



VOTER ENGAGEMENT: MOBILIZING THE POLITICAL POWER OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS

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Agenda

1. Why people should care about voting
2. The three legged stool of voter engagement:
 - a. voter registration
 - b. casting a vote
 - c. basing voting decisions on self-interest to protect basic human rights of person voting
3. Strategies to increase informed voter engagement

Introductions



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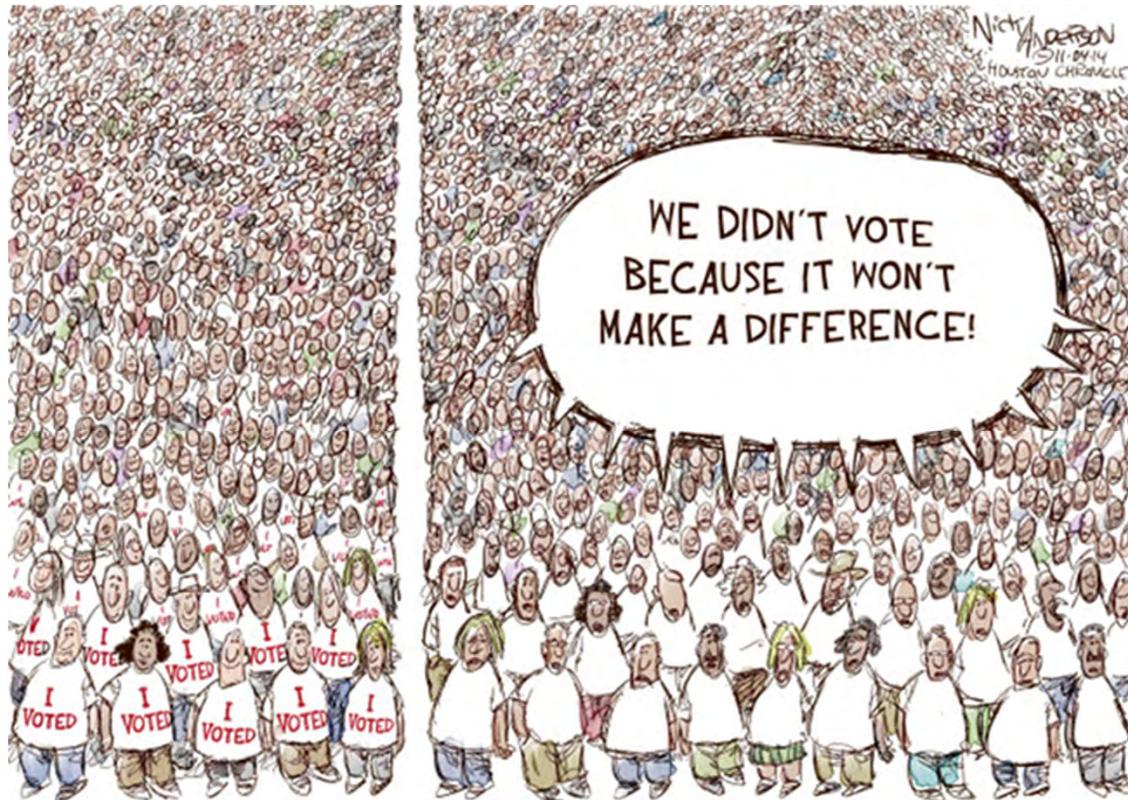


