



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

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

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December 31, 2022

Ms. Erika Contreras  
Secretary of the Senate  
State Capitol, Room 307  
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. A separate report by the California Secretary of State pursuant to Education Code section 66851 (b) will be transmitted to the Legislature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. N. Weber', with a large circular flourish to the right.

Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D.  
California Secretary of State

Attachment

cc: Ms. Cara L. Jenkins  
Legislative Counsel

**2022 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 statistics and the 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 means to register to vote.

## **BACKGROUND**

Between the years 2004 and 2015 and 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, but this approach proved to be ineffective. Data provided from one year was particularly revealing; 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 those mailed, only 16,489 (0.66%) were completed and returned to the Secretary of State.

Senate Bill 854 (Chapter 481, Statutes of 2007) changed the paper registration requirements for institutions, reducing the applications to be sent to those campuses that had adopted a system of pre-filling registration forms with student information. The Legislature later passed Assembly Bill 1446 (Chapter 593, Statutes of 2014), which allowed paper registration applications to be sent in the quantities requested by the campuses, and also encouraged 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 their efforts with the Secretary of State. Since 2012, the Secretary of State has been utilizing California's online voter registration application at [RegisterToVote.ca.gov](https://RegisterToVote.ca.gov), which allows all institutions to provide students with the opportunity to register to vote online in compliance with California law. Each institution is also provided with a unique voter registration URL to track student registration by location.

### Pre-Registration

Pre-registration for 16 and 17 year olds went into effect with the certification the Secretary of State's statewide voter registration database (VoteCal) in September 2016, when Senate Bill 113 (Chapter 619, Statutes of 2014) went into effect. In March 2017, pre-registration was also made available through the [California's online voter registration application](#), expanding access to additional students and permitting 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.

### California Students Vote Project

Established in 2016, the California Secretary of State (SOS) Students Vote Project (SVP) is a leading statewide, nonpartisan program that elevates college student voices and promotes student civic engagement efforts to build a more inclusive democracy.

In 2018, the SVP developed the first California University and College Ballot Bowl. The Ballot Bowl is a friendly competition where all California higher education systems can compete to register the most students to vote.

In 2019, Assembly Bill 963 (Chapter 559, Statutes of 2019) was passed, enacting the Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act (SCVEA). In 2020, the SVP was expanded to implement the SCVEA, which requires California Community Colleges (CCC) and California State Universities (CSU) to work directly with these higher education systems to increase college student voter registration numbers. Campuses are invited to participate in learning opportunities and receive voter education resources provided by the California Secretary of State's office. While the University of California (UC) and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) institutions are not required to participate, they continue to be strong partners and supporters of student civic engagement.

### **2022 RESULTS**

As of 15 days before the November 8, 2022, General Election, 81.63% of eligible California residents were registered to vote. This is a 7.24% decrease from the prior voter registration rate of 88.87% as of 15 days prior to the September 14, 2021, Gubernatorial Recall Election. Since the last 15-Day Report of Registration for a General Election in a gubernatorial election year (October 22, 2018), the percentage of eligible Californians who are registered to vote increased from 78.16% to 81.63%.

Overall student voter registration, including paper applications returned and online registration and excluding pre-registration, increased by 48.25% from 2021 to 2022.

Online student voter registration, excluding pre-registration, increased from 99,124 in 2021 to 151,707 in 2022. There was a 53.05% increase in online college student voter registration from 2021 to 2022. These numbers indicate a rebound in online voter registrations after the pandemic, when outreach efforts were hindered due to closures.

Overall, the Secretary of State anticipates that the number of student pre-registrations and registrations will continue to show a gradual increase in growth in accordance with the statewide registration rate. The Outreach team within the Secretary of State will continue to work with institutions and student groups to advance voter engagement efforts through social media, virtual and in-person events, to increase opportunities for voter registration.

### Total Trackable Student Registrations

Trackable student registrations include those that can be captured by the Secretary of State, including 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. The total number of voter registration applications tracked for students (excluding pre-registration) in 2022 amounted to 91,704. This does not include registrations by students that are not trackable as “student registrations.” For example, students can also register to vote online using other tools made available to them such as Turbo Vote or Democracy Works, which are external to the Secretary of State’s office. In compliance with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), voter registration is also offered at agencies throughout the state, including at the Department of Motor Vehicles and a number of social services agencies.

