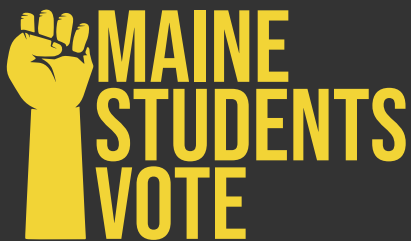


# RESIDENCE LIFE VOTER TOOLKIT



Creating change can start with a conversation. It could be encouraging a friend to vote, sharing your support for a local campaign or candidate, or organizing a group of people to advocate for an issue that matters to you.

In this toolkit you'll find several activities designed to help start these kinds of conversations. From voter registration efforts to community mobilization, this toolkit is full of resources to help you engage your dorm community in strengthening democracy.

Peer-to-peer organizing is the most effective way to engage communities. This type of organizing is rooted in genuine connection that link to some of the following topics:

- Impacts of local elections
- Issues that young people can advocate for and impact in their local communities
- How each vote can make a huge difference at the local level

Sending a vote into the pool of millions being counted nationally can feel distant and abstract, but Millennials and GenZ are quickly becoming the largest voting demographic. These two generations have an incredible sway over national politics.

That said, it's important to highlight the local yearly elections. These are spaces where policies and laws that affect students' everyday lives play out. Attending town meetings, interviewing city council members, and showing up to school board meetings are just a few ways to impact local change and build your personal civic engagement.

#### **What you'll find in this toolkit:**

- Activity ideas for Residence Life Staff for both fall and spring!
- Recommended movies and videos for screening.
- Discussion guide about democracy to use in training or as a dorm conversation.

**Need help?** Reach out to [allyson@mainestudentsvote.org](mailto:allyson@mainestudentsvote.org) if you're in need of volunteers to help you run your event.

# DORM STORM

This event is when students go door to door in the building and register students to vote or encourage them to make a voting plan. This is canvassing in action! Dorm storm is a great strategy for starting conversations and building community. To lay the groundwork for a successful event, it's helpful to let the residents know beforehand that a dorm storm is happening.

Registering to vote where at your current address is the first step to successfully casting your vote.

 **Timing:** March/April/May (before primaries) or September/October

## SUPPLIES:

- o Printed [scripts](#) for door knockers to read/ reference
- o [Voter registration cards](#)
- o Make a plan to collect these (either someone in the dorm returns them to city hall or you provide stamped envelopes to each student)
- o Making sure this process is easy and simple will ensure that more students are successful in voting!
- o Clip boards
- o Blue or Black pens
- o Maine 2022 Election Details
- o Research which polling place is closest to campus, what time it's open, is the college providing a shuttle, what's the bus route,
- o When does in person early voting begin?

## FACILITATION GUIDE:

1. Gather the volunteers who have shown up to STORM their DORM. Providing food is always suggested!
2. Insert presentation for training canvassers
3. Remind participants that it's okay if someone says no or isn't interested at that moment. Canvassing and door knocking can come with lots of rejections. It's okay if that's challenging! Respectful conversations that don't necessarily lead to someone registering to vote, can still deepen connections and encourage peers to consider their civic engagement priorities.
4. Break students up into groups and have them practice reading their scripts. It's helpful to try it out a couple of times before you knock on a door!
5. Divide the building into sections. A pair of students can be responsible for each floor/section. Folks are welcome to work on their own, but heading out in pairs can help build confidence and comfort with canvassing.

Tip! It's especially helpful if students take the floor that they live on! It increases the chance of registering voters when students talk with those they know best.



**Tip:** It can be fun to make it a contest to see who can register the most voters! (A prize of cookies or chocolate creates great incentives.)

# REVERSE TRICK OR TREATING (TRICK OR VOTE)

Residential Hall Assistants or volunteer dorm residences knock on each of the residents' doors and go through a voting preparation checklist, while also allowing each resident to pick a treat out of a bag (this can be candy, plus a surprise gift card).

## SCRIPT + VOTING CHECKLIST

We have prepared [this script](#) for the residential hall staff to follow. They can also watch [this training video](#) on voting in Maine.

### HERE IS A SAMPLE CHECKLIST:

- o Are you registered to vote?
- o Do you have the documents you need to prove your identification/residency?
- o Do you have a voting plan, what is it?
- o Vote early by mail
- o Vote early in person
- o Vote on Election Day
- o Have you already requested your absentee ballot?
- o How are you submitting your absentee ballot?
- o Mail (need to do ASAP)
- o Drop at Town Clerk's Office/  
Town Hall's Ballot Drop Box
- o Do you know what's on the ballot?
- o Vote411.org
- o Ballotready.org

## COMPENSATION

Some campuses count this as a program for their RAs while other campuses are also providing additional incentives, such as gift cards or stipends for volunteers.

## TREAT

Some campuses have done this with a bag of goodies which include candy and a gift card (they hide it in a candy box), or they enter folks into a raffle with swag.



\*Please note that you can not directly incentivize someone to vote, thus, all residents must be able to pick a treat from the goodie bag, or be entered into the raffle. Participation is open to all, even those who do not wish to talk about voting, or go through the voting checklist.\*

# DEMOCRACY SCREENING PARTY

Host a movie night to spark a conversation about elections and voting. This is an easy way to engage students and spark a deeper discussion.



**Timing:** Any! In the Spring you can talk about the importance of primaries and in the Fall you can orient conversations towards the Election Day.

## VIDEOS:

Check out [this list of movies and videos](#). It's a long list full of wonderful film and videos, but here's a quick preview of our top three:

1. "Knock Down the House" - A documentary following four working class women from across the country as they run for congress.
2. "On the Basis of Sex" - A film based on the life and early cases of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.
3. "Milk" - The story of a passionate gay rights activist, Harvey Milk, who in the late '70s became the first openly gay person to be elected to public office in the state of California.

Need a promotional or educational resource? Check out [these informational PSAs](#) about voting here in Maine!

## RECOMMENDED SUPPLIES:

- o A cozy location
- o Snacks!
- o Extra voter registration cards
- o Information sheet about local elections

**Looking to start a conversation?** This activity pairs really well with the below Ask Every Student Conversation Guide or the Verifyit! Game.

**Need a guide to facilitating civic or political discussions?** Check out [this toolkit](#) from Tufts University.

## THREE OF THE BEST NATIONAL RESOURCES

1.

**Ask Every Student Conversation Guide:** Preparing students to confidently navigate the democratic process beginning with voter registration.

This conversation guide is meant to help campus voting organizers develop touchpoints for talking to students about democratic engagement, with a focus on voter participation.

This guide can be used as a stand alone coffee chat type activity or it can be used to frame a conversation/discussion after a viewing party of one of the below democracy videos.

[Link.](#)

2.

**Voting Couch Party:** This resource designed by Vote for Astra and Ask Every Student is an easy way to engage students on campus. This activity is a texting party where students reach out to their friends and/or about the upcoming election.

This type of peer-to-peer organizing, being personal and localized, is the most effective way to increase engagement in elections.

[Watch the training video!](#)

[Access the toolkit.](#)

3.

**Verifult!:** A fast-moving, informative and fun game!

Use this icebreaker to introduce Civics, Voting, and News Literacy topics and as a way to get students civically engaged in a fun way - by playing a game!

[Check out the game here.](#)

This is another great resource to pair with a Democracy Screening Party.