

To: The University Senate
From: Purdue Student Government and Purdue Graduate Student Government
and University Resources Policy Committee
Subject: Resolution Calling for Expanded Voter Accessibility
Reference: PSG Resolution 24-01
Disposition: University Senate for Discussion and Adoption

Rationale: “By signing the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge pledge, Purdue committed to ensuring all eligible students would be able to register to vote and cast informed ballots in the 2020 general election and beyond, while also making a commitment to foster a campus culture that supports nonpartisan student civic learning, political engagement, and student voter participation”¹. This led to the creation of Purdue’s Civics Knowledge Test, a requirement to graduate

In September of 2021, the Purdue Student Government proposed to the Purdue University Senate that “recognizing Election Day as a non-instructional day in future academic calendars would be advantageous in order to encourage civic service among the entire Purdue community”²;

The Purdue University Senate determined that “while participation in primary and special elections are also an important means of civic engagement, the timing of these elections poses scheduling difficulties. Thus, these bodies would encourage instructional flexibility during these elections but do not recommend designation as non-instructional Days of Civic Service”². As reported by WLFI, “some faculty members argued the measure would be redundant due to early voting ability, others felt losing a day of instruction would be too high a cost”³;

¹ Service, P. N. (2020). *Daniels, Purdue work toward full student voter participation*. Purdue.edu. <https://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/archive/releases/2020/Q3/daniels,-purdue-work-toward-full-student-voter-participation.html>

² Kang, S. D. (2021, April 19). *Senate Document 20-57*. Purdue University. <https://www.purdue.edu/senate/documents/meetings/Senate-Documents-20-57.pdf>

³ Hulett, P. (2021, September 13). *Purdue Senate votes against election day as civic day of service*. WLFI News 18. https://www.wlfi.com/news/local/purdue-senate-votes-against-election-day-as-civic-day-of-service/article_6dca2543-5745-55a8-8170-56b349a13db5.html

In November of 2021, Purdue University was awarded as the best Big Ten ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge 2020 voter registration action plan winner. “The award for the Big Ten’s Best Action Plan, resulting in a 20-percentage point jump in student voter turnout to 67% in the 2020 election, was announced and presented to Purdue”⁴;

In the 2024 Primary Election, Tippecanoe County reported a turnout rate of 13.01% of registered voters⁵. When considering that 13% voter turnout rate, Indiana state representative Chris Campbell commented that, “6% of the votes from Tippecanoe County have come from the university polling location. That’s enough to sway an election,”⁶;

On September 25th, 2024, Purdue Student Senate unanimously passed Resolution 24-03 “Purdue Voting Accessibility” to encourage Purdue University and the Tippecanoe County Board of Elections to work together in creating a voting location for General Election Day and create more opportunities for on-campus early voting⁷. This bill expands upon the sentiment expressed in Resolution 24-03;

Regarding the lack of an on-campus voting day location at Purdue during the 2024 election cycle, the Exponent reported the following: “The qualifications that Purdue has reportedly had issues with in the past . . . are parking accessibility, Purdue Police ticketing poll workers and stopping the loading and unloading of polling machines, and ‘Purdue personnel’ removing candidate signs”⁸;

Purdue Student Government conducted a student survey (N=232), to which 88.7% (n=204) of Purdue students were not registered to vote in Tippecanoe County and 44.4% (n=102) had to travel to vote. Moreover, students overwhelmingly supported the creation of a voter absence policy (94.8%, n= 219) and/or a campus-wide Reading Day (89.2%, n=205). When

⁴ Service, P. N. (2020). *Purdue’s 2020 voter registration action plan selected best in the Big Ten for ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge*. Purdue.edu. <https://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/archive/releases/2021/Q4/purdue-2020-voter-registration-action-plan-selected-best-in-the-big-ten-for-all-in-campus-democracy-challenge.html>

⁵ Staff, C. (2024, May 8). *All signs show red*. Purdue Exponent. https://www.purdueexponent.org/city_state/article_3e1eab14-0d5e-11ef-b502-d3129e0ba13f.html

⁶ AND, R. (2024, September 19). *Purdue proposes campus voting locations after backlash*. Purdue Exponent. https://www.purdueexponent.org/campus/general_news/purdue-suggests-campus-voting-locations-after-backlash-corec-proposed-as-location/article_e8538ae2-75f9-11ef-9673-c79538c80719.html

⁷ Packard, J., & Rice, L. (n.d.). *PURDUE STUDENT SENATE “Purdue Voting Accessibility.”* Retrieved October 29, 2024, from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/628e8fb3741fca1eabd8179e/t/6719b0a77e61fa7fc99754ca/1729736871441/Resolution+24-03+Voting+Accessibility.pdf>

