



FEMINIST MAJORITY FOUNDATION

**FEMINIST CAMPUS**

WORLD'S LARGEST FEMINIST STUDENT NETWORK

# Campaign to Vote Feminist

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## THE BASICS

The Feminist Majority Foundation's Vote Feminist Campaign is the nation's only student-led voter education and engagement campaign aimed at increasing young women's voter participation. There is so much at stake at the polls; women, people of color, and the LGBTQIA+ community are underrepresented at all levels of government, including campus student governments. The policies our representatives vote on affect all of us in the United States and worldwide. By harnessing our power as the largest generation, we can achieve a critical mass of voters that shifts the tide of electoral politics.

## WHY YOUR VOTE COUNTS

Young people are the largest voting bloc in the country and have the power to decide elections, so it is incredibly important to participate and vote in every election – federal, state, county and municipal. Typically in off-year elections, voter turnout is significantly lower, meaning elections are determined by much smaller margins of votes and participation is critical!

In the 2018 midterm elections, youth voter turnout in Michigan was the highest it had been in over 56 years, and several colleges and universities reported that turnout rates tripled – and in a few cases, even quadrupled – on campus precincts. The results? Progressive women seized the offices of governor and attorney general (AG), as well as several seats in Congress. The 2018 Michigan elections also heralded in the passage of two critical ballot measures designed to protect and promote voting rights statewide: one that will work to end gerrymandering and one that will seek practical measures to make voting more accessible.

Mobilization of student voters has the potential to influence the political landscape across the nation. In Virginia, a state once plagued by TRAP laws, the 2014 AG race was decided by less than a 1,000 votes. Once elected, the AG worked with the governor to prevent the closure of numerous health clinics, thus protecting access to abortion for people across the commonwealth and the East Coast.

While student voter turnout has always been consistently low, our voices are more powerful in larger numbers. Among women, 18-24 year olds vote less than any other age group. But when we turnout to vote, we influence results! Feminist students need to register, vote, and run for office in record-breaking numbers. Underrepresentation begins in student governments, so run for office and #VoteFeminist in 2019 and

beyond! An unprecedented number of women, including two of the youngest women ever elected to the House, won in the 2018 midterm elections due in part to a surge in young voters casting their ballots.

## THE GENDER GAP

The measurable difference in the way women and men view and vote on issues is called the gender gap. Since 1980, this often significant gap in voting patterns has frequently determined the outcome of elections. When further examined by class and race, the gender gap disparities become even more pronounced. The majority of women who make up the gender gap are Black and Latina women, as well as single women and women who self-identify as feminists. For the past 40 years, gender gaps have been decisive in numerous congressional and gubernatorial races.

## WOMEN ARE UNDERREPRESENTED

As result of the 2018 elections, women now represent 25% of the U.S. Senate and 23.4% (102 members) of the House of Representatives. Women make up more than half of the population, but a mere 23.7% of Congress (127 women total); of state legislatures, women make up only 29%. The numbers are clear – there is still lot of work needed to increase women's representation in all levels of political office.

## HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1965

Colleges and universities have an obligation under federal law to make voter registration and voting available to students. The federal Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) requires that all institutions of higher education must make a "good faith effort" to provide voter registration forms for all enrolled students. Most colleges and universities do not live up to this mandate. Students have the right and power to hold your administrators accountable for implementing this critical provision!

**"The institution...will make a good faith effort to distribute a mail voter registration form, requested and received from the State, to each student enrolled in a degree or certificate program and physically in attendance at the institution, and to make such forms widely available to students at the institution."**

**-Higher Education Act, 1965**



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The HEA should be the foundation of your group's plan of action to mobilize students on campus. The goal of the Vote Feminist campaign is to partner with your administration, student government, and student groups to fulfill the spirit of this critical law and increase voter education, mobilization, and turnout on your campus.

## WHAT IS VOTER SUPPRESSION?

Voter suppression can be defined as any effort to disenfranchise or discourage certain groups within the electorate from exercising their constitutional right to vote. While voter suppression sounds like a thing of the past, there have been increasing attacks on voting access for people of color. These attacks consist of targeting people—particularly Black and Latinx voters, low income people, students, and elderly women—with unnecessary requests and demands for multiple forms of ID. By taking certain voters out of the democratic process, voter suppression is the clearest way to ensure that discriminatory laws, policies, and procedures are passed and kept in place to benefit a very small percentage of the population. Since the 2016 elections, we have felt the effects of the removal of essential protections in the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Many individuals and communities were hurt by targeted voter suppression, and our democratic process was damaged.

