

Outreach Tips for Online Voter Registration

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The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL www.castudentvote.org/home-ca. The page features the California Student Vote.org logo at the top left, with navigation links for "EN ESPAÑOL" and "ENGLISH" at the top right. A red navigation bar contains links for "REGISTER TO VOTE", "PLEDGE TO VOTE", "VOLUNTEER", "ABOUT US", and "OUR PARTNERS". The main content area is titled "Register to Vote" and shows a "New Registrant" form. The form includes a "Step:" indicator with steps 1 through 5, where step 1 is highlighted. The form fields are: "Email Address", "ZIP Code", and "Date of Birth" (with a "MM-DD-YYYY" format hint). Below the fields are two checkboxes: "I am a U.S. citizen." and "I am registering to vote for the first time." A note at the bottom of the form states: "Note: If you are an American citizen living abroad or a uniformed military voter, click here to register to vote." A red "NEXT STEP >" button is located at the bottom of the form. On the left side of the page, there are several promotional callouts: a blue speech bubble with social media icons (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr), a red speech bubble that says "GET OUR ONLINE REGISTRATION TOOL", a white speech bubble that says "CHECK OUT NEW VOTERS PROJECT", and a red speech bubble that says "VOLUNTEER". The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows various application icons and the system clock indicating 2:15 PM on 4/29/2014.

CALPIRG Education Fund and CALPIRG Students have been helping to register young people to vote for more than thirty years.

In 2012, more than 27,000 students from 250 different campuses registered to vote using our Castudentvote.org tool (powered by Rock the Vote).

Outreach Tips:

Emails:

- Send from a trusted source (for campuses that would be the Chancellor, student body president, etc.)
- Three emails is effective in the week leading up to Election Day, including at least one on the day of the deadline.
- We typically saw a 2 percent response rate every time we sent an all-campus email out, regardless of the type of campus community. The response rate increases closer to the deadline.

Webpage:

- Obviously it has to be posted on a site that gets heavy web traffic in order to be effective.
- One advantage of the CAstudentvote.org tool is that it's a button, rather than a link. We often customized the tool with the school's logo on it.

Social media:

- Schools also posted the link to the CAstudentvote.org tool on their official Facebook and Twitter feeds.
- We estimate that one person registered for every two Facebook posts from students that linked to our CAstudentvote.org tool

Messaging Tips:

Our experience is that the process gets in the way of participation more than the desire.

Our best email responses are to messages that convey:

- Timeliness: “1 day left to register to vote”
- Ease of registration: “Register to vote online. Only takes three minutes.”

Secondary messages could include:

- Community participation: Better to highlight the percentage of people in your community that already participate, vs. the need to increase participation.
- Particular issues that affect your community. I.e. a lot of students were motivated by Prop 30 in 2012.