The Center for Civic Justice at Stony Brook University

Summer 2021 International Student Voter Engagement Resource Guide

The Center for Civic Justice at Stony Brook University is fully committed to supporting our students’ right to vote domestically and abroad. This comprehensive resource guide serves to support international student voting at Stony Brook University.

For questions, reach out to us at civicjustice@stonybrook.edu, or call us at 631.632.6822
Introduction
The Center for Civic Justice (CCJ) at Stony Brook University is a nationally recognized organization for our high voter registration and turnout rates; and this now includes the engagement of our international student population as well. Individuals eligible to participate in voting overseas (outside of the United States), known as expatriate voters, often face barriers to accessing the information and resources necessary to stay civically engaged in their home elections. To facilitate your voter experience, the Center for Civic Justice is working to inform, prepare, engage, and register Stony Brook University’s international student population. Below are initiatives we are currently working on as well as steps you can take to participate in your country’s elections. We invite and encourage you to stay civically engaged and exercise your democratic right from wherever you are in the world.

Why International Voting?
Despite the large populations of international students, most of our voter engagement is centered around U.S. Elections. In addition, support services and resources are rarely offered for eligible international students who want to participate in elections of their country of citizenship. At Stony Brook University, approximately 13.5% students do not have access to their country’s voter information (and prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the percentage was even higher at approximately 17%). In colleges and universities around the U.S., there were 1,075,496 international students in the 2019-2020 Academic Year, with 267,712 new enrollments (this number has dramatically decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a 43% decrease in total international student enrollment and 16% decrease in returning international students). It is crucial to help them since like domestic students, international students attend classes, work, and live in the U.S. for most of the year, and like many students, they likely have the right to participate in their elections from wherever they are.

Why Should International Students Vote Overseas?
In most democratic countries, voting is a civil right and the very foundation of society. The process of voting allows citizens to make a direct impact on the future of their country. The Center for Civic Justice values every student's right to vote, regardless of nationality, and is committed to facilitating the right to vote overseas.

“Even though only a relatively small proportion of eligible electors abroad vote, the strength of the external voting provision lies in the facts that

1. it guarantees the political rights of the citizens and

2. that it includes those who, whatever their geographical location, decide to maintain a close bond with their country.”

- ACE Project: The Electoral Knowledge Network

Defining International Voting
While a majority of countries have some form of expatriate voting, there may be some terms or
conditions that confuse voters. The following is a list of clarifications to facilitate your voter experience overseas:

- **Expatriate**: An expatriate is a person who resides or is currently located outside of their native country. Therefore, an expatriate voter is a person who will be voting for their home elections overseas.

- **Rights of Expatriates to Vote in Home Countries**: Whether an expatriate is entitled to vote overseas depends on the legislation of their country of origin. Some countries grant unlimited voting rights, identical to domestic citizens, while other countries limit the types of expatriates that qualify to vote overseas, in addition to the types of elections they are eligible to vote in.

- **Disenfranchisement of Expatriates**: Some countries lack the legislation for or legally prohibit overseas voting, therefore taking away voter eligibility from expatriates. Only citizens within the country’s borders are allowed to vote.

- **Restrictions to Voter Qualifications**: A country may limit an overseas voter or bar them altogether if they do not meet the requirements of being a military personnel, which is an individual serving in the armed forces of a country whether it be a simple soldier or an officer of sorts. A country may additionally restrict overseas voting to only diplomatic staff, who are government employees dealing with foreign affairs between nations.

- **Restrictions to a Voter’s Place of Residence**: A unique requirement that some countries demand from expatriate voters is that they require a place of residence in said nation, as well as a time frame of when an overseas citizen must return home in order to be eligible to vote.

- **Proxy Voting**: Proxy voting is a form of voting (not allowed in all countries) where an expatriate voter can delegate their voting power to a chosen representative, more often than not a domestic voter. It is important to note that an expatriate voter should fully trust their chosen representative in fulfilling their interests. (Governments and/or electoral commissions provide expatriate voters with the necessary documents to ensure that their vote of choice will be accounted for.)

- **Compulsory Voting**: Some countries have laws which require eligible citizens to register and vote in elections, and failure to do so, without an acceptable excuse, may result in a penalty. (Most countries accept international status as an acceptable excuse.)

