

THE TRUE STORY OF THE FORGOTTEN HEROES — SELMA'S STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

# SELMA



# THE

# BRIDGE TO THE



# BALLOT



COMMUNITY SCREENING GUIDE

SPLC



Southern Poverty Law Center



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# A film, a tool, a call to action

*Selma: The Bridge to the Ballot* tells the story of the historic struggle for voting rights through the voices of the Alabama high school students and teachers who were the backbone of the Selma movement. They confronted a violent sheriff and a defiant governor determined to protect white supremacy at any cost. By organizing and marching bravely in the face of intimidation, violence, arrest and even murder, these activists achieved one of the most significant victories of the civil rights era—passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The film, narrated by Oscar®-winner Octavia Spencer, vividly recounts sacrifices that should never be forgotten. Unfortunately, the struggle for voting rights has been lost on a generation of Americans. More than 90 million eligible voters did not go to the polls in the 2012 presidential election. In the 18-to-24 age group, 6 out of 10 did not vote. Two years later, voter turnout dropped to a 72-year low.

Even worse, the U.S. Supreme Court has gutted a key provision of the Voting Rights Act, and states have enacted a variety of voter suppression laws. Now is the time for civic groups to take action by registering and encouraging people to vote, by supporting proposals for greater access to the ballot

box and by raising awareness of voting issues in their community.

This 40-minute film is a crucial reminder that each of us has the ability to bring about powerful social change but only if we exercise our right to participate in our democracy. This guide supports a community screening of *Selma: The Bridge to the Ballot* with background information, discussion questions and community resources.

*Send feedback and ideas at [splcenter.org/screening](https://www.splcenter.org/screening).*

*For more information, and updates, visit [selma.splcenter.org](https://www.selma.splcenter.org).*

# Quick Start Tips for Your Screening

## PROMOTE YOUR SCREENING

The Southern Poverty Law Center has provided several tools to help your civic group promote its screening. The following resources and more are available for download at [splcenter.org/screening](http://splcenter.org/screening).

- Sample press release
- Poster and flyer
- Social media post and tweet

## TAKE ACTION

Choose from this list of projects or create a new idea for how your organization will improve voter turnout in your community.

- **Organize a neighborhood voter registration day** to help register people ages 17 and 18. The League of Women Voters offers registration drive tips. It also provides a high school voter registration drive manual on its website.  
[lww.org/content/tips-successful-voter-registration-drives](http://lww.org/content/tips-successful-voter-registration-drives)  
[lww.org/content/high-school-voter-registration-training-manual-3rd-edition](http://lww.org/content/high-school-voter-registration-training-manual-3rd-edition)
- **Write letters** to local elected officials. Voice your opposition to voter ID laws and measures that threaten to stop voters of color, seniors and students from casting a ballot. Encourage your Congressional representative to support a reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- **Create a flyer** that supplies voting information to members of the community. The ACLU offers tips on creating and distributing flyers.  
[aclu.org/creating-flyers-and-posters](http://aclu.org/creating-flyers-and-posters)
- Check to see if there is a local chapter of the League of Women Voters or the NAACP. **Visit online resources such as Vote411 and Rock the Vote** (see the resources list in this guide for more). Check online for local voting rights groups near you.  
[lww.org/get-involved/local-leagues](http://lww.org/get-involved/local-leagues)  
[naacp.org/pages/find-your-local-unit](http://naacp.org/pages/find-your-local-unit)
- If you know family members and friends who typically do not vote, **make sure they vote** in the next election. Offer to go with them to the polls or provide transportation.
- **Register five first-time voters** and make sure they vote in the next election.

