



The 2026 Midterms

CAMPUS ORGANIZING GUIDE FOR GETTING OUT THE VOTE

WHY THE 2026 MIDTERMS MATTER

The 2026 midterm elections will shape the direction of our country and the future of our democracy for years to come.

Voters will choose leaders at the federal, state, and local levels, who have the power to influence the issues that matter most—from healthcare access and economic opportunity to LGBTQ+ rights and the right to vote itself.

HRC Foundation research shows that LGBTQ+ voters overwhelmingly plan to vote in 2026, but many feel angry, afraid, exhausted, or discouraged about the political climate. Campus organizing plays a critical role in helping turn that emotional energy into participation—and helping your peers feel supported rather than overwhelmed.

There is too much at stake to sit this moment out. Student organizations, especially LGBTQ+ student groups, are uniquely positioned to meet other students where they are and help voting feel possible and accessible. Many students already plan to vote—organizing is often about helping them navigate the process, avoid confusion, and follow through.

DID YOU KNOW?

- LGBTQ+ voters **historically have very high midterm participation** and over 90 percent report planning to vote again in 2026.
- Many LGBTQ+ voters—especially younger and multiply marginalized folks—are deeply concerned about:
 - Voter ID requirements;
 - Being questioned about eligibility;
 - Harassment or intimidation at polling places
- LGBTQ+ voters are more likely than others to engage in civic life beyond voting, including discussing politics, organizing, protesting, and sharing information online.

When LGBTQ+ people vote and show up with strength and solidarity, we can make a real difference.

THE BASICS

DECIDE WHERE TO VOTE: HOME VS. COLLEGE

Students attending school away from home usually get to choose whether to vote in their home state or their college state (but only one).

Things to think about:

- Who and what is on the ballot in each place?
- Are there congressional, gubernatorial, or state-level races?
- Which state is easier to vote in (early voting, mail-in options)?
- Which do you feel more connected to?
- Where do you plan to live after graduation?

For LGBTQ+ students who may feel safer or more supported in one place than another, this choice can be especially important.

REGISTER TO VOTE

Before voting, students must be registered.

To vote in the 2026 midterm elections, you must:

- Be **18 years old** on or before Election Day (November 3, 2026);
- Be a U.S. citizen;
- Meet your state's residency requirements;
- Be registered to vote in the state where you plan to vote

Encouraging early registration is one of the best ways to reduce anxiety around voting—especially for students who may already feel targeted or uncertain about the process. To register to vote, visit:

vote.org/register-to-vote

CONFIRM YOUR REGISTRATION IS VALID

Many students think they're registered, but changes like moving, name changes, or inactivity can affect registration.

HRC Foundation research shows LGBTQ+ voters are especially concerned about being questioned or challenged about their registration status while voting. Confirming registration ahead of time helps minimize those risks and build confidence.

Encourage students to confirm that:

- Their registration is active;
- Their name and address are correct

This quick step can prevent bigger problems on Election Day. To check your registration status, visit: vote.org/am-i-registered-to-vote

MAKE A PLAN TO VOTE

College life is busy. Making a plan helps turn good intentions into action—especially for students balancing classes, jobs, family, and community responsibilities.

Pre-Election Voter Checklist

Encourage students to:

- Register to vote;
- Confirm their registration;
- Check voter ID requirements;
- Find and review a sample ballot;
- Research candidates and ballot measures;
- Make a plan for voting

Breaking the process into steps helps voting feel less overwhelming. To register to vote, visit: vote.org/register-to-vote.

MAKING A PLAN TO VOTE IN PERSON

For students voting early or on Election Day, planning the details matters—especially given concerns about logistics, access, and safety.

Ask students to answer:

1. Does my state offer early voting?
2. When am I voting?
3. Where is my polling place?
4. How will I get there?
5. How long might I be waiting in line?
6. Who am I voting with?
7. Who and what am I voting for?

