



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# Temperance and Good Citizenship Day—Voter Registration

*2020*

**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” (Revised Code of Washington [RCW] 28A.230.150). 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. Despite weather-related school closures, Temperance and Good Citizenship Day school events registered 612 future voters on January 16, 2020. Between May 1, 2019 and February 29, 2020:

- Secretary of State registered 35,561 young adults (17- and 18-year-olds)
- Department of Licensing registered 26,094 young adults (17- and 18-year-olds)

These efforts resulted in a total of 61,655 17- and 18-year-olds newly registered to vote in Washington state in that 10-month period, exceeding the goal.

OSPI and OSOS will continue to make progress toward meeting the statewide goal of 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 identification and creation of engaging materials to support teaching about elections and voting 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.

# BACKGROUND

Young people vote at numbers far lower than their older counterparts do. Among Washington registered voters, significantly fewer 17–24-year-olds are registered to vote compared to any other age group (Table 1). This means 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).

In order 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**

Gender	17–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	Unknown	Total
Female	191,966	383,601	372,581	361,513	411,656	559,093	1	2,279,871
Male	183,941	362,449	351,626	346,403	379,904	482,315	2	2,106,640
Unknown	3,603	2,722	2,147	1,754	1,749	1,988	-	14,013
Total	379,510	748,282	726,354	709,670	793,309	1,043,396	3	4,400,524

**Source:** Office of Secretary of State, April 2019.

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. In addition, it established the Future Voter Program, to be administered by the Secretary of State. The 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.

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. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) works with the Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS) to provide resources and materials to educators to assist them in this endeavor.

The Secretary of State collects data to track how many new voters are registered through both the Department of Licensing and the Future Voter program, which is highlighted and supported on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day.

## YEARLY PROGRESS

Both Future Voter and Department of Licensing early voter registration opportunities have had a positive impact on registering 17- and 18-year-olds to vote (see Appendix A: Early Voter Registrations, by County). In 2020, Washington state saw a measurable increase in youth voter registrations on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day, as well as small increases in the days before and after.

During the month of January 2020, 4,982 future voters were registered by OSOS. This data includes a dramatic spike of 612 Future Voter registrants on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day and 322 Future Voter registrants on the following day (Appendix B). Total new youth voter registrants are depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2: 17- and 18-year-olds Newly Registered to Vote (5/1/19 – 2/29/20)**

Department of Licensing	Future Voter
26,094	35,561
<b>Total 17- and 18-year-olds newly registered: 61,655</b>	

## Implementation Challenges

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

Second, many districts had weather delays and closures on the January 16 launch day, which may have impacted the number of students who were provided an opportunity to register. As OSPI and OSOS continue to develop curriculum and materials it will be important to provide guidance to teachers for alternative times and ways to meet the intent of this legislation.

Overall, educator feedback about the experience was positive. Educators noted that registration was easy and convenient, and that their students appreciated the opportunity to register with assistance in the classroom rather than navigating the process on their own.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) makes the following recommendations 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 Temperance and Good Citizenship Day.
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 Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will continue to build capacity for successful registration of students during Temperance and Good Citizenship Day 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 [OER Commons Elections and Voting Teacher Resources](#) webpage.
- Development of strong partnerships between educational service districts and school districts with both the Office of the 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.

# 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: [CivXNow.org](http://CivXNow.org)

Herczog, Michelle. (2016). *The California Democracy School; Civic Learning Initiative: A Blueprint for Institutionalizing Civic Learning to Prepare ALL Students for Civic Life in the 21st Century*. Los Angeles County Office of Education; Los Angeles, CA. Retrieved from: [LACOE.edu](http://LACOE.edu)

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Early Voter Registrations, by County

County	DOL	Future Voter
(blank)	262	-----
Adams	69	57
Asotin	90	51
Benton	898	841
Chelan	274	336
Clallam	266	179
Clark	2083	2,005
Columbia	12	17
Cowlitz	331	521
Douglas	168	154
Ferry	27	24
Franklin	485	260
Garfield	2	37
Grant	281	293
Grays Harbor	308	216
Island	197	302
Jefferson	99	96
King	5939	11,302
Kitsap	1031	1,339

