

# Siena College Voter

## Action Plan



## **Contributors**

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## **Responsibilities**

Responsibilities will be split up among committee members

- Reach out to First Year Seminars (FYSM) and other classes
- Coordination with Student Senate as well as the office of Student Activities
- Coordination with Community Assistants (CAs) to hold Voter Drives
- Tabling in the Student Union with members of Student led clubs
- Conduct Research on candidates and Promotional activities such as Residence Hall Canvassing to get students to register and turnout to vote
- Registration for early voting

## **Tabling**

The Political-Science Society will hold voter registration drives during the week of September 28th until Friday October 2nd. This will be done to make sure everything reaches students' home offices in time. They will have a table in the Student Union from 11:30-1:30. The Student Union will be used during the free period due to its large amount of foot traffic. The Student Union is the social center of campus, so it will be filled with students at all times. This will help us reach students that we may not be able to reach at other times. This will be effective due to the fact that eighty percent of students live on campus. Eighty percent are also residents of New York state.

These tabling events will be done to help get as many students registered by the state deadlines. October 9th for registration, and the 14th for changes of address.

These tables will feature registration papers from New York, as well as surrounding states. A majority of Siena's population comes from New York and the surrounding states. Students will also be informed on informational websites such as TurboVote and Vote.org. A push will be made for students to sign up for absentee ballots. This is so if they can't get home to vote they can still vote in their home elections; and have their voices heard. This portion of the plan will be effective due to the fact that a majority of Siena students are New York residents. Students will be able to apply and get absentee ballots as well. Students in New York may absentee ballots are available no earlier than 30 days before the General Election and must be postmarked 7 days prior to the election . The Applications for Absentee Ballots are available at local county board of elections or students can fill out the online form and mail it to their local county board of election

Upon completion, applications must be mailed to your county board no later than the seventh day before the election or delivered in person no later than the day before the election.

You may also request an Absentee Ballot by sending a letter to your county board of elections. The letter must be received by your county board no earlier than 30 days and no later than seven days before the election. The letter must contain the following information: the address where you are registered, an address where the ballot is to be sent, the reason for the request, and, the signature of the voter.

Tabling will also be conducted in the dining hall from 11:30-1:30 on the week listed above due to the foot traffic it also gets during that time.

### **Community Assistants**

The coalition will reach out to CAs (Community Assistants) to have them host events for their residents to get them registered to vote. Community Assistants are student leaders that work with student residents directly in the residence halls. CAs have to hold a certain amount of events each semester to help foster a greater connection to the college community. CAs will be contacted to host events in their buildings to help register students.

### **Canvassing events**

The underclassmen dorms will be especially targeted for this, as they are more likely not to be registered. The Political Science society will help to conduct a non-biased voter registration process prior to elections. During the spring semester students in the coalition ran a spring pilot program to gauge how to reach students on our campus in the best way possible. We found that the underclassmen were split between being registered and not. The hurdle we found was that they needed help with understanding how to mail in their ballots into their local board of elections. Moving forward, steps to prevent such an issue will be for the coalition to collect the registrations and mail them in our sleeves. For the future, how we plan to reach all residential students is to expand the number of clubs in our coalition such that we have more members to canvas; run the canvassing over a longer period of time, and have a designated collection zone in the student union.

### **First Year Seminar**

The Voter Coalition will contact the department heads of FYSM who are best suited in helping us to speak with the necessary faculty to get voter registration as a part of the programs classes. This step has been piloted in the fall semester last year with moderate success. Some professors felt that voter registration did not fit their class topic. Our goal this year will be to contact every class and professor either through in person explanation of the importance of voting or through email that can easily be dispersed to students within the program. In addition, we will create informational fliers to be distributed to the First Year Seminar professors in an effort to ensure that we can target the largest population of unregistered students. The flier that will be disseminated will include information about registering to vote, applying for an absentee ballot, and finding a voter's polling place. The flier will also include information on where students can find the voter coalition's booth and/or websites like TurboVote or Vote.org. The flyer displayed on the next page will act as an example of what will be handed out to students. Members of the coalition and volunteers will come and hand them out to students and help them register. The flyers will also show information on websites that will help students register, get absentee ballots, and find their polling place. Having them sign up for websites such as Turbovote will give them updates on upcoming elections. This will be done yearly to ensure continuous voter registration.

