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**“How to Help Others Register and Vote from Home”**

**Guide to the Student Voting Advocate Slideshow**

**Where does this material come from? (Slide 1)**

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that encourages people to be informed citizens and participants in our democracy. *Non-partisan* means that we do not support one political party or another, nor do we support one candidate over the other. We do take positions on issues that affect voting and work to get people to engage in their civic duty to vote. Youth play a crucial role in our democracy. Your voices need to be counted and you can help others have their voices counted.

**Why now? (Slide 1)**

Some election dates can change, but the Presidential (general) election date is set by law as the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. So unless the law is changed, the Presidential election will happen on November 3, 2020 – regardless of whether we are able to move about freely without fear of illness or death.

Covid-19 may mean that most or all of us will need to cast our votes using vote-by-mail. Many older people have never done so before, and they may need assistance and encouragement to do so. Your family members may not be registered and may also need assistance with voting by mail. We hope you can be the person who will help them overcome barriers to voting.

**What can you do? (Slide 1)**

This toolkit includes a ‘how-to’ presentation that equips you to help others vote in the upcoming elections safely by using the vote-by-mail process. Based on what you learned in the online classroom presentation, you will be able to talk with others about:

* Why their vote counts
* How to check to see if they are already registered to vote, and, if not, how to register
* How to use mail-in voting this year for health and safety reasons

**Why is it important to vote? (Slides 2-3)**

Various issues are decided by different levels of government – federal (Washington, DC), state (Trenton), county (Freehold) and local (Neptune, for example).

Ask the person you are helping which issues are important to them, starting with the list on the slide. They may also suggest other issues not on this slide. Ask which branch of government handles the issues that are most important to them. The goal is not to come up with solutions to any problems, but to remind the person you are helping that ALL elections are important, from the national level on down to the very local level of school board.If a person doesn’t vote, it means that others are making decisions for them.

**Who is being heard? (Slide 4)**

On the left is a chart showing voter turnout by age. On the right is a chart showing voter turnout by race. Ask the person you are helping to find the line on the graphs that represents their age group and race.

**Ask :**

* *“What do you realize about your own age group (race) compared to the others?”*
* *“Depending on who turns out to vote, how might that change the election outcome?*
* *“Does that make you realize that you have the power to make a difference with your vote?”*

**Why is this so important now? (Slide 5 – with animation)**

There are two important elections coming up this year.

* **Primary election on July 7 -** You must be affiliated with a Party to vote in its election. If you are not affiliated with a party, you are called “unaffiliated.”
* **General election on November 3 -** You can vote for a candidate from any party.
* **Public questions**: In the general election this year, you will also be voting on two state-wide public questions: whether or not to give a property tax deduction and exemption for veterans who served during peacetime rather than wartime, and whether or not to legalize marijuana.

**Voting eligibility (Slide 7)**

A very new change: People who have served time in prison for a felony are now eligible to vote when they are released, even if they are on parole or probation. BUT - they MUST REGISTER OR RE-REGISTER if they were previously registered.

**Checking to see if someone is registered (Slide 8)**

You can use the resources below to see if the person you are helping is already registered or needs to register now. Seventeen-year-olds who have registered will not be listed until they turn 18 and are eligible to vote.

* <https://www.nj.gov/state/elections/voter-registration.shtml> - for NJ residents
* [**VOTE411.org**](http://www.vote411.org) - a website developed by the League of Women Voters. It is useful anywhere in the US and has all the election information needed.

In all of these cases, you simply enter your name and birthday, and a search will reveal if you are registered. Once a person is registered, they do not need to register again unless their name, address, or signature changes, or they wish to change their party affiliation. If there is any doubt, it is OK to register again.

**Registering to Vote (Slides 9-12)**

Normally there are various ways to get a Voter Registration Application, but since we are still following stay-at-home procedures, we recommend that you use one of these two methods. NJ will have actual online registration by mid-July, but we are urging people to register NOW with a paper form for the upcoming primary election.

* **Get form online** - Both English and Spanish versions are available as fillable pdf from the website link on slide 10. (<https://www.nj.gov/state/elections/voter-registration.shtml>) Registration applications in several other languages are also available as regular pdf’s by scrolling down to “Statewide forms” on the same link.
* **Get form via text** – Text“REGISTRATION FORM” to the League of Women Voters at **732-927-1131.** They’ll be in touch and mail one to you. The League will use this info ONLY to help you with voting info.

Since an original signature is required, the application form must be completed, signed, and returned by mail. If you print the application form yourself, **you must do it at 100% size, and you will have two pages.**

**Fill out the form** – You can find instructions for filling out the Registration Application by

* Reading the notes on this slide (which are really small, sorry…),
* Reading the instructions on the form itself (which you can see by clicking on “online form”)
* Watching an 8 minute video.
* In SLIDESHOW MODE, click on the word “VIDEO”
The Vimeo website will appear as a window on your screen with the “How to Vote in New Jersey” video opening screen.  (You do not need to login to Vimeo, even if a window appears asking you to do so.)
* TO START THE VIDEO, click on the white triangle on the left just below the video opening screen. The Video will begin playing.
* WHEN THE VIDEO ENDS, close the Vimeo window. You will return to the same slide in the PowerPoint with the link to the video.  [If for some reason that does not happen, click on the PowerPoint icon on your screen.  You may have to scroll to the next slide (Slide 12) and re-enter the SLIDESHOW mode.
* **Mail the form** – Fold the page(s) so that the address shows on the outside when it is sealed. Tape the page(s) so that they don’t come apart in the mail. Drop the application into any mailbox or bring it to the post office. Postage is already paid. There are deadlines for registration. In NJ, to the election in which he or she wishes to vote.