## HOW DO AUTHORITIES SUPPRESS THE VOTE?

There are many methods used to systematically suppress the vote: gerrymandering (drawing legislative district lines to underrepresent a targeted constituency or favor a particular party); passing voter ID laws; eliminating or reducing early voting, Sunday voting, and same day registration; decreasing the number of voting machines in targeted districts, moving voting locations to make them inaccessible to voters, and purging voter rolls. Regulations such as these are usually presented as a way to protect the public from voter fraud and keep the democratic process honest, but they create strategic road blocks for many voters. By changing voting accessibility, requiring unnecessary identification and redrawing district maps to suit a particular party, the process is manipulated and discredits the value of the vote.

The law is often used to suppress the vote. In 2013, the Supreme Court case *Shelby County v. Holder* ruled that it is unconstitutional for states with a history of voter disenfranchisement to be required to go through an approval process before making any changes to their voting laws. This ruling effectively removed Section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, allowing many Southern states to pass new discriminatory laws

in order to suppress the vote, including restrictive voter ID laws and laws that reduce early voting and/or the number of polling places.

## WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Since the last election, we have witnessed relentless attacks on our rights. Anti-abortion lawmakers have threatened to roll back access to lifesaving reproductive healthcare while at the same time, cutting funding to higher education programs, and rolling back protections for survivors. In 2019 and beyond, we must work to end discrimination in all forms, especially that which impacts women, people of color, and the LGBTQIA+ community. It is also critical that we advocate for environmental justice, equal pay, and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

## WHAT CAN YOUR STUDENT GROUP DO?

Make sure your peers are briefed on all materials they may need to vote, since the type of identification required to vote varies from state to state. For detailed voter ID requirements by state, consult the National Conference of State Legislators' website. Familiarize yourself with student activists on your campus. Work with your campus administration to ensure they are fulfilling the mandates put forth in the Higher Education Act. It's your right! Partner with local nonpartisan civic engagement groups to be trained in voter defense and legal observation. Your testimony and witness is crucial if the rights of voters are being suppressed at the polls.

## HOW TO LAUNCH YOUR VOTE FEMINIST CAMPAIGN

Vote Feminist activities will help you establish your feminist group as intersectional and multi-issue. Empower students to learn what's at stake in this election, including reproductive rights, college affordability, environmental justice, LGBTQIA+ equality, racial justice, and more!

### STEP ONE: PREPARATION

- Review the Vote Feminist toolkit. Feminist club leadership should designate campaign chairs to coordinate the campaign and volunteers.
- Work with FMF National Campus Organizers to coordinate Vote Feminist efforts with nearby campuses and learn your state's voting requirements.
- Build your Vote Feminist campaign around feminist issues that resonate with your group and campus. Talk about what's at stake without endorsing candidates or political parties, and let students know how to sign up to get paid as county poll workers.
- Find out if you need to be deputized in order to register voters. The process is often short and can be done online. Contact your registrar for help.
- Recruit #VoteFeminist volunteers at student organization meetings, events, and through tabling with sign-up sheets and voter pledge cards.
- Develop an action plan that includes special emphasis on registering women, LGBTQIA+ students, and students of color.

### STEP TWO: REGISTRATION

- Contact your county registrar to get voter registration forms, train to become poll workers, and petition for voting machines on campus. Download paper copies for students to complete by hand during tabling events, or call your Secretary of State or County Registrar for more copies. Many states allow online voter registration. Have a laptop or tablet that students can register on while you table or have general body meetings. Keep a record how many students register.
- Make sure all voter registration forms are mailed in or delivered to the proper state or county official within the time length required. Pay close attention since some states require turning in forms within 24 hours.
- Volunteers cannot ask students for their party identification, state their own party identification, nor should they discuss preferred candidates.
- Table in high-traffic areas with voter registration forms and Vote Feminist materials. Draw attention to your table with balloons, signs, and banners. Have plenty of registration forms, voter pledge sheets, and a list of polling stations on hand. (No materials should reference political parties or any candidate!) Don't just sit behind the table – engage everyone passing by, and ask them to sign the Vote Feminist voter pledge. Encourage students to register to vote using their local address, and tell them you will call them to remind them to vote before Election Day.