What to bring:

- Photo ID (if required)
- Voter registration card (just in case)
- Sample ballot or notes

- Accessibility tools or assistance
- Friends—make it social

What to leave at home:

- Campaign shirts, buttons, or signs (rules vary by state)

IN-PERSON VOTING: WHAT TO KNOW

HRC Foundation research shows LGBTQ+ voters are particularly concerned about harassment, being challenged, or disruptions at polling places. Sharing this information ahead of time can help students feel prepared.

- If polls close and you're still in line, **stay in line**.
- If you make a mistake, ask for a new ballot.
- If a machine breaks, ask for a paper ballot.
- If your name isn't on the voter roll, ask for a provisional ballot.
- Polling places must be accessible, and assistance is allowed. Ask for help if you need it.

Knowing your rights makes a difference. If you have questions, ask a poll worker.

MAKING A PLAN TO VOTE BY MAIL OR ABSENTEE

Voting by mail can be a good option for students who are concerned about in person barriers—but it requires planning.

Before choosing this option, students should:

- Make sure they're registered in the correct state
- Check absentee ballot request deadlines
- Review ballot return deadlines
- Track their ballot if available

Mail-In Voting Plan Questions:

1. When will I request my absentee ballot?
2. When will I complete my ballot?
3. When will I mail or drop off my ballot?
4. How will I get to the post office or drop location?
5. How will I track my ballot?



Encourage students not to wait until the last day—mail delays are real.

ACCESSIBILITY, LANGUAGE ACCESS & SUPPORT

HRC Foundation research shows that concerns about being questioned, misgendered, or challenged are real for many LGBTQ+ voters—especially trans and gender-nonconforming voters and LGBTQ+ voters of color.

- Voters with disabilities are entitled to accessible polling places and assistance.
- Voters who need language assistance may receive help from someone of their choice.
- Voter intimidation and harassment are not allowed.

If you encounter issues like being challenged, intimidated, or turned away, the most important thing is your safety. If you feel unsafe, move toward official poll workers or the inside the polling place and/or call a voter protection hotline. Trust your instincts. If you can:

1. Stay calm and assert your right to vote
2. Ask to speak with a poll supervisor
3. Request a provisional ballot if needed
4. Document what happened if possible
5. Call the Election Protection Hotline for help:
 - English: 866-OUR-VOTE
 - Spanish: 888-VE-Y-VOTA

Sharing these protections builds confidence and safety.

GET OUT THE VOTE ON CAMPUS

TABLING THAT FEELS NATURAL

The best tabling feels friendly and conversational. Use it as an opportunity to build and activate the community.

Try:

- “Are you registered to vote for the midterms?”
- “Do you know where you’re registered right now?”
- “Have you thought about how you’re voting this year?”

Remember: many LGBTQ+ students are already motivated. Your role is often about **removing barriers**, not convincing them to care.

CONSTITUTION DAY & KEY FALL MOMENTS

September 17 is Constitution Day, and many schools already require programming. It’s a great opportunity to:

- Table
- Register voters

- Share voting information
- Host teach-ins or discussions

Also organize around:

- National Voter Registration Day (September 16)
- Early voting start dates (varies by state and county)
- Election Week (the week of November 3rd)

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE BEYOND VOTING

HRC Foundation research shows LGBTQ+ people engage in civic life in many ways beyond voting.

Students can:

- Serve as poll workers
- Volunteer with voter engagement or protection efforts
- Organize ride shares
- Help with reminders and peer outreach

Meeting students where they are at strengthens long-term engagement.

SOCIAL MEDIA & PEER POWER

LGBTQ+ voters are especially likely to discuss politics and share information with their networks.

Encourage students to post when they:

- Register
- Check their registration
- Make a plan
- Vote

Peer visibility makes participation feel normal and supported.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In the 2026 midterms, too much is at stake to sit this moment out. Voting is one of the most powerful ways we can defend our rights, protect one another, strengthen our democracy, and shape the future.

Student organizers play a critical role in making sure their peers are informed, supported, and ready to show up and vote.