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December 31, 2018

Ms. Erika Contreras  
Secretary of the Senate  
State Capitol, Room 3044  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. E. Dotson Wilson  
Chief Clerk of the Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 3196  
Sacramento, CA 95814

VIA EMAIL AND HAND DELIVERY

Dear Ms. Contreras and Mr. Wilson:

Attached is my office's report on student voter registration efforts carried out over the past calendar year, which is required by California Elections Code section 2146(d). If you have any questions about this report, please feel free to contact me at (916) 653-7244.

Sincerely,

ALEX PADILLA  
California Secretary of State

Attachment

cc: Ms. Diane Boyer-Vine  
Legislative Counsel

# **2018 Annual Report to the Legislature on Student Voter Registration**

## **By the California Secretary of State**

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The California Secretary of State submits an annual report to the State Legislature to report on student voter registration efforts pursuant to the Student Voter Registration Act of 2003 (Chapter 819, Statutes of 2003), under the California Elections Code section 2146(d).

It is the Legislature's intent that every eligible high school and college student receive a meaningful opportunity to apply to register to vote and that every California Community College (CCC), California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) give students the opportunity and means to register to vote.

### **Background**

Section 2146 of the California Elections Code requires every CCC, CSU and UC campus that operates an automated class registration system to coordinate with the Secretary of State to permit students, during the class registration process, to apply to register to vote online. In 2012, the Secretary of State's office launched California's online voter registration application at [RegisterToVote.ca.gov](http://RegisterToVote.ca.gov), which allows schools to provide an opportunity to submit an affidavit of voter registration electronically in compliance with this section.

Section 2146 also requires the Secretary of State to provide every high school, CCC, CSU, and UC campus with paper voter registration applications. Between 2004 - 2015, under the Student Voter Registration Act of 2003, the Secretary of State was required to send schools printed voter registration applications based solely on the number of voting age students enrolled. This approach was neither efficient nor effective. In 2008 alone, the Secretary of State's office printed and mailed over 2.5 million student voter registration applications to high school and college campuses, which only yielded 16,489, or 0.66%, completed registration applications.

The new online voter registration system has yielded a more reasonable cost than the previous paper-only implementation. Efforts in 2012 resulted in 23,817 online student registrations. In the same year 24,541 registration applications were mailed to schools, far less than were originally mailed in 2008 prior to Assembly Bill 1446.

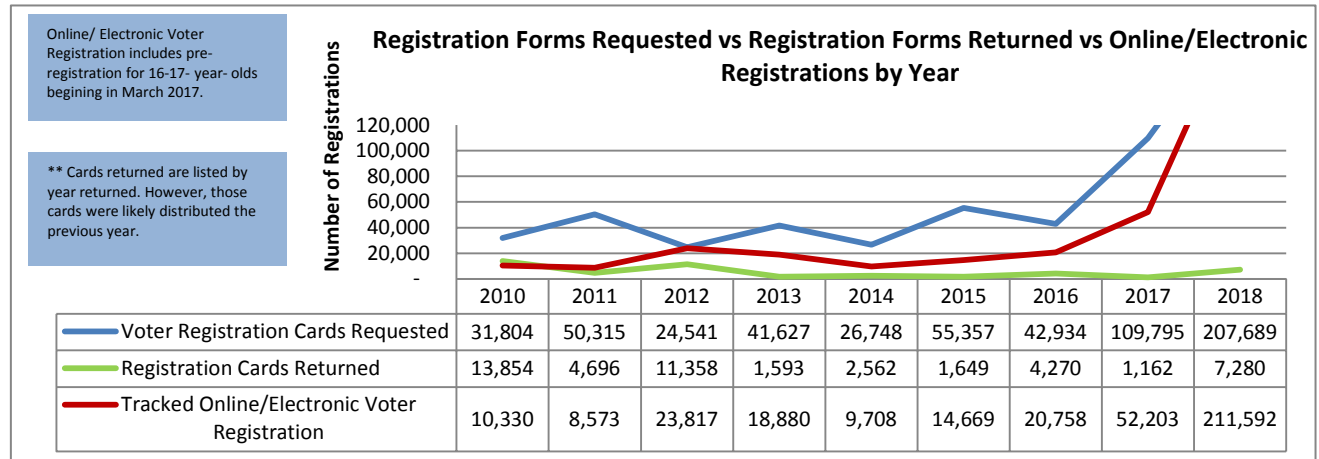
With the passage of Senate Bill 854 (Chapter 481, Statutes of 2007), the requirement to provide printed registration applications for each student was reduced for campuses that had adopted a system of prefilling registration forms with student information. In 2014, the Legislature passed Assembly Bill 1446 (Chapter 593, Statutes of 2014) allowing registration applications to be sent in numbers specifically requested by the campuses and encouraging students to register via the new online system.

