



Strengthening School Board Elections

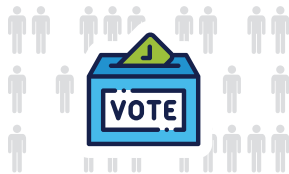
Local school board elections can have wide-reaching and lasting implications for taxpayers and students alike.

More than 90,000 school board members govern and oversee America's public school system, including:



The problem?

A lack of transparency or accountability in school board elections



- School board elections have **much lower voter turnout** than other elections.
- Most of America's school board elections are nonpartisan, yet **nonpartisan elected officials are often more polarized** than ones who declare their party affiliation.*

VOTER TURNOUT PLUMMETED DURING RECENT OFF-CYCLE LOCAL ELECTIONS

Average county-level turnout during recent elections in the 15 largest school districts, by state

State	School Board Elections	2020 Presidential Election
Idaho	26%	88%
Illinois	15%	73%
Iowa	22%	77%
Kansas	21%	72%
Missouri	14%	77%
Montana	35%	81%

State	School Board Elections	2020 Presidential Election
Ohio	24%	73%
Oregon	25%	82%
Pennsylvania	32%	76%
Wisconsin	24%	89%
AVERAGE	23%	77%

Source: State and local election offices

*The tables above show county-level turnout in the most recent off-cycle school board elections as compared to turnout in the same counties during the 2020 presidential election.

*Pennsylvania and Louisiana and some North Carolina school board elections are partisan

Thankfully, there are effective solutions for lawmakers to boost turnout and increase engagement in school board elections.

Lawmakers should:



Require school board candidates to **declare their party affiliation**.



Impose term limits for school board members.



Align school board election cycles with major statewide elections.



Eliminate staggered terms for school board members.

By enacting these reforms, state lawmakers can...

- Restore parents' confidence in the public school system
- Increase community participation in school board meetings
- Help save taxpayer funds
- Ensure school board members don't break the law
- Help voters be more informed about candidates running for school board

It's popular:

Voters support these reforms.



Sources: National School Boards Association, National Center for Education Statistics