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# **U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**

## **2024 Award Application**

Distinguished Voter Education and  
Communications Initiatives

March 2024



## OFFICE OF THE IOWA SECRETARY OF STATE

U.S. Election Assistance Commission  
1335 East West Highway, Suite 4300  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear EAC Awards Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to share our submission for the 2023 Clearinghouse Awards. We are presenting Iowa's Carrie Chapman Catt Award for the category of Distinguished Voter Education and Communications Initiatives. We are pleased to participate in this new category of awards, as voter education initiatives make up a core pillar of our efforts at the Iowa Secretary of State's Office.

We are particularly passionate about educating the next generation of voters. When I meet with Iowa's youth, I always emphasize with them that they are not just leaders of tomorrow but already today's leaders in their own rights. Through various programs and outreach efforts with our younger generation, I am constantly impressed by the passion, dedication, and enthusiasm for civic engagement from students across the state of Iowa.

Voter participation and registration are two of my top goals as Iowa's Chief Elections Officer. The Carrie Chapman Catt Award program allows us to reach students as soon as they are eligible to vote, encourage voter registration, and instill enthusiasm in participating in Iowa's elections process early – as soon as they are eligible. Iowa law allows 17-year-olds to register to vote. The students who are not yet eligible to register receive education and resources so that they are prepared to register once they are eligible.

This effort is one of several initiatives we leverage to engage Iowa students, and it has been a crucial step in encouraging voter participation and increasing voter registration numbers across the board. This is a beneficial program that can be implemented in other states with similar results. In fact, we have already discussed this program with other states that hope to implement similar initiatives.

Youth voter turnout is historically lower than other age groups, but in recent years we have seen youth engagement on the rise. We expect to continue this trajectory and look forward to playing a role in giving Iowa's younger generation the tools they need to make their voices heard. Thank you for considering the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program and for recognizing its impact on voter registration and participation rates.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Paul D. Pate'.

Paul D. Pate, CERA  
Iowa Secretary of State

## **Executive Summary**

Registering eligible Iowans to vote is one of the top priorities for the Office of the Iowa Secretary of State. Voter education and registration drives are critical components to increasing and supporting voter registration and participation rates.

In fact, research suggests that more than one in four unregistered voters reported being unregistered because they didn't know how to register to vote, kept forgetting, were too busy, or recently moved. Among young (18-29) unregistered voters, this number was even higher: 42% reported not knowing how to register to vote or being too busy to do so. (Source: Knight Foundation)

Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate established the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program in 2019 to ensure Iowa high school students received voter education and understood the steps to become a registered voter.

Educating students as soon as they are eligible to register to vote and even before can increase voter registration, participation and civic engagement in the long term. Studies show that younger Americans who report being encouraged to vote or taught how to register to vote in high school are more likely to vote and be more invested in elections. (Source: Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement)

The research shows that it is impactful to promote civic engagement at a young age. Through various projects, the Iowa Secretary of State places a heavy emphasis on reaching students of all ages. Programs like the Iowa Youth Straw Poll provide students from kindergarten through twelfth grade the opportunity to get firsthand experience voting in an election. Students vote for their preferred candidate for offices like President, Congress, and Governor during election years. The Secretary of State's Office also champions Elections 101, an optional curriculum created by Iowa teachers that teaches Iowa high school students more about the elections process.

The Carrie Chapman Catt Award program directly engages students in the voter registration process – and actually gives students the opportunity to register to vote if they are eligible. High schools in all 99 of Iowa's counties are eligible to sign up and participate in the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program. Upon enrolling, teachers and administrators receive an "action kit" outlining the steps and best practices for hosting voter registration drives in their schools, FAQs, and information on how to register, compiled by the Iowa Secretary of State's Elections Division. Additionally, supplemental materials are provided, including flyers, stickers, and pledge cards.



In signing up to participate in the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program, high schools may receive awards at several tiers:

- Schools who register at least 50% of their eligible senior class are recognized with a certificate.
- Schools who register at least 70% of their eligible senior class are recognized with a large banner to hang in their school gymnasium.
- Schools who register at least 90% of their eligible senior class are recognized with a trophy, as well as a special award presentation with Secretary Pate. Local elected officials are also invited to attend, including county auditors and state legislators.
- New in 2023-2024, schools with more than 300 students in their senior class can earn the Capitol Award, which recognizes schools who register at least 100 of their eligible seniors. Schools who earn the Capitol award receive the Capitol Award plaque and a special presentation with Secretary Pate and local elected officials.

