

LaGuardia Votes!

A Campus Guide to Turn
Out the Vote

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

Introduction

02

Barriers to the Vote

03

History

04

Campus Plan

05

How Do I Vote?

06

How to Register Voters

07

Classroom Script

08

Getting to the Polls

09

For Undocumented People

10

Sources

INTRODUCTION

Who can vote?

Does voting matter?

How do I vote?

What if I don't know how to vote on the issues?

When we turn 18 we gain the right to vote. The right to vote. A right that history classes tell us generations of people have fought and even died for. Voting is meant to be the essential entry point into American citizenship. But does voting really matter? Can our votes make a difference? If voting is essential to citizenship, why are there so many barriers to voting?

Here at LaGuardia many of us have a complicated relationship to voting. As a minority serving institution, we know that our communities have had to fight for the vote. Learning about the efforts made to restrict access to the vote makes us believe that there is power in voting. Why else would those people who hold power try to keep it from those seeking an equal society?

We believe LaGuardians should register and vote. We also want our classmates to learn about the history of voting restrictions, suffrage movements, and how political engagement can make a difference in our communities. This guide is a starting point for encouraging our campus to get to the polls!

BARRIERS TO THE VOTE

We often hear that voting is the most basic form of political participation - the least a person can do for their nation. While we agree with the centrality of voting to civic engagement, these types of comments ignore the many barriers to voting that exist nationwide.

- Time to vote: where voting can only happen on election day and in-person, work and family commitments limit access to the polls.
- Housing instability: lack of a permanent address can limit one's ability to register to vote and prevent participation where voting happens by mail only.
- Felonies: Some states continue to restrict access to the vote for those who have been convicted of felonies, even after completing sentences.
- Being undocumented: Generally, individuals who are not citizens do not have the right to vote, no matter their length of time in and contributions to the country.
- Identification: State level voter ID laws restrict the type of identification voters can use at the polls. As of 2022 21 states require photo IDs, which millions of Americans do not have.
- Voter list maintenance: Arguing the existence of voter fraud, roughly half of states purge voting lists, removing inactive voters. Voters may be unaware and not realize they must then re-register to vote.
- Polling locations: Reduced polling locations, particularly in marginalized communities, creates long lines and further limits access to the vote.

Because of structural inequality in the United States, these restrictions disproportionately impact people of color and those with lower incomes. Non-partisan organizations like the League of Women Voters explain that such restrictions are specifically designed to limit suffrage of targeted groups - people of color, those of certain ages, members of certain political affiliations, etc.

HISTORY

The constitution allows states to determine who can vote and how they can do so. Constitutional amendments, congressional actions, and court rulings have further shaped suffrage.

The nation has always placed limits upon the right to vote and disenfranchised groups have always pushed back upon such restrictions.

Who can vote in the United States changes regularly as a result of social values and political tactics.

In the first decades of our nation's history, voting was restricted to white men with property. Nearly all white adult men could vote by the 1830s. In this same time the absence of clear restrictions allowed some Black men to vote. Increasingly, however, state constitutions specifically banned the Black vote. Throughout, there was a general belief across American culture that women did not have a place in formal political participation.

The Civil War (1861-1865) brought an end to slavery as well as recognizing citizenship (14th Amendment) and suffrage (15th Amendment) for Black men. This opened a brief period when Black men voted and held office in the latter 19th century. As the nation moved on from the war and the federal government lost interest in enforcing these amendments, however, southern states (where the majority of Black Americans lived) all but eliminated Black voting. They used the legal system, threats, and violence to do so. It was not until the civil rights movement in the mid-20th century that widespread Black suffrage returned with the 1965 Voting Rights Act. This law also brought the vote to people who did not speak English.

Significantly, the 15th Amendment added gender to the constitution, restricting the vote to men only. Some women's rights activists refused to support the 15th Amendment because of this. Woman suffrage was established as a priority at the first women's rights conference in 1848, a right that was not achieved nationally until ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Women did gain access to the voting box in some territories and states in the decades prior, mostly white. While we celebrate 1920 as the beginning of women's formal political role in the nation, race and ethnicity continued to restrict suffrage for many.

Native American suffrage came in 1924, Asian American suffrage in 1952, and Black suffrage in 1965. Puerto Rican women continued to fight for universal suffrage until they achieved it in 1935. Further, state barriers to the vote targeting minoritized voters remained until ratification of the 24th Amendment in 1964.

