



**25th Annual
National Conference
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2009 Professional Practices Program

MyBallot

“Building a Ballot, Building a Future”

Orange County, California

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Orange County's MyBallot is a 3-step program designed by the Registrar of Voters to involve high school students in the voting process and help them discover the rewards of civic engagement. It was created out of a desire to bring the democratic process directly to students, who are often mischaracterized as apathetic and uninformed, and as a result less likely to participate in campaigns and elections.

During the first phase of MyBallot, students visit the Registrar of Voters' office where they are provided instruction on the history of voting in America, followed by a hands-on tutorial on the creation of official ballots with the chance to design their own ballot for an upcoming school election. During this phase lessons in graphic arts, publishing, and precise proofing are just a sampling of what students learn.

Next, students attend a special assembly at their school where they interact with local community leaders and elected officials who discuss with them the importance of voting and civic participation. In addition to numerous legislators, city council members, and school board officials, Secretary of State Debra Bowen has thrown her support behind the project, and was the featured speaker at the official MyBallot launch.

During the final stage of MyBallot the Registrar of Voters brings their Mobile Voting Unit directly to the participating school to conduct their Associated Student Body or Homecoming election, where students vote on the very ballot they designed. Students vote on the same electronic voting machines that are used in elections throughout the County, allowing them a sneak-peak at voting that most

first-time voters never experience. They are directly involved in the assembly, tally and certification of the votes cast. At the end of the program students are invited to join the office's Student Poll Worker Program where they are trained to work the polls on Election Day.

MyBallot has been a tremendous success. Prior to MyBallot, the Registrar of Voters recruited on average 300 students to work a given election. After the implementation of MyBallot that recruitment has nearly doubled, and the office saw an unprecedented 572 students for the 2008 Statewide Primary Election. After Segerstrom High School participated in MyBallot, their student poll worker population jumped from 24 to 92, with an additional 260 student expressing an interest in working future elections. Anaheim High School's MyBallot resulted in over 400 students signing up to work at the polls. The latest school to participate was Corona del Mar High School, whose student poll worker population went from zero to nearly 200 with MyBallot.

Word of the program's success has spread throughout the State, and a number of cities and school boards have requested MyBallot at high schools in their jurisdiction. MyBallot not only increases the number of student poll workers the Office is able to recruit, but also has an immeasurable long-term effect on the students who participate. Students are educated through hands-on experiences and imparted with the knowledge that their vote counts. By tackling the challenge of increasing youth involvement in elections, MyBallot has made a profound impact on the future of civic engagement in Orange County.

Friday, October 10, 2008

Anaheim High students use county ballots to vote for president

State officials visit Anaheim High School to recruit poll workers, encourage students to vote.

By ERIC CARPENTER

The Orange County Register

ANAHEIM – Anaheim High School students became the first to cast mock ballots on official voting machines brought to the campus by the Orange County Registrar of Voters today.

Senior Michelle Rodriguez, 17, found herself in the minority as a supporter of John McCain for president.

Like most of her classmates, many of whom were voting for Barack Obama, Rodriguez won't be old enough to cast an official ballot in next month's election. But that doesn't stop the passionate political debates around campus.

That's exactly the kind of enthusiasm election officials like to see among high school students who will soon be voting age.

They chose Anaheim High as the county's one school to participate in the MyBallot program, which encourages students to get active and consider being poll workers.

Earlier this week, the school got a visit from the state's top election official Debra Bowen, State Sen. Lou Correa, Registrar Neal Kelley and from Anaheim Mayor Curt Pringle to drive home that message.

Bowen stood on stage earlier this week, clapping to the Black Eyed Peas' "Let's Get It Started," trying to get students fired up.

"We really, really need high school students to be poll workers," said Bowen, who said the average age of a poll worker in California is now 77. "Right now, a lot of young people are more likely to vote for an American Idol than a president ... We want young people to get involved and stay involved."

Students welcomed the attention.

"It's really an honor to see people in those positions come to our school and let us know that our voice matters," said Ivan Recinos, 17, senior-class president.

Recinos said he's "frustrated" that he won't be old enough to vote next month.

"It's a big, historic election and one I've studied a lot about," he said. "I wish my vote could count."

Linh Pham, a senior who was born in Vietnam, said she can't wait to turn 18. She plans to become an American citizen and is eager to make her voice heard in an election.

In the meantime, she said, she's talking about the issues with other students and pushing them to get involved. On Friday, she wore a T-shirt with large block letters that read, "Vote Now."

Students lined up at the counseling center to get their chance to cast a vote on the county's eSlate machines. They entered a registration number which allowed them to cast a mock vote for president and an official vote for the school's homecoming court.

Several students said it was easier than they expected – a lot like working an iPod.

Results of the mock election weren't immediately available. But in individual classes, such as Michelle Majewski's Advanced Placement government class, students let their opinions be known.

Of the 12 students in her class, 10 said they would cast a ballot for Obama. Rodriguez, one of the two McCain supporters, said she grew up in a conservative family.

"McCain has many years in Congress and I think he has the plan to deal with the economy," she said. "A lot of people don't agree with me, but I stand my ground."

Rita Hernandez is among those who disagree. And she's one of the few who will be 18 on Election Day.

She said she favors Obama because he speaks more eloquently and has what it takes to lead the country out of hard economic times, much like Franklin Roosevelt following the Great Depression.

Hernandez said she's so excited about the opportunity to make a difference that she's already signed up as a poll worker.

Students need to be at least 16 years old, have a 2.5 GPA and permission from a teacher and a parent to work the polls.

"I actually get a say in something that matters," Hernandez said.

