



# Center for Civic Engagement

## Northwestern University

### All-In Campus Democracy Challenge Action Plan 2018

## Background & Goals

Northwestern University's voter registration, education, and turnout efforts are led by the Center for Civic Engagement's NU Votes initiative.

NU Votes is a non-partisan initiative designed to provide the NU community with accessible and understandable information about voter registration and voting procedures, and to promote informed voter engagement. NU Votes is supported by a campus-wide Steering Committee of staff from relevant University departments, faculty from multiple schools, and undergraduate and graduate students.

The Center for Civic Engagement founded NU Votes in 2011 in an effort to go beyond simply providing voter registration information to students, as required of federally-funded universities by the Higher Ed Act. Over the past seven years, NU Votes created an ambitious program to integrate voter registration into orientation for all incoming students, and has worked to impact the culture of voter engagement on campus through other voter registration, education, and turnout efforts.

In 2016, NU Votes made special efforts to expand voter engagement among undergraduate and graduate students around the 2016 General Election. Our NSLVE data and All In Challenge Awards from 2016 provided evidence of our success, recording a 91% registration rate, a 65% voter turnout rate, and a 15 point - or 30% - increase in turnout from 2012 to 2016.

The 2018 Midterm elections naturally offer an additional challenge. Northwestern University's voter turnout rate in 2014 was only 22%. For 2018, we are hoping to achieve at least a comparable rate of increase as in 2016.

To achieve this goal, in 2018, NU Votes will keep up our current successful efforts, and well as continue to experiment and innovate to further strengthen the norms of voter engagement at NU.

## **50-State Voter Registration & Absentee Ballots**

As Northwestern is a national university, NU Votes will continue to provide students with support for registering to vote in all 50 states, as well as with requesting and submitting absentee ballots as needed.

### *Integrated Registration During Orientation*

NU Votes will continue to implement its flagship registration program, which integrates 50-state voter registration and absentee ballot requests into Northwestern's Welcome Week orientation programming, allowing all first-year and transfer students the opportunity to register to vote upon arrival at the University. To achieve this, the NU Votes team will staff Voter Registration Stations at each Welcome Center on move-in day, offering every incoming student the opportunity to register to vote for the first time or update their registration information, as well as to request an absentee ballot from their home state.

### *Registration Drives*

For returning undergraduates, all graduate students, and other members of the University community, NU Votes will organize and staff Voter Registration Stations in the student centers, to help students check their registration status, register to vote, update their registration information, request absentee ballots from their home states, get answers to registration and voting related questions, and more.

We anticipate the primary station, at the Norris Student Center on Northwestern's Evanston Campus, will be running throughout the week surrounding National Voter Registration Day (September 27), approximately 12 hours a day for at least one full week. We are also planning an additional station on Northwestern's Downtown Chicago Campus for some portion of that time, in order to provide the same resources to graduate students.

### *Ongoing Registration Support*

In addition to these registration drives, NU Votes will continue to offer registration and voting support yearlong, in person at Northwestern's Center for Civic Engagement, as well as online through [NUVotes.org](http://NUVotes.org).

In-person support is available at CCE, Monday through Friday from 9am-5pm, on a walk-in basis. Students are provided with assistance for everything from answers to complicated registration or voting questions, to support printing and completing forms, to picking up stamps to mail in registration forms or absentee ballots.

In partnership with Vote.org, NU Votes also offers online tools, accessible anytime from anywhere, for students to check their registration status, register to vote, and request absentee ballots in any of the 50 states, on their own.

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## **Voter Education & Turnout**

In addition to our voter registration efforts, NU Votes works to help students become more informed and active citizens through voter education and turnout efforts.

### Web Resources

NU Votes will continue to build upon our online voter education resources, in order to provide students with accessible and understandable information about voter registration and voting procedures, ballot education resources, and answers to frequently asked questions.

### Campus-Wide Emails

NU Votes will continue to work with campus partners to send emails to the University community with timely information about voter registration deadlines, ballot education resources, and procedures for absentee voting, early voting, and voting on election day.

### Voter Education Events

NU Votes will continue to work with campus partners to organize and promote voter education events, such as introductions to local politics, debate watch, and election watch events, for undergraduates and graduate students.

### Flyers & Social Media

NU Votes will continue to raise awareness about the election and election-related services and resources available through NU Votes, as well as promote voter turnout, through a student-led flyering and social media campaign. Past campaigns have included: "Vote Local", "I Vote Because...", "I Vote at NU Should Too." The NU Votes team also uses email and social media, in particular, Facebook messages and tweets, to share voting-related news and educational resources, and answer students' individual registration or voting-related questions.

### *Voter Van*

NU Votes will bring back its Voter Van for 2018. The Voter Van provides transportation to and from the polls during the week leading up to election day, enabling students to take advantage of early voting or grace period registration and voting. Students are also able to ask NU Votes team members any last-minute questions they might have related to registration or voting, and are provided with ballot information in the van on their way to the polls.

### *Additional Efforts/New Initiatives*

In addition to the established efforts above, the NU Votes team is currently exploring additional ways to expand our voter registration, education, and turnout efforts. Ideas thus far include working more closely with student groups, athletics and other departments; better integrating voter registration efforts with technology and adding more targeted email reminders; advocating for an early voting site on campus; and more.