



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Temperance and Good Citizenship Day—Voter Registration

2021

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” (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. This year we had two historical moments directly influencing Temperance and Good Citizenship Day (TAGCD) in starkly different ways. First, this TAGCD followed a presidential election year that brought record numbers of Washingtonians ages 18–24 to both register and vote in the November election. Conversely, the additional challenge of remote learning in most districts in Washington state made student engagement with curriculum and materials for TAGCD challenging. Temperance and Good Citizenship Day school events registered 612 future voters on January 16, 2020. Between March 1, 2020 and February 28, 2021:

- Secretary of State registered 48,981 young adults (17- and 18-year-olds)
- Department of Licensing registered 20,674 young adults (17- and 18-year-olds)

These efforts resulted in a total of 69,655 young people pre-registered to vote in Washington state in that ten-month period, exceeding the goal.

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 from historically marginalized communities.

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 2, 2021

Gender	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	Unknown	Total
Female	224,014	415,211	411,657	374,147	416,031	609,929	2	2,450,991
Male	217,685	405,756	396,729	363,038	389,136	525,859	3	2,298,206
Unknown	18,100	26,734	18,292	12,057	11,396	10,045	-	96,624
Total	459,799	847,701	826,678	749,242	816,563	1,145,833	5	4,845,821

Source: Office of Secretary of State, March 2021.

To address this problem, the 2018 Legislature passed House Bill 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.

House Bill 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. OSOS 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 Temperance and Good Citizenship Day.

YEARLY PROGRESS

Both Future Voter and DOL 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). Despite the disruption of COVID-19 to most districts, current data shows Washington state saw a measurable increase in youth voter registrations on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day, as well as in the days before and after.

During the month of January 2021, 3,059 future voters were registered by OSOS. This year TAGCD occurred on a Saturday, however 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). Total new youth voter registrants are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: 17- and 18-year-olds pre-registered/registered to vote (3/1/20–2/28/21)

Early Voter Registration	17- and 18-year-olds pre-registered/registered
Department of Licensing	20,674
Future Voter Program	48,981
TOTAL	69,655

Implementation Challenges

OSPI, in partnership with 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, COVID-19 forced the elimination of in-person instruction for most high schools in Washington for part of the 2019–20 school year, and the entirety of the 2020–21 school year to date. With the loss of in-person instruction, we anticipate that TAGCD likely received less attention than previous years. Despite this, numbers were much higher than anticipated, likely due to student interest in the 2020 presidential election.

RECOMMENDATIONS

OSPI makes the following recommendations to the legislature to support increased youth voter registration:

1. Provide funding to support professional development for teachers and administrators around teaching elections from kindergarten through 12th grade and best practices around student voter registration 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. Amend RCW 28A.230.150 to include 16-year-olds in required data collection to reflect 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 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 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.

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>

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: <https://www.lacoe.edu/Portals/0/Curriculum-Instruction/HSS/Blueprint%20FINAL.pdf?ver=2017-06-02-100013-040>