## SCREEN THE FILM & DISCUSS

When you screen the film, there are some key ideas you'll want to consider and discuss. Ask viewers these essential questions for discussion:

- Why does voting matter today? Why were black citizens throughout the South ready to risk their lives to secure their right to vote?
- Can people make a difference? What does it take to end deeply ingrained injustice?
- Voter turnout reached a 72-year low in 2014. Why are people so hesitant to vote now? Is that the case in this community? Why or why not?
- Six-out-of-10 voters ages 18 to 24 did not vote in the 2012 presidential election. What was young voter turnout in this community? Does this state allow young people to register to vote at 17 if they will be 18 by Election Day?
- In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated a key provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Officials are now no longer required to seek federal permission to change voting laws. Why should Congress reauthorize the act to again require permission?

## REPORT ON YOUR EVENT

Let the SPLC know how things went at your screening. It can help ensure groups across the nation successfully use the film to raise awareness about voting rights issues. Report on your screening at [sp.lc/Q2MZY](http://sp.lc/Q2MZY).

- Where was your event held? How many people attended? How was the film used?
- Send photos of your event.
- How was the film received by the audience? Did it motivate young viewers to vote, or encourage older viewers to start voting again? What topics and ideas were discussed afterward?
- What worked at your screening? What didn't work? What would you do differently?
- What would help other organizations to host a successful screening?



## This guide is dedicated to the brave marchers of Bloody Sunday.

On March 7, 1965, these men, women and children left Selma, Alabama, bound for the state capital of Montgomery. They were committed to dismantling the racist Jim Crow policies that prevented African Americans from voting. It was a message they were determined to deliver to George Wallace, the white supremacist governor who had earlier pledged “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever.”

As the marchers crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge, they were met by state troopers and a local sheriff’s posse determined to stop them. The air filled with clouds of tear gas and the sound of nightsticks striking the flesh and bones of marchers.

They were beaten back but not defeated.

Their bravery on Bloody Sunday helped stir the conscience of a nation and ensure the right to vote for all citizens.

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

*Selma: The Bridge to the Ballot* is a versatile film that can be used by civic groups and student organizations to motivate people to engage in the democratic process. This film shows that when eligible voters don’t cast a ballot, they don’t have a voice. And when citizens don’t have a voice, they are marginalized.

Because we expect that people will use the film in many different ways—and will have different amounts of time available—we’ve made this guide flexible. You can introduce the film to the audience using the synopsis: the lists of people, groups and places in the film, all provided in this guide.

Once you’ve screened the film, invite your audience to participate in our democracy by tackling current voting rights issues with your organization. The “Your Community” section helps viewers identify voting rights issues in their community.

# PART ONE

## ABOUT THE FILM AND THE SELMA-TO-MONTGOMERY MARCH

*Selma: The Bridge to the Ballot* tells the true story of the forgotten heroes of the historic struggle for voting rights—Selma’s students and teachers. They confronted a violent sheriff and a defiant governor determined to protect white supremacy at any cost. By organizing and marching bravely in the face of intimidation, violence, arrest and even murder, these activists achieved one of the most significant victories of the civil rights era—passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The story of the Selma-to-Montgomery march, like all stories in the civil rights movement, is much more than an isolated chapter in our history. The voting rights movement illustrates how citizens in our democracy can use the rights guaranteed them in the First Amendment to contest injustice. It shows the power of activism and nonviolence to disrupt oppressive systems. And it shows that the energy and momentum for social change often comes from the youngest among us.

Despite the passage in 1870 of the 15th Amendment, which granted African-American men the right to vote, few black citizens could exercise that right 75 years later. Jim Crow laws, particularly in the Deep South, set literacy tests and poll taxes into place as obstacles. Restrictive rules and procedures reinforced the barriers. In Selma, Alabama, the voter registration office was open only two days a month, and would-be voters had to supply the name of an already-registered voter to vouch for them.

Economic power was a further barrier to registration. White employers and landowners were likely to punish black citizens who dared to register by firing them or throwing them off the farms they worked on as sharecroppers. Custom provided the cement that made the combined obstacles all but impenetrable.

And yet, in the face of all these obstacles, the least powerful people in Selma society—the black, the young, the disenfranchised—joined together and used nonviolent means to break the system open and gain the right to participate fully in civic life.