**Excuses (Slide 14 with animations)**

When you are discussing voting with someone, you may get some pushback. People may express a variety of excuses. Here are some possible responses to the excuses on the slide, or you can make up your own as appropriate.

* **Voting by mail is hard** – “*I can walk you through all the steps to register, get a mail-in ballot application, and fill in the mail-in ballot. I’m here to help!”*
* **My mail-in ballot won’t be counted** – *“As long as it is received by the deadline, it will be counted. This won’t even be an issue if the Governor says that this year the entire election will be done via mail-in ballot.”*
* **This is such a crazy time. I’m too preoccupied to vote** – *“We are all nervous about the Covid-19 virus and the effect it has on every aspect of our lives. That is why it is important to vote for the candidates who you think will be able to handle the crisis and its aftermath in the best way.”*
* **It doesn’t matter who is elected. They all act the same once they are in office** – *“There are real differences between candidates. You can look them up on vote411.org to see where they stand on various issues. And you can ‘attend’ the virtual candidate forums sponsored by the League of Women Voters.”*
* **My vote is largely symbolic because of the Electoral College. I live in a “blue” state** *– “The Electoral College applies only to Presidential elections. Your vote counts directly in mid-term, county, local, and Board of Education elections.”*
* **My faith in the system and fairness in voting is utterly crushed** – *“Faith in the system and fairness in voting are important in a democracy. Not voting, however, allows someone else to make all the decisions that will affect your future. In a democracy, voting gives you the best shot at making democratic elections work. Giving up that right means democracy dies.”*

**Voting in the Primary Election (Slide 16)**

* If a person has registered and is at least 18 on July 7, they are eligible to vote in the New Jersey Primary. Because of the COVID crisis, the Governor moved the date of the Primary from June to July 7.
* The Primary is an election run by the major parties—the Democrats and the Republicans—to choose their candidates to run in the General Election in November.
* In New Jersey, you can’t vote in the Primary unless you DECLARE your PARTY AFFILILATION. That means, you have to officially say whether you are a Democrat or Republican.
* For the 2020 NJ Primary, all registered, unaffiliated voters will automatically receive an application for a vote-by-mail ballot. The application will include a place to declare your party affiliation, which ENABLES YOU TO VOTE IN THE PRIMARY.
* IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO VOTE IN THE PRIMARY, you don’t have to say whether you are a Democrat, Republican, or some other party. You can be UNAFFILIATED, which means you are not identifying with any party. Sometimes this is casually called being INDEPENDENT, but actually it is not the same because INDEPENDENT can be the name of a political party.
* Once you officially declare your party, you stay registered as a member of that party until you submit a change. This must be done on paper. It can’t be done at the polls. And your paper request must be received 55 days before the Primary.

**Mail-in Ballot (Slide 17-19)**

For the upcoming July 7 Primary, the rules for both In-Person and By-Mail voting are changed to keep voters and poll workers safe.

* VOTE IN PERSON: It will still be possible
	+ fewer polling places.
	+ paper ballot—called a “provisional” ballot.
	+ Only people with special needs, for whom voting on a paper ballot is a hardship, will vote by machine.
	+ All the Covid-19 rules—like 6-ft. social distancing, wearing masks, sanitizing the polling place, etc.—will be in force.
* VOTE BY MAIL (STRONGLY RECOMMENDED):
	+ Democrats will automatically receive a vote-by-mail Democratic ballot
	+ Republicans will automatically receive a vote-by-mail Republican ballot
	+ Unaffiliated voters will automatically receive a postage-paid, self-addressed application for a vote-by-mail ballot, which needs to be filled out and mailed in order to get an actual ballot. THE APPLICATION WILL INCLUDE A PLACE TO DECLARE PARTY AFFILIATION, IN ORDER TO VOTE IN THE PRIMARY.

**Getting info on candidates: (Slide 20)**

* [**Vote411.com**](http://www.vote411.org) – Just indicate your address to get candidate info, info about ballot questions, and election updates.
* Candidate forums – sponsored by the League of Women Voters and others. They will probably all be “virtual” this year.
* Reliable news sources

**Filling out the Mail-In Ballot (Slide 22)**

The “VIDEO” button will take you to a 2 minute YouTube video from the Monmouth County Clerk’s Office. When the video is over, close the YouTube window or you will end up seeing the next video.

You are allowed to help someone with the mechanics of filling out their ballot. You are NOT allowed, however to cast a vote for someone else. If you have helped someone (for example: by reading the ballot aloud, by explaining the boxes to check, by pointing out where to sign, etc.) you must sign the area indicated on the inner envelope.

**Mailing the ballot (Slide 23)**

* You can mail your ballot directly to the County Clerk’s office. Postage is already paid.
* For the 2020 Primary, secure DROP-OFF sites will be set up around the County where you can take your mail-in ballot if you prefer.
* If you have texted the League of Women Voters at 732-927-1131 for any reason, the League will alert you by text to any changes to the process.