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VOTING MATTERS

Voting Matters

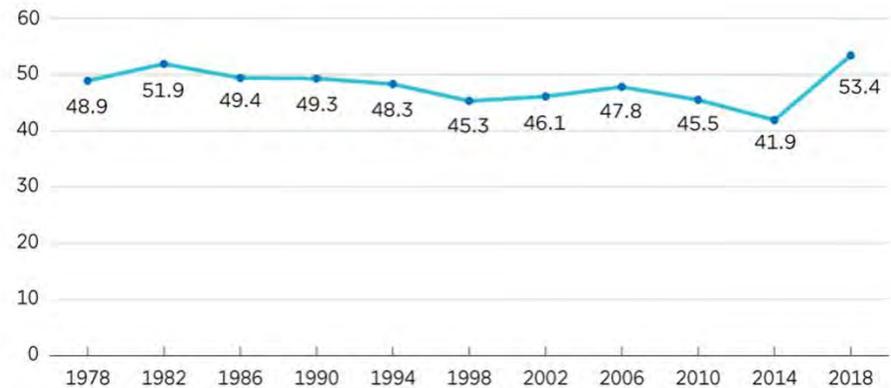


TWO THIRDS OF ELIGIBLE TEXANS DON'T VOTE

2018 Midterm Election

National Voter Turnout: Midterm Elections 1978-2018

(Percentage of the citizen voting-age population that voted)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Current Population Survey Voting and Registration Supplements: Midterm Elections 1978-2018.

Change in Voter Turnout by Characteristic: 2014 to 2018

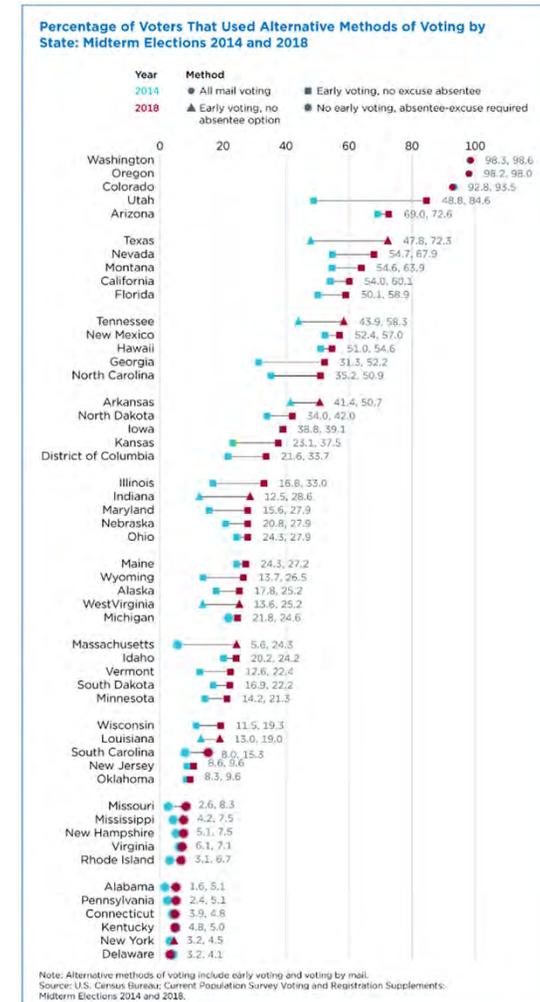
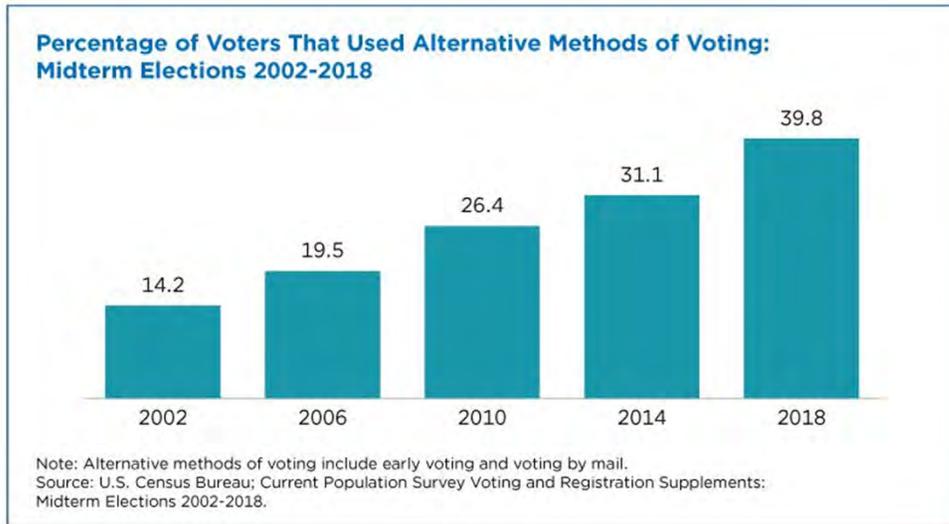
Characteristic	2014 Voter Turnout	2018 Voter Turnout	Difference ¹
Total	41.9	53.4	11.5
Age			
18-29	19.9	35.6	15.7
30-44	35.6	48.8	13.2
45-64	49.6	59.5	9.9
65+	59.4	66.1	6.7
Sex			
Male	40.8	51.8	10.9
Female	43.0	55.0	12.0
Race and Hispanic Origin			
White alone, non-Hispanic	45.8	57.5	11.7
Black alone, non-Hispanic	40.6	51.4	10.8
Asian alone, non-Hispanic	26.9	40.2	13.3
Hispanic (any race)	27.0	40.4	13.4
Educational Attainment			
Less than a high school diploma	22.2	27.2	5.0
High school diploma or equivalent	33.9	42.1	8.2
Some college or associate's degree	41.7	54.5	12.8
Bachelor's degree	53.2	65.7	12.5
Advanced degree	62.0	74.0	12.0
Citizen Group			
Native-born citizen	42.7	54.2	11.5
Naturalized citizen	34.1	45.7	11.7
Metropolitan Status			
Metropolitan area	41.5	53.7	12.2
Principal city	39.1	52.4	13.3
Balance of metro area	42.9	54.4	11.5
Nonmetropolitan	44.3	52.1	7.7