## THE GROUPS

**The Dallas County Voters League**, a local group led mainly by Selma teachers, worked to encourage black citizens to register to vote and held classes to prepare them for the literacy and civics tests.

**The Ku Klux Klan** first emerged during Reconstruction as a vigilante group that used horrific violence to intimidate and control Southern blacks. The white supremacist group arose again during the 1950s and 1960s. Members used violence—including bombings and murder—in a campaign of terror against supporters of the civil rights movement.

**The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)**, whose first president was Martin Luther King Jr., grew out of the successful Montgomery bus boycott. The group worked to support and direct opposition to segregation by collaborating closely with Christian churches.

**The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)** organized students to take direct action such as sit-ins, freedom rides and voter registration drives to bring an end to segregation. A major civil rights organization, SNCC operated throughout the South and enjoyed support from people across the country.

**The White Citizens’ Councils** consisted of white leaders (e.g., bankers, newspaper editors, politicians and business owners) who formed local organizations throughout the South to resist desegregation after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Called the “uptown Klan” by Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, the members used their economic and political power to enforce white supremacy and oppose integration under the slogan “Never!”



Thousands of marchers—including students—depart from Brown Chapel in Selma en route to Montgomery.

**THE PEOPLE OF SELMA: THE BRIDGE TO THE BALLOT**

Students take center stage in *Selma: The Bridge to the Ballot*. But they are not alone: Local residents, state and federal officials, and people across the nation all play a part in this story.

