



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Temperance and Good Citizenship Day—Voter Registration

2022

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.230.150](#)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every year on January 16, public schools participate in “Temperance and Good Citizenship Day” as required by Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.230.150. This year Temperance and Good Citizenship Day (TAGCD) fell on a Sunday, so schools celebrated on Friday, January 14. On this day, Washington social studies teachers who teach high school seniors must provide instructional time for students to register to vote. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in consultation with the Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS), prepares and publishes materials for teachers to support the teaching of elections and voting in Washington state.

The Legislature established an annual goal of 50,000 new voter registrations by 17- and 18-year-olds. This year the continued challenge of remote learning in most districts in Washington state made student engagement with curriculum and materials for TAGCD difficult. TAGCD school events registered 168 future voters on January 16, 2020. Between March 1, 2021, and February 28, 2022:

- Secretary of State registered 9,823 young adults (17- and 18-year-olds)
- Department of Licensing registered 35,894 young adults (17- and 18-year-olds)

These efforts resulted in a total of 45,717 young people pre-registered to vote in Washington state in that ten-month period. This represents a significant reduction in youth voter registrations at roughly 60% of last year’s numbers, which is connected to the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

OSPI, in consultation with OSOS, will continue to strive to meet or exceed 50,000 new voter registrations per year. OSPI makes the following recommendations to continue increasing youth voter registration:

1. Increase resources to support professional development.
2. Provide funding for postage-free registration forms.
3. Continue to identify and create engaging materials to support teaching about elections and voting in K–12.
4. Shift data collection to include 16-year-olds in registration data to include the full spectrum of those eligible for early voter registration.
5. Identify and address existing opportunity gaps that hinder access to civic learning opportunities for students whose families are experiencing poverty, students who are multilingual, and students of color.
6. Align with recommendations of the Educating for American Democracy Act and partner with nonprofit organizations focused on youth Civic engagement and voter registration.

BACKGROUND

Young people vote at numbers far lower than their older counterparts. Among Washington registered voters, significantly fewer 17–24-year-olds are registered to vote compared to any other age group (Table 1). This means that young voters are significantly underrepresented as a voting bloc. Many of the world’s pressing issues, including those that are environmental or economic, disproportionately affect young people.



“Young people [...] are less likely to vote and are less interested in political discussion and public issues than either their older counterparts or young people of past decades.” (Herczog, 2016).

Numerous studies indicate that young people are less likely to vote, belong to civic organizations, or engage in political discussions and public issues than young people in the past, or than their older counterparts (Center for Information and Research for Civic Learning and Engagement, 2003). Voting acts as a “civic barometer” and illustrates the work that needs to be completed to prepare the next generation to “become informed, engaged citizens” (Herczog, 2016).

For young people to be civically engaged through elections and other opportunities, they need to be given the knowledge and resources to do so effectively. Providing materials and resources for educators to teach about elections, and register young people to vote, promises to yield an increase in youth voter turnout.

Table 1: Registered Voters by Age Group, as of March 1, 2022

Gender	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	Unknown	Total
Female	209,473	401,035	410,117	368,450	402,870	626,554	1	2,418,500
Male	208,135	395,591	397,279	358,075	378,360	539,305	3	2,276,748
Unknown	15,151	24,104	18,080	12,176	12,171	12,230	1	93,913
Total	432,759	820,730	825,476	738,701	793,401	1,178,089	5	4,789,161

Source: Office of Secretary of State, March 2022.

To address this problem, the 2018 Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 1513 to increase youth voter participation. HB 1513 established the opportunity for students to register to vote when they obtain their driver’s license from the Department of Licensing (DOL). In addition, it established the Future Voter Program (#FutureVoter), to be administered by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State’s Future Voter program allows 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote through the Secretary of State’s online portal or by paper ballot. On their 18th birthday, young people who pre-registered are then automatically registered to vote in the State of Washington. In addition, new legislation (effective January 1, 2022), provides 17-year-olds who will be 18 by the November General Election the opportunity to vote in the August Primary.

