



For Immediate Release – September 22, 2015

National Voter Registration Day

Chicago Focuses on Youth Engagement

In celebration of National Voter Registration Day, Chicago Election Board officials announced initiatives that are aimed at engaging more young voters during the 2016 elections.

“With the Presidential Election Cycle only months away, we are targeting our younger citizens,” said Marisel A. Hernandez, Secretary-Commissioner of the Chicago Election Board. “We plan to give new meaning to ‘early and often.’ We know that if we get our citizens involved in elections early in their lives, they will return often to participate throughout their lives.”

Hernandez and Election Board Chairman Langdon D. Neal pointed to the following:

- **On-line voter registration:** The Election Board and other Chicago civic groups lobbied for this new system. In its first year, Chicago voters have accounted for nearly 31,000 or 45% of the 68,000 people who have used the system.
- **Election Day registration:** The Election Board and other Chicago civic groups lobbied for this change in the law. The Election Board will provide this service in each of the city’s 2,069 precinct polling places starting with the Primary Elections in March 2016.
- **m.chicagoelections.com:** This new mobile version of the Chicago Election Board web site focuses on the most critical services to help citizens use smart phones to access the on-line registration system and find their polling place if they need to use Election Day registration. The site also will let users apply online to Vote By Mail – the option formerly known as Absentee Voting.
- **Young Poll Workers:** For eight years, the Chicago Election Board has led the nation in assigning high-school students to serve as Election Judges. Through a partnership with Mikva Challenge, more than 1,700 students have worked in each citywide election. Last fall, the Board partnered with the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (CLCRUL) to recruit college and university students to serve. **A new CLCRUL study found that the Chicago Election Board now also leads the way in the use of college poll workers.**
- **Civics Education:** For many years, the Chicago Election Board and other civic groups advocated that one semester of civics instruction be a requirement to graduate from high school. Recently, Gov. Rauner signed new legislation to that effect.

“Historically, registration and turnout rates have been lowest among our youngest voters,” Neal said. “Part of that owes to how young people are more likely to move between elections. Part of that is a feeling that voting doesn’t matter. Our hope is that civics classes and making registration and voting so easy and accessible will help us turn the corner, making more young voters upstanders instead of bystanders.”

###