

FIRST



**Vote**

**CLOSE UP**

F O U N D A T I O N







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## WHAT IS FIRST VOTE?

First Vote is a nonpartisan, classroom-based voter education, registration, and citizenship program for high school students. The program helps to educate young people about the importance of citizen participation and challenges them to get involved in their communities. First Vote provides the opportunity for students and teachers to discuss what it means to be a citizen in a democratic society and the relationship between voting and the other duties and responsibilities of citizenship. The Close Up Foundation provides schools with a First Vote video and *Teacher's Resource Guide* **free of charge** provided that a commitment is made to make First Vote an ongoing part of the social studies curriculum.



The Close Up Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan civic education organization that encourages responsible participation in the democratic process through educational programs and publications in government and citizenship. Since its founding in 1970, Close Up has developed new and better ways for young people, educators, and a widening circle of citizens of all ages to gain a practical understanding of how public policy affects their lives and how individual and collective efforts affect public policy. For more information about Close Up programs, call 800-CLOSE-UP (256-7387).

Close Up Publishing develops books, teacher's guides, and other materials designed to encourage critical thinking and inspire interest in current issues, government, foreign affairs, history, and economics. To find out why more and more educators are relying on Close Up's original and timely educational resources, call 800-765-3131.

**President**

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**Director, Publications**

Joanne S. Levin

**Editorial Staff**

C. Steve Allen

Michael Schad Johnstone

Charles R. Sass

Cindy A. Sweeney

Mark Swift

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Printed in the United States of America

First Vote

c/o Close Up Foundation

44 Canal Center Plaza

Alexandria, VA 22314-1592

Toll-free: 888-706-3300



## AMENDMENT XXVI

*The right of citizens of the United States, who are 18 years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.*

Dear Teacher:

We at the Close Up Foundation are pleased that you and your students are participating in First Vote, Close Up's voter education and registration program. Through First Vote, tens of thousands of high school students have learned more about voting rights and the voting process, and the history of suffrage in the United States. They have learned that with rights come responsibilities and that unless they register and vote, they are not carrying out one of their responsibilities as U.S. citizens. For these reasons, we encourage you to make First Vote an annual part of your curriculum.

You have received a 15-minute closed-captioned video and this teacher's guide to help you teach your lessons on voting. Use these materials in any way that works best for you. The lessons and activities in the teacher's guide will all stand alone; you do not need to proceed from one to the next to complete the project.

We at Close Up believe schools have a responsibility and an opportunity to help prepare young citizens to participate in the democratic process. Every American should graduate from high school with a diploma in one hand and a voter registration card in the other. Thank you for helping make that happen.

Sincerely,

First Vote  
Close Up Foundation

# LESSON 1

## ✓ Voting Rights and Responsibilities

Lesson 1 includes four activities, any of which can stand alone. Please feel free to use any or all activities in this lesson. Before you begin, however, show the First Vote video. It requires little introduction; simply tell your class that it deals with reasons all people—especially young people—should vote, and the responsibilities that go along with voting. The video also covers the historical background of suffrage in the United States.

### ✓ Objectives

The activities in Lesson 1 will allow students to:

- list and discuss reasons why people should vote and the responsibilities that go along with voting
- examine if, and how, low voter turnout may affect an election
- discuss the importance of and the difficulties that go along with being a well-informed voter
- collect information about the voting attitudes of people of various ages in the community and draw conclusions from the findings

### ✓ Activities

**Brainstorming Voters' Reasons and Responsibilities.** After showing the video, lead a brainstorming session by asking students to give short answers to the following question.

• **What reasons for people to vote are provided in the video?**

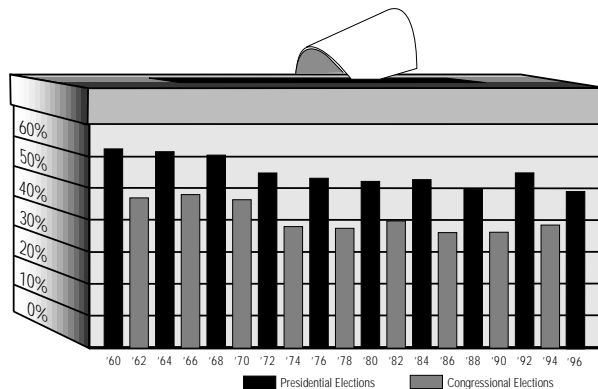
List the responses on the board. After the list is complete, ask each student which reason is most appealing to him or her and why. Conclude by discussing why students' responses varied.

