

Final Report



Illinois Student Government
Get-Out-The-Vote Task Force

November 9, 2018

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Charge and Scope of the Task Force**
- 3. Committee Actions**
- 4. Student Turnout and Engagement**
- 5. Recommendations**
- 6. Budget Spending**
- 7. Acknowledgements**

Introduction

The Get-Out-The-Vote Task Force was instituted by Executive Order 02.10 of the Illinois Student Government, approved by the Senate on August 29, 2018. A division of the Executive, the Task Force was responsible for broadly coordinating ISG's efforts to engage students in the electoral process, and encourage them to vote in the November 6, 2018 election. This represented the campus commitment to the Big Ten Voting Challenge, a friendly competition between peer institutions to turn out the most student voters.

Over the course of two months, the Task Force organized events, disseminated information, and facilitated voting. This was accomplished in coordination with University Administration, Registered Student Organizations, and outside groups. Throughout, the Task Force complied with ISG's viewpoint neutrality policy, engaging solely in non-partisan advocacy while open to representatives of all political affiliations. The work of this diverse coalition of partners contributed to the record-breaking turnout in campus precincts in Champaign County, and an anticipated increase in mail-in and absentee ballots.

Charge and Scope of the Task Force

Per EXO 02.10, the Get-Out-The-Vote Task Force was tasked with the following objectives -

1. Preparing and presenting proposals for coordinating GOTV volunteerism on election day.

This particular objective involved effective coordination with external groups and volunteering by ISG members. By task force discretion, this was extended to coordinating registration drives and volunteering on Early Voting days. It became apparent that there was a need to gradually build engagement to effectively turn out voters, and that Early Voting would be a critical component of the GOTV strategy to distribute load and present more options to students.

2. Proposing a budget for resources and events deemed necessary.

The Task Force presented a budget to the Senate requesting \$5,000 in allocations, to be distributed towards hosting events, publicizing voting methods and publicizing voter information. We requested flexibility in the precise use of these funds, noting the changing circumstances - this proved ultimately useful. We made this ask knowing well that we might spend much less; in the end, we spent about half of the allocated budget.

3. Finding creative ways to educate, inform, and mobilize students into voting either on campus or at home.

In recent years, both ISG and administrative entities have contended with how best to disseminate information and mobilize the student population. We used a combination of methods to promote our messages - social media organic reach, word of mouth, flyering, and targeted large ads. In this endeavour, we could reliably count on the additional reinforcement offered by other partisan and nonpartisan campaigns.

4. Inviting and Coordinating non-partisan student groups that can assist in volunteerism. Specific recommended groups include but are not limited to: Illinois PIRG, Common Cause Illinois, Young Invincibles, League of Women Voters, Science Policy Group at UIUC, Champaign County Voter Alliance.

We reached out to the groups mentioned and other partners while also engaging in conversations with partisan organizations to share broad information and resources.

We assisted Illinois PIRG with their canvassing efforts and their volunteers were an integral part of the coalition. We used the exceptional non-partisan resources offered by the Champaign County Voter Alliance, especially their candidate guide. We were also supported in advocacy by the League of Women Voters, and coordinated events with groups such as HeadCount.

5. Accomplishing the goals of the New Voters Project, The All in Campus Democracy Challenge, and the Big Ten Voting Challenge.

We actively sought to fulfill the premise of the All In Campus Democracy Challenge and the Big Ten Voting Challenge. Both of these campaigns emphasized a culture of civic engagement, above and beyond casting ballots - we anticipate that this will be the start of a long-term emphasis across the University ecosystem. Student Affairs at Illinois played a critical role in this particular objective, connecting us with national resources and providing support and direction.

Committee Actions

1. Illini Democrats and Republicans Debates

An event designed to inform the student body regarding issues prevalent to the upcoming midterms and engage with the school party representatives to further inform and motivate student voter turnout.

2. The Future is Voting

A Rock the Vote style event, working with HeadCounts and Canopy Club. Giving opportunity to get students engaged, educated, and excited about voting by bringing in musical artists along with local and state candidates to talk about their campaigns so as to inform students about who was running and their respective platforms.

3. Watch Parties-WILL 13th Congressional Candidate Debate

An event provided so students can watch the radio broadcasted debate when they might have otherwise been unaware or unable to view it. Giving the ability for students to learn about the positions of the candidates in the 13th congressional district so as to better inform students who opt to vote locally.

