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December 31, 2020

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

Ms. Sue Parker
Chief Clerk of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room 3196
Sacramento, CA 95814

VIA EMAIL DELIVERY

Dear Ms. Contreras and Ms. Parker:

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

2020 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE
STUDENT VOTER REGISTRATION
BY THE CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

California Elections Code section 2146(d) requires the Secretary of State to submit an annual report to the California Legislature on student voter registration efforts undertaken by the Secretary of State pursuant to the Student Voter Registration Act of 2003 (Chapter 819, Statutes of 2003). It is the intent of the Legislature that every eligible high school and college student receive a meaningful opportunity to pre-register/register to vote and that every California Community College (CCC), California State University (CSU), University of California (UC), and private college campus give students the opportunity and the means to register to vote.

BACKGROUND

Between the years 2004 and 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 proved to be ineffective. 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. Of the over 2.5 million student voter registration applications mailed, only 16,489 (0.66 percent) were completed and returned to the Secretary of State.

With the passage of Senate Bill 854 (Chapter 481, Statutes of 2007), the requirement to provide printed registration applications for each student was reduced to campuses that had adopted a system of pre-filling registration forms with student information. In 2014, the Legislature passed Assembly Bill 1446 (Chapter 593, Statutes of 2014), which allowed paper registration applications to be sent in numbers specifically requested by these campuses and to encourage students to register via an online platform.

In 2012, the Secretary of State launched California's online voter registration application at RegisterToVote.ca.gov, which allows schools to provide students with the opportunity to register to vote online. This is in compliance with California Elections Code section 2146, which requires every CCC and CSU campus that operates an automated class registration system to coordinate these efforts with the Secretary of State.

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. Pre-registrants are automatically converted to registered voters on their 18th birthday. In March 2017, pre-registration was made available through California's online voter registration application, further expanding access to pre-registration.

In 2016 the Secretary of State—in partnership with then California Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom, now Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis, and three nonprofit organizations—CalPIRG, California Common Cause, and Asian Americans Advancing

Justice—created the California Students Vote Project (CSVP). The California Students Vote Project is a first of its kind partnership in the nation, where all major institutions of higher education in California have solidified commitments to partner with the Secretary of State's office and encourage student civic engagement efforts in order to promote a democracy that is more inclusive of student voices. This includes the University of California (UC), the California State University (CSU), California Community Colleges (CCC), and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU). In 2019, Assembly Bill 963 codified the CSVP into state law, allowing the Secretary of State's Office to continue the mission of engaging California students in the democratic process.

2020 RESULTS

As schools have shifted to distance learning due to the onset of COVID-19, student voter registration methods have also shifted. In 2020, more schools have opted to offer online voter registration, reflecting a decrease in paper registration application requests and returns.

California reached historic voter registration rates this election year. As of 15 days before the November 3, 2020, General Election, 87.87 percent of eligible California residents were registered to vote. This is an increase from 78.04 percent at the same time prior to the 2016 General Election and an increase from election year 2018, which saw a registration rate of 78.16 percent. This increase is reflected in online student voter registration rates as shown in Attachment A.

Student Pre-Registration Trends

16- and 17-year-old student pre-registrations continue to show consistency. In 2020, 162,344 students pre-registered to vote. As of December 2020, there are 122,751 pre-registered voters in California. This is an increase from non-election year of 2019 in which there were 109,795 pre-registered voters by year's end and a slight decrease from 133,336 pre-registered voters at the end of 2018. Overall, 16- and 17-year-old students are continuing to pre-register at a steady rate.

The Secretary of State actively encourages high schools to include a link on their school website to the Secretary of State's online voter registration application at RegisterToVote.ca.gov and to include the link in school outreach and informational materials.

The number of pre-registrations completed and submitted since VoteCal became the system of record in 2016 is 656,077. Of these, 463,536 pre-registered students have "aged-up" and are now registered voters. Overall, efforts by the Secretary of State to expand pre-registration opportunities for 16- and 17-year-olds continue to be successful.

