

K-State Votes: Campus Community Voter Engagement 2018

Students, Staff and Faculty at K-State who are eligible to vote should participate in all elections, local to national. This is the premise for a coordinated campus effort that began this election year over the summer with registration training of K-State Housing and Dining Services staff by Manhattan/Riley County League of Women Voters. A coalition of campus organizations followed up that training with a fall campaign to increase voter registration and participation by November 6.

K-State Votes is an informal, non-partisan coalition of students, faculty and staff from the Student Governing Association, Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy, Staley School of Leadership Studies, and Housing and Dining Services working with academic departments and other student organizations on voter education, to:

1. Clarify registration requirements in the state of Kansas
2. Promote tools allowing voters to confirm and update their registration status and polling place
3. Encourage use of advanced ballots / early voting as a means of assuring participation
4. Celebrate participation on election day
5. Track and publicize rates of campus participation across election years.

A proposal by the 2017 SGA Governmental Relations Committee Chair Glen Buickerood focused on aligning campus housing and dining registration processes with voter education. Housing and Dining Services adopted the proposal, and designed publicity materials and training of residence hall leaders in August.

Training focused on the requirements of the federal voter registration form, the use of ksvotes.org for online Kansas registration website, and deadlines for registration, early voting, and the election itself. Manhattan/Riley LWV members offered recurring training for anyone wishing to assist voters, and assisted K-State Votes with community outreach events including *Everybody Counts* and *Job Corps* visits.

Members of K-State Votes organized National Voter Registration Day on campus, holding tables at eight sites. An Instagram app linked to the ksvotes.org online registration system was demonstrated, and an estimated 227 new or updated registrations were completed. In addition, the *Kappa Tau* chapter of the *Alphi Phi Alpha* fraternity recorded 104 voter registrations from two weeks of tabling before the October 16 deadline. Increasing publicity from early voting to November 6 focuses on reminding voters of their polling place and encouraging participation.

K-State is a participant in the Tufts University National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE), which collects student voter participation data and tracks engagement with the election process. The 2017 Campus Report for K-State comparing 2012 with 2016 data showed that despite declining campus enrollment, the number of students who voted increased by 1,924. Rates of voting among those who registered also increased by 14.1%. However, K-State's voting rate for registered voters was only 45.4% in 2016, 5% less than the average of other universities in the study. The on-going work of K-State Votes is dedicated to increasing those rates of participation in order to assure a more representative democracy.