



**SHIRLEY N. WEBER, Ph.D.**

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

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December 30, 2021

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Shirley N. Weber'.

SHIRLEY N. WEBER, Ph.D.  
California Secretary of State

Attachment

Cc: Ms. Cara L. Jenkins  
Legislative Counsel

**2021 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 on or before January 1 of each year, an annual report to the California Legislature on student voter registration statistics and 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 Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) 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.

### Online Voter Registration

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

### Pre-Registration

Upon certification of the Secretary of State's statewide voter registration database (VoteCal) in September 2016, Senate 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 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. In March 2017, pre-registration was made available through California's online voter registration application, further expanding access to pre-registration.

### California Students Vote Project

Since 2016, the Secretary of State has partnered with the Lieutenant Governor's Office

and three nonprofit organizations; California Public Interest Research Group (CalPIRG), California Common Cause, and Asian Americans Advancing Justice on 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.

## **2021 RESULTS**

This year, California saw the return of students to school campuses, following the 2020 shift to distance learning environments due to COVID-19. While students continue to prefer online voter registration, schools have also increased requests for paper registration applications, as students have settled back into the classroom.

California's statewide voter registration rate continues to rise. As of 15 days before the September 14, 2021, California Gubernatorial Recall Election, 88.87 percent of eligible California residents were registered to vote. This is a slight increase from the historic voter registration rate of 87.87 percent as of 15 days prior to the November 3, 2020, General Election and an increase from the 79.09 percent in February of 2019, a non-election year. While the online student voter registration rate decreased in 2021 from the historic levels seen in 2020, the rates for both years correlate to the statewide registration rates, respectively. As the registration rate grew in 2020 by nearly 9%, the population of eligible, unregistered voters decreased from approximately 21% in February of 2019 to approximately 11%, 15 days ahead of the 2021 California Gubernatorial Recall Election. This statewide decrease is reflected in the 2021 student voter registration rates.

Overall, the Secretary of State anticipates that the number of student pre-registrations and registrations will continue to show a growth rate in accordance with the statewide registration rate. Students are engaged in the voting process and are 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.

### Total Trackable Student Registrations

The total number of voter registration applications tracked for students, excepting 16- and 17-year-old pre-registrations, amounted to 106,124. This figure includes student voter registration applications that are trackable by the Secretary of State, which include: paper voter registration cards provided to schools and online registrations through voter registration links provided to schools and made accessible via college class registration databases. Students may also register to vote online using other tools such as TurboVote, a tool made available by the non-partisan, non-profit organization, Democracy Works. This figure does not include registrations by students that are not

trackable as “student registrations” by the Secretary of State. Examples of untracked student voter registrations include: registrations via social media company advertisements and registrations at the Department of Motor Vehicles, which incorporates “automatic” voter registration into California driver license and identification applications, pursuant to the National Voter Registration Act.

### Student Pre-Registration Trends

Pre-registrations for 16- and 17-year-old students continue to show consistency. In 2021, 161,326 students pre-registered to vote. As of December 2021, there are 131,052 pre-registered voters in California. This is an increase from the last election year in 2020 in which there were 122,751 pre-registered voters by year’s end and an increase from the last non-election year in 2019 in which there were 109,795 pre-registered voters by year’s end. 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](https://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 822,844. Of these, 604,424 pre-registered students have “aged-up” and are now registered voters. Overall, efforts to expand pre-registration opportunities for 16- and 17-year-olds under the law 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. A letter is sent to each school to partner with these institutions for outreach events and voter registration efforts. The letter includes a voter registration card order form, a reminder of the school’s responsibilities under Elections Code section 2146(d), and voter education and outreach suggestions. In 2021, the Secretary of State contacted 2,053 high schools and 335 CCC, CSU, UC, and private college campuses.

