

CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER

Illinois Voter Registration

LESSON PLAN AND ACTIVITIES

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Illinois Election Law: Voter Registration Lesson Plan and Activities

Grade Level: 6, 7, 8

Subject(s):

- Social Studies: United States, State and Local Government, Civics;
- Language Arts: Reading.

Duration: 1 class session

Description: This lesson provides an overview of elections and describes the requirements for voter registration by giving students the opportunity to engage in a mock voter registration drive.

Goals:

Illinois Learning Standards

A. Social Science: 14A, 14B, 14C, 14D; 16B; 18B; and

B. English/Language Arts: 1A, 1B, 1C; 4A, 4B.

Objectives:

1. Investigate and understand election laws in Illinois;
2. Evaluate voter registration requirements in Illinois; and
3. Synthesize understanding through conducting a mock voter registration drive.

Materials:

Voter Registration Forms - one copy per student

Available at www.elections.state.il.us/Downloads/VotingInformation/PDF/R-19.pdf

Note: If link does not work, cut and paste address into the browser.

Instruction and Activity

Voting rights allow citizens direct access to democracy. In order to participate in the election process by voting, however, citizens must follow certain voter registration requirements and processes. Students will examine these voter registration practices in this lesson.

Lecture - Registering Voters

A. Basic Voter Registration

Pass out a copy of an Illinois Voter Registration sheet to each student. Ask for volunteers to read aloud the first half of the page, which details the basic requirements of voting. After the reading, review with students the following requirements:

- Voters must be U.S. Citizens;

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- Voters must be 18 years old as of election day; and
- Voters must reside in the precinct in which they plan to vote for at least 30 days prior to the election.

Additionally, point out to students that Illinois law requires voters to register before being permitted to vote and that voters can only be registered in one place at any given time. Registration can occur until 28 days before an election, as long as the voter has the proper forms of identification. Voters registering in person must present one photo ID and one form of identification displaying the voter's current address. Voters registering by mail must provide a drivers' license or state ID number. Voters without a drivers' license or state ID can substitute the last four digits of their social security numbers or provide a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, or another document indicating name and current address.

Although it is difficult to ascertain from the Voter Registration form, there is a "grace period" for registration which allows a voter to register until 14 days before an election, provided that the voter registers in person with the necessary identification.

Question for students: What are the advantages and disadvantages of cutting off voter registration 14 days before an election?

B. Challenges to Eligibility

Now that we have discussed who can register to vote, let's turn to which registered voters are actually eligible to vote. Election commissions maintain databases of registered and eligible voters. Some registered voters might not be eligible to vote. For example, felons are not eligible to vote while incarcerated. Individuals who have recently moved can usually vote after they have signed an affidavit, but they are prohibited from voting if the move occurred more than thirty days before the election and no transfer of registration was made. Illinois law addresses the special circumstances of disabled and non-English-speaking voters: these individuals are eligible to vote, but must either designate a helper/assistant or accept aid from two election judges, one from each party. Voters who are disabled to the point that they are unable to communicate their intention of who to vote for, for example, individuals suffering from advanced Alzheimer's disease, are not eligible to vote.

Before reading the following section to students ask them if there are any scenarios where it should be questioned if people can vote.

C. Provisional, Early and Absentee Voting

There are a variety of options available to those who cannot vote under the normal circumstances. Early and absentee voting may be helpful for disabled voters, college students, members of the armed services, and others who are unable to go to the polls on election day. Early and absentee voting may increase voter participation, but may also pose dangers to the integrity of the vote, so voting by early or absentee ballot requires additional registration steps.

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For more information on early and absentee voting, please see the lesson plan entitled ‘Early and Absentee Voting in Illinois.’

Before reading the following section to students, ask them if there are any scenarios where people can vote but can’t make it to the polls.

Voters that are prevented from voting on election day due to problems with their voter registration may cast a provisional ballot. The voter will be asked to sign an affidavit stating that they are authorized to vote. The provisional ballot is then cast, but not counted until later, after a determination is made as to legitimacy.

Please note that voters are required to re-register to vote any time they move or change their names.

