

**CSAC Challenge Award Application  
Contra Costa County Elections Office  
High School "Voter Registration and Participation Kits"**

**Overview:** The Creation of a countywide program to provide each high school in the County a ready-made, easy-to-use kit, allowing any person to hold a voter registration drive.



**Problem or Challenge:** Voter turnout from those ages 18 to 24 is much lower than other age groups in California. Only 8.2 percent in the 18-24 age group voted in the November 2014 election statewide. In Contra Costa County, only 18 percent of those ages 18 to 24 voted in that election. Given this trend and the lack of emphasis on rigorous civics education in schools, our Community Engagement and Education team wanted to find a way to bring our array of resources to our high schools to spark peer-to-peer discussions and enthusiasm about civic life.

**Solution:** Our team created a ready-made "Voter Registration Tool kit," which includes fliers, registration cards, information on registering to vote online, a tablecloth and even some patriotic flair. The toolkits included an "Online Mock Election," which focuses on familiarizing students with voting and the questions they may see. We created the kits to be a part of National Voter Registration Day in late September 2015, and distributed them to each of the roughly 60 high schools in Contra Costa County, including all the comprehensive and continuation public high schools, private high schools, and charter high schools.



We thought it would be easier to participate in an event when you're provided all the tools. Initially, we looked at using the boxes we used for distributing supplies on Election Day, but after talking it through, we felt the kits needed to be simple and easy for the schools to store and re-use.

As the creation of the toolkit evolved, one thing we did to entice some of the younger high-schoolers to participate was encourage 17-year-olds to register to vote. Our office is allowed to hold those registrations so they become active the day the applicant turns 18.

We used the delivery of the kits as opportunities to introduce ourselves, face-to-face, to the civic teachers and principals at the schools and to share how we can be a good resource for them. As a result, we have been invited to give presentations at a few of the schools this spring.

**Budget/Cost/Savings:** Funding for the kits came from the County's General Fund as part of Contra Costa's new Community Education and Engagement Program. We also utilized a lot of old and materials that our office does not use anymore to create the kits.

The initial cost included overhead costs to print fliers and custom "I Registered to Vote today" stickers, transportation costs to drop off the kits

"It was a huge success. The students were very excited to register and learn how to register to vote. It sparked good conversations which is just the start of getting them prepared for the 2016 election."

-Amy Yunis, Civics Teacher  
Alhambra High School, Martinez

and about \$150 for tablecloths and patriotic balloon holders at a dollar store. The large plastic bags that held the kits, pens, and Scotch tape were surplus supplies from our warehouse, and the voter cards and registration card holder were from the Secretary of State's office.

The remaining ongoing costs will be for our Elections staff to deliver more registration forms or to make more kits and deliver them, if requested. Most recently, we had a school request more of registration cards who had distributed their allotment of 60 cards.



**Results:** As of June 1, 2016, 657 students registered to vote using the paper forms. Anecdotally, some teachers told us that they encouraged their students to register online through the Secretary of State website. Additionally, 296 students participated in our "Mock Election Ballot."

The Contra Costa Elections Division continues to see registrations come in long after the day itself. Teachers told us they still use parts of the kit, including the online registration forms.

San Ramon Valley High School in Danville had 45 students register to vote with hard copies, and even more online, teacher Heidi Stepp said.

Concord High School teacher Andrew Shetterly still has voter registration signs from the kit on his wall and window.

"It was great to have all the 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds do it at one shot. Boom," he said. The students really seemed motivated and "all into it" because of the "I Registered to Vote Today" stickers, Shetterly said.

In addition, a handful of other counties inquired about our program's implementation during an elections conference in February and the California Secretary of State's office featured it on their list of Best Practices for High School Voter Education Weeks.



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