### STEP THREE: MOBILIZATION

- Work with Women's and Gender Studies and other departments that may be interested, like Political Science or Sociology. Ask professors to let you to make classroom announcements about important voter registration deadlines and how they can help others access their vote.
- If your state offers early voting, publicize it widely. Disseminate information about early voting locations, ID requirements, and times through tabling, classroom visits, social media, and posters. Organize transportation for students to get to the early voting locations.
- Host educational meetings about the history of voting, detailing the history of voter suppression and how you can combat it on your campus, in your community, and your state. Describe the strategic ways authorities work to stop people of color, students, and women from voting.
- Blanket campus with details about where and when students can vote. Distribute Vote Feminist handouts to help students answer final questions.
- Organize rides to the polls with students who have vehicles or ask to use campus vans to transport students to the polls if they aren't nearby.
- Some states allow voter registration on Election Day. Research and know the laws for your state and share what's needed to register on social media to remind students who have not registered to vote before the deadline that they may do so on Election Day.
- On the day before Election Day, volunteers should set up a phone bank to call or text students who signed voter pledges, remind them to vote, and let them know poll locations. If the main student polling location is off-campus, find out if the student needs a ride.
- Encourage and celebrate student voting by hosting fun events like a Vote Feminist barbecue on campus, swapping out a general feminist club meeting with a pizza and politics meeting, or offering buttons to students who register or pledge to vote.
- Election Day: Organize voting marches on Election Day to rally and lead students to polling locations. Offer free prizes like stickers or buttons to students who show you their "I voted" sticker. Host an election watch party after the polls close to celebrate your hard work and success!

## HOW TO SPREAD THE WORD

1. Create Vote Feminist ads, posters, flyers and stickers. Use posters to advertise Vote Feminist meetings, registration events, and Election Day activities. The more students see your materials, the more likely they are to read them and take action!
2. Voter Educational Materials: Use Vote Feminist materials for leafleting and at your voter registration tables. Provide as much information as possible and let everyone know what's at stake for the upcoming election. Also use facts as talking points.
3. Press: Designate an FMLA media chair to do interviews. Invite press to cover Vote Feminist activities. Submit letters to the editor and op-eds to your campus newspaper about the importance of voting and about your Vote Feminist activities. Ask the campus radio and newspaper to run a series on voting rights and the issues at stake in the election. Ask the school newspaper to run your posters as a PSA to urge students to register and vote.
4. Sponsor voter events. Some ideas:
  - **Vote-a-palooza:** Organize a week of voter registration activities on your campus the week before registration ends in your state; table outside, work with professors, and recruit women's athletic teams, sororities and resident assistants
  - **Countdown to Election Day:** Host rallies, teach-ins, and dorm storms to mobilize students to vote on Election Day! Tell students where to vote!
  - **Vote-In:** Host an event at a central place on campus, like your student center, and invite students to stop in to register and pledge to vote. Supply food if you have the funding, and make it an exciting event. This is an opportunity not only to get students registered but also to educate them about the issues at stake in the election.
  - **March to the polls:** If there are voting polls on or nearby campus, organize a march on Election Day to bring students to the polls.

## STUDENT VOTING FAQs

Voting rules vary by state, so don't hesitate to contact your county registrar of voters, Secretary of State, or Feminist Campus organizer for further help.

### Q: CAN I REGISTER TO VOTE WHERE I GO TO SCHOOL?

**A:** YES. In the 1979 U.S. Supreme Court decided in *United States v. Symm* that you have the right to register and vote where you go to school, even if you don't intend to reside there permanently or live in a dorm room. Depending on the state, certain identification is required when you register to vote the first time. Your Social Security number or a driver's license number should be sufficient. You may also be able to use your college ID card or other picture ID for verification. You can use a recent utility bill or bank statement as proof of your current street address.

### Q: WILL MY FINANCIAL AID OR STUDENT LOANS BE AFFECTED IF I REGISTER TO VOTE AT AN ADDRESS DIFFERENT FROM MY PARENTS' ADDRESS?

**A:** NO. Where you register to vote has no effect on your scholarships, student loans, health and car insurance, or tuition payments. If you hear otherwise, challenge the information source and contact an FMF organizer.

### Q: SHOULD I REGISTER AT MY PARENTS' HOME ADDRESS AND VOTE BY ABSENTEE BALLOT?

**A:** You should register to vote where you'll be living on Election Day so you never miss the opportunity to vote. You have a vested interest in voting where you go to school, live, and spend most of the year. Although you can vote by absentee ballot, you shouldn't rely on your family remembering to send your application or risk requesting an absentee ballot too late. Make your vote count in the state where you live.

### Q: WHAT KIND OF ID WILL I NEED TO SHOW WHEN I GO TO VOTE ON ELECTION DAY?

**A:** The type of identification required varies from state to state. Know the rules in your state. For detailed voter ID requirements by state, take a look at the resources available from the National Conference of State Legislators: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id.aspx>.

### Q: WHAT DO I DO IF I REGISTERED TO VOTE AND MY NAME IS NOT ON THE ROSTER AT MY POLLING PLACE WHEN I GO TO VOTE ON ELECTION DAY?

**A:** Demand a provisional ballot and vote. Federal law guarantees you the right, and in close elections, the state is required to count all provisional ballots.