Of the high schools contacted, 291 schools responded to the Secretary of State’s outreach efforts. A total of 232 high schools in California requested and received 69,296 paper voter pre-registration/registration applications from the Secretary of State, while colleges and universities requested and received 45,490 paper voter registration applications. The combined number of voter pre-registration/registration paper applications requested and mailed was 114,786. This amount represents a 98 percent increase from the 57,882 paper applications requested in 2020 and a 13 percent increase from the 101,675 paper applications requested in non-election year 2019.

The significant increase in paper application requests from 2020 to 2021 coincides with a shift in schools returning to the classroom from a distance learning environment. The number of paper applications requested by schools in 2021 is similar to the number requested in previous non-election years. Generally, there remains a consistent trend of students favoring to register to vote online, rather than via a paper registration application. This trend is shown in Chart 1 with 99,124 trackable online student voter

registrations in 2021 and 7,000 trackable paper student registrations.

Chart 1 – Student Voter Registration Efforts by Year

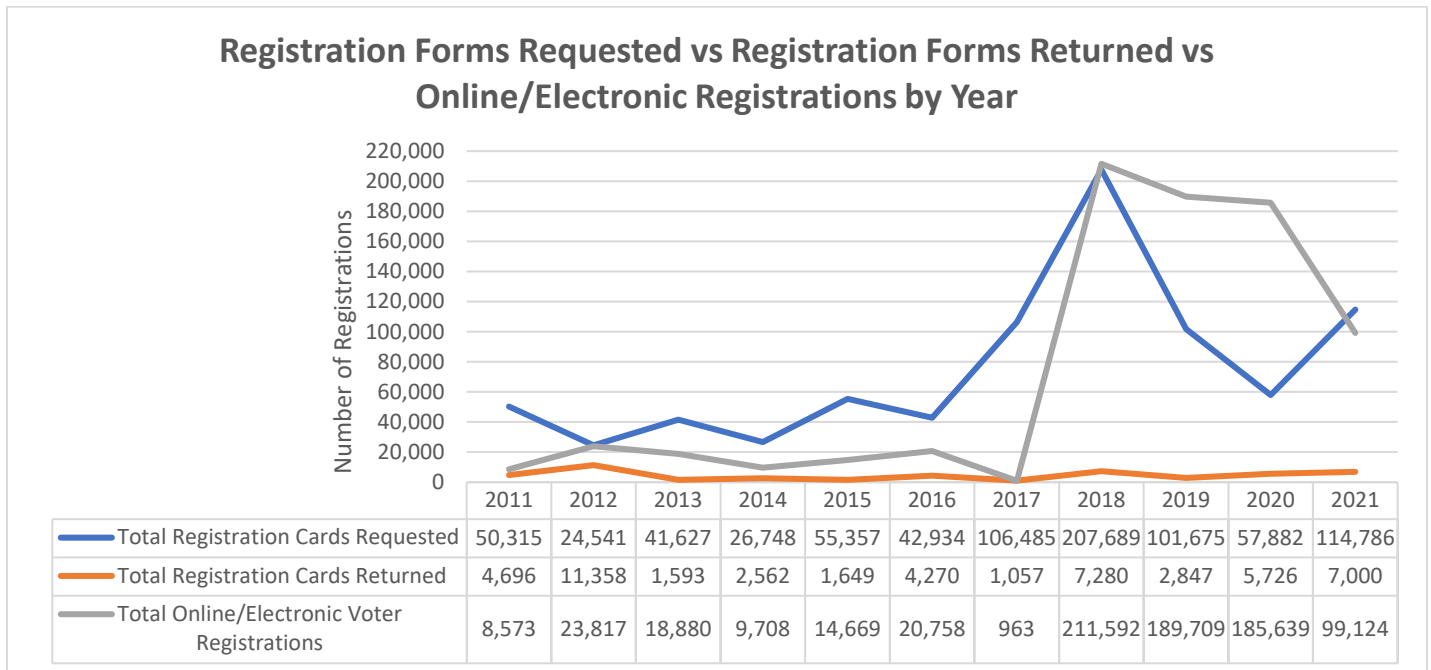


Chart 1: The registration cards returned, and online/electronic voter registration totals, include all trackable student registrations and do not include pre-registrations.

