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# Student Engagement Voting Report

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Baker Ambassadors

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Baker Center Living & Learning Community

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## Overview

The Howard H. Baker Jr Center for Public Policy is a nonpartisan public policy center dedicated to education and research to provide policy makers, citizens, scholars, and students with the information and skills necessary to work effectively within our political system and to serve our local, state, national, and global communities. The Baker Center is working to ensure all students, faculty, staff, and others in the Knoxville community are registered to vote and offered opportunities to learn about the issues impacting politics, government and the greater good.

The Baker Center partnered with many other organizations on campus including the College Democrats, the College Republicans, Political Student Alliance, Student Government Association, UT Libraries, UT Political Science, and others. Partnering with these organizations helped our voter registration efforts reach a larger audience.

We sought to increase voter registration rates and voter turnout on campus and throughout the community, state and beyond. In the past, students at the University of Tennessee have voted at a very low rate. According to the NSLVE Campus Report for the University of Tennessee, in 2012 the turnout rate for University of Tennessee students was 43%, and the turnout rate for University of Tennessee students in 2014 was a dismal 16%.

We have attempted to increase those rates through educational events and voter registration drives including:

- SGA voter registration week - Aug. 12-18
- UT vs. UF – Battle of the Policy Centers – Aug. 22- Oct. 11
- Who’s Influencing our Presidential Candidates – Aug. 29
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment – Dr. Scheb, Police Chief Lane, Dr. Sharma – Sept. 19
- voter registration during Constitution Day celebration - Sept. 19
- participating in National Voter Registration Day – Sept. 27
- Voterpalooza – Sept. 28
- keeping a locked box on the first floor of the Baker Center for students to fill out forms and leave them in the locked box.
- Supporting voter registration drives at the UT Library – Sept. 19-Oct. 4
- Debate Watch in the Toyota – Sept. 26, Oct. 4, Oct. 19
- National Security Policy – Amb. Herbst – Sept. 8
- US Role in Europe – Radek Sikorski (Poland) Sept. 21
- Forty More Years: The Making of the Trump/Clinton Court – Oct. 4
- Presidential Economics: Rhetoric & Reality – Dr. Murray - Oct. 20
- Republicans, Democrats, & Sustainability – Dr. Goodstein - Oct. 24
- Energy Policy & the Next President – Dr. Grossman - Oct. 27

- The US & the Middle East – Dr. Zogby – Oct. 11
- We Look Ahead: Policies of the Trump Administration – Nov. 30

After discussions over the summer with the Knox County Election Commission officials, they formally voted to make the Baker Center an early voting location for the last week of Tennessee early voting (October 31-November 3). Also, the Baker Center was an Election Day polling location for Knox County voters located in precincts 10S and 10W.

## Goals

- Increase civic engagement for those on the University of Tennessee’s campus and the surrounding Knoxville community by holding voter registration drives
- Provide Turbo Vote to offer online voter registration forms and reminders to UT students.
- Provide information to voters about their precinct through resources on the Tennessee Election Commission’s website (also the Tennessee Secretary of State’s website)
- Present information to voters about Tennessee’s voter identification laws to ensure that voters have the correct form of identification when going to vote
- Give resources to faculty to help their students register to vote
- Work with the Knox County Election Commission to ensure voter registration forms are filled out correctly and early voting and Election Day run smoothly for voters
- Educate about the policy issues in the election through offering numerous educational events prior to Election Day.

## Participants

Student groups at the Baker Center like the Baker Ambassadors, Baker Scholars, and the Baker Center Living and Learning Community have been working on registering students to vote either at voter registration drives. Some leaders for this group include Morgan Chance and Diana Howell.



The Student Government Association, with help from leaders such as Caitlyn McCandless, the Student Services Director, Jennings Hardee, the Government Affairs Director, and Jack Larimer, the Government Affairs Co-Director. Students involved in SGA have the opportunity to plan and carry out events that bring awareness to issues facing campus, as well as

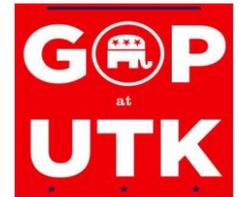


implement policies that improve campus life. SGA staffed tables during voter registration efforts, and also made it convenient to register their members to vote.

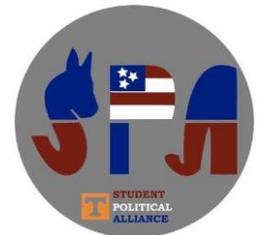
College Democrats, led by Feroza Freeland, at the University of Tennessee is the official college outreach arm of the Democratic Party. We work to get Democrats elected to office on a local, state, and national level, to promote progressive values, and to serve our community. The College Democrats aided in staffing the voter registration tables and hosted a voter registration drive on National Voter Registration Day.



The College Republicans, led by Greg Butcher, are the foremost conservative, free-market student group at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Joining College Republicans is an opportunity to get involved and make a difference on local campaigns and network with like-minded conservatives. The College Republicans aided in staffing the voter registration table and ensuring that their members are registered to vote.



