



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# UPDATE: Temperance and Good Citizenship Day—Voter Registration

*2024*

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

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every year on January 16, Washington public schools participate in Temperance and Good Citizenship Day (TAGCD) in accordance with Revised Code of Washington (RCW) [28A.230.150](#). On this day, Washington social studies teachers must provide instructional time for high school seniors 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.

The Legislature established an annual goal of 50,000 new voter registrations of 17- and 18-year-olds. In January 2024, 2,631 young adults were registered in total. Between March 1, 2023, and March 1, 2024:

- OSOS registered 46,544 young adults (17- and 18-year-olds)
- Department of Licensing (DOL) registered 36,605 young adults (17- and 18-year-olds)
- Between the Future Voter and Motor Voter registrations, 9,939 young people pre-registered to vote in Washington state in the 12-month period.

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

1. Continue to increase resources to support professional development for educators and ensure that TAGCD is recognized and implemented in districts across Washington state.
2. Continue to identify and create engaging materials to support teaching about elections and voting in K–12.
3. Work with OSOS, the Civic Learning Council, and other civic partners to identify and address existing opportunity gaps that hinder access to civic learning opportunities for students from historically marginalized communities.
4. Build upon communication channels and networks to ensure maximum participation, including earlier notification and resource sharing.
5. Consider shifting Future Voter program events to occur near to the November elections in alignment with classroom activities between September and November.

# BACKGROUND

Young people continue to vote in numbers far lower than their older counterparts. Among Washington registered voters, significantly fewer 17- to 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.

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 [CIRCLE], 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. A recent study has shown that allowing young people to pre-register at the age of 16 or 17, so that they are automatically registered on their 18th birthday, increases youth voter turnout significantly (Fowler, 2017). In addition, teaching about elections through experiential means has a positive impact on students’ ability to cast an informed vote, to communicate with others about politics, and to feel that their vote and civic contributions matter (Syvertsen et al. 2009). Finally, it is important that young voters learn that they have a place in civic life and a key role to play in democracy as they bring a diverse perspective and experiences to school and life (CIRCLE, 2021).

Providing materials and resources for educators to engage students in opportunities to practice civic participation, understand the importance of elections, and register to vote, promises to increase youth voter participation.

**Table 1: Registered Voters by Age Group, as of March 1, 2024**

Gender	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	Total
Female	206,697	388,489	415,274	366,535	386,523	662,601	2,426,119
Male	210,363	385,737	405,710	356,283	366,699	569,270	2,294,062
Unknown	16,542	24,979	20,428	13,399	13,741	16,630	105,719
<b>Total</b>	<b>433,602</b>	<b>799,205</b>	<b>841,412</b>	<b>736,217</b>	<b>766,963</b>	<b>1,248,501</b>	<b>4,825,900</b>

**Source:** Office of Secretary of State, March 2024.

## House Bill 1512

To address low youth voter turnout, the 2018 Legislature passed House Bill 1513 (HB 1513) that aims 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 DOL. In addition, it established the Future Voter Program, to be administered by OSOS. The Future Voter program allows 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote through the OSOS' 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, recent 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 11th and 12th graders in Washington are enrolled in U.S. History, Government, Civics, and Contemporary World 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 Future Voter, which is highlighted and supported on TAGCD.

# YEARLY PROGRESS

As 2024 is another presidential election year, there is sustained youth voter registration this year and year-over-year. While Washington did not meet the goal of 50,000 youth voter registrations, there was a consistent number of registrations this year compared with previous years. There was measured increase in Future Voter registrations on TAGCD, as well as the days immediately preceding and following it. Please see Appendix A for data broken up by county.

In January 2024, 2,631 young adults were registered in total. Data indicates that materials and resources shared prior to TAGCD had a positive effect on registration numbers with steady increases in Future Voter registrations (see Figure 1). Total new youth voter registrants are depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2: 17- and 18-year-olds pre-registered/registered to vote (3/1/23 – 2/29/24)**

Early Voter Registration	17- and 18-year-olds pre-registered/registered
Department of Licensing	36,605
Future Voter Program	9,939
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46,544</b>

**Source:** Office of Secretary of State, March 2024.

# CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

TAGCD continues to be an important day to provide educators the opportunity to discuss the importance of voting and to provide students the opportunity to register. OSOS has demonstrated their commitment to supporting this work for Youth Voter Education.

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

- Identification, creation, and advertising 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 (ESDs) and school districts with both the OSOS and county auditors to increase involvement in schools, with a focus on rural regions and regions identified as low-income.
- Continued 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.
- Provide feedback to the legislature for ongoing efforts to maximize Future Voter legislative initiatives.
- Work with OSOS, the Civic Learning Council, TVW, and other civic partners to identify and address existing opportunity gaps that hinder access to civic learning opportunities for students.

