

Creating a Culture of Voting on Campus

Suzanne Walker-Pacheco, PhD
Emily Fessler, MPH
Liz Wertz



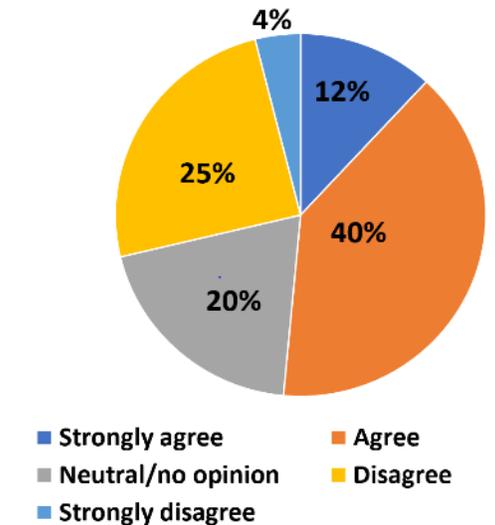
Rationale

- Low college-age national voting rates
- Low voting rates in local elections
- Apparent barriers to voting for college students
- Political information obtained from social media
- Lack of access to nonpartisan resources
- Unfamiliar with practical aspects of voting
- Feelings of disengagement or anxiety related to voting

Surveys from Classroom Visits 2020 & 2021

Indicate your level of agreement with this statement:

I know where to find sources of nonpartisan, unbiased political information (N=256)





Barriers



Solutions



Logistical barriers

- Election laws and policies

Educational barriers

- Lack of institutional transmission of voting information
- Little opportunity to discover personal relevance of voting
- Bias and misinformation
- Not knowing they can register at college

Perceived barriers

- Emotional and psychological factors

Solutions: logistical barriers

- Information distribution
- Advocate for student voter access

Solutions: educational barriers

- Provide practical information on voting process
- Facilitate understanding of relevance of voting
- Offer nonpartisan resources

Solutions: perceived barriers

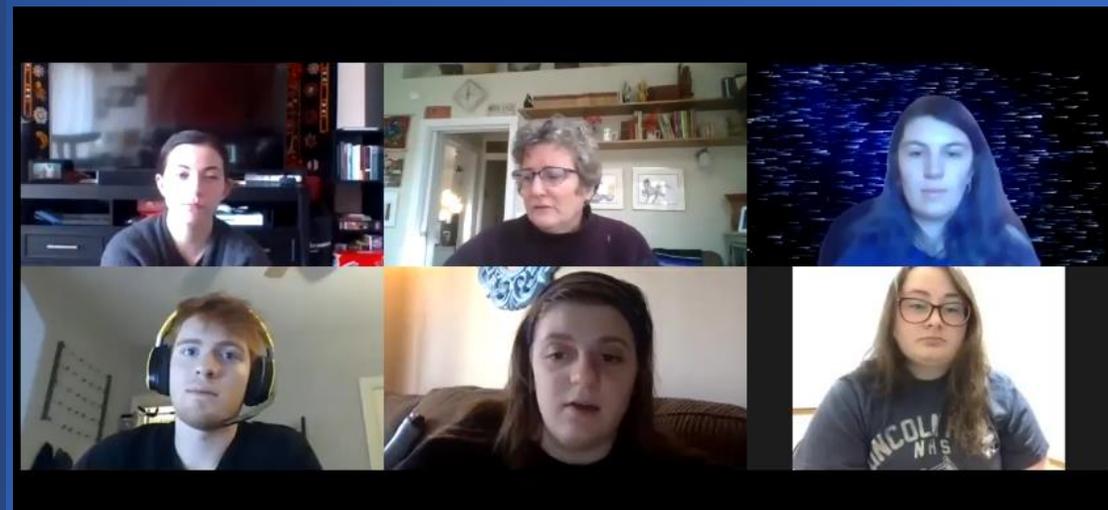
- Familiarize students with voting process
- Provide information to promote engagement
- Enhance outreach

