

Voter Engagement in an Academic Library

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Big Ten Voting Challenge (BTVC)



In 2018, Indiana University competed in the Big Ten Voting Challenge, a competition among the fourteen universities in the Big Ten Conference. Measured were general turnout rate as well as increase in turnout from 2014. Indiana University's turnout rate increased by 26.3 percentile points to 35%.

For the 2020 Election, Indiana University Libraries seek to promote tools and resources across campus, specifically toward undergraduate students, to increase turnout rate yet again. As a gathering hub on campus, Wells Library is positioned to not only introduce helpful resources but also to promote events, voter assistance hours, and a speaker series centered around Democracy. The Libraries' goal is to not only aid in turnout rate, but to also shape informed and engaged voters.

Introduction

Leading up to the 2020 Presidential Election, librarians and staff at Indiana University Libraries have planned a variety of initiatives to not only increase voter turnout, but also to strengthen the confidence young voters have in their ballot choices. Learning from outcomes of tactics prototyped during the 2018 Midterm Election, more user-focused resources and services are provided this fall. This poster provides details of such efforts and demonstrates how an academic library can promote civic engagement and voter literacy through voting and election resources.

Election Resource LibGuide

To aid users preparing to vote in the 2020 Presidential Election, a comprehensive [LibGuide](#) was created. Included are resources on voting registration, definitions of common voting and election terms and Congressional district maps. Also found on this guide are links to a virtual registration help desk, voter literacy tools and information on a speaker series the library is hosting featuring both internal and external speakers sharing further library resources and discussing a range of topics important to all voters.

To meet the needs of all users, this guide combines open government resources with research databases Indiana University subscribes to.

Staff created a page specifically on state resources to provide a voter literacy tool as well as a larger context of state government.

Comparing 2018 to 2020 Initiatives and Events

2018 Initiatives

- ✓ Comprehensive LibGuide with tools and resources to aid those voting in the Midterm Election
- ✓ Regular Instagram, Twitter and Facebook posts promoting library voter resources and reminding students of important dates
- ✓ Table in the library lobby with handouts and staff to assist those with questions or wishing to register on the spot
- ✓ Raffles of GPO swag

2020 Initiatives

- ✓ Comprehensive LibGuide with tools and resources to aid those voting in the Presidential Election
- ✓ Regular Instagram, Twitter and Facebook posts promoting library voter resources and reminding students of important dates
- ✓ 25 virtual "drop-in" registration/voter literacy tool referral hours per week beginning in late August and lasting through Election Day
- ✓ Virtual Democracy Gatherings: A speaker series featuring internal and external speakers sharing further library resources and discussing a range of topics important to all voters

2018 Midterm Election Voter Registration Tabling



2018 Midterm Election Day Tabling

Government Information Resources as Answers to Voter FAQs

Democracy & Civic Engagement

- [The Congressional Directory](#)
- [Congressional Districts Map](#)

Voting Registration

- [U.S. Election Assistance Commission Voter's Guide to Federal Elections](#)
- [Vote.gov registration tool](#)

General Election Information

- [National Voter Registration Act \(NVRA\) Report](#)
- [Election Administration and Voting Survey \(EAVS\) Comprehensive Report](#)

Historical Information

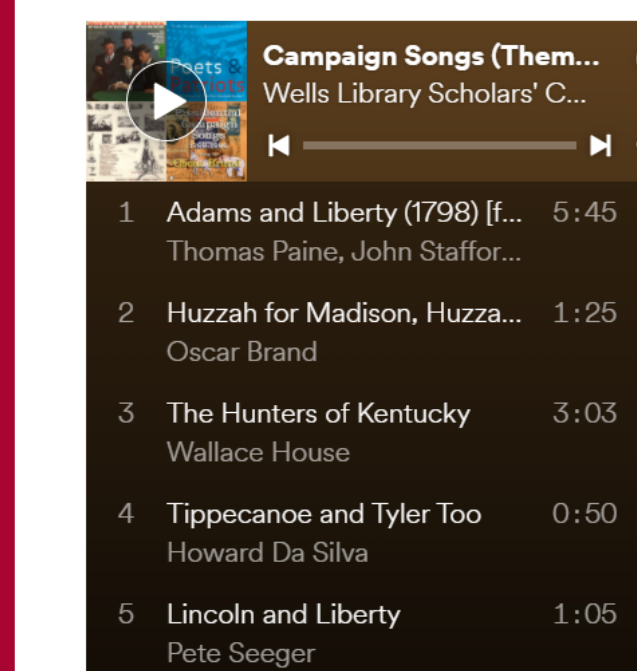
- [Electoral College searching tool from the National Archives](#)

Conclusion

The academic library is a perfect space for civic engagement and voter literacy promotion. Indiana University students rely on the library to provide quality resources and valuable information to help shape their education and ultimately, their professional pathways. This is especially true for the young voter who is often participating in their first federal or even local election. By utilizing library resources and tools in the appropriate context, academic libraries can give students the confidence they need to fill in their ballots in this election and in elections to come.