Upon certification of the Secretary of State's statewide voter registration database (VoteCal) in September 2016, Assembly Bill 113 (Chapter 619, Statutes of 2014) became effective, allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote<sup>1</sup>. Pre-registrants are automatically converted to registered voters on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Beginning in March of 2017, pre-registration was made available through California's online voter registration application, further expanding access to pre-registration.

### **2018 Results**

As of December 15, 2018, we have a total of 133,336 pre-registered voters in the State of California. Since VoteCal has become the system of record, we have had 281,551 pre-registrations completed in the system. To date, 124,756 of pre-registered students have aged-up and are now registered voters.

Chart 1 – Student Voter Registration Efforts by Year



Since the implementation of California’s online voter registration application, more students are choosing to pre-register/register to vote online<sup>2</sup>. Requests for voter registration cards peaked in 2018, due to increased outreach efforts by the Secretary of State and a historical mid-term Election. Completed paper voter registrations yielded a low 3.5%.

With the increasing trend of students going online to pre-register/register to vote, the Secretary of State is actively encouraging high schools to provide a link to the Secretary of State’s online voter registration application at [RegisterToVote.ca.gov](http://RegisterToVote.ca.gov) on their school website and in the parent/student newsletters and other materials. The linked website is virtually identical to the site created for the CCC, CSU, and UC campuses under Section 2146. The Secretary of State has the ability to track all registrations by high school or by college as long as the campus where the student registered ordered the registration cards through the Secretary of State. Though trends are positive in terms of student engagement and online registration, it is difficult for the Secretary of State’s office to fully assess student registration efforts because some students may also register to vote online using other tools such as TurboVote. TurboVote is made available by Democracy Works, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization.

Each year the Secretary of State contacts each high school, CCC, CSU, UC, and private university in California to assess their voter registration needs. In 2018, of the 928 responses from high schools, 713 requested a total of 159,914 paper voter registration applications. Of the 185 responses at the college level, 112 requested a total of 25,585 paper voter registration applications. A combined total of 207,689 paper voter registration applications were mailed to high schools and colleges in California.

<sup>1</sup> This statewide voter registration database is the official system of record for voter registration in California. It is equipped with the ability to track voter registration in conjunction with all California counties’ election management systems.

<sup>2</sup> Prior to the Secretary of State launching fully online voter registration in September of 2012, the Secretary of State’s website provided printable registration applications which required applicants to print, sign, and submit via mail. An electronic record of the application was automatically transmitted to the county elections official.

Also in 2018, the number of trackable voter registrations for students amounted to 218,872<sup>3</sup>. These include: 7,280 completed paper applications submitted by students from registration cards provided to schools, 8,644 registrations through the voter registration link provided on college class registration databases, and 202,948 pre-registrations through the Secretary of State website.

The Secretary of State also hosts the California Students Vote project, a project in partnership with the California Lieutenant Governor and nonprofit organizations, which aims to increase civic engagement and voter participation among California college students. The Secretary of State also encouraged campuses to engage their student in the democratic process by conducting a College Ballot Bowl allowing all California colleges to participate in a friendly competition for the highest number of student body registered to vote.

In 2018, the Secretary of State partnered with the California Department of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, to promote and coordinate a Student Mock Election throughout the state and High School Voter Education weeks designated in the last two weeks of April and September. In 2018 we had 477 schools request materials to conduct their Student Mock Election. Our office provided ballots, Student Voter Information Guides, and other materials to ensure a successful 2018 Student Mock Elections at participating schools. High School Voter Education Week sparked events at high schools all over California.