Next, ask students to respond to the following question.

• **In addition to voting, the video suggests other responsibilities of citizenship. What are they?**

List those responses on the board. Then lead a discussion about which responsibilities appeal most to individuals in the class. Are students surprised at the large number of responsibilities associated with citizenship?

Percentage of Voting-Age Americans Who Vote



Source: Committee for the Study of the American Electorate

**Examining Low Voter Turnout.** Give each member of the class a ballot on which you have printed the following question.

**Should all American citizens be required by law to vote in all major elections? Y N**

Place a small X on the back of half the ballots before handing them out. Ask students to circle their choice and place the ballots in a box.

Tabulate and post the results. Now, tabulate the marked ballots only. Are the results any different? Can students foresee any problems in letting 50 percent of the class decide the issue for the entire class? If not on this issue, then on others? Remind students that only about 49 percent of eligible voters

participated in the 1996 presidential election and an even smaller percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds voted. Ask them why they think voter turnout is historically low in the United States. Should registration and voting be made easier and more convenient? Do your students have any suggestions for raising turnout?

Some Americans do not believe low voter turnout is a problem. They contend that if only half the eligible citizens feel voting is important, this is for the best because those are probably the people who are most informed anyway. Do students agree?

***Tying Voting to Being Well-Informed.*** Ask students if they remember what one student in the video said about casting an informed vote. She implied that people should know what they are voting for before they go into the voting booth; they should be informed about where candidates stand on the issues. Should voters be required to pass a citizenship or current issues test before they can register to vote? Remind students that many southern states once made voters take a literacy test (often oral) before they could register to vote—with the purpose of keeping black citizens from registering.

To extend this activity, it might be interesting for students to create a “citizenship” test to give to classmates. You may organize this any way you think works best—perhaps each student could write one question about the Constitution, the organization of government, the names of elected officials, or any other appropriate subject. Questions could then be combined into one larger test and given to everyone. It would not be necessary to have students place their names on the papers; you are only trying to find out how the students define “well informed.” Tabulating the results of each question will give you that answer.

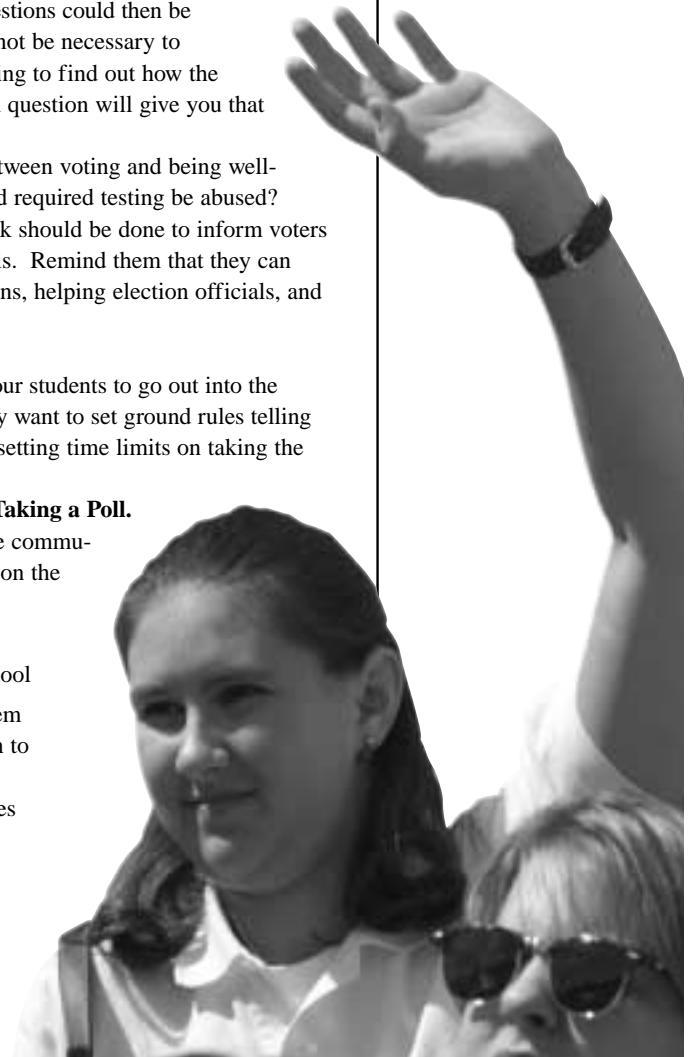
What do your students now think about the relationship between voting and being well-informed? What if only those who “passed” could vote? Could required testing be abused? How? By whom? Conclude by asking the class what they think should be done to inform voters before election day and to stimulate interest in going to the polls. Remind them that they can become active participants by volunteering in political campaigns, helping election officials, and assisting nonpartisan voter education groups.