4. Pollapooza

A brand new event designed to bring out as many groups, RSOS, organizations, parties, candidates, or politically affiliated bodies so as to create an informative event to provide students info about issues in the upcoming election and providing many different perspectives and issues for students to have the opportunity to consider before voting. Also serving as an opportunity to advocate for early voting which has just opened at the Illini Union. Additionally musical performances and much food was ordered and scheduled for the event so as to incentive usually unmotivated students to turn out and engage with the information and groups, hopefully mobilizing them to turnout in the upcoming election. Due to adverse weather, this event was changed last minute, moving musical performances and food inside the Illini Union instead of on the Quad.

5. Dialogue Series

Opportunity for students to be informed about parties and issues including Illini Republicans, Illini Democrats, Illini Libertarians, and The UIUC Young

Democratic-Socialists. An open question event as opposed to a debate, providing the ability for students to engage directly with the issues and become informed and motivated to vote in the upcoming elections.

6. Party at the Polls

Particularly in the face of extremely long lines on 11/5 and 11/6, these events were designed to help motivate students to stay in line to vote where the wait was, at times, 2 hours. Pizza, candy, and other food items were either distributed in the lines or at a table set up in the Courtyard Cafe. Additionally, Party and the Poll style methods were implemented on the quad, distributing candy, flyers, and stickers on 10/31 to further encourage Early Voting.

Student Turnout and Engagement

The increased awareness and emphasis on early voting options helped direct more students to the Illini Union the week before Election Day. We noted a steady increase in the number of voters each day, peaking around midday when lines were occasionally 20-30 minutes long. By the weekend of November 3-4, over 3,500 voters had cast ballots at Illini Union Room 404, the only universal polling place on campus. In our canvassing, we also noted that an increasing number of students had either requested, or filed, mail-in ballots at an off-campus address.

This culminated in a massive turnout on Monday, November 5, the last day of early voting. Lines at the Union eventually snaked down the stairwell from the fourth floor to the first floor, with the Illini Union staff directing and moderating crowd flow. After extensive conversations with Union administration, organizers unaffiliated with ISG decided to distribute food, water and snacks to those waiting in line, largely to encourage them to stay in line. ISG members provided non-partisan information about voter registration and the ballot contents, referring occasionally to the County Clerk website and Champaign County Voting Alliance resources. Eventually, groups of community volunteers offered rides to other universal polling places in Champaign County to alleviate the excessive wait. Multiple individuals reported waiting for over an hour and a half to cast their vote, with some claiming they waited for over two hours. Some chose not to stand in the long line owing to other commitments - including Chancellor Robert Jones.

By the end of the day, after substantial asks from both University and external agents, the County Clerk agreed to operate a second room on the fourth floor of the Illini Union on Tuesday, November 6. On Election Day, the County Clerk operated Room 407 in addition starting at approximately 10AM. Even as the line moved faster on the whole, it eventually stretched to the first floor again. ISG volunteers provided voter information, and redirected some students to their precinct polling places to shorten the line. However, the line at precincts like the University YMCA soon rivalled that at the Union. We also heard reports of students assuming that all polling places were universal, and therefore being redirected to their precincts after waiting in line. We dispatched volunteers to campus locations including the SDRP and the YMCA, and checked in with other organizers to note where our resources would be most useful. Again, even more community volunteers offered rides to off-campus universal polling locations. On both days, a large proportion of students used same-day voter registration before casting their ballots.

While final numbers have not yet been published, unofficial precinct reports published by the Champaign County Clerk note a massive increase in student turnout. The spreadsheet below, provided by James Manrique of the Champaign County Voters Alliance, notes the percentage of registered voters by precinct who voted in every midterm election since 2002 at designated Campus precincts.