The Award is named after famed Iowan, Carrie Chapman Catt, a suffragist who dedicated much of her life to securing women's right to vote.

### **BACKGROUND**

***Carrie Chapman Catt Award program helps schools meet Iowa Code requirements to host voter registration drives and provides critical voter education for Iowa students***

Iowa State law allows 17-year-olds to register to vote in Iowa. They can also participate in primary elections if they will be 18 years old in time for the general election.

***IOWA CODE STIPULATES THAT IOWA HIGH SCHOOLS MUST HOST AT LEAST TWO VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES PER SCHOOL YEAR. THE CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT AWARD PROGRAM PROVIDES TEACHERS WITH THE TOOLS NEEDED TO HOST A SUCCESSFUL VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE, AT NO COST TO THE SCHOOL.***

More than half of U.S. states require high schools to host voter registration drives for eligible students.

### **ACTION STEPS**

***Consistent outreach to teachers build relationships between teachers, students, and the Office of the Iowa Secretary of State***

Since its launch in 2019, nearly 200 schools have participated in the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program in almost all of Iowa's 99 counties. Promoting the program with the public and the media is one key tactic to encouraging schools to participate. Once the sign-up process is open to Iowa schools, media in every corner of the state is notified of the program and the process for schools to sign up and receive recognition. The office distributes a number of press releases and media pitches notifying the press and public of how many schools participated in the program, the estimated number of students registered to vote, and eventually, the schools who have been recognized as award winners.





There are extensive, ongoing channels of communication between Iowa high schools and the Iowa Secretary of State's office. All Iowa schools receive an initial invitation via email to participate in the program, which details deadlines, steps to participate, and the materials received upon signing up for the program.

After a school expresses interest in participating, schools receive an "Action Kit" designed by the program lead and printed professionally at a local printer. The action kit includes everything a teacher or administrator may need to host a successful voter registration drive. This includes:

- Best practices and steps to hosting a voter registration drive
- Voter registration and voting FAQs
- Pens and stickers to distribute at voter registration drives
- Flyers and examples of promotions
- Pledge to vote cards, which allow students to fill out a card and state they are or will be registered to vote by the time the application deadline approaches
- Information to participate in other youth initiatives from the Iowa Secretary of State, such as the Iowa Youth Straw Poll and Elections 101

One critical component to the success of the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program is that the outreach and communication between the Secretary of State's office and participating schools is continual and goes beyond the sharing of initial information. Secretary of State staff members email and proactively reach out to participating schools on a regular basis, announcing schools that have won the award and the number of schools who are participating, sharing best practices, and answering any questions, usually at least once a month. The program lead builds relationships and rapport with participating teachers that extends from year to year.

Once a school completes a voter registration drive, schools mail all pledge cards back to the Secretary of State's office and voter registration forms to their local county auditor's office. A verification process follows to ensure official voter registration lists match pledge cards. Once all voters are verified, schools are notified of their status and whether they have met the threshold to receive the Carrie Chapman Catt Award.

Schools who receive the award are recognized with a special presentation. Schools have the choice to participate in an award presentation at the Iowa State Capitol, invite Secretary Pate to their school for an in-person presentation, or receive a personalized video presentation from Secretary Pate. Media is invited to local presentations and those held at the Iowa State Capitol. Press releases are distributed, and social media is shared from both the schools and the official Secretary of State channels.

Students who participate in the program get the special opportunity to hear from Secretary Pate on the importance of registering to vote and participating in the civic process. Secretary Pate encourages students to continue their voter education efforts, and to participate in Iowa elections as voters when they are eligible.



## **RESULTS**

### ***28,000 17-year-olds have registered to vote in the years since the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program was announced***

In its inaugural year, 18 high schools earned the Carrie Chapman Catt Award and 88 high schools signed up across 54 counties. Another 19 schools were recognized for registering 70% and 50% of their eligible seniors, for a total of 37 schools receiving recognition. The Secretary of State's office reached thousands of students with voter registration education, and more than 3,800 students were registered to vote as part of the initiative.

These numbers have grown since the launch in the 2019-2020 school year. During the 2022-2023 school year, nearly double the number of schools were recognized for registering more than 90% of their students with 31 schools being presented the Carrie Chapman Catt Award. An additional 27 schools were recognized for registering 50-70% of their eligible students, for a total of 58 schools receiving recognition of some sort. A total of 101 schools signed up to participate in the program across 66 counties.

