

I'm Registered to Vote, Now What?

Jessica Bailey

jessica.bailey@portercountyin.gov

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Introduction

Often times the Elections Office and other organizations work very hard to get people registered to vote by hosting voter registration drives, offering the opportunity at community events, or being available during the day at the office. However, after the voter registration acknowledgement is sent there is no more communication. These first-time voters are left on their own to try to learn about the candidates, the process of voting, where to vote, the voting hours, the types of voting available, voting laws, voting equipment and it can all be overwhelming. Not knowing what to do after registration may cause some voters to never cast a vote. The other obstacle that is faced is numerous calls to the understaffed office during a very busy time from voters that don't know where to find the information they are looking for in order to cast their vote. Staff stopping their tasks repeatedly to answer the phones pulls them away from important responsibilities and complicates timelines. By being proactive and providing answers to new voters in a new voter pamphlet it will relieve the stress of the employees by lessening the number of phone calls, allowing them to focus on time sensitive tasks and deadline while at the same time ease the stress of the new voter by allowing them to learn the voting process specific to Porter County on their own.

By sending each newly registered voter an informational pamphlet we are educating the new voter about what to expect and the process of casting their first vote. Providing education allows the new voter the ability to spend their time focusing on researching the candidates they are voting for, instead of searching the process of how to vote. Easing the stress of the new voter is also important, the more relaxed the voter is the more positive the experience the voter will have.

Since becoming the Clerk of Porter County we have tried various forms of outreach to capture the attention of the newly registered voters. We began outreach when we upgraded to new

equipment as the new equipment was intimidating to the new and seasoned voters alike. This is when the office began taking the equipment to the county fair and placing a mock election on it. We encourage “voters” or fairgoers to vote for their favorite fair food, animal, ride, etc. It is just a fun, low stress way to encourage voters to become familiar with the equipment so that on election day they will already know how to insert their ballot, use the machine to mark their ballot, and insert their ballot to have it tabulated correctly. But, going to the fair was only one form of outreach, we also took the machines to the high schools and performed their elections for homecoming and student council. Staff members have taken it to voter registration drives, and also to community organizations to introduce the equipment to the voters. Creating this pamphlet is the newest form of outreach for our new voters. It is my hope that by having something tangible that they can keep and refer back to as needed it will alleviate apprehension that voting can bring and maybe teach them a few things as well.

Goals

I would like to help educate new voters on voting in Porter County by creating short videos of the equipment and processes used in Porter County. We would then publish these videos on social media and on our county website for voters to watch at their convenience prior to Election Day in order to prepare for their first time casting a ballot. It would also be our goal to have these videos available on a tablet at the Vote Centers for those in line to review while waiting. In order to help ease the pressure the first-time voter is having I would like to create a pamphlet to be sent with the voter registration acknowledgement letter. This pamphlet would have QR codes to allow the Porter County voter to view the short videos. Using the information located in the pamphlet, the first-time voter would have the information needed to have a successful first-time voting experience including- hours, locations, types of voting available and much more. The long-term

goal would be to increase voter turnout, by providing information from the start that the voter will need for a positive experience. By providing the new voter with videos and the information pamphlet the goal for the office would be to lessen the amount of phone calls received asking for information on Vote Centers or new voter information

Methods

Schedule-

August 2025	Determine media to be used and type of design.
September 2025	Finalize the information to be used in the pamphlet.
October 2025	Research topics and type content in pamphlet
November 2025	Tie in visual components to verbiage
December 2025	Code and place QR codes in pamphlet
January 2026	Test QR codes to ensure all links go to correct content. Proof final draft. Price printing.
Ongoing	Update content as legislation or procedures change

Tools-

The tools used in this capstone project were mainly the Standard Operating Procedures within the Porter County Elections & Registration Office. Other helpful resources included the indianavoters.com website and the application for Absentee Ballot. The videos were originally created using a HAVA grant from the Indiana Secretary of State’s Office Grant and were recently

updated to reflect the new version of equipment that was purchased. We sourced a local videographer to create the videos and a staff member to act in the video. The videos utilized the information that has been learned from trainings that received from ES&S, our equipment vendor, to share the process of voting on the machines. The pamphlet was created using a template in Canva. The material that was chosen for the pamphlet came from questions that are regularly asked during phone calls or at Vote Centers. It also came from incidents that regularly arise at Vote Centers on Election Day that may prevent a voter from casting a regular ballot, such as forgetting their photo identification card.