Champaign County Voter Data General Election Study 2018: Campus Precinct Data						
			2018	2014	2010	2006
Precinct Name	Type	Increase v. 2014 (BC)	Turnout %			
City of Champaign 02	"Official" Campus Precinct	7.1	74.91%	20.00%	18.26%	19.45%
City of Champaign 03	"Official" Campus Precinct	6.5	81.13%	16.43%	10.23%	12.71%
City of Champaign 04	"Official" Campus Precinct	4.9	64.99%	12.79%	13.53%	17.39%
City of Champaign 05	"Official" Campus Precinct	5	84.78%	16.61%	11.44%	18.50%
City of Champaign 07	"Official" Campus Precinct	8.7	73.81%	17.54%	12.06%	27.17%
City of Champaign 08	"Official" Campus Precinct	6.2	71.52%	16.09%	10.08%	13.97%
Cunningham 02	"Official" Campus Precinct	5.5	66.91%	19.59%	17.84%	43.07%
Cunningham 03	"Official" Campus Precinct	3.1	76.13%	15.65%	13.06%	30.03%
Cunningham 04	"Official" Campus Precinct	4.5	84.37%	19.25%	17.11%	26.21%
Cunningham 05	"Official" Campus Precinct	4.6	73.29%	16.34%	14.20%	17.24%

Source: Champaign County Voters Alliance's *Champaign County Voter Data General Election Study 2018*, Champaign County Clerk's Office

As seen here, the overall turnout on Campus is the highest its been in over a decade, and in terms of ballots cast, at least 3.1 times higher than in 2014. Of course, determining what exactly caused such a high turnout in this election cannot be determined here, with multiple variables at play. However, we find it safe to conclude that the combined efforts of the GOTV Task-Force, along with all the efforts throughout the community, played a considerable part in creating the successful campus voter turnout we see here.

Recommendations

1. Additional County resources and continuing University support

Access to reasonable voting options is critical to ensuring student turnout and engagement. To that end, the situation at campus voting precincts, particularly the Illini Union and the University YMCA, was categorically unacceptable. President Walter Lindwall and Vice President Alice Zheng summarized this sentiment in their statement.

“This constitutes an undue burden on students, many of whom had to skip classes and other obligations to vote as a result. This follows a historical trend of understaffing and underequipping student polling places in Champaign-Urbana. Equality under the law means equal access to the ballot box.”

The Illinois Student Government should shortly initiate conversations with the incoming Champaign County Clerk and the County Board to allocate better resources to campus voting precincts in order to bring waiting times more into line with those in the community - no more than 30 minutes as a standard. To aid this, ISG should advocate for more universal polling locations on campus, such as the Activities and Recreation Center. Weekend early voting hours should be increased, so students can vote when they have fewer classes and obligations. In partnership with the Illini Union, ISG should pursue prioritizing a prime location on the first floor or the basement for all voting, reserving it months in advance. Lastly, ISG must work aggressively to promote knowledge of precincts and precinct voting locations. Educating students on mail-in and absentee options will also help distribute load.

2. Building a culture of student civic engagement

Student political participation cannot, and should not, be centered solely around elections. Indeed, encouraging a broader understanding of civic responsibility is critical to the educational mission of the University of Illinois. Students should be encouraged to interact with new ideas, engage in productive conversation and debate, and to engage in organizing action on issues they feel passionately about.

The Illinois Student Government should act as a conduit between students and their elected officials, inviting them to campus and engaging with student audiences. ISG should also continue the Dialogue Series under the Committee on Community and Governmental Affairs, inviting diverse panels of student speakers from political organizations to engage in a conversation about salient national issues. In

partnership with Student Affairs, the Illinois Student Government should push for the adoption of effective methods used at peer universities, such as the voter engagement at orientation, like at Northwestern University, and the usage of technology tools like TurboVote, like at the University of Michigan. The Association of Big Ten Students would also provide a valuable framework for these conversations.

3. Developing best practices for future ISG efforts

In future missions of similar committees and task-forces, some key practices should be implemented so as to reap the best results possible, and engage as many students as we can. Ensuring that advertising and planning of events of all scales are implemented and distributed well in advance is just one such practice. Additionally, engaging with appropriate University academic departments, RSOS, groups, and community organizations so as to create a cohesive coordinate effort will substantially benefit all event endeavors.

In that same vein, ensuring that relationships with units such as the Illini Union are created and maintained, being aware of rules and timelines that the Union operates under beforehand. Utilize these connections within the Union and the University in event planning, so as to ensure that all plans can be implemented. Furthermore, establish that any and all events have backup plans for possible disruptions, particularly if an event is held outside.

Be aware of what works and what does not with incentives. We have found that food often serves as a large incentive for almost all students and community members. However, in instances that food is not able to be provided, ensure that other incentives and encouragements are provided, this helps to engage more students who may have otherwise disregarded the event, and the more students we help bring out, the more successful our endeavors will be.

