

TOOLKIT: SECURING ON-CAMPUS POLLING PLACES

This toolkit is designed to support students in securing polling places on their college or university campuses.

An on-campus polling place is a powerful symbol of an institutional commitment to student voting by campus and local election officials, as well as a proven mechanism that increases students' access to the ballot box. Central on-campus polling places provide students, a population with unique needs, key accessibility, while also benefiting the disabled community and the wider college community. Research demonstrates that greater access to on-campus polling locations correlates with increased student voter turnout.¹

Included within this toolkit you will find: a background of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment and the fight for youth voting rights; a brief how-to guide for securing on-campus polling places; a list of helpful resources; and an appendix of case studies from the Andrew Goodman Network.

With [the support of Yael Bromberg, Esq., Rev. Prof. Cornell William Brooks, and The Harvard Kennedy School's William Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice](#), The Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF) developed this toolkit as part of our long-standing efforts to secure this under-utilized election mechanism.

BACKGROUND

In 1971, the Twenty-Sixth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution was ratified — swiftly and with bipartisan support — and not only lowered the voting age from 21 to 18, but also prohibited age discrimination in voting. Yet its promise remains unfilled today.²

Young voters face many obstacles that can prevent them from exercising their right to vote. Depending upon the context in which they arise, these obstacles can be apparent or pernicious,

¹ In 2019, Yael Bromberg, Esq., a constitutional rights attorney and Special Counsel & Strategic Advisor to the President/CEO at The Andrew Goodman Foundation, conducted a study of the [Andrew Goodman Vote Everywhere](#) program's then-59 campuses in 24 states and Washington, D.C. Bromberg found that campuses with polling stations on Election Day in 2018 correlated with a voting rate increase of 5.3 percentage points, and those with them during both Election Day and the early voting period correlated with an increase of 7.39 percentage points.

² Bromberg, Yael, Youth Voting Rights and the Unfulfilled Promise of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment (August 1, 2019). University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law, Vol. 21, No. 5, 1105, May 2019, Available at [SSRN](#).

and range from strict voter ID to limited access to same-day voter registration, early voting, ballot drop boxes, nearby polling places, and more.

Securing on-campus polling places is one key way to help fulfill the promise of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment, and was specifically contemplated within its legislative history.

HOW TO SECURE AN ON-CAMPUS POLLING PLACE

A key factor that can depress student voter turnout is the placement of polling locations off campus, forcing students to walk, drive, or use public transit to travel sometimes miles away from their communities. For students with limited time to vote between classes, meals, and work, adding an additional barrier of significant transit time to already long wait times and lines may make voting inaccessible to students. This can be averted by securing early and Election Day polling locations on-campus for precincts with significant student populations.

Recommended Steps

Through our [Andrew Goodman Vote Everywhere](#) program, a national movement of more than 80 campuses in 26 states and Washington, D.C., The Andrew Goodman Foundation has extensive experience and expertise in coaching and assisting students in organizing and advocating to bring polling places to campus. We have learned that the process can be distilled to the following five steps:

1. Find and Assess Nearby Polling Locations: Polling places are designated at the local level and administered and staffed by the County Board of Elections or an equivalent office. Students should find the nearest polling place(s) corresponding to their college or university's address by calling the appropriate local office or searching the Secretary of State's website. Once students learn more about the number of polling locations that are assigned to student voters, begin the process of evaluating their accessibility for student voters. How far are they from campus? How can students reach them? Are they large enough to accommodate the voting population? Are they ADA accessible?³
2. Build a Student Coalition: If a college or university does not have accessible early or Election Day polling locations, students should organize and leverage relationships with other voting rights and social justice organizations to spread awareness and publicize the issue with the student body. Students can also work with members of their Student Government Association (SGA) to pass SGA legislation calling for an on-campus polling place. A growing public movement can not only strengthen advocacy with elected officials, but also drive student organizing and civic engagement, increasing turnout.

³ The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires state and local governments and their election officials to ensure that people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote in all elections. Learn more about ADA requirements for selecting accessible polling places [here](#).

3. Reach Out to Campus Administration: Utilizing faculty relationships and momentum from student advocacy, students should meet with administrators. If a college or university already has an established department specifically for student democratic engagement (i.e., a Center for Civic Engagement), students should reach out to them first before pursuing any other advocacy actions. These centers will have critical connections and understanding of the campus and community context, including knowledge about any similar past or current efforts and campaigns.
4. Connect with Election Officials: Next, students should schedule meetings with local officials and attend County Board of Elections meetings (or the equivalent local office that designates polling locations) to advocate for an on-campus polling site. Use existing data on the number of students registered in the city and explain how an on-campus polling place would ease access. These types of student-led meetings and presentations are particularly effective when they are well researched and presented, and when supported by faculty, administrators, students, and coalitions. See our Resource section below for effective advocacy templates used by our campuses.
5. Leverage Local Media: Finally, students should elevate their campaign for an on-campus polling place using local media. A media strategy, backed by regional voting rights and social justice organizations, will help to build popular will over the long-term until the policy is changed.

Key Stakeholders

In alignment with the recommended steps above, consider how you might engage, build relationships with, and even hold accountable the following stakeholders:

Stakeholder	Location	Explanation
The Base: Students and Community Organizations	Find supportive and helpful voices on campus and in your surrounding community – in classes, dorms, at student or community meetings, and more. The faculty union may also prove to be a helpful advocate.	Effective advocacy cannot and should not be done in silos. Look on and off campus to build meaningful relationships, develop a campaign, and learn and get involved with related issues affecting the community.
Student Government Association	The SGA is likely part of a college or university's division or department of Student Affairs and located in a student center.	The SGA can help to build support for an on-campus polling place by raising awareness, wielding influence, or passing legislation.

College or University Center for Civic Engagement	Such a center is likely part of a college or university's division or department of Student Affairs. Colleges or universities may not have a dedicated resource for civic engagement, but many will have faculty committed to student civic engagement and voting rights.	If a campus has a department dedicated to student voting, it can be an indispensable resource for a campaign to secure an on-campus polling place.
Responsible Official and Relevant Governmental Boards	Depending on the state, the public actor responsible for designating a polling location may be a County Board of Election Commissioners, a local or county Election Supervisor, a County Election Board, a City Clerk, or other. ⁴	Identify the responsible town or county officials and board(s) charged with designating polling locations. These individuals may also have oversight over broader local election administration and the staffing of polling locations. The individual and relevant boards are important relationships to develop since they are the ultimate decision-makers.
Local Media	Local media can take many shapes and sizes, from a campus student newspaper, to a city newspaper, to a radio station, to a news station, and beyond.	The local media is another indispensable resource. They will want to hear about student concerns, and if published, those concerns will create pressure on campus administrators or local officials to take action.

Important Reminders

When beginning a campaign to secure an on-campus polling place, be aware that there could be several pitfalls to navigate.

- **Timeline:** Polling places are often designated many months before even a primary election. Start early to build your education and advocacy campaign and increase the likelihood of having a supportive resolution and designation before the next election.⁵

⁴ The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) is a bipartisan organization that offers analysis on key policies, [including vis-a-vis polling locations](#).

⁵ According to NCSL, fifteen states require that a polling place be established or publicly announced by a deadline of about 30-90 days prior to Election Day, and sometimes even earlier in connection with the Primary election. Learn more about a state's requirements on the [NCSL website](#), and cross-reference with the Secretary of State website and via phone to local officials. Even if

The critical point here is to start early: An effective advocacy campaign can take several semesters to develop, and includes analysis, education, coalition building, and more. If starting early is not an option, do not wait; look for opportunities to start and build your campaign with an eye to the future.

- **Logistics**: Work with campus administrators before approaching local election officials to get buy-in and prepare specific proposals for on-campus polling places. Campus administrators can provide helpful support, for example, in identifying a preferable on-campus location that is central to campus and offers an adequate amount of space and parking.
- **Political Pushback**: Securing an on-campus polling place is entirely reliant on the approval of local election officials. Absent their immediate support, the campaign may need to be sustained over a number of academic years in order to build support with successive student cohorts to continue the conversation with election officials. To prevent student turnover from threatening to derail momentum, a successful campaign will benefit from bringing in younger student leaders and organizational commitments within a coalition and institutional support from the college or university.

RESOURCES FROM THE ANDREW GOODMAN NETWORK

When starting a campaign to secure an on-campus polling place, it may be helpful to look at resources that show how students and campus administrators have organized and advocated for their own in the past. Check out the following case study snippets and resources from the Andrew Goodman Network:

- **A Catalytic Op-Ed (Florida)**: In 2017, Megan Newsome, an Andrew Goodman Ambassador at the University of Florida, identified an issue: The Secretary of State's wrongful interpretation of a statute meant that the placement of early voting sites on campuses across Florida was prohibited. She wrote [an op-ed in The Gainesville Sun](#), arguing why on-campus early voting sites were so desperately needed, that catalyzed [a successful campaign and litigation](#) for on-campus early voting sites — on her campus and beyond — ahead of the 2018 Midterm Elections. [This report](#) evaluates the impact of the 12 on-campus early voting sites across Florida, and [this toolkit](#) offers guidance on how to write an op-ed, such as one like Megan's.
- **New Statewide Legislation (New York)**: In addition to the grassroots efforts of Andrew Goodman Ambassadors to secure on-campus polling locations via organizing and

there is no state requirement with a designation deadline, learning more about local and state policy and practice regarding the designation process and its timing will be important to building a campaign.

advocacy, The Andrew Goodman Foundation has also [brought an on-campus polling station to Bard College](#) via successful student-led litigation. Plus, AGF [celebrated a statewide legislative victory in New York](#), which was the direct result of lawsuits filed by AGF and Bard College in 2020 and 2021 that brought the polling place to Bard's campus, coupled by the advocacy efforts of a statewide coalition. Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law new legislation that mandates polling places on college campuses with 300 or more registered students or at a nearby site proposed by the college and that prevents the gerrymandering of college campuses.

- Additional Student Stories and Resources:
 - Bard College, New York:
 - AGF Story, [A Decades-Long Battle: How Bard College Won An On-Campus Polling Site](#)
 - Article in The Nation, [Even Blue States Suppress Student Voters](#)
 - Bard College Website, [The Fight For A Polling Site On Bard's Campus: A Timeline Of Appeals, Rulings, And Media Coverage](#)
 - Public Hearing Advocacy Template, [Red Hook Town Council Meeting. Student Advocacy Presentation, October 26, 2020](#)
 - Advocacy Tools Template, [New Polling Place At Bard College: Visual Evidence \(Accompanying Student Advocacy Presentation\)](#)
 - Binghamton University, New York:
 - AGF Q&A, [Andrew Goodman Vote Everywhere Promising Practices: Engaging The Board Of Elections](#)
 - East Carolina University, North Carolina:
 - Advocacy Tools Template, [ECU Polling Place Packet for the Board of Elections](#)
 - Georgia State University:
 - AGF Story, [Who Will Run Georgia State University's Early Polling Location? For The First Time Ever. It Was Students.](#)
 - Louisiana State University:
 - AGF Story, [Access To The Ballot: Geaux Vote Wins On-Campus Voting For LSU Students](#)
 - University of Florida:
 - AGF Story, [The Battle To Expand Student Access To Early Polling In Florida](#)
 - AGF Story, [University Of Florida Team Brings Early Voting To Campus](#)
 - AGF Story, [Vote Everywhere Ambassadors Help Pave The Way For 12 Early Voting Sites In Florida. Including 2 At Miami Dade College](#)
 - Western Carolina University, North Carolina:
 - AGF Q&A, [Andrew Goodman Vote Everywhere Promising Practices: Advocating For An On-Campus Polling Place](#)
 - AGF Story, [Bringing The Ballot To WCU](#)

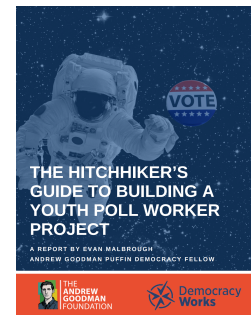
- Advocacy Tools Template, [WCU Polling Place Packet for the Board of Elections](#)

Legislative Impact Spotlight

The Youth Voting Rights Act, introduced in July 2022 by Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Nikema Williams, [is comprehensive legislation to enforce the Twenty-Sixth Amendment and to expand youth access to voting](#). If passed and signed into law, the Youth Voting Rights Act would expand voter registration services at public colleges and universities, allow young people in every state to pre-register to vote before turning 18, and require institutions of higher education to have on-campus polling places, just to name a few of its significant provisions. By serving justice to young voters, the Youth Voting Rights Act would fulfill the long overdue promise of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment.

Youth Poll Worker Spotlight

Andrew Goodman Ambassador Evan Malbrough brought a polling place on campus as a student at Georgia State University, and then ran the first-in-the-nation all-student run polling station. He then expanded his work across Georgia to build a wider Youth Poll Worker Project. Later, as an AGF post-graduate Puffin Democracy Fellow, Evan wrote [The Hitchhiker's Guide To Building A Youth Poll Worker Project](#). Evan now sits on AGF's Board of Directors!



NEXT STEPS

Now what? Keeping in mind our recommended process, key stakeholders to engage, and important reminders, start plotting your next steps.

- Identify a Core Team: What core team of democracy practitioners can help to drive the campaign?
- Research the Issue and Build Advocacy Tools: Why is the off-campus location not suitable for student voters? What alternative on-campus location is better suited? How many students are impacted? Have there been similar advocacy efforts in the past? What is the relevant deadline and requirements?
- Build a Coalition: How can a base of students and organizations be built that will engage stakeholders effectively?

- Build Out a Campaign Plan: What goals need to be achieved each semester? Work backwards from the deadline to designate polling locations. This [Campus Action Plan Template](#) can serve as a useful tool and framework for anyone building a campaign plan.

CONTACT US

Questions about how to secure a polling place on your campus? Interested in joining our Andrew Goodman Vote Everywhere program, a national nonpartisan movement of young people and college and university partners? Want to partner with The Andrew Goodman Foundation? Please [contact us](#), and we will be in touch.

APPENDIX: CASE STUDIES FROM THE ANDREW GOODMAN NETWORK

For further case studies of colleges and universities within the Andrew Goodman Network who brought polling places to their campuses, [click here](#).