During the most recent school year in 2022-2023, 89 out of Iowa's 99 counties had schools participating in the initiative.

The 2023-2024 Carrie Chapman Catt Award program deadline is on March 22, 2024. Thus far, 27 high schools have met the threshold to be awarded the Carrie Chapman Catt Award, having registered more than 90% of their eligible seniors, and one high school has earned the Capitol Award in its inaugural year. A record-breaking number of schools are expected to participate in the program, with 125 schools currently signed up to participate.

Since the first year of the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program, 50 different schools have been recognized for registering 90% or more of eligible students. Many of these schools have met the 90% threshold multiple times, with several schools having received the award all five years.

### **SINCE THE LAUNCH OF THE CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT AWARD PROGRAM, 60 TOTAL SCHOOLS HAVE WON THE CATT AWARD, AND 5 SCHOOLS HAVE RECEIVED THE CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT AWARD TROPHY ALL FIVE YEARS.**

While the number of schools and students reached continue to grow, most important is the number of young Iowans who register to vote. While the number of registered eligible 17-year-olds increased slightly each year, this most recent year saw a significant increase in young Iowans registered to vote.

Secretary Pate put out the call for schools to sign up to participate in the 2023-2024 Carrie Chapman Catt Award program in August 2023. At the time of the announcement, more than 3,500 17-year-olds were registered to vote in Iowa.

### **THERE ARE CURRENTLY MORE THAN 4,500 ELIGIBLE 17-YEAR-OLDS REGISTERED TO VOTE IN IOWA, WHICH IS 1,000 MORE THAN JUST SIX MONTHS PREVIOUSLY.**



### ***Promotion of Carrie Chapman Catt Award program reaches hundreds of thousands of Iowans in all corners of the state***

A central component of the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program is communicating the program and its importance with not just high school students, teachers, and administrators, but the general public. As such, employing a robust marketing and media campaign has been critical to the program's success over the last four years.

**Social media:** The Office of the Iowa Secretary of State consistently shares updates with tens of thousands of followers on the Iowa Secretary of State's social media channels. This includes calls to action for schools to sign up, highlighting schools who have signed up to participate, and recognizing the schools that have earned the Carrie Chapman Catt Award. Posts include graphics and "tag" and "mention" the schools with a social media presence. Many schools interact with and share the original posts to their pages to promote their participation in the program. This approach allows the office to reach thousands of new Iowans who may not be aware of the program or services provided by the Iowa Secretary of State's office.

When schools are recognized, photos and videos of presentations, including reels, stories, and grid posts, are shared on all of the Secretary of State's official social channels. This includes photos of the students who have participated in the program with their trophies, certificates, and banners, and these posts are also shared to the schools' social media channels. Further, a majority of schools proactively share these updates on their channels with their own photos and include updates to parents in newsletters and school bulletins.

**Press:** Upon the announcement of the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program's opening each year, a press release is distributed to all media across the state. Because the Iowa Secretary of State's Office has built robust relationships with local media in all 99 counties, many publications directly publish the press release.

In-depth, feature stories are emphasized when each school is recognized. When award presentations take place, whether at the State Capitol or at the school, local media is informed and invited to attend the presentations, when the school is open to media attendance. Typically, at least one local outlet attends these presentations. It can be difficult to garner media attendance in smaller, rural counties, when there are limited staff and sometimes only one newspaper in the entire county. These stories are human-centered and give the office an opportunity to share positive, human-interest stories with Iowans.

In larger communities, there is often television media attendance at these events and resulting features on prime-time news hours. Following each presentation, a press release with photos, videos, and voice-recorded sound bites are distributed to media who are unable to attend, which results in additional coverage.



*January-December 2022 Carrie Chapman Catt Media Coverage Estimate:*

- Coverage in 60+ print publications, with an estimated reach of 446,000+
- Coverage in 40+ online/digital publications, with an estimated reach of 4 million
- Coverage in 4 out of 7 TV media markets
- Coverage in 38 out of 99 counties

*January-December 2023 Carrie Chapman Catt Media Coverage Estimate:*

- Coverage in 100+ print publications in 47 counties, with an estimated reach of 830,000+
- Coverage in 40+ online/digital publications, with an estimated reach of 6.5 million
- Coverage in 4 out of 7 TV media markets
- Coverage in 58 out of 99 counties

The addition of the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program has allowed the Office of the Iowa Secretary of State to reach thousands of new Iowans, register thousands of young Iowans to vote, and build important relationships with Iowa schools.

