

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 1514

To amend title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to require institutions of higher education that participate in programs under such title to distribute voter registration forms to students enrolled at the institution, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 16, 2019

Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. BROWN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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## A BILL

To amend title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to require institutions of higher education that participate in programs under such title to distribute voter registration forms to students enrolled at the institution, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Help Students Vote  
5 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

2 It is the sense of Congress that political participation  
3 and civic engagement are fundamental to the health of  
4 American democracy, and that all citizens should be en-  
5 couraged to vote, regardless of party affiliation.

6 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) According to the National Center for Edu-  
9 cation Statistics, undergraduate enrollment is pro-  
10 jected to increase from 17,000,000 to 19,300,000  
11 students between 2015 and 2026, and nearly  
12 3,000,000 undergraduate and graduate students  
13 today enroll in exclusively online education.

14 (2) According to the Pew Research Center, peo-  
15 ple between the ages of 18 and 35 comprise roughly  
16 31 percent of the overall electorate.

17 (3) In 2014, young adults (ages 18 to 29) made  
18 up about 21 percent of the voting eligible population  
19 but only 17 percent of this populations cast a ballot  
20 in the 2014 election.

21 (4) Just 42 percent of 18–24-year-olds said  
22 they were registered to vote in 2014, which was the  
23 lowest rate in 40 years.

24 (5) In 2008, 21 percent of young adults (ages  
25 18 to 29) said they weren't registered to vote be-

1       cause they missed the registration deadline. Six per-  
 2       cent said they didn't know where or how to register.

3   **SEC. 4. DISTRIBUTING VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS.**

4       Section 487(a)(23) of the Higher Education Act of  
 5   1965 (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)(23)) is amended to read as fol-  
 6   lows:

7               “(23)(A) The institution will make a good faith  
 8       effort to distribute voter registration forms to each  
 9       student, and to make such forms widely available to  
 10      students at the institution. In this paragraph, the  
 11      term ‘student’ means an individual who is enrolled  
 12      at the institution as an undergraduate or graduate  
 13      student on a full-time or part-time basis, including  
 14      an individual who is solely enrolled in an online  
 15      course.

16              “(B) The institution shall be considered in com-  
 17      pliance with the good faith requirements of subpara-  
 18      graph (A)—

19                      “(i) if, with respect to each student en-  
 20              rolled and physically in attendance at the insti-  
 21              tution, the institution—

22                              “(I)(aa) distributes voter registration  
 23                      forms not less than twice in a calendar  
 24                      year, and distributes such voter registra-  
 25                      tion forms not less than 30 days in ad-

1 vance of the deadline for registering to  
2 vote within the State for the next sched-  
3 uled Federal or State primary election and  
4 not less than 30 days in advance of the  
5 deadline for registering to vote within the  
6 State for the next scheduled Federal or  
7 State general election; or

8 “(bb) electronically transmits a mes-  
9 sage containing a voter registration form  
10 (or the message contains an Internet ad-  
11 dress where such a form can be  
12 downloaded) acceptable for use in the  
13 State in which the institution is located to  
14 each such student, and such electronic  
15 message is devoted exclusively to voter reg-  
16 istration, not less than twice in a calendar  
17 year, and transmits such a message not  
18 less than 30 days in advance of the dead-  
19 line for registering to vote within the State  
20 for the next scheduled Federal or State  
21 primary election and not less than 30 days  
22 in advance of the deadline for registering  
23 to vote within the State for the next sched-  
24 uled Federal or State general election;

1 “(II) makes available information re-  
2 garding State registration deadlines, resi-  
3 dency requirements, voter identification,  
4 and absentee voting, as applicable; and

5 “(III) ensures that an appropriate  
6 staff person or office has been designated  
7 as a ‘Campus Vote Coordinator’ to ensure  
8 compliance in accordance with this clause  
9 at the institution and who shall—

10 “(aa) be publicly designated as  
11 the ‘Campus Vote Coordinator’, along  
12 with the Coordinator’s contact infor-  
13 mation, on the institution’s website;  
14 and

15 “(bb) upon request, provide to  
16 students residency requirements for  
17 voting, including the ability of out of  
18 State students to vote in the State in  
19 which they are enrolled and physically  
20 in attendance, in accordance with ap-  
21 plicable State law; and

22 “(ii) if, with respect to each student en-  
23 rolled exclusively in distance education or cor-  
24 respondence programs and who is not physically

1           in attendance at the institution, the institu-  
2           tion—

3                   “(I) transmits a message of referral  
4                   to a centralized voter registration website  
5                   or platform that provides applicable voter  
6                   registration forms and information to po-  
7                   tential voters in all States, provided that  
8                   such platform is hosted by a government  
9                   affiliated website; and

10                   “(II) transmits such message not less  
11                   than twice in a calendar year.