**Amelia Boynton**, civil rights activist, leader of Dallas County Voters League (DCVL)

**Avery Williams**, Selma student

**Bernard Lafayette**, youth organizer with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

**Bettie Mae Fikes**, Selma student

**C.T. Vivian**, minister, civil rights activist, member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

**Charles Bonner**, Selma student

**Charles Mauldin**, Selma student, president of the Dallas County Youth Voters League

**Clark Olsen**, minister from Berkeley, California

**Cleo Hobbs**, Selma student

**Diane Nash**, civil rights activist, a founder of SNCC

**Frank M. Johnson Jr.**, U.S. District Judge

**Frederick D. Reese**, Selma teacher, president of the Black

Teachers' Association, president of the DCVL

**George Wallace**, governor of Alabama

**Hazel Chatmon**, Selma student

**Henry Allen**, Selma student

**Hosea Williams**, civil rights activist with the SCLC

**James Bevel**, civil rights activist with the SCLC

**James Hare**, Alabama Circuit Court Judge

**James Reeb**, minister from Boston

**James Orange**, civil rights activist with the SCLC

**Jim Clark**, sheriff of Dallas County

**Jimmie Lee Jackson**, church deacon from Marion, Alabama

**Joanne Blackmon**, Selma student

**John Cloud**, leader of the Alabama State Troopers

**John Lewis**, civil rights activist, chair of SNCC

**Joseph T. Smitherman**, mayor of Selma

**Lawrence Huggins**, Selma football coach and teacher

**Lynda Blackmon**, Selma student

**Lyndon B. Johnson**, president of the United States

**Margaret Moore**, Selma teacher and member of DCVL

**Martin Luther King Jr.**, leader of the SCLC

**Sarah Craig**, Selma teacher

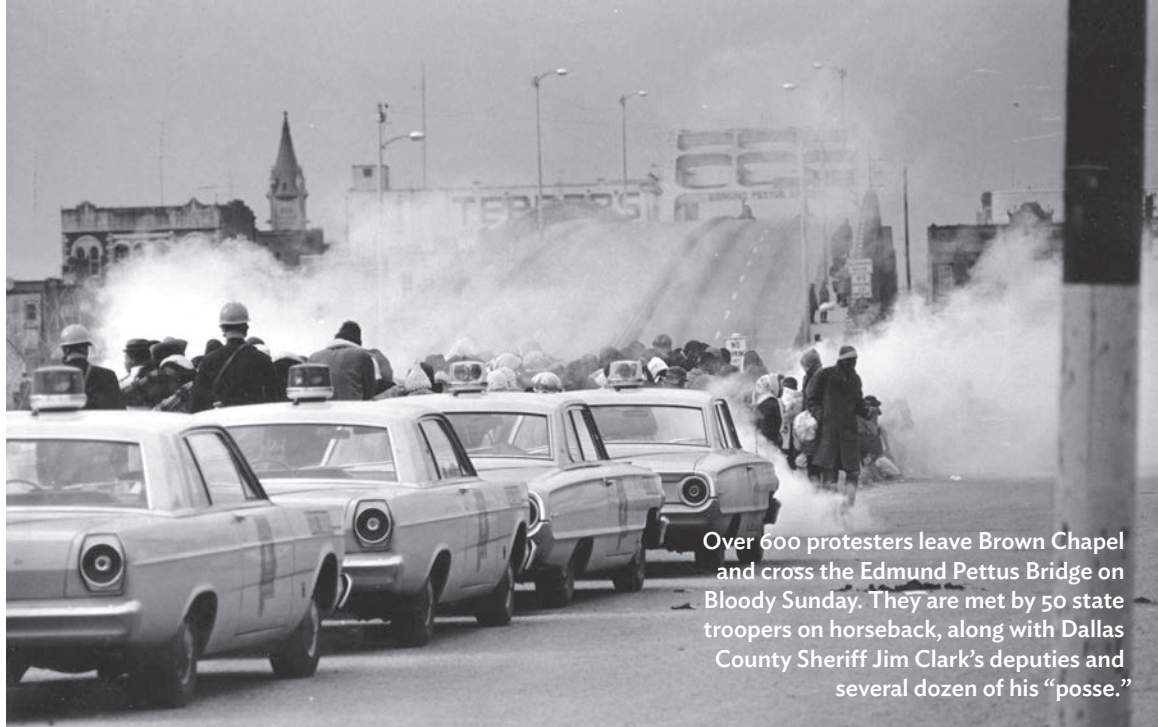
**Sheyann Webb**, Selma elementary student

**Terry Shaw**, Selma student

**Walter Turner**, clerk to Judge Johnson

**Willie Robinson**, Selma student

**Wilson Baker**, Selma director of public safety



Over 600 protesters leave Brown Chapel and cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday. They are met by 50 state troopers on horseback, along with Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark's deputies and several dozen of his "posse."

## THE PLACES

**16th Street Baptist Church.** A church in Birmingham, Alabama, that served as a hub of activity during mass anti-segregation demonstrations in 1963, including the Birmingham Children's Crusade. In September of that year, members of the Ku Klux Klan planted a bomb in the basement, killing four girls, Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Denise McNair.

**Black Belt.** The rich soil of the Black Belt drew cotton planters—and their enslaved workforce—to the region before the Civil War. After the war and into the 20th century, the sharecropping system that replaced the plantation system kept the largely black population mired in poverty.

**Brown Chapel.** One of the Selma churches that allowed activists to hold mass meetings during the voting rights campaign, including rallies led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

**Dallas County Courthouse.** The site of the registrar's office and the only place where residents of Dallas County could register to vote on one of the two days each month it was open.

**Edmund Pettus Bridge.** A bridge that crosses the Alabama River, over which U.S. Highway 80 runs, connecting Selma to Montgomery. As marchers en route to Montgomery, Alabama, crossed the bridge on March 7, 1965, they were met by Alabama State Troopers and brutally beaten.

**George Washington Carver Homes.** A public housing project in Selma for many black residents, the Carver Homes became a staging area for demonstrations.

**Good Samaritan Hospital.** This Catholic facility was Selma's black hospital. Jimmie Lee Jackson died there after being shot. Doctors at the hospital also treated people injured on Bloody Sunday.

**Marion, Alabama.** Located in the Black Belt, the county seat for Perry County had its own groups working for voting rights.