***What Do Your Neighbors Think?*** It might be interesting for your students to go out into the community and ask people their attitudes about voting. You may want to set ground rules telling students to avoid polling the same respondent more than once, setting time limits on taking the poll, and encouraging them to be courteous and polite.

Begin by giving each student a copy of the handout titled **Taking a Poll**. Then, tell the class that each student will poll four people in the community by asking them to agree or disagree with the six questions on the handout. The four people polled should include:

- a high school student
- a retired adult
- a working adult
- a teacher in your school

After polling has been completed, tally the results and place them on the board. Discuss the outcomes, paying particular attention to wide differences among age groups for particular statements. What conclusions can class members draw about voting attitudes in their community?



## LESSON 2

### ✓ Voting Is History

Lesson 2 is made up of two activities. As in Lesson 1, you can use the activities by themselves.

#### ✓ Objectives

The activities in Lesson 2 will allow students to:

- learn more about famous—and less famous—Americans who gained fame either by the votes they cast or the votes they got (or did not get)
- trace the history of suffrage in the United States from the colonial period to the passage of the Twenty-sixth Amendment

#### ✓ Activities

**Researching Voting Firsts.** Begin by writing the following names on the board:

- Andrew Johnson
- Hiram Revels
- Jeannette Rankin
- Oscar DePriest
- Margaret Chase Smith
- Gerald Ford
- Geraldine Ferraro
- Douglas Wilder
- Carol Moseley Braun

Add any names that you think may be appropriate to your community or state. Then, as a homework assignment, ask each student to choose one name and find out more about that person. (Alternatively, you might want to assign subjects to students to make sure they all get covered.) In one- or two-page essays, students should report on their person and tell what his or her fame has to do with voting or elections. The next day, ask class members to read their essays aloud and then spend a few minutes talking about each of the Americans listed.

*Teacher's Note.* The following information should come out about the people on the list.

- President Andrew Johnson escaped removal from office in 1868 when the vote in the Senate for impeachment fell one vote short. He was the first and only president to be tried on impeachment charges.
- Hiram Revels was the first black senator from the South. He represented Mississippi during Reconstruction.
- Jeannette Rankin, a U.S. representative from Montana, was the first woman elected to Congress. She was elected in 1916. Rankin cast the only vote in Congress against U.S. involvement in World War I (1918), and lost her seat in the next election as a result. After she retook the seat in 1940, she alone voted against U.S. involvement in World War II (1941).
- Oscar DePriest was the first black man elected to Congress from the North. He was elected in 1928.
- Margaret Chase Smith was the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate. She was elected in 1948.



- Gerald Ford was the first and only president who was not elected to either the office of president or vice president. In 1973, he was appointed vice president by President Richard Nixon to replace Spiro Agnew. He then became president upon Nixon's resignation in August 1974.
- Geraldine Ferraro became the first woman to be on the presidential ticket of either major party when she was picked by Democratic nominee Walter Mondale to be his vice-presidential running mate in 1984. Mondale and Ferraro lost to Ronald Reagan and George Bush.
- Douglas Wilder was the first African American to be elected governor in the United States. He became governor of Virginia in 1990.
- Carol Moseley Braun in 1992 became the first African-American woman to be elected to the U.S. Senate.



**Tracing Suffrage in America.** Before showing the video, ask students to be alert for historical references in it that trace the franchisement of various groups of citizens. Next, distribute copies of the handout titled **Suffrage Timeline**. Spend a few minutes looking at each item on the timeline and discussing its significance. Finally, ask students to respond to the following questions.

