



Students, College Administrators, Faculty, and Election Officials Working Together to Overcome Barriers to Student Voting

September 17, 2018

Dear Institution President,

We are writing on behalf of Fair Election Center's Campus Vote Project to remind you of the legal mandate in Minnesota that colleges and universities provide voter registration forms to their students "as early as possible in the fall quarter."¹

Minnesota Statute §201.1611 states that "[a]ll postsecondary institutions that enroll students accepting state or federal financial aid shall provide voter registration forms to each student as early as possible in the fall quarter." Further, "[i]nstitutions shall consult with their campus student government in determining the most effective means of distributing the forms and in seeking to facilitate election day registration of students..."²

We know that in 2016 in Minnesota, 83.9% of registered students turned out to vote. Yet only 70.6% of Minnesota students were registered to vote during the last national election in 2016 and this rate is below the national average for students. Since students matriculate every term and change addresses frequently, we know it is pivotal to continue providing voter registration assistance, as Minnesota Statute §201.1611 requires, every fall semester. Also, while, Minnesota allows for registration on Election Day we know that, especially at student heavy voting sites, this has led to long lines and prevented some students from being able to vote.

As such, we believe it is crucial to fulfilling the civic mission of higher education to assist students in registering to vote and comply with Minnesota Statute §201.1611. While voting is only one from of civic engagement, it is a crucial component to a healthy democracy, and as such we hope you will consult with your campus student government as soon as possible this semester to find options for providing each student with a voter registration form.

You may contact the Secretary of State's office, 1-877-600-VOTE(8683) or secretary.state@state.mn.us to request voter registration forms and seek guidance on the best practices in assisting students to register to vote.³ We encourage you to work together with students, faculty and staff in convening a campus coordinating committee to improve political learning and engagement in democracy. To support you in this work, we have also attached a report that highlights 10 recommendations to increase college student voting from the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at Tufts University.⁴

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.

Mike Burns
National Director
Fair Election Center's Campus Vote Project

¹ Minn. Stat. Ann. § 201.1611

² This Minnesota statute is a separate requirement, at the state-level, then the federal Higher Education Act requirement that institutions receiving Title IV funds make a good faith effort to distribute voter registration forms. See <https://ifap.ed.gov/dpccletters/GEN1317.html>

³ www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting

⁴ Available digitally at <https://idhe.tufts.edu/electionimperatives>