**Montgomery, Alabama.** Located 54 miles east of Selma, the capital city was where Governor George Wallace lived and worked.

**R.B. Hudson High School.** In Selma's segregated school system, R.B. Hudson was the black high school attended by many of the student activists.

**River Road.** On February 10, 1965, Sheriff Jim Clark's officers violently forced young demonstrators down this road for two miles to stop them from protesting.

**Selma, Alabama.** Located in the middle of Alabama's Black Belt, this was the largest city in Dallas County and also the county seat.

**U.S. Highway 80.** The road connecting Selma to Montgomery and the route for the 54-mile Selma-to-Montgomery March.



# PART TWO

## YOUR COMMUNITY // THE VOTE TODAY

In 1965, young people in Selma, Alabama, stood up for the right to vote. These young people should be an inspiration to all communities at a time when our country is facing new issues at the ballot box that must be addressed. What would motivate your audience to act?

Here are some issues to consider:

**Voter ID laws** are threatening to turn away the poor, the elderly and students at the polls by requiring government-issued photo identification. As many as 11 percent of citizens (21 million people) do not have such ID, according to the Brennan Center for Justice. Despite legal precedent requiring free ID to eligible voters without them, they are not always easily accessible.

[brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/d/download\\_file\\_39242.pdf](http://brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/d/download_file_39242.pdf)  
[brennancenter.org/publication/challenge-obtaining-voter-identification](http://brennancenter.org/publication/challenge-obtaining-voter-identification)

**The Voting Rights Act of 1965** had a key provision invalidated by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2013. State and local officials (mostly in the Deep South) are now no longer required to seek federal permission to change voting laws. States have enacted a variety of voter suppression laws.

**Young voters** are not showing up at the polls. In the 2012 presidential election 6-out-of-10 voters in the 18–24 age group *did not* vote. Voting not only ensures their voices are heard, but helps establish the habit of voting.

**Poverty** has an exceptionally detrimental effect on voting. Research shows that only 52 percent of those with a household income of less than \$20,000 voted in the 2008 presidential election, compared to 80 percent of those in households earning \$100,000 or more. Seven of the 10 states with the lowest voter turnout are among the top 15 states with the highest poverty rate.

**Stark racial disparities** are an issue at the ballot box. Latino and Asian-American voters have much lower voter turnout rates than white and black voters, with demographic factors such as income and age often exacerbating this gap.

An **automatic voter registration** system registers every eligible voter within a country. It is an international norm, but as FairVote noted, the

“United States is one of only a few democracies in the world where the government does not take responsibility for registering voters.”

Oregon has passed a law that automatically registers citizens with driver’s licenses. The license data is used to provisionally register people. Citizens have a period to “opt out” of registration – a groundbreaking change compared to traditional registration methods requiring people to “opt in.”

The new system could mean 300,000 new voters are registered in Oregon, according to one estimate. Almost all of the state’s 860,000 unregistered voters could eventually end up on the rolls.



### CAST A BALLOT, KICKSTART A HABIT

When young people vote, research shows they are more likely to vote later in life. This means ensuring a new generation of active and engaged voters is dependent on getting young people to the polls. One trip to the ballot box at 18 can mean many more in the future.

### CASE STUDY: WHO IS NOT VOTING?

A 2014 Pew Research Center report—“The Party of Nonvoters”—looked at who isn’t voting and found that nonvoters are a younger, racially diverse and less affluent group when compared to likely voters. Here are the report’s key findings:

- **Younger:** About one-third (34 percent) of nonvoters are *younger than 30*. Most nonvoters (70 percent) are under 50.
- **More diverse:** About 43 percent of nonvoters are African American, Hispanic or other ethnic and racial minorities. That’s about double the percentage of likely voters (22 percent).
- **Less educated:** A majority of nonvoters (54 percent) have not attended college. Seventy-two percent of likely voters have completed some college.
- **Less affluent:** Almost half of nonvoters (46 percent) have family incomes of less than \$30,000, compared to 19 percent of likely voters.