Paper Applications

Every year, the Secretary of State contacts high schools and the campuses of each CCC, CSU, UC, and private college in California to help assess their voter registration needs and to partner with these institutions for outreach events and voter registration efforts. In 2020, the Secretary of State contacted 2,060 high schools and 272 CCC, CSU, UC, and private college campuses.

Of the high schools contacted, 188 schools responded to the Secretary of State's outreach efforts. A total of 141 high schools in California requested and received 36,222 paper voter pre-registration/registration applications from the Secretary of State, while colleges and universities requested and received 21,660 paper voter registration applications. The combined number of voter pre-registration/registration paper applications requested and mailed was 57,882. This amount represents a 72 percent decrease from the 207,689 paper applications requested in 2018 and a 43 percent decrease from the 101,675 paper applications requested in non-election year 2019. This decrease represents a consistent trend of students shifting to online registration applications from paper registration applications. In addition, this decrease reflects schools' shift to remote learning environments this year, due to COVID-19 related policies.

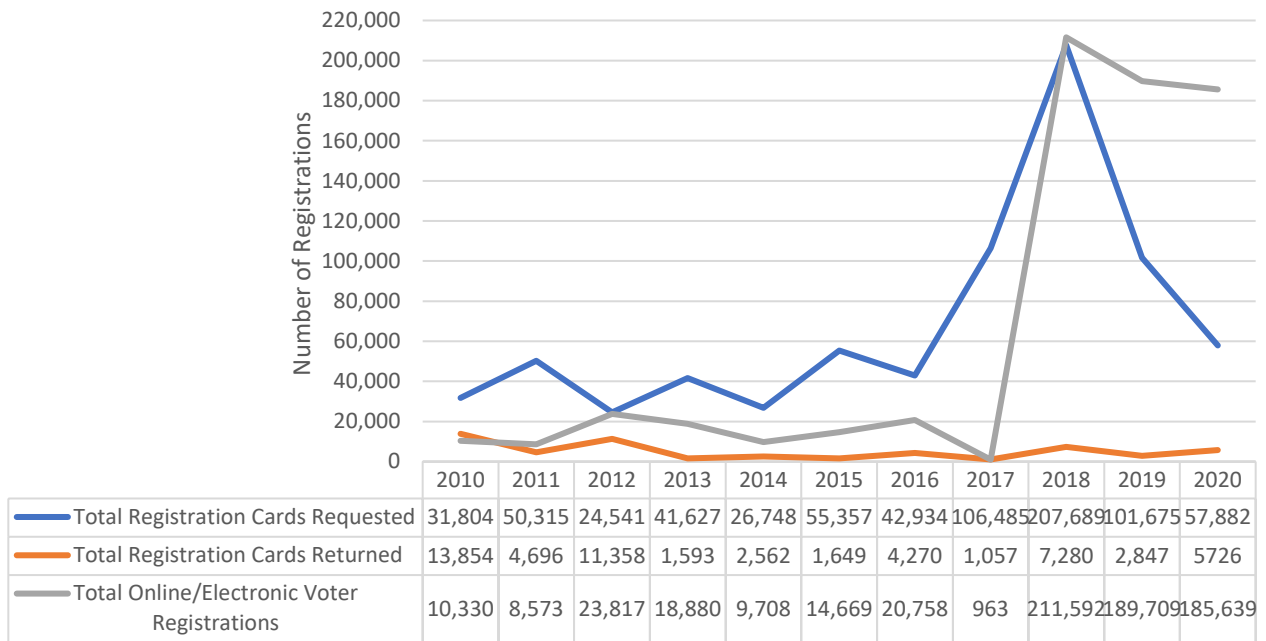
Total Trackable Registrations

The total number of voter registration applications tracked for students, excepting pre-registrations, amounted to 191,365. This figure includes student voter registration applications that are trackable by the Secretary of State, which include: voter registration cards provided to schools and online registrations through voter registration links provided to schools and made accessible via college class registration databases. This figure does not include registrations by students that are not trackable as "student registrations" by the Secretary of State. Students may also register to vote online using other tools such as TurboVote. TurboVote is made available by Democracy Works, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization.