Est. 2020



- Mission statement & objectives established
- Specific goals & plans
- Voter Education Curriculum produced
- Video production
- Proposal prepared for campus funding
- Production of 1st edition of Voter Information Booklet
- Tabling, presentations, distribution of Voter Information Booklet
- Campus partnerships established; website development
- Association established with County Clerk's office

LWV of SW Missouri: logistical support, financial contribution, engagement



OUR MISSION



Civic Engagement and the Public Affairs Mission

Paws to the Polls formed to increase voter engagement and voting knowledge at Missouri State University. Our mission is to drive culture change by turning MSU into a voting campus. Inspired by the university's mission in public affairs, our aim is to weave civic engagement into the fabric of the university via education and outreach.

Utilize Existing Resources

- Campus

- Office of Public Affairs Support
- ALL-IN Democracy Challenge
- American Democracy Project
- National Study of Learning and Voter Engagement, Tufts University
- Campus Central Polling Location

- Community

- Greene County Clerk
- League of Women Voters



Paws to the Polls Funding



- LWV Education Fund
- Student Govt Assoc, Student Initiative Fund
- MSU Office of Public Affairs Support (logistical & in-kind support)
- Provost's Office & Student Affairs



Paws to the Polls
<https://www.missouristate.edu/ADP/paws-to-the-polls.htm>



 **Check your voter registration**
<https://www.sos.mo.gov/>



Register to vote



Peer engagement

Self-discovery



Paws to the Polls Voter Education Initiative

Education

- Voter Education Modules
- Voter Information Booklets
- Video Production

Outreach

(Campus and Community)

- Voter Registration Tabling
- Presentations
- Events

Support & Advocacy

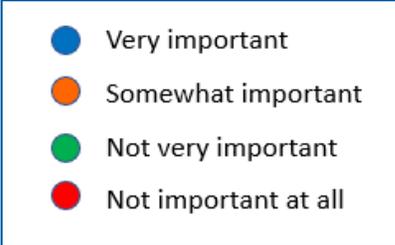
- Legislative Interactions
 - Jefferson City
 - On campus
- Liaison w/Greene County Clerk

Education

Voter Education Curriculum - Sample Results

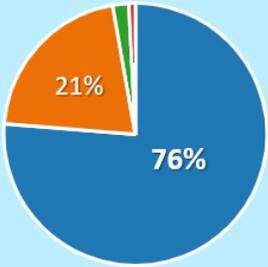
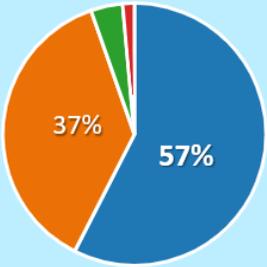
- Personalizes & familiarizes voting
- Registering to vote, regulations
- Locating nonpartisan information
- Identifying election districts & elected officials
- Recognizing and avoiding bias

“How important do you feel it is to vote?”



Pre-test (N=280)

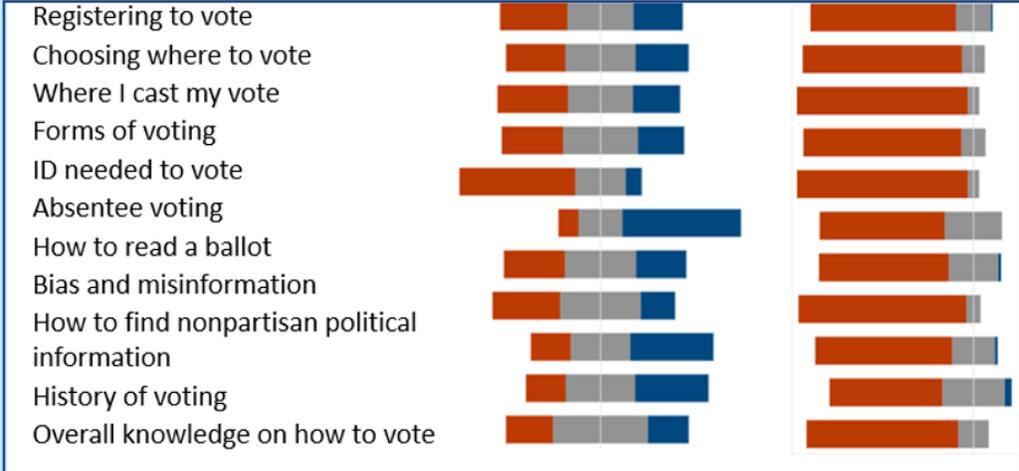
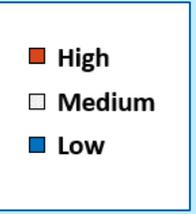
Post-test (N=253)