***Civic Days of Action provide opportunity to tie in program, get media coverage***

Each year in the spring, Secretary Pate works alongside Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds to proclaim a statewide High School Voter Registration Day, and the two encourage Iowa schools to host voter registration drives. The governor signs an official proclamation, and when possible, schools and students who participate in the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program are invited to attend the proclamation signing.

In conjunction with statewide High School Voter Registration Day, Secretary Pate invites media for a “media day.” During media day, several hours are blocked off and media are invited to come to the office or conduct video or phone interviews with Secretary Pate to discuss high school voter registration.

**2024 High School Voter Registration Day Media Coverage Estimate:**

- Coverage in 30+ print publications in 23 counties, with an estimated reach of 133,000+
- Coverage in approximately 15 online/digital publications, with an estimated reach of 153,000+
- Coverage in 4 out of 7 TV media markets, covering 68 Iowa counties
- Coverage in 81 out of 99 counties

Media days and school voter registration drives are also held in conjunction with National Voter Registration Day in September.



## **CONCLUSION**

The Carrie Chapman Catt Award program has demonstrated remarkable success in empowering Iowa's youth to actively participate in the democratic process. Through extensive outreach, comprehensive educational initiatives, and targeted media campaigns, the Office of the Iowa Secretary of State, led by Secretary Paul Pate, has surpassed its goals in promoting voter education and registration among high school students and reaching thousands of new Iowans.

The significant increase of over 1,000 registered 17-year-old voters within six months underscores the program's effectiveness in fostering civic engagement and inspiring young Iowans to take an active role in shaping their community through elections. As we commend the accomplishments of participating schools and students, it is evident that the Carrie Chapman Catt Award program is playing a pivotal role in cultivating a future generation of informed and engaged voters in Iowa.





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## **SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS**

### **Media Coverage 2024**

[Scholastic Spotlight: Johnston High School voters | who13.com](#)

[Secretary of State Paul Pate presents Carrie Chapman Catt award to Waterloo Christian School | Waterloo | kwwl.com](#)

[News/Talk 1540 KXEL Newsletter for Thu. Feb. 15, 2024 | News/Talk 1540 KXEL](#)

[Iowa high school voter registration day - ABC 6 News - kaaltv.com](#)

### **Media Coverage 2023**

#### **Print Coverage**

[Dubuque Senior awarded for voter registration efforts | Tri-state News | telegraphherald.com](#)

[Rivermont Collegiate wins voter registration award for fourth straight year \(qctimes.com\)](#)

[FHS receives Carrie Chapman Catt Award | Local News | ottumwacourier.com](#)

[Secretary Pate encourages high schools to register students to vote, compete for Catt Award | Lifestyle | swiowanewssource.com](#)

[Dubuque Senior awarded for voter registration efforts | Tri-state News | telegraphherald.com](#)

#### **Radio Coverage**

[KMAland schools qualify for Catt awards | News | kmland.com\]](#)

[Area Schools Qualify for the Carrie Chapman Catt Award – Mix 107.3 KIOW](#)

#### **Television Coverage**

[Scholastic Spotlight: Johnston High School voters | who13.com](#)

[Iowa schools qualify for Carrie Chapman Catt Award | OurQuadCities](#)

[19 Iowa schools win award for registering 90% of eligible students to vote \(kcrq.com\)](#)

[Area schools receive honor from Secretary of State \(siouxlandproud.com\)](#)

## **Media Coverage 2022**

### Television Coverage

[School district awarded for exceptionally high voter registration | weareiowa.com](#)

[Secretary Pate encourages high schools to register students to vote \(kwqc.com\)](#)

[Two eastern Iowa high schools win voting registration award from the state | KGAN \(cbs2iowa.com\)](#)

[Siouxland school recognized for getting students registered to vote \(siouxlandproud.com\)](#)

[Record high 31 Iowa schools win Carrie Chapman Catt Award for registering 90% of eligible students to vote \(kcrq.com\)](#)

### Print Coverage

[Central receives Carrie Chapman Catt Award for voter registration drive | Courier Press \(gutenbergpress.com\)](#)