¹ The difference between 2014 and 2018 voter turnout rates is significant for each group.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Current Population Survey Voting and Registration Supplements: 2014 and 2018.



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2018 Midterm Election- Alternative Voting Methods



Who Votes Matters

Voters

- Older
- Wealthier
- More Educated
- Favor **Less** Government Spending on Services and **MORE** Tax Cuts

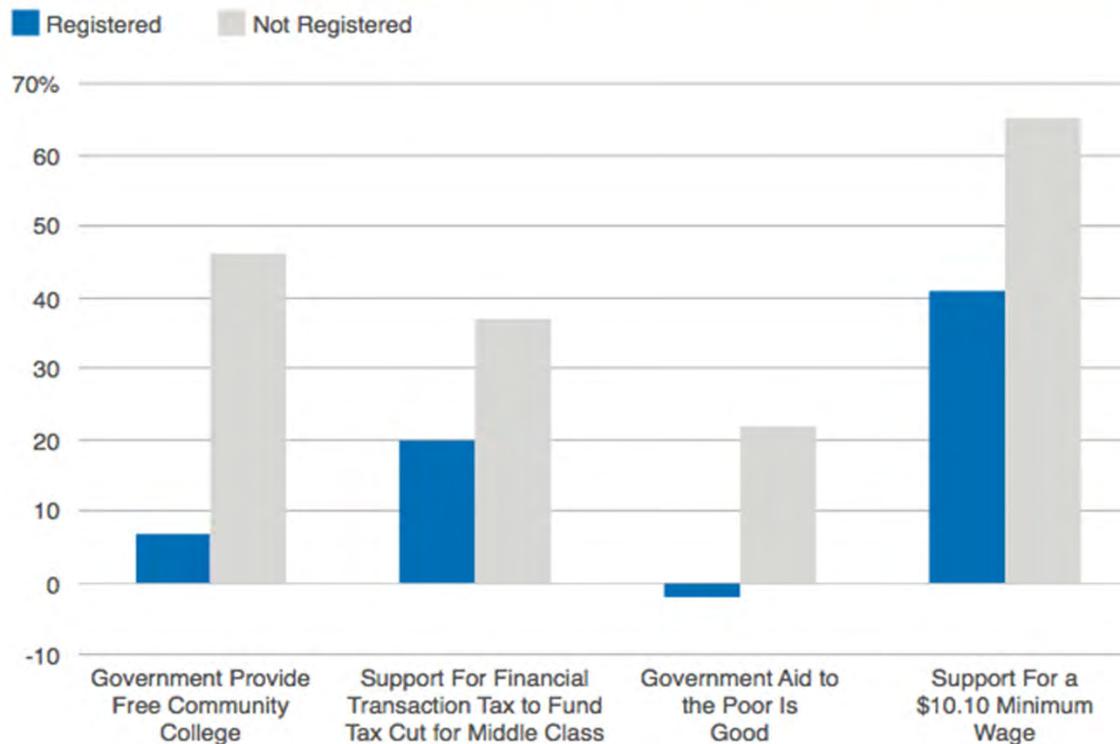
Non-Voters

- Younger
- Poorer
- Not Attended College
- Non-white
- Favor **More** Government Spending on Services (Education & Health Care) and **LESS** Tax Cuts

Interests of Voters Become Embedded in Policy

When people stay home, so does their power

Figure 4. Net Support For Policy, Registered Versus Not Registered



Source: Pew, YouGov, Demos

The Power of Voting

- **Voter turnout** tells an important story about **power** in communities, states and country.
- Elected officials reward areas of their district with **the highest voting rates with more federal resources** (Martin, 2003).
- The collective **needs of groups who vote less are not prioritized** nor reflected in governmental policies (Verba et al, 1993; Campbell, 2007; Bartels, 2008; Frasure & Williams, 2009; Piven, 2011).

*An inclusive democracy in which power is shared equally:
therefore it reflects and responds to the needs of all citizens*

**your VOTE
is your VOICE**

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Impact on Communities



- Elected officials reward counties in their district with the highest voting rates with more federal resources (Martin, 2003)