[people-press.org/2014/10/31/the-party-of-nonvoters-2](http://people-press.org/2014/10/31/the-party-of-nonvoters-2)

Automatic voter registration systems are important because they can ensure citizens are added to voter rolls at age 18. This means young people can exercise their right to vote at an early age – helping them to start a lifelong voting habit.

There are other registration methods that make it convenient for people to register. Online registration has been adopted by some states. Same-day voter registration, which lets citizens register on Election Day, is also available in some states.

What system does your state have in place? Is it convenient for citizens to register? How would you modernize it? If you’d like to learn more about automatic registration efforts, the Brennan Center for Justice has examined the issue.

[oregonlive.com/mapes/index.ssf/2015/03/oregons\\_pioneering\\_new\\_voter\\_r.html](http://oregonlive.com/mapes/index.ssf/2015/03/oregons_pioneering_new_voter_r.html)

[rockthevote.com/voter-registration/online-application-system/online.html](http://rockthevote.com/voter-registration/online-application-system/online.html)

[brennancenter.org/analysis/automatic-voter-registration](http://brennancenter.org/analysis/automatic-voter-registration)

### CASE STUDY: POLLING PLACES

Even when voters have decided to cast a ballot, they can still encounter obstacles at the polling place. Are any of the following items issues at polling places in your community:

- Are the polling places accessible by foot? If a major road or highway cuts through a precinct, is the polling place located on the side with the greatest number of voters?
- Does the polling place have a history of long lines? Are too many voters within the precinct? Does it have adequate parking? Is it wheelchair accessible?
- Is the polling place a nonpartisan location, or is it located at someone’s house?
- Do multiple precincts use the same polling location? Does it cause confusion, such as voters using the wrong machines?

### VOTING IN YOUR TOWN

Here are key questions to help you assess what voting issues are affecting your community today. Other helpful tools and information can be found at [selma.splcenter.org](http://selma.splcenter.org).

- What is the current level of voter participation at the state and local level?
- What’s involved in registering and voting in your community?
- Are voting reforms in the air?
- How engaged are voters in your state and community? Use online resources, like your state’s website or the U.S. Census Bureau, to find out. One place to begin is the United States Election Project, where there’s a link to each state’s 2014 voter turnout results.

[census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting](http://census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting)  
[electproject.org](http://electproject.org)

### DISCUSSION: PAST VS. PRESENT

Literacy tests and poll taxes created obstacles to the ballot box in the Jim Crow South. Selma’s voter registration office was open only two days a month. People registering to vote had to supply the name of an already-registered voter to vouch for them.

What obstacles do today’s voter ID laws create?



Freedom Day—an all-out effort to register Selma voters—leads to arrests and brutal use of force by Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark.

### TAKE ACTION: SCHOOL REGISTRATION DRIVES

High school voter registration drives can be an effective way to sign up young voters. But before you start registering new voters, there are some tips to keep in mind. The League of Women Voters offers these tips and more in its high school voter registration drive manual:

- Ensure you're following state and local laws by discussing your plans with election officials.
- Research shows that late winter or early spring registration activities were *three times* more effective than those held in the fall. These efforts were not only more successful in the number of young people registered, but it was easier to reach school personnel and schedule events.
- Reach out to schools at least three months before your registration drive. Persistence is key! It may take repeated calls to schedule a registration drive at a high school, especially in high-need neighborhoods. Expect prep work to be the biggest time commitment.
- Ask the school to allot the time and space for a classroom visit or assembly for the registration drive. Also, ensure students are required to attend, or that incentives—such as extra credit—are offered.
- Ensure that the school instructs students to bring the necessary identification and personal information for registration.

[lww.org/content/high-school-voter-registration-training-manual-3rd-edition](http://lww.org/content/high-school-voter-registration-training-manual-3rd-edition)

### SPOTLIGHT: CALIFORNIA

California offers several examples of how to register young people to vote. It's one of only 10 states requiring schools to serve as voter registration agencies or enable on-campus voter registration drives, according to EdSource. It also allows pre-registration of 17-year-olds.