- **E-Voting**: E-voting is a form of voting done online on an official government or electoral commission website. According to a country’s laws, this may be done from wherever at the voter’s convenience or only at the embassy or consulate.

- **Referendum**: A referendum is a direct vote on a particular proposal from the electorate which can result in a new adopted policy or a specific law. Some countries allow expatriate voters to participate.

- **Electoral Commission**: A specific group of people (or commission of people) that are delegated to supervise an election.

- **Consulate**: A diplomatic mission, and where the consul carries out duties representing the foreign country they are from.

- **Elections in the European Union**: In some countries part of the European Union, an expatriate does not have the right to vote in their national elections but is able to vote in European Union elections (and vice versa).

**CCJ’s Efforts**

Our objective is to provide a comprehensive, accessible web platform for international students to access information about expatriate voting. Last semester’s student team created a draft version of the web platform, after researching electoral data
for over 200 countries/territories and reaching out to closest embassy/consulate contacts for verification. They also hosted four focus groups of international students from at least 20 countries, requesting their thoughts on expatriate voter participation and feedback about the draft version of the web platform.

Although the platform is not yet published, the website is expected to launch later this year. Below is a link to a sneak peak into the main elements of the website:

**Test:**
https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/civicjustice/test/test_isve.php

Here’s a breakdown of the website in progress:

To main tab breaks up electoral data by country/territory and includes (but is not limited to):

- Availability of expatriate voting
- Voting age
- Types of elections expatriates can participate in
- How and where to cast your vote
- Online voter registration
- How to check your polling place and your registration status
- Links to postal voting and e-voting
- Contacts to embassies/consulates
- Additional restrictions

We also are preparing other tabs for the website, which include:

- Definitions and values of expatriate voting
- Voter checklist (see **Voter Checklist**)
- Google calendar to upcoming elections (see **Elections Calendar**)
- External research and case studies
- Newsfeed

**What Can You Do?**
While CCJ is completing finishing touches on the web platform, international students can still exercise their right to vote overseas. The following websites were used for research, and most information has been verified by embassies/consulates. For further information, contact your country’s nearest embassy/consulate either by mail, phone, or in person.

- The ACE Project:

The ACE Project, launched in 1998 at the United Nations by the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, is one of the world’s largest electoral databases. It includes information for over 200 countries/territories, directed through their use of an interactive map highlighting one’s place of interest. By clicking on a highlighted country, users see the voting age, election methods, and limits to expatriate voting. Case studies are also provided for specific countries, in addition to election calendars, foreign observations of a given country’s elections, limitations to expatriate voting, and additional documents and electoral materials.

- The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA):
  https://www.idea.int/data-tools/world-view/52

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that keeps up to date information on electoral data from 216 countries/territories. The website provides a comprehensive guide to expatriate voter rights, including the availability of expatriate voter legislation, the types of elections expatriates can participate in, and voting methods abroad. IDEA also includes a news feed providing a wide range of topics such as voter rights, special circumstances that limit voter participation, and new legislation.

- The Global Elections Calendar:
  https://www.ndi.org/elections-calendar

The Global Elections Calendar, created by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), is a constantly updated calendar for future and past elections
worldwide. NDI is established in over a hundred countries and is not directly affiliated or involved in general elections. As stated by their mission statement to “support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government,” the calendar also provides general electoral information, such as the type of elections available to citizens, deadlines for voters, and any potential restrictions to voting.

**Voter Checklist**

While CCJ is completing finishing touches on the web platform, international students can use the following to prepare for their home elections.

**Before you vote**

- Are you eligible to vote overseas?

To check if you are eligible to vote overseas in your country, visit The ACE Project online or The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) online to find your country’s voting regulations and restrictions. Verify with your local embassy/consulate.

- How and where will I be voting?

According to the laws of your country, overseas voting can take place in different ways. The multiple ways of voting would be by mail, by proxy, at your embassy or consulate, and/or e-voting. To find your method of voting, visit The ACE Project online or The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) online. Verify with your local embassy/consulate.

- How can I find my polling place?

According to the rules of your country, overseas voting may take place at the embassy and/or consulate. Visit The ACE Project online or The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) online for information on your country’s voting methods, and contact your local embassy/consulate to verify your polling place if in person.

- When is my ballot due?