HB 1513 also requires public schools to provide instructional time to teach about elections and give students an opportunity to register to vote. Because most juniors and seniors in Washington are enrolled in U.S. History, Government, Civics, and World Historical Problems courses, their instructors are in a unique position to provide guidance directly to students as they participate in civic life through voter registration and other opportunities. OSPI works with the OSOS to provide resources and materials to educators to assist them in this endeavor.

OSOS collects data to track how many new voters are registered through both DOL and the #FutureVoter program, which is highlighted and supported on TAGCD.

YEARLY PROGRESS

The disruption of COVID-19 and the absence of a presidential election to drive interest in voting resulted in a decrease in future voter registrations, compared to [2021](#), on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day, as well as in the days before and after. Please see Appendix A: Early Voter Registrations, by County for 2021 statewide data.

During the month of January 2021, 3,059 future voters were registered by OSOS. Data indicates that materials and resources shared prior to TAGCD had a positive effect on registration numbers with steady increases in Future Voter registrations (Appendix B). A total of 45,717 new youth voter registrants, 17- or 18-year-olds, were registered or preregistered between March 1, 2021 and February 28, 2022. Appendix A details how many were registered at the DOL and how many were registered by #FutureVoter.

Implementation Challenges

OSPI, in partnership with OSOS, will continue to assess and mitigate challenges associated with implementation. Direct communication with social studies teachers statewide, especially in smaller districts, continues to be a challenge. OSPI will continue to seek new methods of disseminating information, resources, and materials that are effective in reaching educators across the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

OSPI makes the following recommendations to the legislature to continue increasing youth voter registration:

1. Increase resources to support professional development that introduces teachers and administrators to materials and resources available to teach elections from kindergarten through 12th grade and register students to vote on TAGCD.
2. Provide funding for postage-free registration forms so students without opportunities to apply online can mail in paper registrations easily and without financial hardship.
3. Continue to support the identification and creation of engaging materials to support teaching about elections and voting for grades K–12.
4. Shift data collection to include 16-year-olds in registration data to include the full spectrum of those eligible for early voter registration.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

Temperance and Good Citizenship Day, along with Constitution Day (September 19), continue to be important days to provide educators the opportunity to discuss the importance of voting and to provide students the opportunity to register.

Along with the OSOS, OSPI will continue to build capacity for successful registration of students during TAGCD through the following:

- Identification and creation of engaging materials to support teaching about elections and voting in K–12 public schools to add to current materials and resources found on [OSPI's website](#).
- Development of strong partnerships between educational service districts and school districts with both the Office of Secretary of State and county auditors to increase involvement in schools, with a focus on rural and low socio-economic status regions.
- Identification of school districts and regions where early registration is high, and engagement of educators to determine best practices for increasing student engagement and registration.
- Identification and addressing of existing opportunity gaps that hinder access to civic learning opportunities for students from historically marginalized communities.
- Alignment with recommendations of the Educating for American Democracy Act and partnering with nonprofit organizations focused on youth civic engagement and voter registration.

REFERENCES

Center for Information and Research for Civic Learning and Engagement. (2003). *The Civic Mission of Schools*. Carnegie Corporation; New York, New York. Retrieved from: <https://www.civxnow.org/sites/default/files/resources/2003%20Civic%20Mission%20of%20Schools.9357eed9.pdf>

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Early Voter Registrations, by County