Impact of Covid19

The Covid19 global pandemic fundamentally altered the delivery method of BTVC initiatives. As most IU Libraries service functions moved online, registration and voting literacy consultations were offered by appointment or drop-in over Zoom daily from 1pm-5pm and the Democracy Gatherings speaker series was hosted as online webinars.



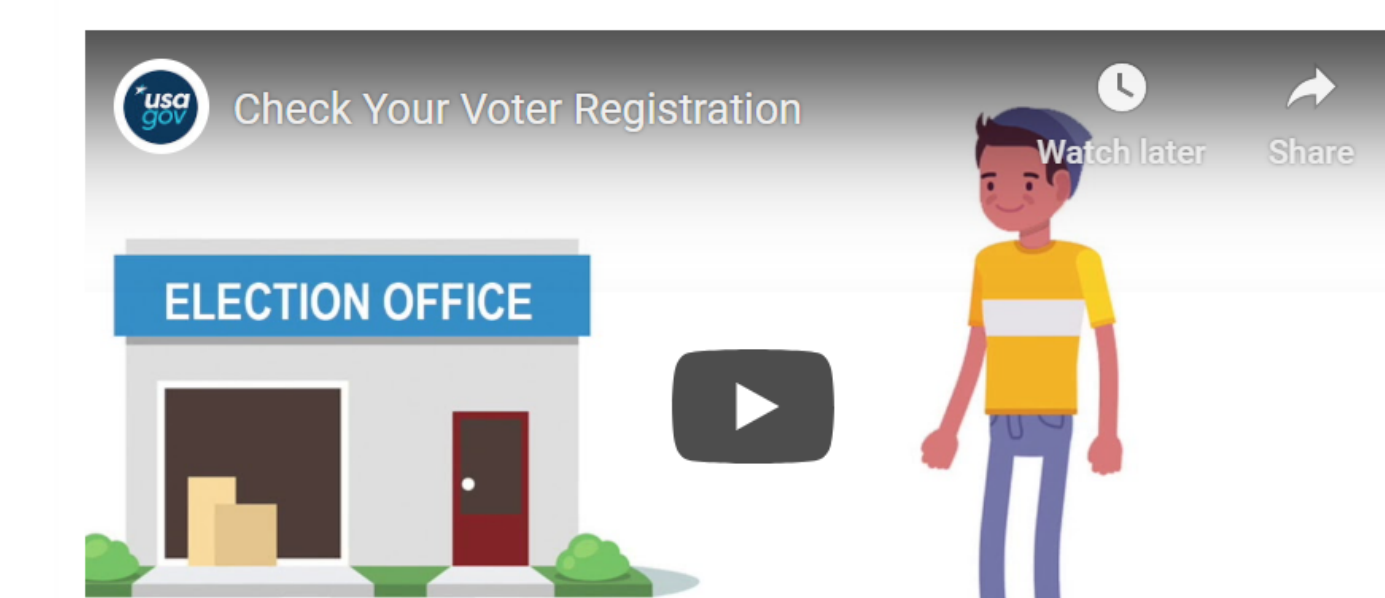
For a fun addition, our Media Studies experts created several playlists on the topics of Democracy and Elections which viewers of the LibGuide can access directly.

Before Election Day:

- [TurboVote](#)
A tailored site for IU affiliates, this is the university's preferred platform for voter registration
- [How to Register to Vote](#)
Learn how to register to vote and find the deadlines for voter registration in your state.
- [Change Your Voter Registration](#)
Find out how to update or change your voter registration. If your state has online voter registration, you can make the changes online.
- [Confirm You're Registered to Vote](#)
Find out how to check your voter registration status to confirm that you're able to vote in the next election.

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Within this larger, comprehensive guide is a specific page with bulleted links to chief voter inquiries.