1. Why did many early colonial governments require voters to be of a particular religion? Can you think of any country in the world where that might still be a requirement?
2. What effect did owning property have on voting in early America? What effect would it have today?
3. Why were property requirements dropped by the 1820s?
4. Why were women denied the vote in national elections until 1920? Why do you think Wyoming (and most other western territories and states) took the lead in giving the vote to women?
5. What event prompted the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment? How did the southern states violate this amendment long after it was passed?
6. What was significant about Alice Paul's march being staged the day before Wilson's inauguration?
7. Why was registering African Americans in the South to vote important to the civil rights movement of the 1960s?
8. What was the relationship of the Vietnam War and the military draft to the passage of the Twenty-sixth Amendment?

#### **Additional Activities**

1. Conduct classroom debates on one or all of the statements listed in the handout titled **Taking a Poll**. Work with students to develop scoring criteria that will be used to determine a "winner." Allow debaters time to research their topics. Before beginning, select a moderator and a timekeeper to keep the debate orderly and to keep it moving. Have student judges use the scoring criteria to determine a winner at the end of each debate. The affirmative, or pro, side should go first for a set length of time, followed by the negative, or con, side for the same length of time. Then allow each side three minutes for rebuttal. After a winner has been determined, briefly discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments.

2. One major way in which Americans participate in the political system is by becoming involved in political parties. Have students investigate activities of local party organizations. How can students become involved? How many people actively participate in party functions and campaigning? How are they making a difference? Your school may already have a Young Democrats or Young Republicans Club that students might want to join. If those clubs have not been organized, perhaps some students would like to do so. Students can get party information from:

**The Democratic National Committee**  
**430 South Capitol Street SE**  
**Washington, DC 20003**

**The Republican National Committee**  
**310 First Street SE**  
**Washington, DC 20003**

3. Candidates and political parties are always looking for volunteers to help them stuff envelopes, knock on doors and hand out literature, erect yard signs, gather signatures on petitions, and so forth. Students can learn a lot about the functions and tactics of parties during campaigns and perhaps get inspired to run for public office themselves one day.
4. Have students organize a get-out-the-vote campaign in your school or community. They can distribute leaflets or set up a voter registration table in their communities. You will first need to find out if your state allows teenagers to register voters. They might need to conduct research into other organizations that sponsor similar activities for some ideas. They could volunteer to help other organizations in the community who register voters. Or they may simply want to set up a registration table in a shopping mall under their own banner. They should be able to get all the information they need by contacting the state or county Board of Elections.
5. Petition drives are common in many localities for the purpose of getting an issue on the ballot, getting a candidate on the ballot, or recalling an elected officeholder. Students may want to become active in this most common exercise in direct democracy by collecting signatures for an issue or candidate they feel strongly about. Urge them to be aware of such petition efforts and to volunteer their services if they so desire.
6. As a research project, have students gather information on minorities, women, young people, and people with disabilities who are presently serving in elected office. Perhaps as a group project, they could list the names of the women, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian Americans in Congress or governorships. It may be more difficult to find young people who are now serving in elected office, but there are several who have been elected to school boards, city councils, and the like.



# TAKING A POLL

Use this form to poll four citizens in your community about voting. Ask one person from each of the four categories to agree or disagree with the statements below. Mark their response in the appropriate box—"A" for agree or "D" for disagree.



**1. All citizens should be required by law to vote.**

High School	Working Adult	Retired Adult	Teacher
A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>

**2. Before being allowed to register to vote, people should have to pass a written test on the Constitution and the organization of government, and be able to identify their elected officials.**

High School	Working Adult	Retired Adult	Teacher
A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>

**3. Ballots should be mailed to all registered voters, and all voting should be done by mail.**

High School	Working Adult	Retired Adult	Teacher
A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>

**4. Election day should be moved from Tuesday to Sunday to increase voter turnout.**

High School	Working Adult	Retired Adult	Teacher
A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>

**5. The voting age should be lowered to 16.**

High School	Working Adult	Retired Adult	Teacher
A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>

**6. The voting age should be raised to 21.**

High School	Working Adult	Retired Adult	Teacher
A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>

**7. People who vote should receive a tax credit.**

High School	Working Adult	Retired Adult	Teacher
A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>	A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>

Conclude the poll by asking them:

**Did you vote in the last presidential election?**

High School	Working Adult	Retired Adult	Teacher
Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## SUFFRAGE TIMELINE



**1600s–1700s**—Colonial governments commonly dropped religious tests for voting, but left property-owning qualifications. The common belief was that only men who held a “stake in society” could vote responsibly.