### **Intro Political Science Courses**

The Voter Coalition will work with the Political Science Professors who teach introductory classes to send in members of the Voter Coalition to give students information about the efforts to get more people registered to vote and to the polls come election day. Having other students go in and talk to the students in these introductory courses will be more effective than simply having a professor give information about voter registration to their students, as they are more likely to listen to something that other students have to say.

# VOTER



ALICE SCHMITZ / SHUTTERSTOCK / GIMPONEY

# REGISTRATION

Come register to vote, apply for  
an absentee ballot, or find your  
polling place!

### **Siena Student Activities**

The Voter Coalition will meet frequently with the Siena College Office of Student Activities. The office can provide support with planning, financial resources, and student outreach. Through the student activities office the coalition will be able to send out mass emails to specific groups on campus. Additionally, the office can assist with student outreach in the form of posting flyers and announcements in the Siena Daily Digest. Student activities are also responsible for approving the posting of all promotional and outreach materials that are used on campus. Financial resources will come from individual organization members within the coalition. As well as help from Siena's Center for the study of Government and Politics. The posting of informational material can also occur through the office of Student Activities as well as in "The Digest" which is a daily email of all the events on campus and upcoming activities and need to know information.

### **Promotional Activities**

The Voter Coalition will be trained to assist students to register to vote and request absentee ballots. Besides getting the students to register, the coalition will provide informational flyers on the candidates, upcoming events, and important deadlines. There will be volunteers from all five political clubs; Political- Science Society, College Republicans, College Democrats, Young American for Liberty and Turning Point USA joining together to help spread the word. The coalition's goal this year is to include affinity clubs and athletic groups, of whom our coalition members are a part of. Such groups would include the Black Student Union and the Gay Straight Alliance. Reminders will also be sent to students to remind them of important dates coming up. The coalition hopes to hold up the importance of face to face contact. Students will respond more to other students guiding them through the process, rather than being told to do so by faculty, or through an email.

As election days get closer, the key race that will be selected is the Presidential Election between President Donald Trump and Democratic Nominee Joe Biden. Other races will be strategically picked, for their importance. For each race, documents will be made to be displayed around campus and on social media. One example of this race will be New York's 14th District currently held by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. This race will be hotly contested between 13 candidates. Documents will be made to inform students on the upcoming elections. The documents will include every candidate and their party, as well as where the candidates stand on the issues. Issues will be chosen based on the importance of the issues for students. The issues included will be student debt, taxes, gun control, affirmative action, free college, legalizing marijuana, and criminal justice reform. Flyers displaying the candidates and where they stand on these issues will be displayed around campus, and shown on social media for all students to see. Every class has a social media group on Facebook and Instagram and the coordinators of each page will be contacted with information for them to post. After all the research is done, these flyers will be put on clubs and organizations social media pages as well as class pages to make sure it reaches and informs as many students as possible.

The Political Science Society hosts town hall debates and Polichats. These events take place several times a semester. Town Halls place the College Republicans and Democrats against each other. A topic is chosen, usually a topic that's big in the news at the time. The Republicans and Democrats must build their case. At the town hall, the two sides debate each other and present their side of the issue. Poli Sci chats allow students to come and present their own opinion on a certain issue. These chats can cover a wide array of topics, such as the Supreme Court nomination process. These are put on annually by the Political Science Society. Events like these allow students to educate and voice their own opinions.

The conservative clubs on campus (Young Americans for Liberty, Turning Point USA, and College Republicans) hosted their second free speech conference last year and have plans to hold a third one in the coming semester. In the past, this conference has hosted several big name speakers such as Roger Stone, Austin Peterson, and James O'keefe. The speakers looked to explain their viewpoints on certain topics as well discuss free speech on college campuses.