### Student Pre-Registration Trends

Since VoteCal became the system of record in 2016, the total number of pre-registrations completed and submitted is 979,081. Of these, a total of 740,329 pre-registered students have since turned 18 and are now registered to vote, which represents 75% of students who have pre-registered since 2016. Overall, efforts to expand pre-registration opportunities for 16- and 17-year-olds under the law continue, as the success rates for the transition from pre-registration to registered voter represents a demographic that is promising for the future.

Although there was a decline in 16- and 17-year-old student pre-registrations this year compared to 2021, there is an increase from the last general election year in 2020. In 2022, a total of 153,990 students pre-registered to vote. As of December 2022, there are 132,928 pre-registered voters in California with 21,062 pre-registrants having turned 18 and having become registered voters. This is a 31.43% increase from the last general election year in 2020 in which there were 122,751 pre-registered voters by year end and a decrease from 2021 in which there were 161,326 pre-registered voters by year end.

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), as well as to use this link on school outreach materials. The SOS anticipates that pre-registrations will increase as Outreach efforts are transitioning post pandemic, and that plans for additional social media will increase these figures.

### Paper Applications

The Secretary of State contacts high schools, community colleges, CSUs, UCs, and private colleges statewide annually 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 opportunities.

In 2022, the Secretary of State contacted 4,653 high schools and 359 CCC, CSU, UC, and private college campuses and offered them the opportunity to order paper applications. Of those, 330 high schools (7.1%) responded to the Secretary of State’s outreach efforts in 2022. A total of 273 high schools in California received 50,887 paper voter pre-registration/registration applications from the Secretary of State. A total of 42 colleges and universities (11.7%) responded to the Secretary of State’s outreach efforts; these schools requested and received 40,817 paper voter registration

applications. The combined number of voter pre-registration/registration paper applications requested and mailed in was 91,704. This represents a 20% decrease from the 114,786 paper applications requested in 2021 and a 27% increase from the 57,882 paper applications requested in 2020.

There remains a consistent trend of students favoring to register to vote online rather than utilizing the paper registration application. This trend is displayed in Attachment 1 and illustrated in Chart 1 with 151,707 trackable online student voter registrations in 2022 and 5,624 trackable paper student registrations. The totals translate to online voter registrations making up 96.4% of total registrations and trackable paper registrations making up only 3.6% of total registrations. The data follow the general movement towards increased online engagement. Californians can conduct many transactions online, from retail shopping to filing taxes to applying for state and federal benefits. For many, online voter registration provides a similar convenience. With access to the internet, voters can log on to register to vote, verify their registration status, and track their ballots. Online voter registration also provides convenience when assisting others with voter registration, and specifically student voter registration. Groups can help students register to vote by having laptops, tablets, or smartphones at school and community events, voter registration drives, and door-to-door canvassing.