The Student Political Alliance, led by Mustafa Ali-Smith and LJ Lytle, aims to increase the number of politically aware individuals, thus fostering a more politically active campus by offering students political dialogue, and the teaching of public policy in order to understand the issues and events in the community. Members of the Student Political Alliance staffed the voter registration tables, and they ensured that members of their organization are registered to vote.



## Students' Efforts

Voter Registration Week: September 12-16: A week long voter registration drive was held with members of the Baker Center, the Student Government Association, College Democrats, College Republicans, and Student Political Alliance. Each day, volunteers were located at different locations on campus from 9 am – 4 pm.

- Monday, September 12, Pedestrian Walkway and the Student Union Plaza
- Tuesday, September 13, Pedestrian Walkway and Presidential Courtyard
- Wednesday, September 14, Pedestrian Walkway and Presidential Courtyard
- Thursday, September 15, Pedestrian Walkway and Alumni Memorial Building



Pictured here: Trevor Dixon, Mickayla Stogsdill, and Morgan Chance

- Friday, September 16, Pedestrian Walkway and the Hill.

**Constitution Day:** Constitution Day is celebrated by the Baker Center since 2007. This year, the Baker Center partnered with the UT Libraries to host voter registration in the library and a public discussion on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment with professors and UT Chief of Police, on Sept. 18. Alongside that, there was an opportunity for students to sign a copy of the US Constitution and to write down what their thoughts about the Constitution. We were located on the second floor of the library from 11am-2 pm.



**National Voter Registration Day:** The Baker Center hosted National Voter Registration Day on Sept. 27 with the Government Affairs committee within the Student Government Association, from 11 am – 2 pm. We were located on Pedestrian Walkway near the library in an attempted to register as many students as possible. We had popsicles to try and motivate students to register to vote.



**Voterpalooza:** The Baker Center hosted this event on Sept. 28. It included a showcase of student groups working to get out the vote, a student debate and voter registration drive. It was sponsored by UT Political Science Dept. students, SGA and others and attracted more than 100 students.



**Competition with Florida:** The Baker Center challenged the Bob Graham Center on the University of Florida's campus to a voter registration competition. The competition started August 22 and ran until October 11, the deadline to register to vote in both states. Both public policy centers held voter registration drives and encouraged students to sign up on Turbovote to register to vote and to get election reminders. UT won the competition!

Voter Registration Box: In order to make registering to vote easier for students on campus, there was a locked metal box on the first floor of the Baker Center with guides on how to fill out the form. Students could visit the Baker Center and register to vote quickly before moving on to class or other obligations. Workers at the Baker Center would check the forms and either mail the forms to various counties in many different states or take the forms downtown to the Knox County Election Commission.



Turbovote: If someone wants to register to vote, they can go online to the University of Tennessee's Turbovote dashboard: <https://utk.turbovote.org/>. Through this website, students had the opportunity to fill out a voter registration form, fill out a request for an absentee ballot, and sign up to receive election reminders! Tennessee does not have online voter registration, so if someone registers to vote on Turbovote or requests an absentee ballot they must print out the forms (or Turbovote will print and mail it to them for their signature) and then mail the form.

Turbovote does provide stamps. The Turbovote link was posted on various social media including multiple UT websites, Facebook and Twitter. The link was also posted on the MyUTK website. Students use MyUTK for many things including paying fees and registering for classes. Putting the link at the top of the MyUTK website resulted in over 1600 students using Turbovote to either register to vote, request an absentee ballot, or sign up for election reminders.

Rides to the Polls: UT Students Leadership and Service offered rides to nearby voting precincts on Election Day. Around 27 students took advantage of that serviced.



We make voting easy.

We make sure you always know when elections are happening, and have the information you need to vote with confidence. Sign up to receive election reminders, get registered to vote, & apply for your absentee ballot!

GET STARTED →

IN ENGLISH | EN ESPAÑOL

Polling Location at the Baker Center: Students at the Baker Center contacted the Knox County Election Commission to try and make the Baker Center the on campus polling location for students, faculty, and staff. The Knox County Election Commission came and visited the Baker Center and took a tour of the Toyota Auditorium, the room in which the election would take place. The Election Commission liked the location and it was unanimously voted by the members of the Knox County Election Commission to be a polling location for the first time last year. For the November 8, 2016 election, the Baker Center was both an early voting and an election day precinct. For early voting, the Baker Center was open from October 31-November 3 from 8am to 8pm for any Knox County voter to be able to cast their vote.



On Election Day, any voter in precincts 10S or 10W can cast their ballots at the Baker Center. Life-size cardboard cutouts of the two Presidential Candidates held a prominent 2<sup>nd</sup> floor window-position, looking down on the Baker Center plaza throughout the election period.

## Final Results

- With our partners, the students registered 2,486 students to vote.
- We won the competition against the University of Florida, who registered 1,235 Floridians to vote
- We presented information about absentee voting and voter identification laws
- We hosted opportunities to watch the debate and express their opinions
- We educated the public on the issues so they could make their own informed decision.

**TENNESSEE**  
**T** vs **FLORIDA**  
UT 38 - UF 28

**We Won!**

Voters Registered  
UT = 2,486  
UF = 1,235

Now turn out and vote!  
(Early) Oct. 31-Nov. 3  
Nov. 8 - Election Day