## Recommendations

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

1. Continue to increase resources to support professional development for educators and ensure that TAGCD is recognized and implemented in districts across Washington state.
2. Continue to identify and create engaging materials to support teaching about elections and voting in K–12.
3. Work with OSOS, the Civic Learning Council, and other civic partners to identify and address existing opportunity gaps that hinder access to civic learning opportunities for students from historically marginalized communities.
4. Build upon communication channels and networks to ensure maximum participation, including earlier notification and resource sharing.
5. Consider shifting Future Voter program events to occur near to the November elections in alignment with classroom activities between September and November.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Early Voter Registrations, by County

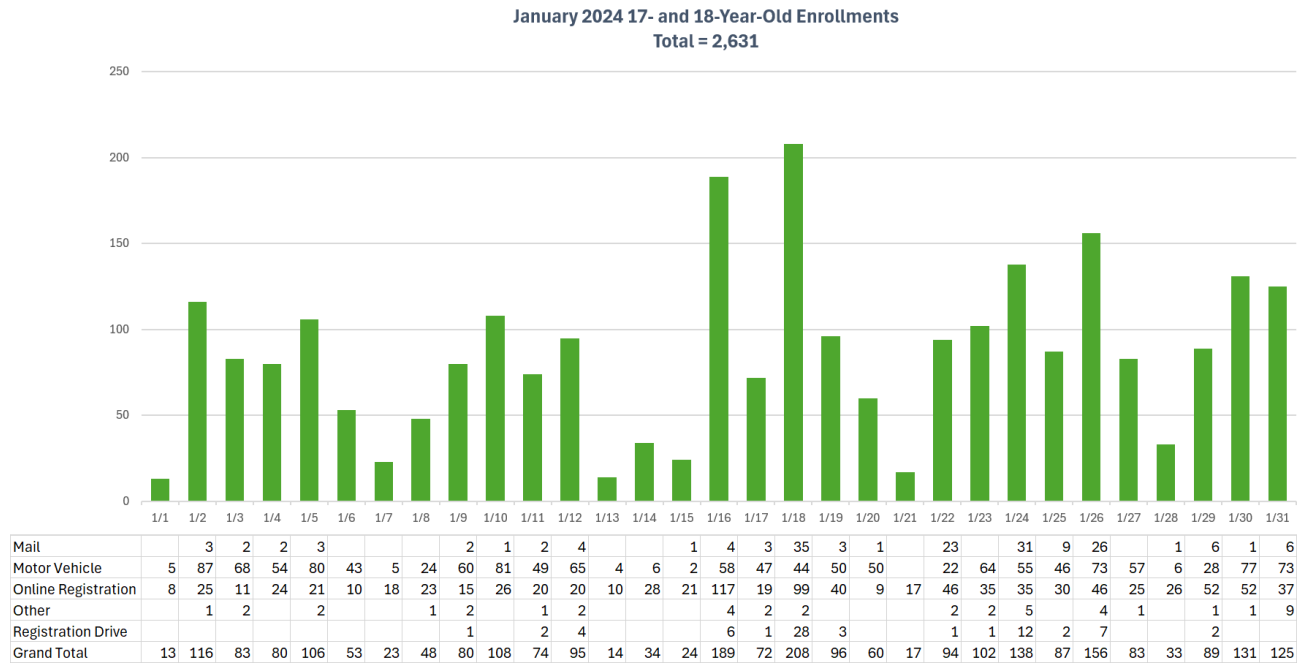
Table 3: 17- and 18-year-old pre-registrations/registrations by county (3/1/23 – 2/29/24)

County	DOL	Future Voter
Adams	83	50
Asotin	83	14
Benton	1,105	186
Chelan	486	56
Clallam	289	44
Clark	2,949	687
Columbia	20	4
Cowlitz	619	175
Douglas	261	26
Ferry	24	3
Franklin	629	78
Garfield	1	0
Grant	371	181
Grays Harbor	359	73
Island	344	88
Jefferson	125	25
King	9,725	3,036
Kitsap	1,267	463
Kittitas	129	95
Klickitat	43	43
Lewis	381	88
Lincoln	67	22
Mason	360	44
Okanogan	158	57
Pacific	89	30
Pend Oreille	79	26
Pierce	4,775	1,246
San Juan	49	21
Skagit	459	192
Skamania	34	18
Snohomish	4,052	955
Spokane	2,655	528
Stevens	275	36
Thurston	1,516	396
Wahkiakum	27	5
Walla Walla	318	37

Whatcom	1,125	436
Whitman	151	41
Yakima	1,126	434
Total	36,605	9,939

# Appendix B: Future Voter Registrations

## Figure 1: 17- and 18-year-old Enrollments



**Source:** Data provided by OSOS Voter Education & Outreach

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