12                   “(C) The institution may also include voter reg-  
13                   istration forms within materials or information dis-  
14                   tributed to newly enrolled, or returning, students at  
15                   the beginning of a term, consistent with the require-  
16                   ments of subparagraph (B).”.

17 **SEC. 5. GRANTS AUTHORIZED.**

18           The Secretary of Education shall award grants to in-  
19           stitutions of higher education that greatly exceed the min-  
20           imum requirements under section 487(a)(23) of the High-  
21           er Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)(23)), in-  
22           cluding as demonstrated by—

23                   (1) sponsoring large on-campus voter mobiliza-  
24                   tion efforts;

1           (2) engaging the surrounding community in  
2           nonpartisan voter registration and get out the vote  
3           efforts;

4           (3) creating a website with centralized informa-  
5           tion about voter registration and election dates;

6           (4) inviting candidates to speak on campus; and

7           (5) offering rides to the polls to increase voter  
8           education, registration, and mobilization.

9   **SEC. 6. ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS.**

10   (a) CORRECTIVE ACTION.—

11           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Education  
12           shall submit a written warning to an institution of  
13           higher education that violates a requirement of sec-  
14           tion 487(a)(23) of the Higher Education Act of  
15           1965 (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)(23)) that includes a direc-  
16           tion to correct the violation not later than 60 days  
17           after the date the warning was received.

18           (2) ACTIONS AUTHORIZED.—If an institution of  
19           higher education does not correct a violation in ac-  
20           cordance with a direction from the Secretary of Edu-  
21           cation as described in paragraph (1), the Attorney  
22           General of the United States may authorize the ap-  
23           propriate State law enforcement officer or the chief  
24           elections official of a State to commence a civil ac-  
25           tion in accordance with subsection (b).

1 (b) CIVIL ACTIONS.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—A State law enforcement of-  
 3 ficer or chief elections official of a State may com-  
 4 mence a civil action in accordance with subsection  
 5 (a) in the appropriate district court of the United  
 6 States against the institution that engages in a pat-  
 7 tern or practice of violating section 487(a)(23) of  
 8 the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.  
 9 1094(a)(23)).

10 (2) RELIEF.—In a civil action commenced  
 11 under paragraph (1), the court may—

12 (A) grant any appropriate equitable or de-  
 13 claratory relief with respect to the violation of  
 14 section 487(a)(23) of the Higher Education Act  
 15 of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)(23));

16 (B) award all other appropriate relief to  
 17 any person or group aggrieved by the violation;

18 (C) to vindicate the public interest, assess  
 19 a civil penalty in an amount not exceeding the  
 20 amount listed in section 487(c)(3)(B) of the  
 21 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.  
 22 1094(c)(3)(B)) for any violation; and

23 (D) take into account the number of days  
 24 in which the infraction occurred.



(3) INTERVENTION.—Upon timely application, a person aggrieved by a violation of section 487(a)(23) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)(23)) with respect to which a civil action is commenced under this subsection may intervene in such action, and may obtain such appropriate relief as the person could obtain in a civil action under subsection (c) with respect to such violation, along with costs and reasonable attorneys fees.

(c) PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Any person or group aggrieved by a violation of section 487(a)(23) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)(23)) may commence a civil action in any appropriate district court of the United States against the institution that engages in such violation.

(2) RELIEF.—In a civil action commenced under paragraph (1), the court may—

(A) grant any appropriate equitable or declaratory relief with respect to the violation of section 487(a)(23) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)(23));

(B) award any other appropriate relief to the person or group aggrieved by the violation,

1 including the costs of the action, such as rea-  
 2 sonable attorneys fees;

3 (C) to vindicate the public interest, assess  
 4 a civil penalty in an amount not exceeding the  
 5 amount listed in section 487(c)(3)(B) of the  
 6 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.  
 7 1094(c)(3)(B)) for any violation; and

8 (D) take into account the number of days  
 9 in which the infraction occurred.

10 (3) REPORTING.—Not later than 60 days be-  
 11 fore the date a person or group aggrieved by a viola-  
 12 tion of section 487(a)(23) of the Higher Education  
 13 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)(23)) commences a  
 14 civil action under paragraph (1), the person or  
 15 group shall report the violation to the Department  
 16 of Education, a Federal or State law enforcement  
 17 agency, and the institution purported to have com-  
 18 mitted the violation via an affidavit detailing the al-  
 19 leged violation.

20 (d) PRESERVATION OF REMEDIES.—Nothing in this  
 21 section shall be construed to preclude or limit any remedy  
 22 otherwise available under other law, including consequen-  
 23 tial and punitive damages.

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