During the last two weeks of April and September, state law requires schools to allow voter registrars on campus to register potential voters. This time is known as “high school voter weeks.” California law also allows students to be campus voter outreach coordinators. School officials designate students to be coordinators and to register their classmates. The hope is that these students will have more success at registering young people than adults.

The Power of Democracy project, which is headed by California Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye, is working to “improve civic knowledge and participation in California,” by promoting civic education in the state’s schools. Several counties have formed “Civic Learning Partnerships” with the goal of persuading school boards to adopt practices proven to promote civic engagement by students.

These efforts in California show that teaching young people the importance of participating in our democracy is an endeavor that doesn’t stop when the polls close.

[edsources.org/2015/schools-have-key-role-to-play-in-youth-voting/76162](http://edsources.org/2015/schools-have-key-role-to-play-in-youth-voting/76162)

[powerofdemocracy.org](http://powerofdemocracy.org)

**VOTER RESTRICTIONS OR VOTER FRAUD**

Voter fraud is often cited as a reason for restrictive voter ID laws. But as the Brennan Center for Justice report “The Truth About Voter Fraud” found, in-person voter fraud is “more rare than death by lightning.” Here are key questions to ask about your community:

- What are the rules and regulations in your state?
- Is there a move to make voting more accessible or one to make it more restrictive?
- Are there concerns about voter integrity, either through people voting illegally, bad counting practices or inaccurate voting machines?
- Visit [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org) and click on “Search by State & Topic” to research details for your state.
- Visit [RocktheVote.com](http://RocktheVote.com) and [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org) to find out about student voting. You can record your findings in the chart below.

STATE	
ABSENTEE VOTING	
EARLY VOTING	
ELIGIBILITY	
VOTING REGISTRATION	
ID REQUIREMENTS	
VOTING MACHINES	
STUDENT VOTING	
REGISTRATION OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS	

[brennancenter.org/publication/truth-about-voter-fraud](http://brennancenter.org/publication/truth-about-voter-fraud)  
[brennancenter.org/issues/voter-fraud](http://brennancenter.org/issues/voter-fraud)

**FELON DISENFRANCHISEMENT**

Felon disenfranchisement creates a barrier to the polling place even after a person has served his or her sentence. It’s estimated that more than 5 million Americans have been denied the right to vote due to a past felony conviction. The Sentencing Project and FairVote provide state-by-state information to research felon disenfranchisement. Here are some questions to consider:

- What are the rules in your state about felon disenfranchisement?
- When can the vote be recovered?
- How many people are disenfranchised?
- Is there a racial disparity?

[sentencingproject.org/template/page.cfm?id=133](http://sentencingproject.org/template/page.cfm?id=133)  
[fairvote.org/research-and-analysis/voting-rights/felon-disenfranchisement](http://fairvote.org/research-and-analysis/voting-rights/felon-disenfranchisement)

**STRATEGIZE AND TAKE ACTION**

Use these questions to come up with ways to encourage voter participation in your community:

- What specific element of voter participation do you want to address?
- How can you influence participation?
- What outcomes are you seeking?
- What specific actions can you take to bring about the desired outcomes?



Freedom Day demonstrators encourage Selma residents to register to vote.

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

Now that you've looked into voting in your community, you have a picture of the health of democracy where you live. How does it look? Most likely, there's room for improvement. Fortunately, there are things your organization can do to help.

