



Every Vote Counts – and is Counted!

Poster Contest for Middle and High School Students

The League of Women Voters of Virginia invites posters from students who are Virginia residents to tell students and adults about the importance of voting in our democracy, the need to cast an informed vote, the security of their vote and the accuracy of vote counting.

A poster must cover some part of one of the four contest themes. A short description of each theme is part of this packet. We encourage you to find even more information to help with your poster.

1. Voting is Important in Our Democracy
2. Voting Requires Following Specific Laws
3. Voting and a Vote Should Depend on True Not False Information
4. Every Vote will be Handled Legally, Carefully and Counted Correctly

Poster Content Requirements: The poster must:

- a. Support one or more parts of just one contest theme.
- b. Make no mention of political candidates' names or political parties.
- c. Be OK for anyone to see: no bad/offensive words or pictures.
- d. Have no copyrighted words or images.

To Enter the Contest:

- a. Complete and submit the Contest Submission Form and attach to it two digital files or digital photos of your poster (either .jpeg or .pdf). One file should be Low Resolution (no larger than 1 MB) and the other should be High Resolution (no smaller than 5MB).
- b. Wording on a poster must be easy to read from at least 3 feet away when the digital file is blown up to poster size (22 x 28 inches).
- c. There is a limit of one poster for each contest theme.
- d. Do not put your name on the poster.

Submission Deadline: ONLY ON-LINE SUBMISSIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

- a. Your submission, including completion of the online submission form and attachment of your two digital poster files must be received by June 30, 2024.
- b. By submitting a poster the student agrees that it contains no copyrighted material and that the League of Women Voters can share winning posters with others.

Judging of Posters: Posters will be judged by the extent to which they meet these criteria: adherence to theme, content accuracy, originality, artistic expression and attractiveness.

Prizes: A first, second and third place prize will be given at both the Middle and High School levels:

First Place: \$750; Second Place: \$350; Third Place: \$250. Winners will be selected and contacted by September 1, 2024.

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Here are brief descriptions of each of the four themes in the poster contest. We encourage you to use this information and any other information you gather yourself to think about what you would like your poster to be. Please keep in mind that a poster must cover just one theme – and can be on just a part of that theme. Good Luck! We're excited to see your poster!

Poster Theme #1: *Voting is Important in Our Democracy*

Voting is a right for all citizens. In a democracy, “the people rule.” This means that every eligible voter has a voice and should use it. The right to vote was once denied to women, African Americans, Native Americans and Asian-Pacific Americans. That right has been won through hard-fought struggles in our history.

There are many ways to find out about both the importance of voting and the history of efforts to give the right to vote for those once prevented from voting. One good source is: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting_rights_in_the_United_States.

While the right to vote exists for all U.S. citizens eighteen years or older who are registered and meet legal requirements (see Theme #2), some people still try to deny that right by discouraging people from voting. This has been done by sending out false or confusing information about who can vote, how to vote and where or when to vote. It has also been done by trying to scare people so they do not vote.

Poster Theme #2: *Voting Requires Following Specific Laws*

To be eligible to vote in Virginia, you must register to do so. You must be a citizen, be at least 18 years old (17 year-olds who will be 18 by the general election may register and vote in primary but not special elections), and be a resident of Virginia. Sixteen-year-olds in Virginia may pre-register to vote and will receive a voting card when eligible to vote. To vote you will need valid identification (ID). Some examples are: a Virginia driver's license or state issued ID, Virginia school ID or U.S. passport.

You do not have to wait until Election Day to vote. Virginia has the longest early voting in the country – 45 days before general and primary elections. Voting by mail ballot is also available. Same-day registration and voting is available on Election Day if you miss regular registration deadlines but your vote will be a provisional ballot and will be counted once your registration is verified by your local Election Board.

Here are two excellent sources you can use: <https://www.elections.virginia.gov> and <https://www.vote411.org/virginia>.

Poster Theme #3: *Voting and a Vote Should Depend on True Not False Information*

Democracy depends on every individual having facts about issues and voting - and basing their decisions on these facts. Information about voting and political campaigns comes from many sources. Voters must know how to judge what they see, read and hear from TV and newspapers, campaign ads, public opinion polls, social media, and other Internet sources. Voters must know how to recognize and avoid efforts by some to distort the truth, misinform and/or appeal to emotions over the use of careful thinking.

Some important steps voters can take include:

- Slow Down and Think: Ask yourself where election information comes from and how objective the source is.
- Beware Before You Share: Don't immediately spread information; it may be wrong.
- Keep Your Cool: If it makes you mad or angry, step back and calm down.
- Don't agree with information just because your friends do.
- Find Out if It's Really True: What do other sources say about this information? Do they agree? Use "fact check" sources such as: www.politifact.com, www.factcheck.com.

Poster Theme #4: *Every Vote Will Be Handled Legally, Carefully and Counted Correctly*

The first, essential step in a fair, free election is that every eligible voter can cast a vote without being subject to harassment, prevented from voting or forced to cast a ballot in a certain way.

Once a ballot is completed and the vote cast by the voter it will be counted following timelines and using procedures administered by the State of Virginia under state laws. Every vote is handled only by trained poll workers and election officials who follow an extensive set of steps to assure each vote is handled securely.

In a presidential election year, votes for the President and Vice-President of the United States are for a slate of "Electors" for the Electoral College, as governed by the U.S. Constitution and Virginia state law. These votes are handled using the same procedures for all other votes. For more about the Electoral College see: <https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/about>

Some sources to learn about their right to vote under Virginia law and how votes are processed:

- Voter Rights (<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/voter-rights>) is a detailed list of the rights of state residents to register and vote.
- Vote Processing and Counting: A useful, short summary produced by Virginia Public Media and can be found at: <https://www.vpm.org/news/2023-11-06/vote-counting-virginia-elections-2023-general-assembly>
- The federal government's "Rumor vs. Reality" website includes information about how states prepare for and handle election security: <https://www.cisa.gov/topics/election-security/rumor-vs-reality>

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