

Election 101: Partnering with Local Election Administrators

Web Highlight

In advance of Indiana's May primary election, the St. Joseph County Clerk's Office partnered with the American Democracy Project at Indiana University South Bend to host an Election 101 Workshop that brought election administration directly to campus. The event was open to all students, faculty, staff, and community members, reflecting a shared commitment to transparency and public education.

Faculty integrated the workshop into a first-year seminar, a political parties course, and a comparative politics class, helping connect real-world election administration to the curriculum while also ensuring strong participation. This academic partnership supported a productive working relationship with election officials, who brought voting machines, election technology, and professional staff to campus.

Participants learned how elections work from the inside—covering voter registration, absentee voting, Vote Center operations, and opportunities to serve as election workers. Research shows that hands-on exposure to the voting process builds confidence and increases future turnout, particularly among first-time voters. The collaboration offers a replicable, nonpartisan model for strengthening trust between campuses, election administrators, and the broader community.

✓ RESEARCH SIDEBAR (PULL-QUOTE FORMAT)

Why Hands-On Election Education Works

Political scientist Elizabeth Adrenyi Adnazzio (Yale University) finds that early, hands-on exposure to voting procedures—such as practicing with real voting machines—builds voter confidence and increases turnout among first-time eligible voters. Her research shows that experiential learning is more effective than test-based civics instruction alone. The Election 101 Workshop operationalized this research by allowing students to interact directly with election technology and professional election administrators prior to Election Day.

Citation: Adnazzio, E. A. (2011). *When schools matter: The impact of state standards and assessments on the political learning of young citizens* (Doctoral dissertation, Yale University).

✓ HOW-TO CHECKLIST

Partnering Productively with Local Election Administrators

- Integrate election workshops into credit-bearing courses

- Encourage faculty to bring entire classes (e.g., First-Year Seminar, Political Parties, Comparative Politics)
- Explicitly link the event to course learning outcomes
- Confirm attendance numbers and logistics in advance
- Provide space for voting machines, election technology, and staff
- Center election administrators as nonpartisan experts with time for Q&A
- Promote the collaboration through campus and local media
- Capture photos and offer follow-up resources

NOTE: From the election administrator’s perspective, a built-in audience justifies the significant investment of staff time, equipment, and logistical coordination required to bring voting machines and election technology to campus.

 **PHOTO SOURCE (OPTIONAL BUT IDEAL)**

Photos – see <https://www.facebook.com/iusbadp>

- Classroom setup with voting machines
- Students engaging with election officials
- Election administrators explaining voting tech

Recommended caption: *Students participate in an Election 101 Workshop led by the St. Joseph County Clerk’s Office and the American Democracy Project at IU South Bend.*

 **Related Media Coverage**

Elections 101 at Indiana University South Bend (2026)

Local and regional media covered the Elections 101 workshops hosted at IU South Bend in partnership with the St. Joseph County Clerk’s Office, highlighting hands-on voter education ahead of Indiana’s May primary election.

Public Radio

- **WVPE 88.1 (NPR affiliate)** — *“Workshops aim to make young, first-time voters feel more secure”*
<https://www.wvpe.org/wvpe-news/2026-03-26/workshops-aim-to-make-young-first-time-voters-feel-more-secure>

Local Television

- **ABC57** — *“St. Joseph County officials host Election 101 Workshop on voting process”*
<https://www.abc57.com/news/st-joseph-county-officials-host-election-101-workshop-on-voting-process>
- **WSBT 22** — *“St. Joseph County clerk hosts Elections 101 course aimed at boosting voter confidence”*

<https://wsbt.com/news/local/st-joseph-county-clerk-hosts-elections-101-course-aimed-at-boosting-voter-confidence>

- **WNDU 16** — “*St. Joseph County officials host Election 101 information session*”
<https://www.wndu.com/2026/04/01/st-joseph-county-officials-host-election-101-information-session/>

Syndicated Coverage

- **MSN** — “*St. Joseph County officials host Election 101 information session*”
<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/other/st-joseph-county-officials-host-election-101-information-session/ar-AA1ZWB3V>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Elizabeth Bennion, Director

American Democracy Project (ADP), Indiana University South Bend

Email: iusbadp@iu.edu; Phone: 574-520-4128

“Elections 101” Workshops Will Feature Hands-On Voting Machine Demonstrations

South Bend, Ind. — Indiana University South Bend will team up with the St. Joseph County Clerk’s Office to host Elections 101, an interactive educational event designed to give community members and students an inside look at how elections are administered in St. Joseph County. The sessions, offered on April 1 and 2, 2026, will feature representatives from the St. Joseph County Clerk’s Office and provide attendees with the rare opportunity to operate real voting machines used in local elections.

The workshops aim to demystify election processes by walking participants through ballot handling, vote tabulation, security procedures, and verification practices used to safeguard the integrity of local elections. These real-world insights are intended to help students and community members better understand how election administration works in St. Joseph County, Indiana, and to boost voter confidence as they head to the polls for this spring’s primary election.

Event Details

Elections 101 – Learn How Elections Are Administered

Dates & Times:

April 1, 2026 | 10:00–11:00 AM

April 2, 2026 | 1:00–2:00 PM

(Participants may attend either session.)

Location:

Indiana University South Bend

Student Activities Center

Rooms 221, 223 & 225 (Combined)

Cost: Free and open to the public.

Classes are welcome; sign-in sheets will be provided.

Sponsored by the St. Joseph County Clerk's Office and co-sponsored by the American Democracy Project (ADP) at IU South Bend, the event supports ongoing efforts to strengthen civic learning and engagement on campus and in the broader community.

"Opportunities like this allow students to engage directly with the people responsible for administering our elections," said Elizabeth Bennion, Director of the American Democracy Project at IU South Bend. "It's a hands-on way to deepen understanding of democratic processes and promote informed participation."

Bennion noted that the workshop is especially helpful for those voting for the first time.

"New voters often feel overwhelmed by all the national conversations about election security, and they may not know what to expect when they show up at the polls," she said. "Getting hands-on practice with real voting machines and talking with the local experts who manage the process can make a big difference. It helps reduce anxiety, clears up confusion, and gives first-time voters the confidence they need to participate."

For questions or additional information, please