Activity 1: Preparing and Registering to Vote

Have students bring to class a form of identification, such as a school ID card or a pool pass. Students should also bring in a piece of mail with their name and address, such as a letter from a relative or perhaps a magazine to which they subscribe. Tell students that they are registering to vote for an election to occur in the following month.

Roles:

During this voter registration phase of the election, the teacher will be the registrar of voters, acting as a member of a labor group, civic group, corporation, or as staff of one of the following: County Clerk’s office, Board of Election Commissioner’s office, city or village offices, township offices, precinct committees, schools, public libraries, or military recruitment office. Students will role play citizens registering to vote.

Procedure:

Assure that students have their copies of the Illinois Voter Registration form. Instruct students to fill out the second half of the form, disregarding the obvious issue of age requirement and any other discrepancies which may arise.

Students register to vote by presenting their completed forms along with a valid form of identification and proof of their address to the teacher/registrar. Students should be given a stamp or sticker upon completion of their registration, which will take the place of the registration confirmation card which would normally arrive in the mail about two weeks after submission of voter registration materials.

Activity 2: Closing Discussion and Review

After students have successfully registered to vote, they should discuss what they have learned about Illinois election law and voting requirements. Use the following questions to lead discussion:

- What is needed to register to vote? What is noteworthy about these requirements?
- Is there anything about voter registration that you found surprising?

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- Are there things about voter registration that the general public does not know that you think people should know?
- Is there anything about voter registration that you think should be changed?
- How do you feel about same-day registration? What do you think about being required to show ID at the polls on election day in order to be permitted to vote?

Resource

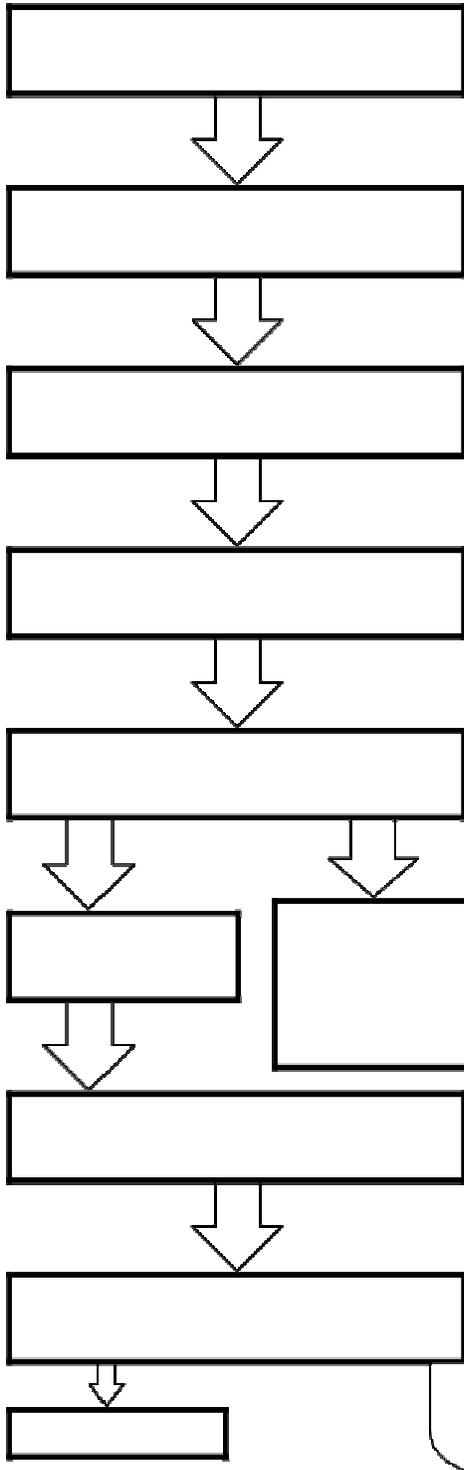
Illinois State Board of Elections: 'Registering to Vote' handout --

<http://www.elections.il.gov/downloads/electioninformation/pdf/registervote.pdf>

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HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW: FEDERAL LEVEL

FIRST HOUSE:



SECOND HOUSE:

