



## Democratic Engagement Action Plan

**OVERALL OBJECTIVE:** Increase democratic engagement among students

To do this we will:

- Simplify voting process for students
- Increase student voter turnout
- Facilitate voter education programming to encourage political discourse and informed democratic decision-making

### **Action Plan**

Reports from past elections show the lowest voter turnout is for individuals between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine years of age. This demographic represents 96% of all North Dakota State University (NDSU) students. This is why NDSU set forth a plan in increase democratic engagement among students in order to foster active citizenship while in college and upon graduation.

The overall object of increasing democratic engagement among students will be addressed by providing a variety of opportunities for students to become personally engaged in democratic issues—namely, simplifying the voting process, increasing student voter turnout, and facilitating voter education programming to encourage political discourse and informed democratic decision-making.

### **Simplify Voting Process**

**TurboVote.** Understanding that even small inconveniences may deter voters, NDSU provides TurboVote, a free tool for students to streamline the voting process this election season. The tool provides absentee ballot applications, registration information, precinct location information, and voting reminders via text or email. Additionally, with over 50% of NDSU students from out-of-state, TurboVote is able to tailor information to their states of residency in order to serve all students equally.

Signing up for TurboVote takes only a few minutes and can be done on computers or cell phones. When barriers to voting are removed, increased numbers of students will be able to engage in their democratic right to vote.

<https://ndsu.turbovote.org/>

### **Increase Voter Turnout**

**Tailored Emails.** To increase voter turnout, we will send targeted voting information to all students through ListServ emails. Further, by gathering student data from Registration and Records, we are able to customize emails to each student's home state detailing the state's voting requirements, registration deadlines, etc. For students who register with TurboVote, email or text reminders will be sent leading up to November 8<sup>th</sup>, including relevant voting information like precinct locations.

**Tabling.** Representatives from Student Government (SG) will encourage students to sign up for TurboVote. To do this, SG will provide voting information at promotional tables in the Memorial Union, NDSU's student union, leading up to the election.

**Pledging to Vote.** Students will be invited to pledge to vote on a visual display board in the Student Activities Office. Pledging will be encouraged until election day, particularly during the dialogue event discussed below. Students will sign their name on a Post-It note as well as write why they are voting.

**Sign-up Competitions.** In order to encourage more students to sign-up for TurboVote and thus increase the likelihood of voter turnout, we have partnered with NDSU Fraternity and Sorority Life as well as the Office of Residence life to create registration competitions. Students compete within their Greek chapters and within the Residence Halls to have the largest percentage of sign-ups based on membership.

## **Voter Education**

**Dialogue.** Viewing voter education as essential to increasing democratic engagement, students will be given opportunities to think critically about political topics while also learning about the voting process. Using political discourse as a tool for education, students are invited to partake in a dialogue about voting in the upcoming election. This civil discourse will increase students' critical thinking around political issues and foster insight around outside perspectives.

**The NDSU Democracy Wall.** In addition to the dialogue program and voting engagement initiatives, students will be invited to engage in the NDSU Democracy Wall. The Democracy Wall is a venue for students to respond to weekly questions about current issues at the local, national, or global level. The mission of the NDSU Democracy Wall is to foster the development of well-informed and engaged citizens where critical thinking and understanding are promoted through civil discourse on political, cultural, and societal issues impacting our community. For students who may be less likely to join a verbal dialogue, the Democracy Wall provides a space for written engagement. Questions about policies, candidates, debates, issues, etc. surrounding the election will be posted on the Democracy Wall leading up to election day.

**Faculty Involvement.** Faculty members play a vital role in encouraging democratic engagement among students. Therefore, faculty will be provided with a voting "cheat sheet" to guide conversations with students regarding voting in the upcoming elections. The "cheat sheet" will outline step-by-step instructions for talking with students about voting, utilizing TurboVote, as well as information about voter laws in North Dakota.

Together, these methods comprise our action plan to meet the goal of increasing democratic engagement among NDSU students.