posting flyers around campus.
- **Partnering with Vote Smart:** Project Vote Smart is another program that works with the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life. VoteSmart.org offers nonpartisan voter information at national and local levels. We have tabled with Vote Smart and used their information to create voter education guides for students.

FALL 2016 PLANS

UT VOTES REGULARLY PLANNED MEETINGS AND CONTINUING THE CEA

UT Votes members will meet every other week to plan voter registration and voter education activities. This is a time for members to discuss best practices for voter engagement. Some meetings will consist of activities and/or speakers. As with previous years, UT Votes will continue to regularly register students through tabling efforts and student organization and teacher requests.

We will continue to grow membership for the Civic Engagement Alliance (CEA) and have already determined goals for the '16 semester. The CEA has implemented a new point system in order to win the “Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life Leaders in Civic Pursuit” designation. The CEA aims to register 10,000 students, equaling 80 percent of the student population. The CEA aims to see 35 new volunteer deputy registrars trained. It has a goal that 50 percent of students turn out to vote, a nearly ten percent increase from 2012. A volunteer deputy registrar training is already planned for the beginning of the school year.

Members of the CEA are also planning voter registration and turnout events that are unique to the people they serve.

- **Graduate Student Association (GSA):** The GSA is working to train Graduate Student Advisors and/or individuals the Graduate Student Advisor nominates as volunteer deputy registrars. This will make the process of registering to vote for graduate students easier for students. The GSA will also detail the Texas voting process at a major orientation event hosted at the beginning of the year.
- **Residence Life:** Residence life is allowing UT Votes to hand out ready-made bulletin board materials about voting to residence assistants (RAs). RAs will be able to attend a special volunteer deputy registrar training before the school year begins.

UT Votes will work to help RAs turn in their voter registration cards, as transportation is one of the hardest challenges RAs face.

- Hook the Vote and The Freedom Network: Throughout the month of September and part of October, Hook the Vote and The Freedom Network will coordinate with UT Votes to register voters through tabling as often as possible.

TRAVIS COUNTY VOTES: NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY

The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life and the Travis County Tax Office are collaborating to celebrate National Voter Registration Day, on Sept. 27. We have received the National Voter Registration Day Flagship Event designation. We are currently working to contact St. Edward's University, Austin Community College, Concordia University Texas, Huston-Tillotson University, and a number of vocational colleges in the event. We aim to bring together places of higher education and volunteer deputy registrars in Travis County to create a day of celebration around registering to vote. Over 2,000 volunteer deputy registrars will be invited to help register the more than 100 thousand college students in the country.

Volunteer deputy registrars play an important role in this event because Texas will only allow people who have completed the volunteer deputy registrar training to register Texas residents. Due to this requirement, two additional trainings have been scheduled at the University of Texas as at Austin. Volunteer deputy registrars will also be invited to register others throughout the county on their own accord, if they do not specifically want to be part of the event.

Each university location will have events tailored to their students' needs. Volunteers may table and/or visit classrooms and other organization meetings.

VOTER REGISTRATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

UT Votes is awaiting response from the Center for Sports Leadership and Innovation about registering UT athletes, coaches, and staff to vote while creating a social media campaign to encourage the UT community to register and turnout to vote. The goals are twofold: The first is to register UT athletes, coaches, and staff to vote in a way that is easy for them. We can come out to a practice or team meeting. We realize how busy their schedules must be and want to make it as easy as possible for them to register to vote. This will also give us an opportunity to answer any questions they may have about voting in Travis County. The second is to create more awareness about registering to vote and voting for the entire UT community through a social media campaign with cooperation from the athletic teams.

UT CAMPUS VOTER REGISTRATION AND PLEDGE CARD COMPETITION

According to the UT NSLVE report, there is a disparity in voter turnout between the different fields of study. Education and communication related areas turnout at almost a 15 percent higher rate than science and engineering related areas.

In order to combat these, UT Votes plans to create a competition between the colleges on campus. The competition would begin by distributing pledge cards to all students through their professors. The pledge cards would gather information, including: Voting eligibility, if registered to vote, major, and if they are willing to take a pledge to vote in the next election. It will also include information for students to sign up for text and email reminders on when and where to

vote. From the collection of these pledges we will determine which schools have the highest percentage of people registered to vote and pledged to vote in the next election. We will report these through UT media and social media.

** In order to make this happen, we will have to receive support from the university and funding for the pledge cards. We plan to work with the UT Student Senate in order to receive support from the top down. We are currently looking for ways to fund this project.*

UT/OU RIVALRY COMPETITION VIA ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE

We are currently competing in the All In Campus Democracy Challenge. One way we hope to engage more students in the All In Campus Democracy Challenge is by utilizing our rivalry with Oklahoma University. We are working a representative with the Foundation for Civic Life to reach out to OU. If OU accepts, we will publicize the rivalry challenge through UT media, athletics, and other forms of media. If OU does not accept, we will look to other schools that are also considered rivals, such as Texas A&M.

ELECTION WATCH PARTY ON THE STEPS OF THE TOWER

UT Votes is working with Hook the Vote and The Graduate Student Association, both branches of UT Student Government, to host an Election Watch Party. Our ideal location is on the steps of the iconic UT Tower. We hope to create a gathering where all students, no matter their political beliefs, feel welcome and can just enjoy a night celebrating civic engagement.