Overall, the Secretary of State anticipates that the number of student pre-registrations/registrations will continue to increase steadily. Students are more engaged in the voting process and actively participating at events within their campuses. The Secretary of State continues to work with high schools, colleges, and universities to improve voter registration services to the student population and to improve registration processes through evolving technology.

Chart 1 – Student Voter Registration Efforts by Year

Registration Forms Requested vs Registration Forms Returned vs Online/Electronic Registrations by Year



VOTER OUTREACH EFFORTS

The Secretary of State's voter outreach efforts in high schools and colleges focuses on encouraging students to pre-register or register to vote and to educate students on the importance of actively participating in all local, statewide and federal elections. The Secretary of State partners with high schools, colleges, and universities across the state to facilitate voter registration training, offer voter registration applications, provide Voter Information Guides, and to respond to any voter registration questions these institutions might have. In addition, the Secretary of State continues to encourage students to become poll workers.

In partnership with the California Department of Education, the Secretary of State designates the last two weeks of April and September of each year as "High School Voter Education Weeks." These weeks include coordinated voter registration education and outreach events.

Student Mock Election

In statewide election years, the Secretary of State, in partnership with the California Department of Education's Superintendent of Public Instruction, promotes and coordinates a "Student Mock Election" across the state. This event includes production and distribution of ballots, Student Voter Information Guides, and other materials that ensure a successful Student Mock Election experience for students in participating schools. This year, teachers were provided with electronic materials to accommodate remote learning environments. Over 400 schools registered to participate and over

40,000 students cast ballots. The Secretary of State will continue this outreach effort in years to come as it has been a consistent instrument for civic student engagement and learning.

California University and College Ballot Bowl

The Secretary of State also conducts the "California University and College Ballot Bowl," which encourages college campuses to engage their students in the democratic process by participating in a friendly competition for the highest number of student body voter registrations. This year, college campus participation for this event doubled from 46 campuses registered in the previous competition year of 2018, to 95 campuses registered in 2020, including all 23 CSU campuses, all 10 UC campuses, 51 CCC campuses, and 11 AICCU campuses. Campuses and partners received regular updates regarding the competition, including multiple social media toolkits and resource guides, for campuses to easily engage students. The competition resulted in over 82,000 students registering to vote throughout the duration of the event, a significant increase from 10,887 students in 2018.

NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT (NVRA)

Congress enacted the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (also known as the "NVRA" and the "Motor Voter Act") to enhance voting opportunities for every American and to make it easier for all Americans to register to vote. In 2018, the Secretary of State designated all CCC, CSU, and UC campus offices for students with disabilities as NVRA agencies. Although this NVRA designation does not fall under the purview of Elections Code section 2146(d), the Secretary of State would like to provide the following information:

In 2019, the Secretary of State conducted regional trainings for these agencies. In 2020, the Secretary of State continued trainings, reaching over 300 staff participants at 102 campus offices for students with disabilities. As designated voter registration agencies, staff at these offices provide students with voter registration opportunities at the time of application for services, renewal of services, or notification of a change in address.

Attachment A

ATTACHMENT A:

Number of Student Voter Registration Applications Requested					
	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
High School Campuses	36,222	73,045	159,914	86,775	36,034
CCC Campuses	1,810	24,465	24,650	12,070	6900
CSU Campuses	11,700	1,705	8,300	400	0
UC Campuses	550	1,500	9,100	8,300	0
Private College Campuses	7,600	960	5,725	2,250	-
Total Number of Student Voter Registration Forms Distributed	57,882	101,675	207,689	109,795	42,934

Table 1: The number of student voter registration paper applications requested and mailed to high schools, CCC, CSU, UC, and private college campuses by the California Secretary of State by year from 2016 to 2020.

Completed Online Voter Registration Applications					
	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
California Community College	50,094	876	1,736	779	9,238
California State University	38,865	1,133	5,862	18	6,348
University of California	15,396	199	879	259	2,735
No school identified	81,284	94	167	60	2,437
Pre-registration	162,344	165,113	202,948	51,087	-
Total Number of Students	347,983	167,415	211,592	52,203	20,758

Table 2: The number of students who have completed a voter registration application online at California campuses in compliance with California Elections Code section 2146 from 2016 to 2020.