**1775–1781**—Property qualifications for voting were lowered in many states. Prior to 1775, five already said that any taxpaying white male could vote.



**1780s–1807**—Some women voted in New Jersey after its constitution defined voters as all “free inhabitants.” In 1807, New Jersey disfranchised both women and blacks.

**1821**—Property requirement and most taxpaying requirements had been dropped by all states.



**1848**—Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton called the Seneca Falls Convention to proclaim that “all men and women are equal.” After the Civil War, women’s groups focused on woman suffrage.

**1860**—Every southern state now allowed universal white male suffrage.

**1867**—Congress extended suffrage to blacks in the District of Columbia and U.S. territories.



**1869**—Susan B. Anthony and Stanton founded the National Woman Suffrage Association. Wyoming granted full suffrage to women.

**1870**—The Fifteenth Amendment was ratified, forbidding states to deny any person the vote on grounds of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.



**1890**—Disfranchisement of blacks gained impetus in southern states. Mississippi was the first to pass voting laws requiring long residence in the state and district, disqualification if convicted of certain crimes, poll taxes, and literacy tests.

**1913**—On the day before Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration, Alice Paul led a march in Washington to promote a woman suffrage amendment.

**1920**—The Nineteenth Amendment, giving women the right to vote, was ratified.



**1964**—A Civil Rights Act was passed including a requirement that literacy tests for voting be administered in writing. The Twenty-fourth Amendment, banning poll taxes, was ratified.



**1965**—A Voting Rights Act was passed to ensure all the right to vote. Martin Luther King, Jr., announced a drive to register 3 million black voters in the South.

**1971**—The Twenty-sixth Amendment was ratified, giving 18-year-olds the right to vote.

# IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

## ✓ Teacher's Implementation Checklist for First Vote

- 1 Obtain a list of all age-eligible students in your classroom/school. These records are normally kept in the school guidance office. (In most states, students who are 17 years old may register to vote, provided that they will be 18 by the next election.)
- 2 Secure voter registration cards from your county or city Board of Elections office. The telephone numbers for your state election offices are listed at the back of the *Teacher's Resource Guide*.
- 3 Preview the First Vote video and the *Teacher's Resource Guide*, show the video to your students, and use lessons from the *Resource Guide* for class discussions.
- 4 Ask students to complete their voter registration cards. Collect the cards. Tally the number of registrations (for the First Vote Report Card) and send the registration forms to the county or city Board of Elections office.
- 5 Complete the First Vote Report Card. Mail the report directly to: First Vote, c/o Close Up Foundation, 44 Canal Center Plaza, Alexandria, VA 22314-1592.



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## ✓ First Vote Report Card

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

School Name \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_

School District \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number/Fax Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many **teachers** participated in showing the First Vote video at your school (or schools)? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Did the teachers use the lessons in the *Teacher's Resource Guide*? If so, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did the teachers feel that the *Guide* provided useful activities for the classroom? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Approximately how many age-eligible students are enrolled in your school (or schools)? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How many **students** viewed the First Vote video and participated in classroom activities? \_\_\_\_\_

6. How many students registered to vote during this program? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you plan to use this program in your school next year? \_\_\_\_\_



## TESTIMONIALS

*“ Since 1992, my office has implemented Ohio First Vote in more than 600 high schools. The results have been terrific! More than 200,000 students have registered to vote in their classrooms while learning about the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.”*

*—Bob Taft, Secretary of State of Ohio*

*“First Vote provides the perfect opportunity for students to learn and practice the responsibilities of enlightened democratic citizenship.”*

*—H. Michael Hartonian, Past President,  
National Council for the Social Studies*

*“First Vote provides teachers with a great chance to educate and inspire their students regarding the importance of voting and citizen participation.”*

*—Karen R. Todorov, Social Studies Education Consultant,  
Michigan Department of Education*

# ELECTION OFFICIALS

For further information about voter registration in your community, call one of the following state offices.