$\chi^2 = 21.06$ $p < .001$

Voting-Related Knowledge

Pre-test (N=280) Post-test (N=253)



All variables sign. @ $p < .001$



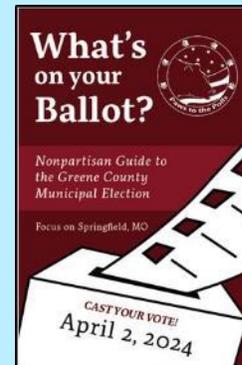
Voter Information Booklets

- Registration & voting, absentee voting, etc.
- Nonpartisan sources of political information
- Benefits of voting at school vs. home
- Linktree to online resources
- ~9000 distributed (printed copies)



Local Election Voter Guide

- Produced, printed, and distributed for April 2023 and April 2024 municipal elections
- Candidate responses to student-developed questions
- Information on ballot measures
- 5200 guides distributed ('23 & '24)



Video Production

- Student-produced
- Student perspectives on voter engagement
- "Finding Your Voice"
- "Casting Your Vote"



Collaborations and Partnerships

Campus

Offices & Departments



Student Organizations



Community

- League of Women Voters of SW Missouri
- Greene County Clerk
- Graduates of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity
- Youth Civic Leadership



- Local businesses



Presentations, Tabling & Activities

Campus & Community Presentations



Campus & Community Tabling

- Across campus
- Labor Day Parade
- MLK, Jr. Day events
- High school voter reg (w/LWV)
- Trivia
- Election Day @ campus Polling Location





Voter Awareness Events

- Creation of “Voter Awareness Week”
- Voting Fairs (~1 100 attendees)
- Legislator and Candidate Panels and Forums
- Presentations
- Voter registration tabling
- Social media contests



Voter Awareness Week Event
October 6, 2022
Plaster Student Union Theater
3:30 – 5:00 PM

Collaborative Conversations:
A Discussion with Our Elected Officials

Agenda

Introduction	Suzanne Walker-Pacheco, PhD & Zion Riffe-Stevens, Grad. Ast.
Opening Remarks	Ken McClure, Mayor of Springfield
Panel Discussion Q&A	Nora Cox, Moderator
Closing Remarks	Paws to the Polls student leader

GUEST SPEAKERS



Senator Doug Beck District 1	Senator Lincoln Hough District 39	Representative Alex Riley District 134	Representative Betsy Fogle District 135
---------------------------------	--------------------------------------	---	--



Visit the Paws to the Polls website

Missouri State
Today's program is sponsored by: Paws to the Polls with support of the MSU Office of Public Affairs Support

Registration, Legislative Awareness, Legislator Interactions

- Deputy Registrar Training with County Clerk
- Partnering with League of Women Voters
- State & Federal Civic Engagement
- Legislative tracking
- Letter-writing campaigns
- Written testimony to MO House Elections Committee
- Jefferson City (MO capital) voter advocacy trips
 - Create & distributed white papers
 - Meetings with legislators
- Campus meetings with state legislators
- Legislation introduced in 2022 based on our advocacy to reinstate university ID