Campus Plan

1. Make voter registration forms available in Admissions, the Registrar's office, The Women's Center, the LGBTQIA Safe Zone Hub, Casa de las Americas, etc.
2. Hold weekly voter registration drives in September and October in the C and E buildings. Computers for online registration can be checked out in the library. If students cannot register at that time, provide the quarter sheets with QR code for registration website.
3. Ask to speak in related classes about the importance of voting. A script is on page 8.
4. Flier around campus! You can make fliers explaining why voting matters to you. Include QR codes that link to voter registration information websites.
5. Partner with History and Political Science courses - design and share "LaGuardia Votes!" pamphlets that include your choice of historical documents and how it speaks to why voting is important to you.
6. Work with the Communications and External Affairs office to invite local politicians to campus events on voting.
7. Host event s where students can discuss what is on the ballot.

How to Register Voters

Who Can Register

US citizens 18 and older can register to vote in their county of residence. Felony convictions do NOT disqualify you from voting in New York State.

How to Register

Registration can be completed online if an individual has a New York State DMV ID: <https://voterreg.dmv.ny.gov/motorvoter/>

Or, individuals can download, complete, and sign the form and return it by mail. Forms are also generally available at libraries, post offices, and other government offices. These forms are available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Bengali: <https://vote.nyc/page/register-vote>

Registration can also be completed in person at Board of Elections offices: <https://vote.nyc/page/contact-us>

To complete the form, the future voter will need:

- New York State permit, ID card, or driver's license from the DMV
- The zip code they have registered with the DMV
- Social Security Number

Plan to Register

To encourage voting on campus, we will:

- Make voter registration forms available in Admissions, the Registrar, The Women's Center, the LGBTQIA Safe Zone Hub, Casa de las Americas, etc.
- Hold weekly voter registration drives in September and October in the C and E buildings. Computers for online registration can be checked out in the library. If students cannot register at that time, provide the quarter sheets with QR code for registration website.
- Ask to speak briefly in our classes about registration and getting to the polls.
- Flier around campus in spaces regularly used by students.
- Partner with History and Political Science courses: design and share "LaGuardia Votes!" pamphlets that include your choice of historical documents and how it speaks to why voting is important to you.

HOW DO I VOTE?

Like practically, how do I vote?

Registering to vote is the first step. If you need to double check that you are registered, you can do so online: <https://vote.nyc/page/am-i-registered> When you register, you can also sign up for absentee voting (voting by mail, with a ballot being mailed to your home).

Before the election, you should receive notification in the mail directing you to your polling location. This is where you can vote on election day. Poll hours in New York are 6am to 9pm, though early hours may vary. You can also vote in person before election day! This location may be different than your election day polling location. Find your early voting location here: <https://findmypollsite.vote.nyc/>

At your polling site, election officials will look up your information and provide you with a paper ballot. Take your ballot to a voting booth and fill in the bubbles completely to vote for the candidates and issues of your choice. You will file your ballot by feeding into an electronic scanner. Make sure to take your "I Voted!" sticker before you leave!

But also, what if I don't know who and what to vote for?

You will receive a voter guide by mail. The government-provided voting guides are non-partisan, meaning they do not take position on the issues or candidates. They are meant to help you understand the issues so that you can make an educated decision at the polls. You can also look up information from non-partisan organizations like When We All Vote, League of Women Voters, or New York Public Library.

If you want guidance based upon your values, you can look up voting guides from your local political parties or organizations that you support.

CLASSROOM SCRIPT

[The below script can be used when presenting in classrooms encouraging people to register and vote. Feel free to customize! Share why you personally think voting is important.]

We have an election coming up on [date]. If you are 18 or older and a United States citizen, you can register to vote, if you're not already. You must be registered 10 days before the election in order to be able to vote. There are different requirements for address changes and absentee ballots. [you can look it up here: <https://www.elections.ny.gov/VotingDeadlines.html>]

Voting matters! And young voters make up about half the voting population - we have the power to shape election outcomes! While it may seem like one vote doesn't matter, decisions can come down to hundreds or even dozens of votes. Yes, your voice matters! And our elected officials are making decisions on issues that will affect us for decades to come - student debt, the environment, health care, voter suppression, LGBTQIA rights, and more. [Consider inserting information about a relevant candidate or issue that will be on the forthcoming ballot.] Young voters are an incredibly diverse group and rights that we care about are currently being stripped away by judges who are appointed by elected officials. While we may not love the available candidates, their political and ideological differences do have a significant impact on our lives.