The Secretary of State's voter outreach effort in high schools and colleges focuses on encouraging students to register and to educate them on the importance of voting in all local, statewide and federal elections. Our partnership efforts with high schools and colleges continue to include offering voter registration cards, guides, posters and other materials. We encourage participation in serving as poll workers and holding voter registration drives.

Overall in 2018, California saw a significant increase of student pre-registrations. We anticipate that these numbers will likely quadruple for the year 2020. Students are engaged in the process and actively participating as they build excitement for the 2020 Presidential Election. While there were significant increases in the number of registration applications requested by high schools, the focus moving forward will be on online pre-registration through high schools using the voter registration link rather than paper forms, but we will continue to provide voter registration forms as schools request them.

In 2018 the Secretary of State designated all CCC, CSU and UC campus offices for students with disabilities as a National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) agencies, requiring all 114 CCC, 23 CSU and 10 UC campuses to assist with voter registration efforts. In 2019, we will conduct regional training to college campuses, provide direct links to register online and provide materials to ensure the success of the designation.

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<sup>3</sup> The total number reflects registrations of students that are tracked by VoteCal based on registration applications mailed to schools by the Secretary of State, completed online registrations through school systems, and general online pre-registration through the Secretary of State's website.

The Secretary of State will continue to work with high schools and colleges to increase efforts in serving their student population. We will improve registration processes through evolving technology to encourage online registration. The Secretary of State remains committed to providing training, educational materials and increased outreach efforts to California's entire high school and college student population.

Attachment A reflects voter registration data for 2018 required by the Student Voter Registration Act of 2003, pre-registration, and compares the 2018 data with similar reports provided for the years 2015, 2016 and 2017.

## Attachment A

### 2018 STUDENT VOTER REGISTRATION

**Figure 1:** The number of students who have completed a voter registration application online under the program California Community College (CCC), California State University (CSU), and University of California (UC) campuses that adopted to comply with Elections Code (EC) section 2146 and pre-registration in 2018 compared to the number of registration applications completed in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Completed Online Voter Registration Applications				
	2018	2017	2016	2015
California Community College	1,736	779	9,238	6,375
California State University	5,862	18	6,348	4,974
University of California	879	259	2,735	1,655
No school identified <sup>4</sup>	167	60	2,437	1,150
Pre-registration <sup>5</sup>	202,948	51,087	-	-
<b>Total Number of Students</b>	<b>211,592</b>	<b>52,203</b>	<b>20,758</b>	<b>14,154</b>

**Figure 2:** The number of student voter registration paper applications mailed to high schools, CCC, CSU, and UC campuses, and the number of paper student voter registration applications that were returned to the Secretary of State in 2018.

Number of Student Voter Registration Applications Requested				
	2018	2017	2016	2015
High School Campuses <sup>6</sup>	159,914	86,775	36,034	31,832
CCC Campuses	24,650	12,070	6,900	23,425
CSU Campuses	8,300	400	0	0
UC Campuses	9,100	8,300	0	100
Private College Campuses	5,725	2,250	-	-
<b>Total Number of Student Voter Registration Forms Distributed</b>	<b>207,689</b>	<b>109,795</b>	<b>42,934</b>	<b>55,357</b>

**Figure 3:** The number of student voter registration paper applications returned by students, to the Secretary of State in 2018 compared to the number of paper registration applications completed in 2015, 2016 and 2017. The statistics significantly increase in even numbered years due to statewide elections.

Number of Student Voter Registration Applications Returned				
	2018	2017	2016	2015
Paper Applications Returned to the Secretary of State	7,280	1,162	4,270	1,392

<sup>4</sup> Students are not required to enter school identifying information as part of the voter registration application process.

<sup>5</sup> Pre-registration was not available online until March of 2017 but continues to be very successful.

<sup>6</sup> Additionally, 385 high schools reported that they offered the Secretary of State's online voter registration application to students and staff by placing the link [RegisterToVote.ca.gov](http://RegisterToVote.ca.gov) on the school's website.