Recognition

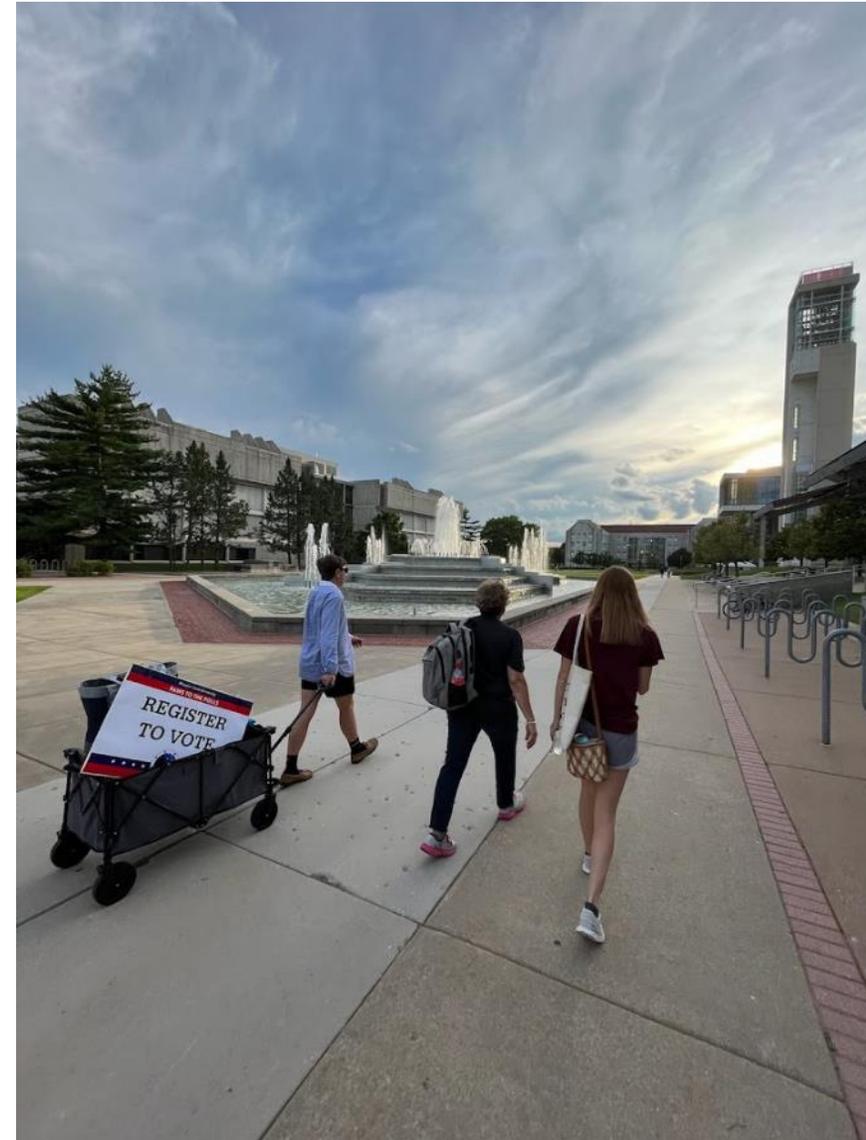


- 2020 All-in-Democracy Challenge Silver Campus
- 2021 Washington Monthly – top 200 voting colleges
- 2021 Springfield Community Focus Report Update
- 2022 All-in Democracy Challenge Presidential Commitment Signatory
- 2023 All-in Democracy Challenge Student Award for Promoting Democracy on Campus (Z. Stevens, PttP graduate asst)
- 2023 League of Women Voters of MO, Harriet Woods Award for Exemplary Community Service (S. Walker-Pacheco, Faculty Coordinator)

Missouri State U

62.6%
2020 Voting Rate

+12.2
Change From 2016



PAWS in the NEWS



OZARKSFIRST.com

Missouri State University working to get more 'Paws to the Polls'

Missouri State students provide resources to community



From left to right, Paws to the Polls members Sam Wang, Ava Taylor, Emma Bloodworth and Clemmie Taylor pose for a photo outside of the Davis-Harrington Welcome Center on Missouri State University's campus on Tuesday, April 4, 2023. Greta Cross/Springfield News-Leader



About 112 results (0.31 seconds)

KSMU

Paws to the Polls works to educate MSU students about the election process

The organization is hosting its annual Voter Awareness Week, which will include the 2nd Annual Voting Fair on Wednesday, October 18,...