- States with the highest levels of voter turnout among lower socioeconomic groups have less restrictive welfare policies and fewer cuts in welfare spending (Hill 1995; Johnson, 2001; Avery & Peffley 2005).
- Association to social determinants of health
 - Low rates (50%) of voter registration in Hartford associated with fewer community resources (Hartford Department of Health and Human Services' Community Health Needs Assessment, 2012)
 - Flint Michigan (12% voter turnout local election)

Structural barriers are *designed* to limit participation and power.

- Confusing and complicated rules, deadlines and processes;
- Inconsistent and discriminatory election administration, including cutting polling locations
- Restricting who can vote:
 - Felony disenfranchisement;
 - Strict voter id rules
 - Purging voter lists
 - Throwing out registrations with identical match and challenging student registration
 - Drawing barriers that dilute power through “packing” & “cracking” (Gerrymandering)

State Laws and Voting

Elections at all levels—local, state and federal—are coordinated and run by the states, resulting in a complex tapestry of registration policies

Impactful policies:

- Same-day registration
- Automatic or motor-voter registration

Policies that disenfranchise:

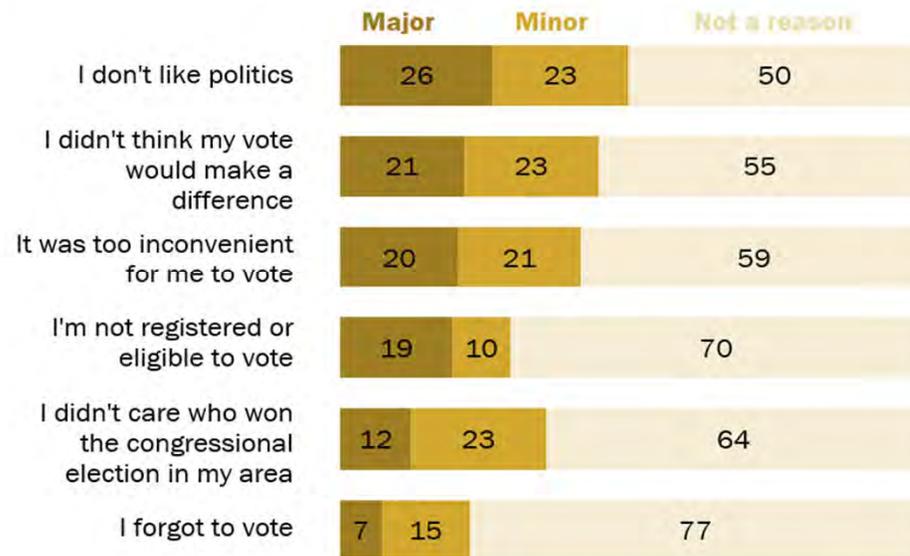
- elimination of early voting on Sundays in Ohio
- elimination of voting on the Sunday before Election Day in Florida
- elimination of “day of” registration in Maine
- Required government-issued photo IDs in Wisconsin, Kansas, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas

Barriers to Voting

- Belief that voting doesn't matter
- Apathy
- Lack of social trust that elections matter
- Self-efficacy
- Alienation
- Indifference to candidates
- Lack of political knowledge and awareness
- Transportation
- Polling Hours

Nearly half of nonvoters in the midterms cite disliking politics as a reason for not voting

% of nonvoters who say each is a ___ reason why they did not vote



Notes: Based on U.S. citizens who say they did not vote. No answer not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 7-16, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

VOTER ENGAGEMENT

Voting is Fundamental to Social Welfare

MICRO: Empowering vulnerable citizens to cast a ballot by providing information, tools AND encouragement to vote.

MEZZO: Strengthening communities, changing voting culture, increasing civic engagement.

MACRO: Addressing system of voting, including voting rights and policy



Three Legged Stool of Voter Engagement

1. Voter Registration
2. Voting
3. Informed Voting

Each leg is important for vulnerable populations to access the political power that emanates from voting.

Conceptualized by Nancy A. Humphreys



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REGISTRATION

Voter Registration

Nonpartisan Voter Registration is LEGAL

Nonprofits may conduct nonpartisan voter engagement activities designed to educate the public and help them participate in elections

Voter Registration

Social Work

Register Your Clients Today

Nancy A Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work
Advancing Political Social Work | University of Connecticut | School of Social Work
1001 Bldg. Room 320 | Tel: 860-470-9266 | Email: POLITICALINSTITUTE@UConn.EDU

- The 1993 National Voter Registration Act (Motor Voter Act) mandates that any organization, including nonprofits, who are helping clients sign up for federal public assistance programs such as food stamps, WIC, Medicaid and TANF, must be providing opportunities for people to register to vote.)

A 501(c)(3) MAY NOT:

- Make an endorsement
- Donate money or resources
- Rate/rank candidates on their positions

Some organizations may be breaking the law by NOT offering voter registration

TURNOUT

Voting

Organizations can significantly increase voter turnout in communities

A 2012 study by Nonprofit VOTE showed that:

Voters contacted in-person by nonprofits during services voted at higher rates than other voters in their state across all demographics. *Nonprofits had their greatest participation impact on voters considered less likely to vote.*

VOTING
RULES
VOTING RIGHTS
POWER
DEADLINES
OUTREACH
SOCIAL
PRIMARY
MOBILIZE
HOMELESS
CANDIDATES
FORUMS
GENERAL
REGISTER
BALLOTS
ELECTION
TURNOUT
EDUCATE
COMMUNITY
FELONY
WORK

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Voting

- Ask those, who are the least likely to vote, to vote!
- Use pledge cards to get individuals to vote.
- Remind clients when and where to vote
- Organize/provide transportation and/or child care
- Encourage voting in local elections (LOCAL ELECTIONS MATTER)
- Remind clients what policies are at stake.
- Inform felons of their voting rights. (In Maine and Vermont felons never lose their right to vote, in 16 states voting rights automatically restored after incarceration, in 21 states restored after completion of probation/parole and fines/fees paid, in 11 states felons lose voting rights indefinitely)

INFORMED VOTING

Informed Voting

- Critical dialogue matters
- Reinforce the connection between the personal and the political and importance of voting
- Reframe the importance of voting in terms of effecting policy not just who gets elected
- Actively work to stop perpetuation of political narrative that shames voters who have less income (recipients of means-tested government assistance)

Informed Voting

Meet the voter where they are

Dedicated Voters	Voters	Nonvoters	Dedicated Nonvoters
Voting is important	Not sure if voting is important	Do not care about voting	Voting is useless

Dedicated Voters: Encouragement; Provide resources to vote in local elections

Voters: Indirect interventions to increase critical awareness about importance of elections; Non-partisan information

Nonvoters: Opportunities for critical dialogue about voting; Non-partisan information

Dedicated Nonvoters: Address structural issues related to strong feelings of alienation and resignation; Create opportunities for interaction with elected officials

GET INVOLVED

Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work

Our Mission: To increase the political participation and power of all social workers and the communities we serve.



Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work

“Politics is social work with power.”

- Senator Barbara Mikulski, MSW

Voter Registration



Social Work



Register Your Clients Today

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The National Social Work Voter Mobilization Campaign

The Campaign seeks to:

- Raise social policy awareness of the importance of voting to social work practice and;
- Integrate voter engagement activities into class and field education for all micro and macro students;
- Provide information and resources to field instructors, students and faculty for use in agencies and the classroom; and
- Ensure that all the people served by social workers have access to vote.

Organizational Endorsements include:

CSWE ♦ North American Network of Field Educators and Directors (NANFED) ♦ National Association of Deans & Directors (NADD) ♦ Special Commission to Advance Macro Practice in Social Work ♦ Association for Community Organization & Social Action (ACOSA) ♦ #MacroSW ♦ Network for Social Work Management (NSWM) ♦ Influencing Social Policy (ISP) ♦ National Rural Social Work Caucus ♦ National Association of Perinatal Social Workers ♦ Clinical Social Work Association



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A CALL TO ACTION

Social Work Education's role
in turnout

VOTING is Social Work

Voting IS Social Work!

Central to social work's values and social justice mission. Gives individuals and communities the power to voice their opinions and effect change.

Non-partisan voter registration, education and outreach are *legal, ethical and professional.*

VOTING = A Human Right

Strenuous efforts exist to restrict access to voting. Not unlike the old poll tax, they include strict voter ID laws, purging voter rolls and intimidation by political parties and even those in charge of elections.

Over 20 million people have felony convictions, nearly 6 million of which have unfairly lost the right to vote--disproportionately from communities of color (38%). In the 4 worst states, more than 1 in 5 African Americans have lost the right to vote.¹⁶

State by state rules have created widespread confusion with most assuming they can't vote even when they can.

Voting rights are *protected* for many groups, including:

- Persons who are homeless;
- Victims of domestic violence;
- The disabled, including those with language and reading barriers; and
- Those in pre-trial detention.

VOTING = Better Outcomes

Individual and communities that vote report better health, employment and other important outcomes; receive more resources from elected officials; and develop stronger community connections.

Voting builds power! It maximizes the capacity to influence public policy and can offset some of the negative effects of oppression and discrimination.^{1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 14}

Yet BARRIERS Still Exist

- Confusing registration and ID requirements;
- Not knowing where, when and how to vote;
- Lack of transportation;
- Long lines;
- Lack of information on candidates and issues;
- People believing their vote doesn't matter.^{12, 13}; and
- Wrongly thinking that voter registration is partisan, illegal, unethical and unprofessional.

SCHOOL/PROGRAM-WIDE ACTIVITIES

- Inform faculty and students.
- Hold a forum or public event inviting all candidates on the ballot to speak about relevant social issues.
- Offer training and CEUs to field supervisors on voter engagement.
- Add voter registration links/info to school registration processes.
- Hold registration drives; inform students about election dates and resources; and encourage them to vote.

FACULTY

- Can bring content on voting into the classroom and the field to build student political efficacy and connect voter engagement to social work's impact.
- See VotingIsSocialWork.org for classroom resources and training ideas.
- Create experiential learning assignments such as registering voters, looking up Voter ID rules, finding polling sites, checking registration status, reviewing registration and absentee ballot forms, and running registration drives.
- Invite guest speakers to class (e.g., League of Women Voters or local registrars).
- Assign students to look up who represents them at all levels of government and/or meet with one of their elected officials.
- Ask students to partner with their field instructors to design ways to integrate voter engagement into agency services.

