



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Temperance and Good Citizenship Day—Voter Registration

2023

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), per Revised Code of Washington (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.

The Legislature established an annual goal of 50,000 new voter registrations of 17- and 18-year-olds. This was the first TAGCD since 2020 where most districts began re-engaging with TAGCD in person. TAGCD school events registered 206 future voters on January 13, 2023. Between March 1, 2022, and February 28, 2023:

- OSOS registered 14,657 young adults (17- and 18-year-olds)
- Department of Licensing registered 38,118 young adults (17- and 18-year-olds)
- Between Future Voter and Motor Voter registrations, a total of 52,775 young people pre-registered to vote in Washington state in the twelve-month period.

This represents a slow but encouraging increase from numbers of pre-registered voters as the state ends COVID-19 restrictions.

OSPI, in consultation with OSOS, expects to meet or exceed 50,000 new voter registrations per year. 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. Provide funding for postage-free registration forms for students who may not have access to materials on a computer.
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. Work with OSOS, the Civic Learning Council, Rhizome, and other civic partners to identify and address existing opportunity gaps that hinder access to civic learning opportunities for students from historically marginalized communities.
6. Align with recommendations of the Educating for American Democracy Act and partner with nonprofit organizations, like the Civic Learning Council, League of Women Voters, Washington State Council for Social Studies, and others youth civic engagement groups.

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 (see Table 1). This means that young voters are significantly underrepresented as a voting bloc.

Table 1: Registered Voters by Age Group, as of March 1, 2023

Gender	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	Total
Female	206,429	392,749	411,029	367,132	393,003	644,606	2,414,948
Male	207,611	388,263	399,997	357,006	370,893	554,244	2,278,014
Unknown	15,982	24,639	19,187	12,695	12,850	14,346	99,699
Total	430,022	805,651	830,213	736,833	776,746	1,213,196	4,792,661

Source: Office of Secretary of State, March 2023.

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, according to the Center for Information and Research for Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) (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. CIRCLE’s findings are that “educational leaders must commit to transforming their schools into institutions where young people don’t just learn about democracy: they practice it, live it, and see its potential to improve communities” (Keisa, et. al., 2022). They must provide materials and resources for educators to engage students in opportunities to practice civic participation, understand the importance of elections, and register to vote to promise increases in youth voter participation.

House Bill 1513

To address low youth voter turnout, the 2018 Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 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. This 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. 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 high school juniors and seniors in Washington are enrolled in U.S. History, Government, Civics, or 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. OSPI works with OSOS to provide resources and materials to educators to assist them in this endeavor.

"Schools are uniquely able to reach nearly all youth in systematic ways, and to identify and address any gaps by race, socioeconomic status, etc. In our extensive research on the relationship between civic education and voting in the 2012 election, we found that teaching about voting increased the likelihood of students (self-reported) voting when they turn 18 by 40%."

CIRCLE, 2020

OSOS collects data to track how many new voters are registered through both DOL and the #FutureVoter program, which is highlighted and supported on TAGCD.

Eighteen- to 29-year-olds voted in record numbers in the 2020 Presidential election and Washington state was in the top 10 nationally in voter turnout for 18–29-year-olds. Additionally, Washington and California stand alone as the only states to increase voter turnout in 18–19-year-olds in the 2020 election (CIRCLE, 2020).

YEARLY PROGRESS

There continue to be challenges to engage students as COVID-19 restrictions end. OSPI is also aware of reduced registrations in absence of a presidential election. Despite these challenges, there were modest increases in youth voter registration year-over-year. There is a steady 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.

During the month of January 2023, OSOS registered 2,151 future voters. This year, because January 16 fell on the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, TAGCD events occurred Friday, January 13. 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 [Appendix B](#)). Total new youth voter registrants are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: 17- and 18-year-olds pre-registered/registered to vote (3/1/22 – 2/28/23)

Early Voter Registration	17- and 18-year-olds pre-registered/registered
Department of Licensing	38,118
Future Voter Program	14,657
TOTAL	52,775

Source: Office of Secretary of State, March 2023.

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. Provide funding for postage-free registration forms for students who may not have access to materials on a computer.
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. Work with OSOS, the Civic Learning Council, Rhizome, and other civic partners to identify and address existing opportunity gaps that hinder access to civic learning opportunities for students from historically marginalized communities.
6. Align with recommendations of the Educating for American Democracy Act and partner with nonprofit organizations, like the Civic Learning Council, League of Women Voters, Washington State Council for Social Studies, and others youth civic engagement groups.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

TAGCD, 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. OSOS has demonstrated their commitment to supporting this work through an increase in staffing 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 and school districts with both the OSOS and county auditors to increase involvement in schools, with a focus on rural and low socio-economic status regions.
- 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.
- Continued work with OSOS, the Civic Learning Council, Rhizome, and other civic partners to identify and address existing opportunity gaps that hinder access to civic learning opportunities for students from historically marginalized communities.
- Continued advocacy for, and alignment with, recommendations of the Educating for American Democracy Act and partnering with nonprofit organizations focused on youth civic engagement and voter registration.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Early Voter Registrations, by County

Table 3: 17- and 18-year-old pre-registrations/registrations by county (3/1/22 – 2/28/23)

County	DOL	Future Voter
Adams	96	20
Asotin	118	28
Benton	1,185	353
Chelan	397	108
Clallam	300	82
Clark	2,856	1,070
Columbia	19	4
Cowlitz	507	193
Douglas	256	62
Ferry	24	4
Franklin	705	114
Garfield	9	0
Grant	436	155
Grays Harbor	345	120
Island	314	145

County	DOL	Future Voter
Jefferson	153	24
King	10,352	4,362
Kitsap	1,295	519
Kittitas	132	101
Klickitat	49	65
Lewis	416	126
Lincoln	54	45
Mason	306	126
Okanogan	163	66
Pacific	87	32
Pend Oreille	79	40
Pierce	4,835	1,864
San Juan	73	32
Skagit	563	229
Skamania	34	42
Snohomish	4,507	1,416
Spokane	2,726	1,133
Stevens	267	61
Thurston	1,612	592
Wahkiakum	24	5
Walla Walla	345	91
Whatcom	1,041	663
Whitman	187	88
Yakima	1,251	477
Total	38,118	14,657

Appendix B: January 2023 Future Voter Registrations

Figure 1: January 2023 17- and 18-Year-Old Enrollments

January 2023 17- and 18-Year-Old Enrollments
Total = 2,151



Mail			1	1	2	1			1	4	2	4	1				4	4	20	7				8	2	1	3	5			4	2
Motor Vehicle	4	2	82	88	57	73	70	4	27	72	68	68	73	3		3	65	74	78	88	67	4	28	81	63	59	74	78	4	30	67	
Online Registration	5	3	16	5	3	11	4	4	15	15	14	14	131	3	14	8	9	23	12	13	5	5	13	12	17	17	12	12	14	12	19	
Other			2	1					4	1	2		1					1	4	1			2	1	4	1			1	3		
Registration Drive					2					1									3	18				2	2	2	1					
Grand Total	9	5	101	95	64	85	74	8	47	93	86	86	206	6	14	11	78	102	117	127	72	9	51	98	87	82	92	90	19	49	88	

Source: Data provided by OSOS Voter Education & Outreach

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