## VOTER OUTREACH EFFORTS

The Secretary of State’s voter outreach efforts in high schools and colleges focus 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 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 voter registration education and outreach events. Students and school staff are also encouraged to host voter registration drives during these times. The Secretary of State provides tools like the ‘Guide to Voter Registration Drives’ for students and school staff to use to coordinate a successful voter registration event.

The Secretary of State encourages eligible high school students to engage in the election process by serving as poll workers. High school students may be eligible to receive compensation for this service to their community. The Secretary of State invites teachers, administrators, and activities directors to publicize this opportunity on campus.

### 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 allows students who are not yet of voting age to engage in the elections process and cast a "mock" ballot. The program includes the production and distribution of ballots, Student Voter Information Guides, and other resource materials that ensure a successful Student Mock Election experience for students in participating schools. In the most recent statewide election year of 2020, 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 as it has been a beneficial instrument for civic student engagement and learning.

### California Students Vote Project

In statewide election years, the California Students Vote Project (CSVP) 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. In 2020, 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, 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. In 2020, 82,634 students registered to vote throughout the duration of the event, a 659 percent increase from 10,887 students in 2018.

Ahead of the 2021 California Gubernatorial Recall Election, the Students Vote Project hosted a simplified version of the California University and College Ballot Bowl competition called the "2021 Ballot Bowl: Registration Rumble". The competition launched on August 2, 2021, ahead of the election and concluded on Election Day, September 14, 2021. Throughout the duration of the competition, a total of 1,698 students registered to vote.

During the 2021 competition, the Students Vote Project Team created and distributed resources and materials to partners in order to encourage participation in the Ballot Bowl and to register and vote in the September 14 recall election. This included weekly social media posts with the week's current Ballot Bowl standings, weekly email updates to share new resources and information, and video content for the agency's Snapchat account. The Students Vote Project Team created multiple resources: updated Ballot Bowl guidelines, Student Voter Resource Guide, CSVP social media toolkit, including an "expansion pack" with more competitive language. The team posted in the campus Facebook groups of multiple universities and took part in multiple outreach events, including partnering with CALPIRG for a Vote-a-Thon, where CALPIRG volunteers called students to ensure they were registered to vote and had a vote plan.

### **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 and 2020, the Secretary of State conducted regional trainings for these agencies, with over 300 staff participants at over 100 campus offices. In 2021, the Secretary of State continued trainings, reaching over 148 staff participants at 64 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:

Number of Student Voter Registration Applications Requested					
	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
High School Campuses	69,296	36,222	73,045	159,914	86,775
CCC Campuses	35,035	1,810	24,465	24,650	12,070
CSU Campuses	8,345	11,700	1,705	8,300	400
UC Campuses	1,160	550	1,500	9,100	8,300
Private College Campuses	950	7,600	960	5,725	2,250
<b>Total Number of Student Voter Registration Forms Distributed</b>	<b>114,786</b>	<b>57,882</b>	<b>101,675</b>	<b>207,689</b>	<b>109,795</b>

**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 2017 to 2021.

Completed Online Voter Registration Applications					
	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
California Community College	42,843	50,094	876	1,736	779
California State University	30,463	38,865	1,133	5,862	18
University of California	13,697	15,396	199	879	259
Private College Campuses	11,219	-	-	-	-
No school identified	902	81,284	94	167	60
Pre-registration	161,326	162,344	165,113	202,948	51,087
<b>Total Number of Students</b>	<b>260,450</b>	<b>347,983</b>	<b>167,415</b>	<b>211,592</b>	<b>52,203</b>

**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 2017 to 2021. Table categorization for private college online voter registration applications began in 2021.