The Humphreys Institute is a proud partner of the
**NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK
VOTER MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGN**

www.VotingIsSocialWork.org

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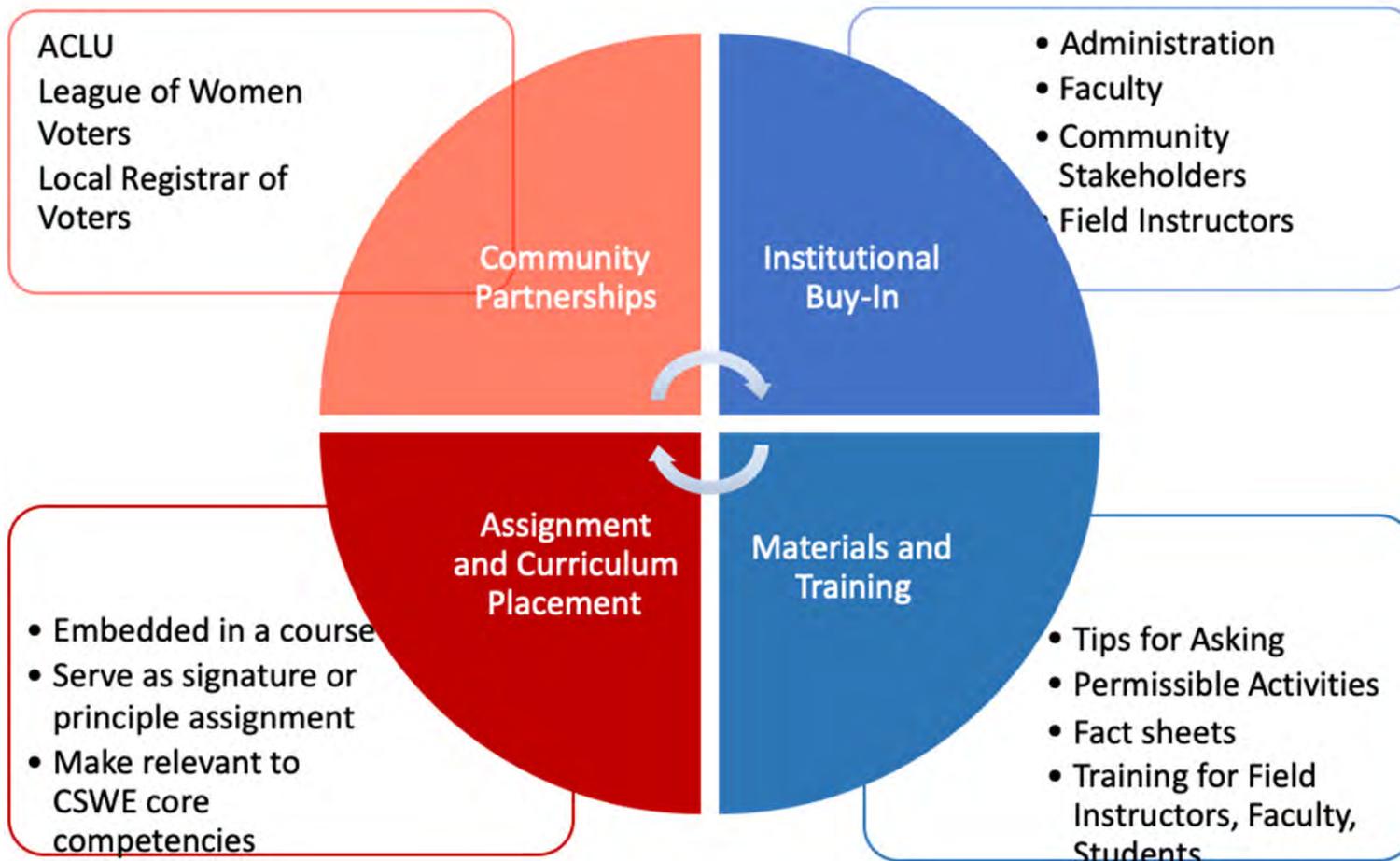
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Voter Engagement Model



QUESTIONS?



YOUR
 VOTE
=
YOUR
 VOICE
=
OUR
FUTURE

your VOTE
is your VOICE