Here are a few ideas:

- Organize a community voter registration drive. The League of Women Voters website offers registration drive tips at [lww.org](http://lww.org).
- Find out how to register future voters during their senior year of high school and organize a voter registration campaign at school. Some states allow young people to register at 17, if they will be 18 by Election Day. See "Take Action: School registration drives" on page 10 for tips. [RocktheVote.com](http://RocktheVote.com) also offers tips and information about registering, as well as online tools.
- Provide rides to the polls.
- Organize a letter-writing campaign encouraging elected officials to support longer polling place hours, easier voter registration methods or other initiatives to improve access to the polls. Encourage your Congressional representative to support a reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

- Send letters to the editor of your local newspaper raising voting issues in your community, such as rules that make it harder for people to register or vote.
- Use social media to raise awareness about upcoming elections, voter registration deadlines and other issues.
- Organize a march to raise awareness about local political issues, candidates and voter registration.
- Create a flyer that supplies voting information to members of the community. The ACLU offers tips on creating and distributing flyers.
- Check online for local voting rights groups near you. See if there is a local chapter of the League of Women Voters or the NAACP. Visit online resources such as Vote411 and Rock the Vote (see the resources list in this guide for more).

[lww.org/content/tips-successful-voter-registration-drives](http://lww.org/content/tips-successful-voter-registration-drives)

[aclu.org/creating-flyers-and-posters](http://aclu.org/creating-flyers-and-posters)

[lww.org/get-involved/local-leagues](http://lww.org/get-involved/local-leagues)

[naacp.org/pages/find-your-local-unit](http://naacp.org/pages/find-your-local-unit)

[vote411.org](http://vote411.org)

[rockthevote.com](http://rockthevote.com)

# Resources

## **SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER**

The Southern Poverty Law Center is a nonprofit civil rights organization dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry, and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society. Its website for *Selma: The Bridge to the Ballot* is a portal to information for hosting a registration drive, getting the vote out on college campuses and more. The SPLC's other websites provide information about various social justice issues.

[selma.splcenter.org](http://selma.splcenter.org)

[splcenter.org](http://splcenter.org)

[tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org)

[splcenter.org/civil-rights-memorial](http://splcenter.org/civil-rights-memorial)

## **ASIAN AMERICANS ADVANCING JUSTICE— ASIAN LAW CAUCUS**

The Asian Americans Advancing Justice—Asian Law Caucus has a voting rights program that “focuses on strengthening voting systems for the benefit of all Americans.”

[advancingjustice-alc.org](http://advancingjustice-alc.org)

## **BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE**

The Brennan Center for Justice works to preserve and expand the right to vote for every eligible citizen. Its website provides information about contemporary voting issues.

[brennancenter.org](http://brennancenter.org)

## **FAIRVOTE**

FairVote is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization focused on voting reform via research, analytics and education. The website offers reports on presidential and congressional elections, redistricting, voting rights, voter turnout and representation of women.

[fairvote.org](http://fairvote.org)

## **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**

The League of Women Voters, formed from the movement that secured the right to vote for women, works to expand participation and give voice to all Americans. Its website provides state- and federal-level voting information as well as tips for voter registration drives.

[lww.org](http://lww.org)

## **NAACP**

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People works to ensure the political, educational, social and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination. Its website includes voting and election information.

[naacp.org](http://naacp.org)

## **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LATINO ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS**

The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials and the NALEO Educational Fund, promote the “full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.”

[naleo.org](http://naleo.org)

## **NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA**

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the country's largest Latino civil rights group, provides information about the Latino vote and its voter registration and participation campaign.

[nclr.org](http://nclr.org)

## **POWER OF DEMOCRACY**

The Power of Democracy project works to “improve civic knowledge and participation in California,” by promoting civic education in the state's schools. Its website provides a glimpse into a statewide effort to engage students.

[powerofdemocracy.org](http://powerofdemocracy.org)

## **ROCK THE VOTE**

Rock the Vote has registered and mobilized young voters since 1990. Its website offers information for requesting absentee ballots, participating in its events, contacting election officials and more.

[rockthevote.com](http://rockthevote.com)

## **VOTE411.ORG**

VOTE411.org is a non-partisan “one-stop shop” for information related to elections and voting, including a polling-place locator, ID requirements, absentee ballot information and early voting.

[vote411.org](http://vote411.org)

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