**Alabama**  
Director of Voter Registration  
Montgomery, AL  
334-242-4337

**Alaska**  
Division of Elections  
Juneau, AK  
907-465-4611

**Arizona**  
Office of Assistant Secretary  
of State  
Phoenix, AZ  
602-542-4919

**Arkansas**  
Election Services  
Little Rock, AR  
501-682-5070

**California**  
Office of Chief of Elections  
Sacramento, CA  
916-657-2166

**Colorado**  
Elections Officer  
Denver, CO  
303-894-2680

**Connecticut**  
Elections Office  
Hartford, CT  
860-566-7106

**Delaware**  
Office of State Election Commissioner  
Dover, DE  
302-739-4498

**District of Columbia**  
Board of Elections and Ethics  
Washington, DC  
202-727-2525

**Florida**  
Division of Elections  
Tallahassee, FL  
850-488-7690

**Georgia**  
Elections Division  
Atlanta, GA  
404-656-2871

**Hawaii**  
Elections Division  
Honolulu, HI  
808-453-8683

**Idaho**  
Office of Secretary of State  
for Elections  
Boise, ID  
208-334-2300

**Illinois**  
Board of Elections  
Springfield, IL  
217-782-4141

**Indiana**  
State Election Board  
Indianapolis, IN  
317-232-3939

**Iowa**  
Office of Secretary of State  
Des Moines, IA  
515-281-5823

**Kansas**  
Elections Office  
Topeka, KS  
913-296-2236

**Kentucky**  
State Board of Elections  
Frankfort, KY  
502-573-7100

**Louisiana**  
Office of Commissioner of Elections  
Baton Rouge, LA  
504-925-7885

**Maine**  
Elections Office  
Augusta, ME  
207-287-4186

**Maryland**  
Board of Elections  
Annapolis, MD  
410-974-3711

**Massachusetts**  
Office of Director of Elections  
Boston, MA  
617-727-2828

**Michigan**  
Office of Director of Elections  
Lansing, MI  
517-373-2540

**Minnesota**  
Office of Secretary of State  
St. Paul, MN  
612-296-2805

**Mississippi**  
Elections Office  
Jackson, MS  
601-359-1350

**Missouri**  
Election Services  
Jefferson City, MO  
573-751-2301

**Montana**  
Office of Secretary of State  
Helena, MT  
406-444-4732

**Nebraska**  
Office of Secretary of State  
Lincoln, NE  
402-471-2554

**Nevada**  
Office of Secretary of State  
for Elections  
Carson City, NV  
702-687-3176

**New Hampshire**  
Assistant Secretary of State  
Concord, NH  
603-271-3242

**New Jersey**  
Election Division  
Trenton, NJ  
609-292-3761

**New Mexico**  
Bureau of Elections  
Santa Fe, NM  
505-827-3622

**New York**  
State Board of Elections  
Albany, NY  
518-474-8100

**North Carolina**  
State Board of Elections  
Raleigh, NC  
919-733-7173

**\*North Dakota**  
Division of Elections  
Bismarck, ND  
701-328-4146

**Ohio**  
Office of Secretary of State  
Columbus, OH  
614-466-2585

**Oklahoma**  
State Election Board  
Oklahoma City, OK  
405-521-2391

**Oregon**  
Office of Secretary of State  
Salem, OR  
503-986-1518

**Pennsylvania**  
Office of Commissioner of Elections  
Harrisburg, PA  
717-787-5280

**Rhode Island**  
Office of Director of Elections  
Providence, RI  
401-222-2340

**South Carolina**  
State Election Commission  
Columbia, SC  
803-734-9060

**South Dakota**  
Office of Supervisor of Elections  
Pierre, SD  
605-773-3537

**Tennessee**  
Elections Office  
Nashville, TN  
615-741-7956

**Texas**  
Office of Secretary of State  
Austin, TX  
512-463-5650

**Utah**  
Office of Director of Elections  
Salt Lake City, UT  
801-538-1041

**Vermont**  
Office of Secretary of State  
Montpelier, VT  
802-828-2304

**Virginia**  
State Board of Elections  
Richmond, VA  
804-786-6551

**Washington**  
Division of Elections  
Olympia, WA  
360-753-2336

**West Virginia**  
Office of Chief of Staff  
Charleston, WV  
301-558-6000

**Wisconsin**  
State Elections Board  
Madison, WI  
608-266-8005

**Wyoming**  
Deputy Secretary of State  
Cheyenne, WY  
307-777-5333

**Puerto Rico**  
Office of Secretary of State  
San Juan, PR  
787-724-2085

\* No voter registration



Close Up Foundation  
44 Canal Center Plaza  
Alexandria, VA 22314-1592  
Toll-free: 888-706-3300  
[www.closeup.org](http://www.closeup.org)



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