2 days ago

OzarksFirst.com

Get registered to vote for upcoming elections in Springfield

GREENE COUNTY, Mo. — A coalition of Springfield and Greene County partners will celebrate National Voter Registration Day with drives aimed...

1 month ago

The Standard

Bohlen: In elections big and small, student votes matter

As new and returning students march onto campus this August, some are coming from across the country or the world, while some are simply...

Aug 20, 2023

M News

Empowering MSU to engage students in democracy

Engagement in campus democracy is important, especially to Zion Riffe-Stevens. Zion Riffe-Stevens. A Missouri State University student and...

May 9, 2023

Current Effort:

Statewide Collaboration: Voter Advocacy in Missouri's Higher Education Institutions



In progress:

Development of an information- and action-sharing coalition of Missouri higher education institutions to enhance civic engagement on college and university campuses

Missouri State
UNIVERSITY



 Washington University in St. Louis

Objectives

- Increase access to nonpartisan information
- Build community, build bridges
- Increase effectiveness of advocacy in MO
- Increase effectiveness of individual inst. actions
- Mutual support
- Serve as models for initiative-building

Actions



Information-Sharing

- Current legislative actions
- Sharing ideas
- Promoting nationally recognized voting days
- Updates on actions

Support

- Sharing information resources
- Providing ideas
- Target less-supported institutions for assistance

Collective Action

- Data-gathering
- Collaborative advocacy in Jefferson City
- Support voting legislation
- Conferences, webinars

Reflections & Recommendations

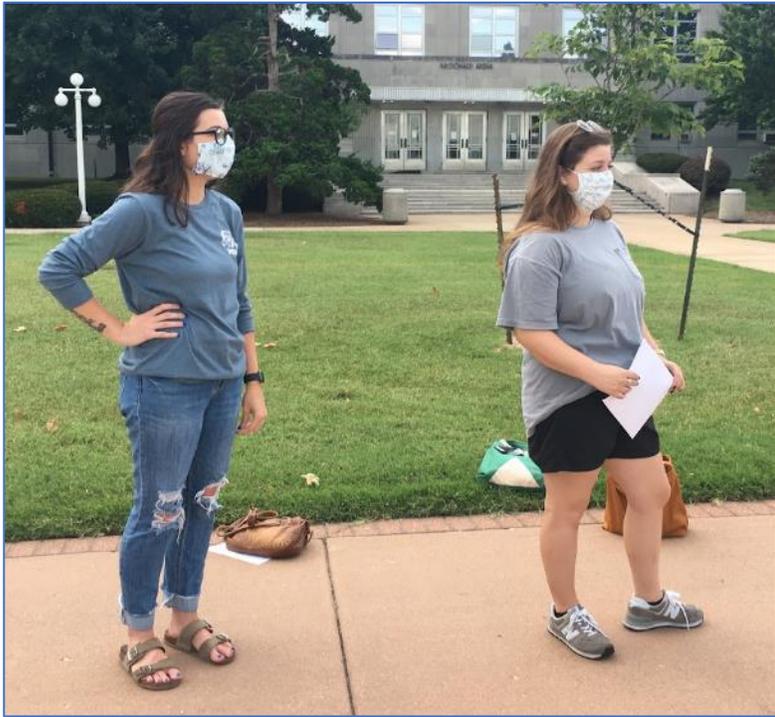


League of Women Voters ↔ Campus Collaboration

- Campus connections
 - Seek action-oriented faculty, programs, or depts
 - Connect campuses within state for collaboration
- Recruiting & engaging young voters
- Preparing leaders
- Voter services & educational support
- LWV state education funds to support campus initiatives



Student Perspectives



Emily Fessler

Liz Wertz



Best Practices for LWV ↔ Campus Collaborations

- Peer focus
 - Power of student-centered ideas
- LWV role
- Identify barriers and create solutions to student voting
- Visibility counts – just show up!