Getting in the habit of political participation now will help you understand the political system as a whole.

If you are eligible to vote, consider how your vote can support the people in your life who cannot vote. If you are unable to vote, there are other ways to get involved! [See page 12 for suggestions to include here.]

GETTING TO THE POLLS

Make a plan!

You are more likely to vote if you have a plan. So are your loved ones!

Getting yourself to the polls

1. Know what you will be voting on
2. Know your polling location
3. Check your calendar and vote ahead of time if needed
4. Make a plan to go to the polls with family members or friends

Getting loved ones to the polls

1. Talk about it well in advance and often to ensure they are registered and prepared for election day
2. Help them problem solve
3. Share why it matters to you (don't rely on social media!)
4. Ask their plans for election day
5. Follow up the morning of
6. Make plans for election night (I voted stickers required!)

Political Participation for People Who Are Undocumented

You have a right to political participation in the United States, even if undocumented. Here are some methods of civic engagement to consider:

1. Get involved in the campus voter campaign and support others getting to the polls.
2. Research timely political issues and share accurate information with loved ones.
3. Call out and report misleading information on social media; share factual posts, reels, etc.
4. Visit the local office of your elected representatives and speak to them about the issues you care about. Ask what they do to advocate for their undocumented constituents.
5. Attend rallies and demonstrations (be aware of and prepared for potential legal risks).
6. Join a social movement that works on an issue you care about - immigrant rights, the environment, women's rights, LGBTQIA rights, animal rights, etc.
7. Volunteer for a candidate you believe in.
8. Invite an organization you believe in to present on campus (talk to a faculty mentor or advisor about how to do this properly).

Primary Sources

The database [American History, 1493-1945](#) offers a wealth of primary sources (historical documents) about political issues such as the right to vote. Some samples are included here. Consider trying out your own search to find more!

Title: Jane Addams, *Why Women Should Vote* (1912)

- Pamphlet explaining why women should have the right to vote.

Title: *Why women do not want the vote* (1885-1903)

- Collection of anti-suffrage pamphlets, arguing women shouldn't vote.

Title: Woodrow Wilson to Carrie C. Catt re: Women's Suffrage

- Image of letter from President Wilson voicing support for expanding the vote to include women.

Title: William Cullen Bryant to Bradford R. Wood discussing Black suffrage

- Images of handwritten letter, in support of Black suffrage.

Title: Andrew Johnson on Negro Suffrage, His Letter to Gov. Sharkey of Mississippi

- President Johnson describes criteria for Black voters in the Mississippi constitution.

Title: *An Appeal to the colored voters of Hart County*

- Statement by two Black men who were jailed for refusing to vote for Klan members.

Primary Sources

How to vote for woman suffrage amendment, election day, November 6th, 1917

**How To Vote For Woman Suffrage
Amendment, Election Day,
November 6th, 1917**


THE FORM OF BALLOT WILL BE AS FOLLOWS

YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	AMENDMENT No. 1
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shall the proposed amendment to section one of article two of the Constitution, conferring equal suffrage upon women, be approved?

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	AMENDMENT No. 2
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shall the proposed amendment to section ten of article eight of the Constitution, etc.

Vote "YES" on Amendment No. 1
as marked above

N. Y. State Woman Suffrage Party
109 STATE STREET, ALBANY, N. Y.



Primary Sources

Frederick Douglass to Robert Adams regarding African American voters (1888)

Cedar Hill, Dec. 4, 1888
Anacostia, D. C.

My dear Robert Adams,

Thanks for the paper containing
an account of the Fall since Aldermanic
session. I was glad to know the part you
were able to take in that pleasant session.
I was also glad to see that your brother
Charles was also there.

I am a good deal disturbed
with you by the manner called for
the disfranchisement of the colored voters
of the South. The cry about negro supremacy
is like the old cry you and I so often heard
in the old time about the negroes going to
cut their masters throats. No all humbug—
there is nothing in it. Kind regards to
Wm Adams and your self in which Wm
Douglass joins me. Yours very truly
Fred. Douglass