

Dear colleagues,

As we prepare for a new normal this semester—and with the November election approaching—cultivating a culture of civic engagement and participation at Harvard Law School is more important than ever.

President Bacow has embraced this goal, establishing the [Harvard Votes Challenge](#)—a nonpartisan Harvard-wide initiative to increase voter registration, engagement, and participation—as well as committing Harvard University to the [ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge](#)—a public commitment to work towards reaching 100% eligible student voter registration and participation. This effort is especially meaningful for us here at the Law School, given the vitally central connection between democracy and the rule of law.

[Research shows](#) that integrating information about voting into our academic infrastructure, classroom discussions, and student-to-student communication can significantly improve student participation even if they are registered in other states. Applying these best practices, some campuses have achieved eligible voter registration rates above 95% and have seen actual voting rates increase by more than 30%.

In 2018, only 43.4% of eligible HLS students cast their ballot. We can and should do better this election cycle. In the past, students have relied on in-person voter registration drives. Given the University's commitment—and competition across Harvard's Schools to see which school can do the best—it would really make a difference for faculty members to mention the topic and point students to resources.

Staff and student leaders from [Harvard Votes Challenge](#) and the [Equal Democracy Project](#) offer a menu of options to make it easy for each of us to help.

- **Each of us can spend a few minutes at the end of a class raising the topic of voting, including absentee ballot and vote-by-mail elements, and referring students to resources (such as www.vote.org).** You can share the link or attached materials with your students.
 - If held at the end of your class or section meeting, students can check their registration status and begin implementing their plans in real time. Contact Sam Parker, saparker@law.harvard.edu, from the DOS Office to be connected with the Equal Democracy Project team for any help planning such a session or for additional materials.
- **Special opportunity for 1L Section Leaders — Schedule a Voter Engagement Session.** If you can, set aside time for voter registration in a section meeting or class in the first two weeks of September, and share the attached material.
 - Our goal is to reach 100% coverage of the 1L class, which can be achieved if each Section Leader holds a Voter Engagement Session. Aside from the option above, another option is to set aside time for HLS students in the Equal Democracy Project to lead a 5-15 minute session. During that session they can share information about the most effective means to register, check or update registrations, and assist students requesting absentee ballots. Contact Sam Parker, saparker@law.harvard.edu, from the DOS Office to be connected with the Equal Democracy Project team for any help or additional materials.
- **Research supports the following [best practices](#) as effective ways to engage your students:**
 - [Share Your Voter Story](#): Sharing your personal experience (how you vote, not who you vote for) is a great way to connect with and encourage students to

prioritize civic engagement. Where are you registered? How long have you been registered there? Where did you vote before? Do you typically vote in-person or by mail? Have you voted in every local, state, and federal election, or mostly in federal and state contests?

- Add a Voter Registration Blurb to your Syllabus: A brief sentence encouraging students to go to www.vote.org to ensure they are registered and ready to vote can go a long way.
- Adopt a Civic Engagement Email Signature: For example, “Register to [vote\(.org\)](http://www.vote.org)!” is brief and to the point, while providing a useful hyperlink to a non-partisan website.
- Note on Ineligible Voters: Since our community includes many ineligible voters, such as international students and undocumented students, consider using language such as “if eligible, check your voter registration.” Additionally, ineligible voters can promote civic engagement by encouraging their eligible peers to exercise their right to vote.

Thank you all for your time and for your willingness to promote civic engagement at HLS. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,
Martha Minow
Andrew Crespo
Ruth Greenwood
Lawrence Lessig
Nicholas Stephanopoulos