



POPULATION ENGAGEMENT AND VOTER ENROLLMENT



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INTRODUCTION

I have a mixture of adult and teenage children, as well as a variety of acquaintances who had mixed responses when asked what they know about voter registration, the voting process, and what the importance of local government means. I feel that there is a tremendous disconnect from the community regarding the local government duties and understanding of the responsibilities that these offices hold. It seems almost like the people don't link the process of voting to the idea that the results of that vote are what put the people into power that will determine all of the things that affect their lives at a local level. While it is impossible for me to reach out to each citizen and educate them on who handles what part of the local community flow, I can try to help at least get more of the eligible citizens to register to vote and cast their voice to the process with an understanding that their number counts. Or even better, if they want to make some changes, they can run for office and try to work things out from the inside and correct the things that they feel are not where they need to be. Having more of the community engaged with getting registered, and voting will create a little more work for our voter registration associates,

but will also allow more people in the local community the opportunity to be part of the election process and have a say in the election of their local officials.

Goals

My goals for this project are:

1. Provide an opportunity to speak with young adults regarding voting, and how to register to vote, with hopes that they will register and vote and be more involved in the local government processes. Unfortunately I was unable to find a report that allowed for an age based separation in our system, to compare, but I will compare Historical details as well as overall registrations from 2024 General to 2026 Primary
2. Engage others with an interest in running for local offices, as it is important to allow new ideas to breathe life into a community, and to allow for new points of view and approaches to problems or interests, this will be measured by the number of new candidates on the 2026 Primary ballot
3. Design a promotional outreach to draw interest from the community to participate in the elections, and set this up in a way that it can be adapted

over time to allow for new ideas, and new outreach areas, this one is less measurable, but before this project began we had NO outreach other than a link on our county portal.

Methods

Before beginning the project, I researched historical data to determine old voter numbers and voting turnout over 30 years. I looked at our county's historical election data, which is scanned into files we have on our central drive, from 1994 and compared it to the election data from 2024 and found that in 1994 our county had 17,725 registered voters. In the general election, 11,161 ballots were cast for a turnout of 63% of the registered voters. I compared this to the 25,094 registered voters and 16,747 ballots cast in the general election in 2024 for a 66% turnout.

While this number has increased in the last 30 years with the addition of the vote centers, it was not a dramatic increase (only 3%). I would like to provide more outreach to our community to not only get more people registered to vote but also get more people to turn out to vote. According

to the 2020 Census, the estimate for our 2024 population of eligible voters was 29,913 and we had 22,984 active registered voters. In 2024 we had a total of 16,742 votes cast in the General Election which is 66.7% of the total registered voters, which would be only about 55.9% of eligible individuals according to the estimated population from the census (Source: InDepth Profile: STATS Indiana). As of today we have 25,102 registered voters in our county.

While I feel it is important to increase the voters in our community, I also believe it is important for the election to have opportunities for new authorities to be voted in. Many people have little information about what it takes to run for office, and our clerk and I felt that this was something that we could help educate the community about.

To accomplish this, the clerk's office paired with Purdue Extension to host a "Running for Office" class back in January to assist individuals who were looking to run for office for the first time. I felt like this class worked to give information to those who were looking to step up and put their name on the ballot.

I wanted to have a positive outreach opportunity for our community to engage with both the local youth/young adults, and others who feel disconnected from the voting process. I feel it is important to have those touch-points to engage and educate those voters on the importance of local government, how their vote impacts those offices, and the processes for registering, and voting options.

We were able to set up and hold 2 presentations at 2 of the 3 local High Schools in our area. I have a message out to the 3rd but I am unsure that we would be able to present to them before the early vote begins for the primary and we certainly won't have time until after Election Day. We provided information regarding the local offices, and their duties, and information about precincts, districts, and commissioners for our county. We also provided a QR code for the kids to be able to scan it and go to indianavoters.in.gov to fill out the voter registration application. I feel like we had a good deal of the students paying attention, and hopefully absorbing the information.

My ultimate goal is not to only have an increase in registered voters as having more voters registered but not voting accomplishes nothing. I want

to see a greater turnout for the elections and try to stir some excitement in the voting process again. I also want to see more people running for these local offices. With the total number of voters always being fluid anyway due to deaths, transferring individuals in and out of the county, etc. it is a little more difficult to determine if my specific outreaches are what is impacting the resulting “new” registrations.

CEATS Principles & Tools

Using the CEATS Principles of Voter Registration and utilizing the Statewide Voter Registration System to ensure accurate, and consistent records to keep our elections easy to manage and ensuring that the voter is placed in the correct precinct for voting reasons.

Outreach Planning

As our county really didn't seem to have a great outreach process, I began at the very beginning. We had no recognizable outreach flyers, or pamphlets, no propaganda other than a few coloring books from the SOS office, and a handful of stickers. Until we could determine what budget we had for any Election Propaganda, I had to start small. I designed a flyer that I felt would be more eye catching for the younger audience, and began

planning opportunities to present to the younger population. I also reached out to the Secretary of State's office to see if they had any promotional items that I could utilize as incentive items to get encourage engagement. I was able to work with Emilio in the Secretary's office to design some additional promotional fliers and some other outreach items that we can give to different entities to help promote voter registration and voting opportunities for some of the older community voters once it finalizes through the approvals at the SOS office.

Conclusion

Overall, I feel confident that reaching the students and distributing the promotional flyers and hanging the promotional posters that we are hoping to get from the Secretary of State's office, will provide a start on promoting voter registration and is something that will be manageable over time. The schools have indicated that they would be open to having us back in the future to continue to give these presentations to their senior classes. I hope to continue to move forward with additional outreach opportunities by distributing our flyer and registration handouts to the smaller towns and other community centers to have a farther reach.

References

Stats Indiana- *Indiana's Public Data Utility*

https://www.stats.indiana.edu/profiles/profiles.asp?scope_choice=a&county_changer=18107

SVRS – Statewide Voter Registration System

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