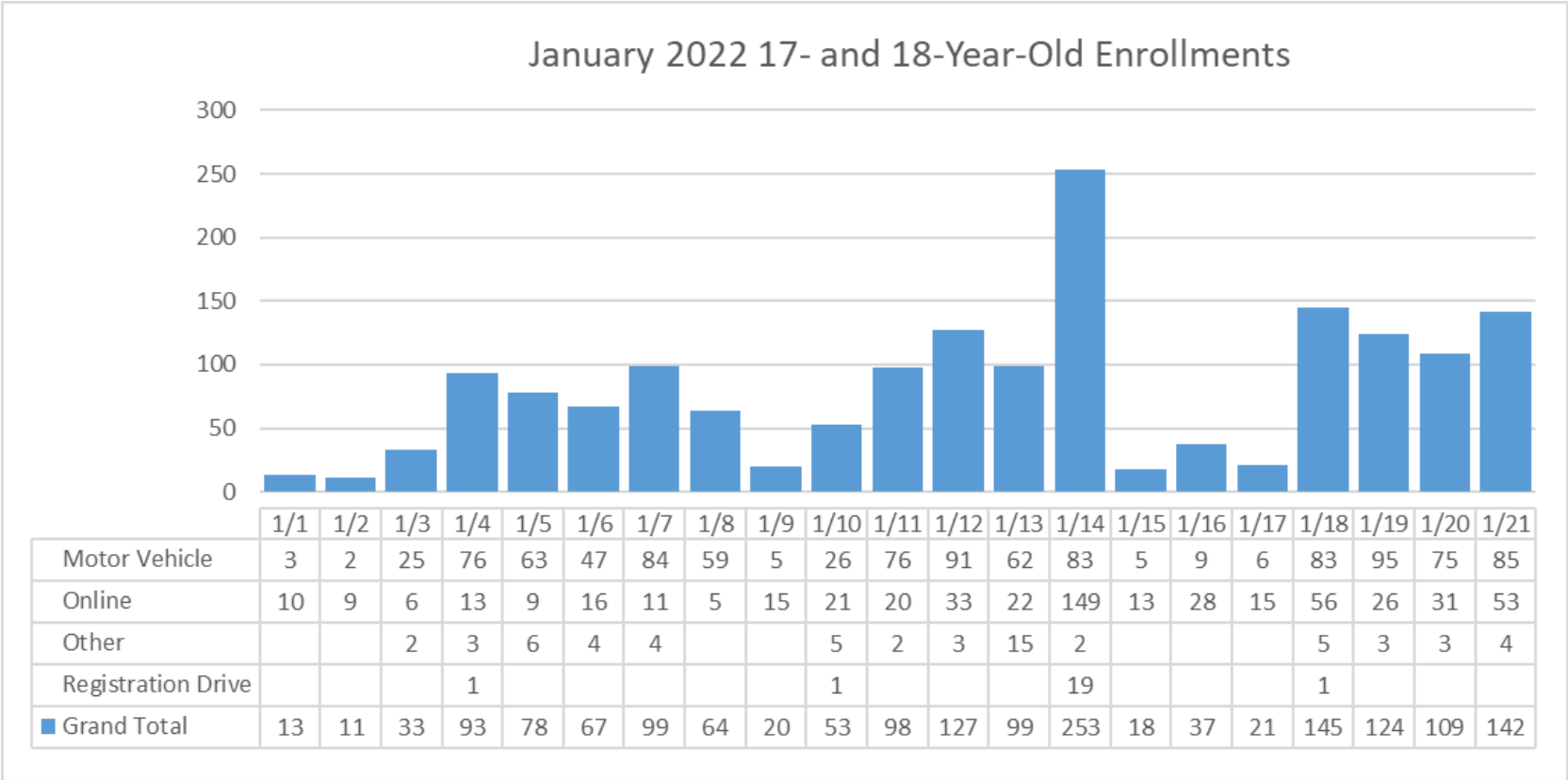
17- and 18-year-old pre-registrations/registrations by county (3/1/21–2/28/22)

County	Department of Licensing	Future Voter
Adams	85	23
Asotin	127	15
Benton	1,151	311
Chelan	413	60
Clallam	312	48
Clark	2,700	659
Columbia	14	2
Cowlitz	502	93
Douglas	255	29
Ferry	25	8
Franklin	685	63
Garfield	6	8
Grant	404	99
Grays Harbor	332	44
Island	337	73
Jefferson	111	21
King	9,254	3,093
Kitsap	1,259	267
Kittitas	178	101
Klickitat	51	25
Lewis	440	89
Lincoln	49	16
Mason	290	43
Okanogan	170	21
Pacific	86	13
Pend Oreille	61	22
Pierce	4,575	1,311
San Juan	41	18
Skagit	476	202
Skamania	28	21
Snohomish	4,134	1,192
Spokane	2,757	677
Stevens	238	41
Thurston	1,490	270
Wahkiakum	14	3
Walla Walla	372	52
Whatcom	817	422
Whitman	186	29

County	Department of Licensing	Future Voter
Yakima	1,469	339
Total	35,894	9,823

Appendix B: January 2022 Future Voter Registrations

Data provided by OSOS Voter Education & Outreach



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