Chart 1 – Student Voter Registration Efforts by Year

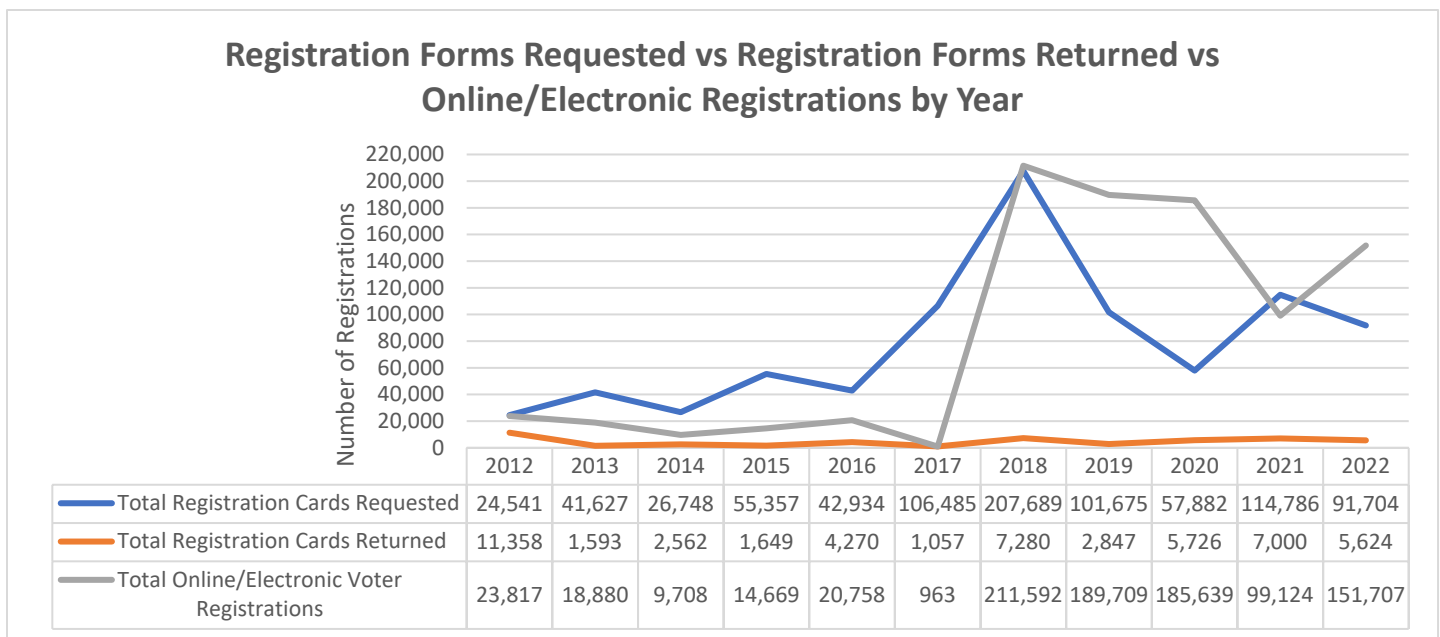


Chart 1: The registration cards returned, and online/electronic voter registration totals, includes all trackable student registrations and do not include pre-registrations.

## VOTER OUTREACH EFFORTS

The California Secretary of State encourages high school students to pre-register and college students to register to vote through various outreach efforts. The California Secretary of State partners with high schools, colleges, and universities across the state

to facilitate voter education and registration resources. The California Secretary of State's office offers voter registration training, physical and online voter registration applications, social media tool kits and other relevant publications, as well as to respond to any voter registration inquiries the institutions may have. Staff members also participated in and hosted several events on high school and college campuses, including two Voting Rights Townhalls, providing additional opportunities for voter registration and education.

#### High School Voter Education

Each year, the last two weeks of April and September are designated as "High School Voter Education Weeks" by the California Secretary of State's office in partnership with the California Department of Education. High School students and school administrators and staff are encouraged to host voter registration drives and education events all year, but especially during these two weeks. This year the California Secretary of State's office visited several high schools across the state and held voter education forums, attended college fairs and participated in virtual civic engagement programs during these times. The California Secretary of State also encourages eligible high school students to engage in the election process by serving as poll workers, including by celebrating civic holidays such as Poll Worker Recruitment Day. The California Secretary of State has created targeted outreach material to support civic engagement participation and share these materials with high school campuses.

#### Student Mock Election

In statewide election years such as 2022, 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, a Student Voter Information Guide, posters, and other resource materials that ensure a successful Student Mock Election experience for students in participating schools. This year, over 300 schools registered to participate and over 35,000 students cast ballots on paper or using an electronic system. The Secretary of State will continue this outreach effort, as it has proven to be a beneficial instrument for civic student learning and promoting voter engagement.

#### California Students Vote Project

The California Student Vote (SVP) program held and participated in various events, including several workshops throughout the year with each of the higher education systems and individual campuses. Two statewide virtual youth voter summits were hosted for the 2022 California Midterm Primary Election, and another was held for the California Midterm General Election.

Several resources were also developed to assist higher education campuses with registering college students to vote, including a Student Voter Resource Guide for the 2022 election cycle for campuses to distribute amongst their staff and students. The guide consisted of shareable graphics, important election dates, frequently asked questions, a voter checklist, and sample email messages. These resources enabled the students to participate and become educated in the voting process.

### 2022 Overall College Student Voter Registration

During 2022, 18,496 college students registered to vote using the [RegisterToVote.ca.gov/?t=s](https://RegisterToVote.ca.gov/?t=s) unique URL and 1,207 physical voter registration cards from 45 campuses were submitted to the Secretary of State's office. The unique voter registration URL allows the Secretary of State's office to track student voter registrations by higher education institution.

The overall number of 18-24 year olds who registered to vote using both the unique URL and the regular RegisterToVote.ca.gov was 795,814, representing 16.7% of those who registered to vote in 2022.

