



DEBRA BOWEN

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California's Elections and Education Chiefs Launch 'MyVote California,' Encourage Teen Civic Engagement

SACRAMENTO – To engage teen voters-to-be in the excitement of the February 5, 2008, Presidential Primary Election, Secretary of State Debra Bowen and Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell today launched *MyVote California*, a hands-on civic engagement project for high-school students that will culminate in a statewide mock election in January.

"Too few Californians who are eligible to vote are actually registering and going to the polls," said Secretary Bowen, California's chief elections officer. "To turn that around, I want to inspire people to participate in their democracy. Projects like *MyVote California* help high-school students learn about the democratic process in a hands-on way, which will hopefully help them make voting a habit for years to come."

"Looking at social-networking and video-sharing sites like Facebook and YouTube, it's easy to see young people who are hungry to take part in democracy in new ways, on their own terms," added Bowen. "*MyVote California* is an innovative way for the next generation of voters to start having their say, and to hopefully get them hooked so that they are registering to vote as soon as they turn 18."

Secretary Bowen and Superintendent O'Connell were joined today by Todd Clark of the Constitutional Rights Foundation and dozens of high-school students in kicking off the statewide registration drive for *MyVote California* at C.K. McClatchy High School in Sacramento.

"Exactly one year before we elect the next president of the United States, we are inviting schools to help us bring democracy alive for students by joining *MyVote California*," O'Connell said. "Our goal with *MyVote* is to promote in our schools and in our communities a greater level of participation by students in civic and government affairs."

MyVote California offers high-school students a chance to learn about presidential candidates and public policy issues, and gain first-hand lessons in the importance of voting. Participating schools and teachers can use the mock election as a launching pad for discussions about the candidates and their platforms. They will also have access to a lively, standards-based curriculum selected by the California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools and the LegiSchool Project.

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MyVote California will culminate on January 28 and 29, when students have their say and cast their votes in a mock presidential primary election one week before California's registered voters go to the polls. The Secretary of State will announce the mock election results on January 30.

The Secretary of State and Superintendent of Public Instruction developed *MyVote California* with the help of the Constitutional Rights Foundation, the California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, the Sacramento County Office of Education, and the Orange County Registrar of Voters, among others.

In 2006, 545 schools statewide registered more than 235,000 students to take part in a mock election for governor and other key races.

To learn more about the *MyVote California* youth civic engagement project, go to <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/studentmockelection.htm>.

The last day for eligible Californians to register to vote in the February 5 Presidential Primary Election is January 22. The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot is January 29.

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