Outreach Tips for Online Voter Registration

Emily Rusch
CALPIRG Executive Director
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.