Budget

As seen below, the GOTV Task-Force was given a budget of \$5,000 to use to accomplish the tasks and goals it was assigned in EXO.02.08.

Item	Price Per Item	# of Items	Allocation
Information, Publicity and Advertising	\$3000	n/a	\$3000
Events - Location, Logistics and Refreshments	\$1000	n/a	\$1000
Miscellaneous	\$1000	n/a	\$1000

Total: \$5000

The following are the items and areas where that budget was spent, and the total amount spent of the overall budget.

GOTV Task-Force Budget Spending		
Item	Date	Amount
Illini Republicans and Illini Democrats Debate-Food	October 2, 2018	\$100.00
I'm Voting Campaign Stickers	October 2, 2018	\$350.00
Pollapooza Courtyard Cafe Space Reservation	October 26, 2018	\$258.52
Pollapooza Staging Space Reservation	October 26, 2018	\$266.00
Pollapooza Labor Cost	October 26, 2018	\$160.06
Pollapooza Extra Tables	October 26, 2018	\$250.00
Pollapooza Table SetUp	October 26, 2018	\$85.06
Pollapooza Food Order-Einsteins	October 26, 2018	\$375.84
Pollapooza Food Order-Qdoba	October 26, 2018	\$165.00
Party at the Polls-Candy Order	October 31, 2018	\$58.96
Party at the Polls-Einsteins	November 5, 2018	\$250.00
Party at the Polls-Quad Shop	November 5, 2018	\$124.01
Party at the Polls-Einsteins	November 6, 2018	\$250.00
Dialogue Series Room Reservation	November 1, 2018	\$288.32
	Total:	\$3,508.66

Consequently, the GOTV Task-Force has a leftover budget of \$1,491.34.

Acknowledgements

Over the last 3 months, the GOTV Task-Force has created, implemented, and succeeded in our events, creating the largest student voter turnout in over a decade. It is safe to say that this could not have been done without the sheer mass of coordination with this government, this University, and this community. And as such, we have many people to thank for their time, efforts, and contributions.

First of all, we would like to thank any and all who came to the GOTV Task-Force meetings who helped to originally design and create the ideas and plans that we were lucky enough to have happen in the ways that they did.

Secondly, a huge thank you to all the help in our scheduling and ordering to our Event Coordinator Isabelle Ausdal, our Chief of Staff Susan Zhou, and our Vice President Alice Zheng. Without your help, these events wouldn't have happened at all, so thank you so much.

Thirdly, thank you to Illinois PIRG for being our partner in voter registration, engagement, education, and turnout efforts. Your coordination and determination to motivate as many students to vote as possible is inspiring and helped our efforts extraordinarily.

Fourth, thank you to all the help, advice, and work we received from the Office of the Dean of Students, particularly from Alex Suñé, Gina Lee-Olukoya, Rhonda Kissling, Mark Stinson, and Jim Hintz. ODOS provided us with so much support and resources that we could not have done without, so thank you all for all your help.

Additionally, thank you each and every community organization and individual who worked and coordinated with us, our efforts, and/or showed up to our combined events. They include the following; The University YMCA, I-CAUSE, Students for Justice in Palestine, Illini Public Affairs Committee, United Students Against Sweatshops, Illini Libertarians, UIUC Young Democratic Socialists, The Student Advocacy Coalition, Illini Dems, Students for Environmental Concern, Political Science Club, Amnesty International, Eco-Olympics, Campus and Community Services, Green Observer, Student Sustainability Committee, Illini Republicans, WILL, Champaign County Voters Alliance, The Londrigan, JB, Ingram, Ammons, and Kloeppel Campaigns, HeadCount, Hillel, and Illinois Public Media. You all made each and every event possible with all the time and effort you put in, so thank you.

We would also like to thank the Illini Union for all their help in the numerous events we held there, as well for working with us when we were trying to find different, more accessible, polling places throughout the building. Additionally, they provided extensive logistical support on November 5 and November 6 with the long lines at the polling place. They were continually amenable and flexible with the many details we have in our plans, and so we thank you for all your help that made these events happen.

And finally we would like to thank each and every student who registered, got engaged, got excited, and voted this election. The determination we saw in the lines, at the events, and throughout campus to be part of the political process and have their voices heard, was inspiring. And the sheer amount of turnout we saw is simply awesome, so we thank you for all your hardwork and determination, and for giving us all the hope that this student body can, and will, deliver the change we want to see.