### **Other Organizations**

ACE (Academic Community Engagement) is the major community service outlet on campus. It serves as the home to the Bonner program, as well as other campus service organizations. ACE serves a sizable portion of the College's population. Recently, this organization has started pushing voter registration among its members. We will work with ACE to help get its members registered and out to vote. Along with ACE the coalition will work with other organizations on campus. The Center for the Study of Government and Politics is a citizen education group at Siena College interested in encouraging great student involvement and interest in government and politics. The Center will supply funding and other forms of help to the coalition to help achieve our goal. Members of the coalition sit on its board. The center serves as a source of research and examining government.

### **Landscape**

Siena has access to a polling place right across the street from the campus. The Colonie town hall acts as a polling place. Having this gives easy access to students to reach a polling place. Clubs and organizations have begun to press students to register for absentee ballots for their home district if they aren't local. Most registration laws will apply to New York State. First-time voters who have not voted in a previous federal election or who have never voted in their county of residence in a federal election, and who did not provide either a driver's license number or the last four digits of their Social Security number at the time of registration, must present documentation proving their identity in order to complete their voter registration. Voters who are voting in person must present this documentation at the polls, while those who are voting by mail/absentee ballot must enclose a copy of such documentation. This identification is required under the federal Help America Vote Act, enacted in 2002.

Voter registration requires in this order:



- Current driver's license number, OR
- Last 4 digits of social security number, OR
- State-assigned unique number

If unable to provide above and is voting in person, show a current:

- Photo ID, OR
- Copy of utility bill, bank statement, paycheck or government document including check

If unable to provide above and is voting by mail, provide a copy of current:

- Photo ID, OR
- Utility bill, bank statement, paycheck or government document including check

The coalition will also look into using data from National Assessment of Service and Community Engagement (NASCE). This survey looks to assess how engaged students are on college campuses. This is done at the Siena College Research Institute, Siena college has partnered with Brown University to conduct this survey.

### **Reporting**

The Action Plan will be shared with the members of the coalition as well as school administrators, clubs and organizations, and academic departments. This plan will be shared within the coalition to help members organize key steps. Each member of the coalition has responsibilities within their own clubs and organizations to help events move more smoothly.

### **Goals**

Our Long Term goals would be to help Create curriculum around civic engagement by the end of 2020 as well as Incorporate civic education into FYSM. As for our short term goals, we want to be able to register as many of the current and future Freshman classes as possible as well as increase voter turnout. Respectively, our voter turnouts from 2012 and 2016 were 42.1% and 46.1%. With the National average in 2016 being 50.6% our goal for turnout would be to get as close to the national average as possible. We do believe that Covid-19 will affect voter turnout and to combat lack of turnout our events will be moved if necessary to online/virtual formats.

### **Commitment**

Over the years Siena has looked for ways to increase voter registration and turnout. Countless clubs and organizations have held voter registration drives and programs to help inform students. These events look to help give students the tools they need to get more involved and become more educated on the political system. The Center for the Study of Government and Politics has been looking for a way to reach the student population on a larger scale. There is much excitement and fever about this initiative. Many programs are held on campus for civic engagement. These programs include town halls, and polichats. Siena also looks to have courses be community engaged, pairing with local nonprofits and organizations to bring better practices into the classroom.

### **Leadership**

For students and institutions on campus civic engagement is a major issue. The Political Science society has been holding registration drives for years, and looks for any opportunity to increase campus bipartisanship. The Center for the Study of Government and Politics has made it its mission to create bipartisanship and advance civic education on Siena's campus. Processes are in place or being put in place by the school and organizations to increase engagement.

### **Covid-19 Preparations**

Should our college not open in the fall due to the current Covid-19 crisis, the coalition will use other forums in which to help students register to vote. As stated before we can still contact FYSM faculty and have voter registration information disseminated that way. We also can use the college's automated email that notifies students of upcoming events and need to know information with useful information about registration as well as election dates and absentee ballot deadlines. Should we have to go contact free, we will not be doing traditional tabling and canvassing but rather we will do it through an online means either through Zoom or other video sharing software, with links sent to all interested parties.