Analysis-

Using dynamic QR codes the office would be able to track the number of times the QR codes were scanned, thus be able to know how meaningful the content of the pamphlet is to the first-time voter. After each election the office will be able to see if the voter turnout has increased, understanding that not all results can be attributed to one factor. Being that this is a new source of data, there would be no data to compare it to at the start.

CEATS Principles & Tools

Voting and Election Laws- One of the biggest misunderstandings on Election Day is the concept of Electioneering, discussing this in the pamphlet will allow first-time voters to understand that it is permissible to campaign outside of the 50-foot chute, and also prepare them for what clothing choices are appropriate in a polling location. It is important that voters be educated on these topics ahead of Election Day due to the possible misunderstandings that can occur. The CEATS Principle of Voting and Election Law emphasized the significance of including this as a section on the pamphlet.

A Source of Trusted Information- Much of the news we receive in Northwest Indiana is from Illinois- this can cause a disruption when hours, locations, candidates, and such differ when they reach a polling location as compared to what they heard on television. Preparing the first-time voter from the start with the Porter County voting process can prevent some of this disruption. The CEATS Principle of, A Source of Trusted Information, is imperative when it comes to sharing election information. When voters have a question they should know they can turn to the Porter County Election & Registration Office for accurate information. Providing them with a detailed, informative pamphlet explaining what to expect on Election Day to prepare them will set the tone for that relationship.

Election Technology- Following the QR codes the first-time voter will be able to watch videos demonstrating the use of a Ballot Marking Devices and the Tabulator. Being able to see these election machines ahead of Election Day can help in easing some of the nervousness of voting for the first time. The CEATS Principle, Election Technology, is important because the system of elections has changed dramatically within the last twenty years and it will only continue to change. Allowing the voter to prepare ahead of time by watching videos of the machines will allow the voter to learn how to use the machine prior to actually casting their ballot.

Websites and Social Media- Informing the voter from the beginning to follow the Porter County Elections & Registration Office's social media accounts and where on the website to find information will better help to keep the voter engaged and informed for future election needs. It is also important to notify the voter of our app so they can follow wait times on Election Day. The CEATS Principle Websites and Social Media captures these ideas and showcases them as trusted sources of information for voters. Steering voters to the official pages for the county is

important so they can know where to look for the information they need to stay informed and up to date.

Vote Centers- The CEATS Principle Vote Centers is the concept that allows voters to no longer have an assigned polling location on Election Day. This concept offers ease of access to voters as voting now can fit in their schedule instead of them having to schedule their day around going to a certain location during certain hours. Going to Vote Centers means the voter can go to any Vote Center location during the duration of the voting hours, much like Early Voting works.

Explaining to the first-time voter that in Porter County voters can “vote anywhere” is an important discussion and including a list of all of the potential locations available has made voting in Porter County a much easier process.

Best Practices and Continuous Improvement- In anything that is done there are always ways to improve and developing this brochure is no different. This brochure will be a work in progress and will continue to develop and change as new procedures for voting evolve. The CEATS Principle Best Practices and Continuous Improvement speaks to this endeavor. This pamphlet will remain a fluid document and as such, even in its current completed form the Director and Assistant Director of Elections & Registration have been invited to the Canva project so that as procedures and laws change they are able to edit this pamphlet instead of having to create an entirely new document.

Conclusion

With the pamphlet complete, the Porter County Elections & Registration staff will begin mailing a copy with each Acknowledgement Letter sent to newly registered voters. Soon, new voters will have all the information they need to cast their first vote at their fingertips. They will be able to

locate their polling place, understand what identification to bring, learn how to request an absentee application, or take advantage of the Porter County Mobile Voting Unit.

The pamphlet was created in Canva, and access has been provided to the Directors so it can be updated as procedures or legislation change. This approach is far more efficient than recreating the pamphlet each time an update is needed and helps ensure its continued use into the future, even as officeholders change.

References

1. Indiana Election Division. “*Application for Absentee Ballot by Mail for Election on __/__/2026,*” *Voter Portal*, 7 Jan. 2026, www.indianavoters.com
2. Indiana Secretary of State (2026). *Voter Portal*. <https://www.indianavoters.com>
3. Porter County Commissioners (2026). *Porter County Elections & Registration*. <https://portercountyin.gov/170/Elections-Registration>

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