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Department of State Launches 2026-27 Governor's Civic Engagement Award Program on National Voter Registration Day

Harrisburg, PA – The Department of State launched the 2026-27 [Governor's Civic Engagement Award \(GCEA\) program](#) for Pennsylvania high school students today on [National Voter Registration Day](#).

“What better way to celebrate National Voter Registration Day than by highlighting a program that encourages young people to learn about and engage their peers in our electoral system,” **Secretary of the Commonwealth Al Schmidt** said. “Since the GCEA program started nine years ago, high school students across Pennsylvania have helped about 33,000 of their eligible classmates to register to vote.”

The Departments of State and Education began the GCEA program in the 2017-18 school year. Pennsylvania high schools that register at least 85% of their eligible students receive Gold Awards, and schools that register at least 65% of their eligible students receive Silver Awards. In addition, students who participate in a voter registration drive at their school and serve as poll workers during the November general election earn Student Poll Worker Awards.

“The best education prepares learners for success in civic life. The more we teach the next generation about the power they can exercise at the ballot box, the more we can expect a bright future for everyone in Pennsylvania. I encourage school leaders across the Commonwealth to make opportunities available for their eligible students to register to vote,” said **Secretary of Education Dr. Carrie Rowe**.

To be eligible to register to vote, students must be U.S. citizens, residents of the voting district for at least 30 days, and at least 18 years old (or 17 years old and will be 18 on or before the next election). To serve as poll workers, students must be at least 17 years old and obtain permission from their principal and parent/guardian.

To launch this school year's GCEA program, the Department of State held a virtual presentation for county election officials and high school faculty and students. **GCEA faculty advisor Lynda Hauman** and **2025-26 student poll worker winner Liam Hynes** from Delta High School in Centre County spoke about best practices for organizing voter registration events. Delta High School is a repeat Gold Level Award winner and, last school year, was one of only two high schools in the history of the GCEA program to register 100% of their eligible students.

"As a social studies teacher, participating in the program aligns with my ultimate goal as an educator - to prepare students for their future lives," **Hauman** said. "By ensuring that eligible students are registered to vote, they face one less barrier to participation in our democracy as adults. With motivated teachers, departments, and student leaders, I hope other schools can find success through this program."

Hynes graduated from Delta High School in June and attends Penn State University, where he plans to pursue a double major in philosophy and secondary education social studies.

"An opportunity to be a student poll worker felt like the moment to start engaging in this big picture system, and the experience was incredibly formative," **Hynes** said. "I saw people of different backgrounds and beliefs coalesce into something bigger than themselves. The combined force of excellent poll workers and voters made sure that everyone had the equal chance to take part in our beautiful tradition of representation."

For more information about the GCEA program, visit the Department's [website](#).

Sec. Schmidt discussed the GCEA program and National Voter Registration Day in today's media briefing.

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