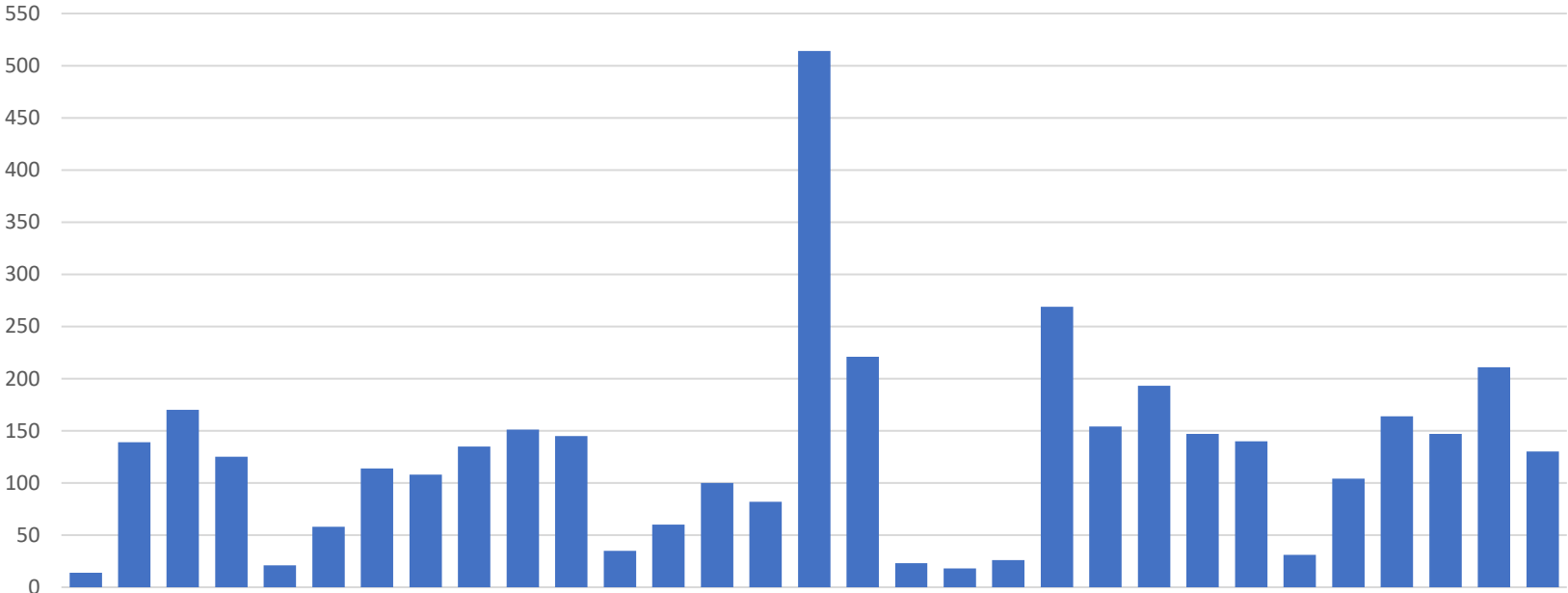


<b>County</b>	<b>DOL</b>	<b>Future Voter</b>
Kittitas	118	329
Klickitat	45	69
Lewis	287	312
Lincoln	35	54
Mason	222	262
Okanogan	98	194
Pacific	43	83
Pend Oreille	40	87
Pierce	3261	3,880
San Juan	38	86
Skagit	410	602
Skamania	35	37
Snohomish	3309	3,595
Spokane	2012	3,005
Stevens	215	219
Thurston	1041	1,692
Wahkiakum	12	26
Walla Walla	297	240
Whatcom	730	1,577
Whitman	153	219
Yakima	871	963

# Appendix B: January 2020 Future Voter Registrations

January 2020 Future Voter Registrations

Total = 3,949 Future Voters



	1/1	1/2	1/3	1/4	1/5	1/6	1/7	1/8	1/9	1/10	1/11	1/12	1/13	1/14	1/15	1/16	1/17	1/18	1/19	1/20	1/21	1/22	1/23	1/24	1/25	1/26	1/27	1/28	1/29	1/30	1/31
Motor Vehicle	8	130	147	120	9	38	87	86	84	94	131	13	31	64	66	49	79	13	11	9	124	95	82	104	128	15	51	103	81	81	98
Registration Drive	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	8	7	0	0	2	0	0	74	28	0	0	0	91	21	54	0	0	0	0	19	42	93	1
Online	5	7	7	5	12	11	14	18	36	44	14	22	20	34	15	382	103	10	7	17	29	30	47	26	12	16	27	14	14	30	18
Mail	0	0	1	0	0	4	5	2	7	6	0	0	6	1	1	7	6	0	0	0	11	7	8	11	0	0	21	26	9	4	6
Other	1	2	1	0	0	5	8	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	5	0	0	0	14	1	2	6	0	0	5	2	1	3	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>130</b>

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