### California University and College Ballot Bowl

The California Secretary of State Students Vote Project hosts the biennial California University and College Ballot Bowl. The Ballot Bowl is a friendly competition where all California higher education systems can compete to register the most college students to vote. The other competition categories include the highest number of student body voter registrations, the highest percentage of student body registered to vote, and the most creative approach to register students to vote.

In the 2018 Midterm General Election Ballot Bowl, 10,887 college students registered to vote during the first competition.

In the 2020 Presidential General Election, 82,634 that students registered to vote throughout the duration of the event. College students participated from all 23 CSU and 10 UC campuses, 51 CCC campuses, and 11 AICCU campuses.

In 2021, a condensed version of the Ballot Bowl competition for the Gubernatorial Recall Election was held. The competition dates for this special election were August 2, 2021, to September 14, 2021. College students participated from 77 CCC, all 23 CSU, all 10 UC, and 27 AICCU campuses. A total of 1,698 students registered to vote during this competition.

In 2022, the Ballot Bowl competition ran from August 15, 2022, to November 8, 2022. This was the fourth competition, and it resulted in 18,335 college students registered to vote. College students participated from all 116 CCC, 23 CSU, and 10 UC campuses. Out of the 85 AICCU campuses, 78 participated.

During the 2022 Ballot Bowl competition, The Secretary of State created and distributed resources and materials to partners in order to encourage participation in the Ballot Bowl and to register and vote in the Midterm General Election. Campuses and partners received regular updates, including a Ballot Bowl Outreach Toolkit for campuses to easily engage students. weekly social media posts with the most recent Ballot Bowl standings on the Secretary of State's social media platforms, sent email updates to share new resources and information, and hosted events to promote the competition. These outreach events will continue to increase voter participation and educational opportunities as the office is able to create more opportunities coming out of the pandemic in the upcoming year.

## **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. While this NVRA designation does not fall under the purview of Elections Code section 2146(d), the Secretary of State's office also provides quarterly online trainings for these institutions and their coordinators along with other Voter Registration Agency (VRA) agencies. 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.

### **SUMMARY**

Overall, the Secretary of State anticipates that the total number of student pre-registrations and registrations will continue to trend upwards due to enhanced outreach and engagement efforts. This year, the state saw a rebound in student online voter registration rates and a continued trend downward of student paper voter registration rates. Online voter pre-registration and registration appears to be the biggest return for student organizations. To increase student voter registration, the Secretary of State plans to emphasize online voter registration in its student outreach programs.

Attachment A



## ATTACHMENT A:

| Number of Student Voter Registration Applications Requested & Distributed           |               |                |               |                |                |
|---|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
|   | 2022          | 2021           | 2020          | 2019           | 2018           |
| High School Campuses  | 50,887        | 69,296         | 36,222        | 73,045         | 159,914        |
| CCC Campuses  | 30,680        | 35,035         | 1,810         | 24,465         | 24,650         |
| CSU Campuses  | 4,280         | 8,345          | 11,700        | 1,705          | 8,300          |
| UC Campuses   | 1,700         | 1,160          | 550           | 1,500          | 9,100          |
| Private College Campuses  | 4,157         | 950            | 7,600         | 960            | 5,725          |
| <b>Total Number of Student Voter Registration Forms Requested &amp; Distributed</b> | <b>91,704</b> | <b>114,786</b> | <b>57,882</b> | <b>101,675</b> | <b>207,689</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 2018 to 2022.

| Completed Online Voter Registration Applications |                |                |                |                |                |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|  | 2022           | 2021           | 2020           | 2019           | 2018           |
| California Community College                     | 56,576         | 42,793         | 50,094         | 876            | 1,736          |
| California State University                      | 43,075         | 30,334         | 38,865         | 1,133          | 5,862          |
| University of California                         | 22,447         | 13,688         | 15,396         | 199            | 879            |
| Private College Campuses                         | 16,581         | 11,201         | -              | -              | -              |
| No school identified                             | 13,028         | 786            | 81,284         | 94             | 167            |
| Pre-registration (16 to 17 year olds)            | 153,990        | 149,147        | 162,344        | 165,113        | 202,948        |
| <b>Total Number of Students</b>                  | <b>305,697</b> | <b>247,949</b> | <b>347,983</b> | <b>167,415</b> | <b>211,592</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 2018 to 2022. Table categorization for private college online voter registration applications began in 2021.