

Beloit College 2024 Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan follows on from a plan initially developed by Beloit College in Wisconsin ahead of the 2022 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 general election and beyond. The ongoing goals for Beloit College for the 2024 election are: to help students make voting a lifelong habit, beginning with the 2024 general election for those voting for the first time; Beloit College will continue to give students Election Day off to turn it into a day of action.

Leadership:

Our leadership team includes the following:

Donna Oliver, provost and dean of the college

Ron Watson - associate provost; associate professor of political science and health & society and political science

Scott Zibell - director of web communications

Why Bother, Wisconsin? Student Activists and Ambassadors - Alejandra Torres, Clara Martin, Maij Sprenger-Otto, Frances Donis, Israel Zewdie, Sophia Miller and Jake Fein

Our campus works with the following nonprofit partners and government entities: Ask Every Student, League of Women Voters, Beloit City Clerk's Office

Commitment:

As part of this campaign – *Why Bother, Wisconsin? (WBW)* – we'll do four things proven to increase voter turnout.

First, we'll register people to vote, not just on our campus but in the surrounding community.

Second, we will clearly explain the mechanics of voting. How and when to register; what's on a ballot and how to fill it out; where to go to cast a vote and what documentation to show when you get there. We'll also explain absentee ballots, both in- and out-of-state.

Third, we'll talk about why we are pushing so hard for people to vote. Why should students and others bother?

- Because it matters. (The 2000 Presidential election was decided by 537 votes.)
- Because in so many places elections do not matter, or are not held.
- Because for centuries women of all races, Black, Indigenous and other People of Color and other marginalized people could not vote, and efforts to curtail voting continue.
- Because people died for the right to vote.
- Because voting is fundamental in a democracy to making positive policy changes for a better future for all.

Finally, we'll work to reduce systemic barriers. For instance, we will have no classes on Election Day at Beloit College. It will be a day of action, not a day off, and will be treated as much like a national holiday (as democracies around the world do).

Beloit College Landscape:

Beloit College is a private 4-year institution in Beloit, Wisconsin, one of the most racially and ethnically diverse cities in the state.

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Beloit College has 948 degree-seeking students in Fall 2023, hailing from 44 states and 39 countries. The breakdown is 239 first-years, 211 sophomores, 236 juniors, and 184 seniors. Approximately 92 percent of our first-year students live on campus, while 85 percent of students overall live on campus. Approximately 32 percent of Beloit's degree-seeking students are domestic minorities, and 15 percent of students are international.

Beloit College has authorized NSLVE.

Goals:

Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

1. Increase voter registration in 2024 by approximately 3 points over 2020, with an emphasis on our first-year students, to 75%
2. Increase voting rate by 5% in 2024 compared to 2020
3. Increase student civic engagement as measured by higher student participation in WBW fall events

Strategy: WBW Events

Beloit College will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation:

1. Hold a Why Bother, Wisconsin? Campaign 2024 kickoff on Sept. 17 (National Voter Registration Day). Bring League of Women Voters representatives on campus at various locations to register students, and provide WBW swag, in the form of T-shirts, stickers, and buttons
2. Host Political Trivia Night at C-Haus, the on-campus bar
3. Host candidate forums featuring candidates for Wisconsin state and national office
4. Host political movie nights at the Powerhouse, the college's student union and recreation center
5. Host visits from Wisconsin state and national political officials
6. Post voter promotion banners across campus
7. Host a conversation titled Know Before You Go: What to Expect at Your Polling Place, with Beloit alumna and elections expert Stacie Rosenzweig, moderated by political science professor Ron Watson

8. Host joint events in participation with other *Why Bother, Wisconsin?* participating institutions
9. Publicize all events in Beloiters Beat, the college's weekly e-newsletter
10. Host an election night watch party in the Powerhouse

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

1. Political science professor Ron Watson will work with students to lead the evaluation effort.
2. We will check with the local clerk's office to identify increases in both voter registration and voting rate in the college's precinct.
3. We also will host a debriefing session to refine tactics to be even more effective in our efforts for the state's April elections.
4. The college plans to keep the focus on voter education alive for 2024 and beyond, and will use this lens to also evaluate what worked in 2024.

Reporting:

The campus action plan will be shared with our campus community. The action plan and NSLVE reports will be shown on our institutional research page.