Evaluate Existing Resources

- Campus
 - Campus offices
 - Student organizations
 - National campus voting organizations – member institution?
 - ALL-IN Campus Democracy Challenge
 - Campus Vote Project
 - Voter Friendly Campus
 - National Study of Learning and Voter Engagement
 - Campus Polling Location?
 - Action-oriented individual faculty and staff
- Community
 - League of Women Voters
 - County Clerk/Election Authority



Re-Establish Trust with Evidence-Based Sources



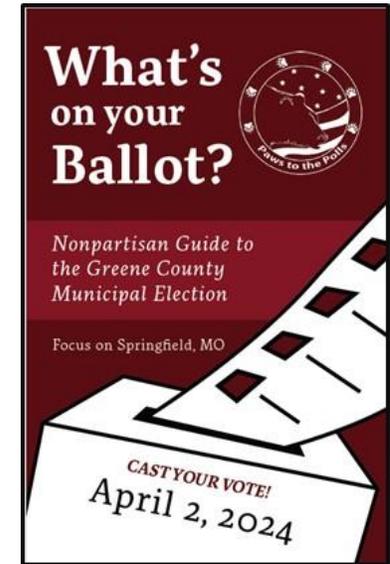
Political Information

- Vote 411
- Vote Smart
- ActiVote app
- Voter Guides



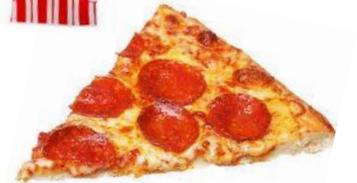
Fact-checking Websites

- Politifact
- FactCheck.org
- Science Feedback

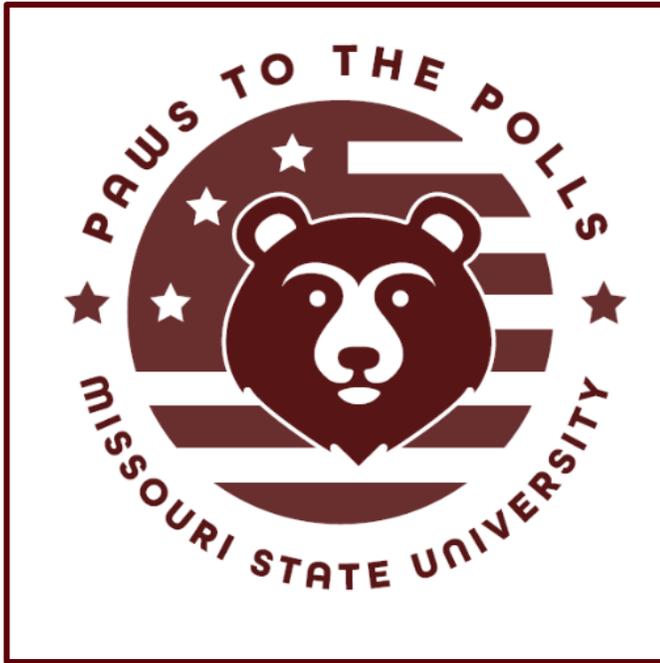


Assessing Funding Needs & Accessing Funding

- Assess funding needs
- Engage students
 - Food, giveaways
 - Fun or interesting
 - Make local government visible
- Seek internal funding for faculty/staff



Thank You



- Missouri State University
 - Office of Public Affairs Support
 - Student Affairs
 - Office of the Provost
- League of Women Voters
- Greene County Clerk

Contact us:

pawstothepolls@missouristate.edu

Follow us:

 @pawstothepolls

Find us: 