APPENDICES

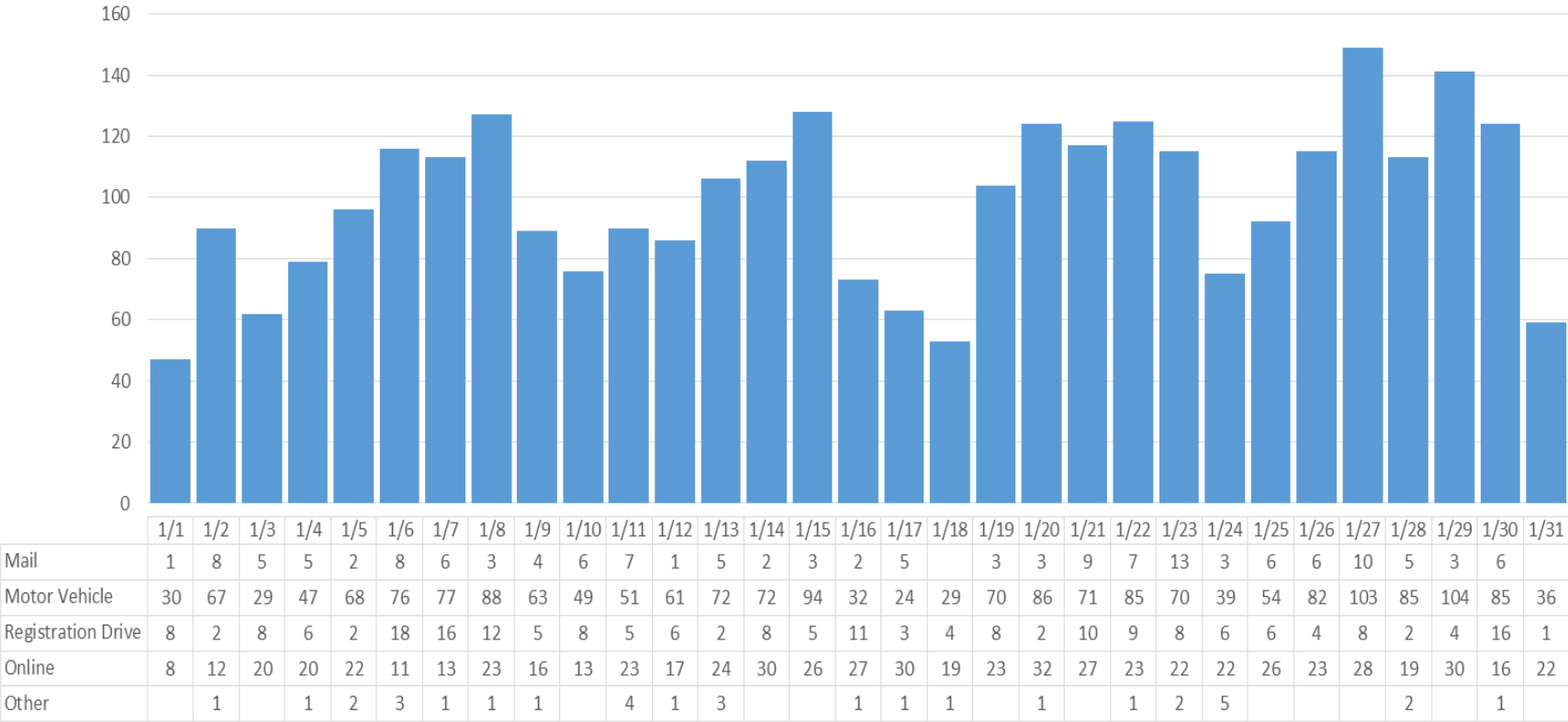
Appendix A: Early Voter Registrations, by County

County	Department of Licensing	Future Voter
Adams	69	57
Asotin	90	51
Benton	898	841
Adams	66	151
Asotin	88	115
Benton	736	1,565
Chelan	242	526
Clallam	148	343
Clark	1,708	3,692
Columbia	6	18
Cowlitz	239	684
Douglas	145	326
Ferry	17	29
Franklin	419	680
Garfield	2	16
Grant	289	618
Grays Harbor	212	351
Island	157	424
Jefferson	65	128
King	5,045	14,221
Kitsap	692	1,816
Kittitas	80	321
Klickitat	34	121
Lewis	242	490
Lincoln	38	81
Mason	140	298
Okanogan	97	232
Pacific	37	113
Pend Oreille	45	72
Pierce	2,559	5,566
San Juan	20	90
Skagit	304	774
Skamania	31	72
Snohomish	2,264	5,524
Spokane	1,882	3,558
Stevens	143	258
Thurston	809	1,759
Wahkiakum	10	24
Walla Walla	149	394

County	Department of Licensing	Future Voter
Whatcom	550	1,645
Whitman	108	343
Yakima	856	1,543
Total	20,674	48,981

Appendix B: January 2020 Future Voter Registrations

January 2021 Future Voter Enrollments (17 and 18 Years Old)
Total = 3,059



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