⁸ AND, C. (2024, September 12). *Early Voting at Mackey Arena in 2020*. Purdue Exponent. https://www.purdueexponent.org/city_state/politics/purdue-voting-vote-president-campus-machine-mackey/article_abfe3c62-707d-11ef-9889-1faa7d63d5f4.html

speaking with students, multiple expressed concerns with varying departmental policies and lack of flexibility from professors as it pertains to Election Day. However, after speaking with Purdue's Office of Dean of Students (ODOS), staff expressed concerns about the organizational capacity to manage a high influx of Voter Absence requests;

Public Institutions in Kentucky, Montana, South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware are mandated by state law to cancel classes on Election Day, enabling students to practice their civic duty. Similarly, though not required by state law, the University of Cincinnati has proactively canceled academic classes on Election Day. Purdue University should follow this lead as Purdue students should be enabled to practice their civic duty with the same accessibility as their peers in these states;

With Purdue's lack of an election-day policy, professors are the ultimate decision-makers in determining their respective absence policies, potentially varying across faculty and academic colleges. This poses an issue concerning flexibility for Indiana voters at the University. Additionally, this raises concerns for students who are engaging in civic processes by volunteering to work at polling locations across Indiana and neighboring states;

The Purdue Student Government acknowledges and appreciates Purdue University Resources and Policy Committee's (URPC) stance that "the university will work with the county board of elections to provide facilities support for voter registration and both early and election day voting in national elections held every other year. On voting day, no quizzes or exams will be held, so if a student misses class due to long lines, they will only need notes for the day. If the university is unable to secure an adequate number of sites to provide all students, faculty and staff the opportunity to exercise their civic rights and vote in national elections on campus, then classes will be cancelled so they can go off campus to vote"⁹;

If the Purdue University Senate plans to proceed with such a route, then the Purdue Student Government is supportive. However, if no voting location were to be offered on Purdue's campus in future election cycles, students may not have the flexibility or accessibility to practice their civil duty. While Purdue University has a robust Jury Duty Policy, another vital civil duty, the University lacks a comprehensive Voter Accessibility Policy allowing for the excusal of students from in-person academic activities to vote in primary and general elections;

⁹ The University Resources and Policy Committee (URPC). (2024, October 21). *Senate Document 24-03*. Purdue University. <https://www.purdue.edu/senate/documents/meetings/Senate-Documents-24-03-Resolution-for-Voting-Facilities-and-Time-on-Campus.pdf>

Election Day has amplified student awareness of the need for accessible voting options on campus and robust policies to enable students to exercise their civic duty. To leverage this heightened engagement and election-day momentum, this bill merits emergency consideration by the Purdue Student Government and Purdue Graduate Student Senate.

Proposal:

That Purdue University's Office for the Vice Provost of Student Life distributes polling location information and poll worker volunteer opportunities to all Purdue students at least two weeks prior to primary and general elections.

That Purdue University's University Senate designates primary and general election days (Tuesday after the first Monday in November on even-numbered years) as "Election Day – Class in Session" on the academic calendar starting in 2026-2027.

That Election Day – Class in Session be added to the academic calendar to provide greater awareness for professors when scheduling exams, quizzes, and mandatory in-class exercises which may impede a student's ability to travel to vote.

That University Senate amend the Academic Regulations under Scheduling of Examinations, Evening Examinations subsection, Point G by adding "or the day of Election Day, defined as the Tuesday after the first Monday in November on even-numbered years" to the end of the sentence.

Current: Examinations will be held on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, with the exception that no examinations will be held on the day preceding an official University holiday.

Amended: Examinations will be held on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, with the exception that no examinations will be held on the day preceding an official University holiday or the day of Election Day, defined as the Tuesday after the first Monday in November on even-numbered years.

That this policy shall be continually evaluated by University Senate, the Vice Provost for Student Life, students, professors, faculty, and other appropriate entities should changes need to be made.

Committee Votes:**For (13):**

Daniel Cziczo
Benjamin Dunford
Thomas Hacker
Kyle Haynes
Lori Hoagland (chair)
Kee-Hong Kim
Richard Johnson-
Sheehan
Paul Mort
Tae Hong Park
Brian Richert
Changyou Wang
Donald Woodyard
Howie Zelaznik

Against (0):**Abstained (0):****Absent (1):**

Amy Atkinson

Advisors (0):**Advisors (0):****Advisors (2):**

Carl Krieger
Kim Pearson

Advisors (0):**Students (2):**

Ayooluwa Ojo
Shayne Ryan

Students (0):**Students (0):****Students (1):**

Elisabeth
Mauermann