Ballot deadlines vary in different countries. You may have to vote early, send in your ballot within a given period of time, or visit your country’s embassy/consulate on the day of the election. Verify with your local embassy/consulate.

- What documents should I bring?

Voter identification varies in different countries. You may be allowed to use the same documents and ID as if you were voting at home or you may be required to obtain an international voter ID. Visit the website of your local embassy/consulate, and verify before continuing the voter process, as this is one of the most important steps in expatriate voting and may restrict you from doing so.

**Check your voter status**

- How can I see if I am registered to vote?

To check if you are registered to vote, visit the website of your local embassy/consulate or your country’s official government website. Verify with your local embassy/consulate before voting.

- Can I register to vote in my home country from the United States?

Different countries have different regulations. Some countries allow expatriates to register to vote online, by mail, or at the embassy. Visit the website of your local embassy/consulate or your country’s official government website. Verify with your local embassy/consulate before voting, and make sure to check for voter registration deadlines.

- I need a stamp to submit my completed voter registration request. How can I get a stamp?

The Center for Civic Justice will provide students with a free stamp for their completed voter registration request. In order to receive a free stamp, students must bring their completed ballot in a sealed envelope. The Center for Civic Justice is located in the Stony Brook Union, Suite L-20 on the lower level. Stamps are provided Monday through Friday from 10am to 4pm when offices are open.
Request an expatriate ballot

- What elections am I eligible to vote in?

According to the laws of your country, overseas voters may be eligible to vote in all elections, only certain types of elections, or none at all. To determine which elections you are able to participate in, visit The ACE Project online or The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) online.

- Where can I receive my ballot?

Different countries have different regulations. Some countries will allow expatriates to receive their ballot online, by mail, or only at the embassy. Visit the website of your local embassy/ consulate or your country's official government website. Verify with your local embassy/ consulate before voting, and make sure to check for deadlines requesting and submitting a ballot.

- I need a stamp to submit my completed ballot. How can I get a stamp?

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Research who and what is on my ballot

- Who and what is on my ballot?

Visit The Global Elections Calendar online to learn about your country's electoral system, electoral commission, parties, and candidates.

Additional Support

- Are there any other services to assist with voting related questions or concerns on or before my country’s election day?

Visit The ACE Project, The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), The Global Elections Calendar online. The website of your local embassy/ consulate, your country's official government website, or your country's electoral commission website, all which provide more specific support for citizens abroad.

To request additional information about upcoming elections in your country, please email us at civicjustice@stonybrook.edu or visit your country's embassy/ consulate website.

Elections Calendar

The Center for Civic Justice is committed to providing all the necessary electoral information relevant to all students from a given country, which includes election dates. We are constantly updating the following information.

Note: Election dates in a given country are only provided for the next upcoming election. Once that election has passed, we will update the calendar to include the next election.

The following is a list of elections from September to December of 2021. Attached is a link to the IFES Election Guide, which breaks down a country’s past election results, future elections, and electoral demographics.

https://www.electionguide.org/

NORWAY
- Monday, September 13
  - Norwegian Parliamentary election

RUSSIAN FEDERATION
- Sunday, September 19
  - Russian Federal Duma election

GERMANY
- Sunday, September 26
  - German Federal Diet election

CZECH REPUBLIC
- Friday, October 15
  - Czech Chamber of Deputies election

JAPAN
- Friday, October 22
● Japanese House of Representatives election

ICELAND
● Saturday, October 23
● Icelandic Parliamentary election

UZBEKISTAN
● Sunday, October 24
● Presidential election

ARGENTINA
● Sunday, October 31
● Argentinian Chamber of Deputies & Senate election

CHILE
● Sunday, November 21
● Presidential election
● Chilean Chamber of Deputies & Senate election

BULGARIA
● Tuesday, November 30
● Presidential election

HONDURAS
● Tuesday, November 30
● Presidential election
● Honduran National Assembly election

MOROCCO
● Tuesday, November 30
● Moroccan Chamber of Representatives election

Stay Engaged!

As we continue our research, finalize the platform, and work on new initiatives, the Center for Civic Justice will update all Stony Brook students every step of the way. Follow us on Instagram @civicjusticesbu to learn more about internship, community service, and engagement opportunities. For further information, email us at civicjustice@stonybrook.edu.

Happy (international) voting!