[31 Iowa schools win Carrie Chapman Catt Award for registering 90% of students to vote | Waverly Newspapers | communitynewspapergroup.com](#)

[Norwalk High School receives Carrie Chapman Catt award | Warren County News | indianola-ia.com](#)

### Radio Coverage

[High schools across the state recognized for voter registration efforts - KGLO News](#)

[Secretary Pate Launches High School Voter Registration Drive on National Voter Registration Day – Mix 107.3 KLOW](#)

[Rivermont Wins Voter Registration Award | WVIK, Quad Cities NPR](#)

PLEDGE CARD



# I PLEDGE TO VOTE

PLEASE PRINT USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS  
*\*Required Fields*



\*Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

\*Home Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

\*School \_\_\_\_\_

\*Graduation Year \_\_\_\_\_

\*Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
MM/DD/YYYY

Mobile Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

- I'm registering to vote today!
- I'm already a registered voter!
- I will register to vote when eligible!



INFORMATION WILL ONLY BE USED FOR VOTER AND POLL WORKER EDUCATION PURPOSES AND WILL NOT BE SOLD.

POST CARD



**YOUR VOTE. YOUR VOICE.**

The Iowa Secretary of State office offers voting initiative programs, including [Elections 101](#), [Carrie Chapman Catt Award](#), [Iowa Youth Straw Poll](#), and [Voter Ready](#). These programs help ensure that Iowans across the state are voter ready. Scan the QR code below to learn more about each program offered.



**Iowa Secretary of State**  
321 East 12th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319

FLYERS PROVIDED TO SCHOOLS

[See more at this link.](#)

## VOTER REGISTRATION FORM SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

### VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS

- After you collect the forms, review them to ensure the mandatory fields are completed. Refer to the common errors section in the Action Kit Guide Booklet for examples.
- Count the Total number of completed voter registration forms and write this number:
- Without Bending, place the completed voter registration forms in the envelope you received with your Action Kit. Order a prepaid shipping label by emailing [Gracie.Redefesos.iowa.gov](mailto:Gracie.Redefesos.iowa.gov) which will be delivered via email. Print the label and tape to the envelope.
- Complete this following information:
  - High School Name:
  - High School Address:
  - Principal Name:
  - Contact Name:
  - Contact Phone Number:
- Place this check list in with the voter registration forms and seal.
- You are ready to mail your Voter Registration Forms! Take them to your school's office and ask the office administrator to include the envelope with the outgoing mail.

### MAIL TO COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

CONGRATULATIONS ON COMPLETING A VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE!





# REGISTER TO VOTE TODAY

**REGISTER 90%  
OF ELIGIBLE SENIORS TO VOTE  
AND WIN THIS TROPHY FOR  
YOUR SCHOOL!**

**SCAN THE QR CODE  
TO LEARN MORE!**



# MAKE YOUR

# VOICE HEARD.

# REGISTER TO VOTE TODAY



GET 90% OF ELIGIBLE SENIORS IN YOUR SCHOOL TO REGISTER & RECEIVE THE CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT AWARD



ACTION KIT

*[Entire action kit available at this link.](#)*



**IOWA SECRETARY OF STATE**

**ACTION KIT**

**#BEAVOTER**







# GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL HIGH SCHOOL VOTER REGISTRATION: STEP #1: DESIGN THE DRIVE

Like most of us, you're probably wanting to get the best results for the time and energy you invest. Typically, holding a tabling drive at lunch doesn't lead to many voter registrations. You may try one of these options to reach a more captive audience, (classrooms, clubs, assemblies, etc). Be sure to advise your principal that you will be conducting Voter Registration Drives at your school!

## Classroom Presentation Drive

Schedule and lead classroom presentations where eligible seniors will register to vote and understand the difference that their vote can make.

### Tips:

- Think about a class that all seniors must take, like social studies or homeroom.
- Work with teachers to organize classroom presentations during a specific week to reach as many students as possible.

## Library Drive

Set up a Voter Registration center in your library or multipurpose room and ask teachers to bring their classes at assigned times throughout the day.

### Tips:

- Set up several stations for students to fill out their paperwork to keep things flowing smoothly.
- Recruit volunteers to help remind students to fill out their forms correctly.

2

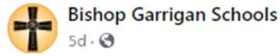
## Online Voter Registration

Plan and promote a digital Voter Drive, where students are given time in class to register from their laptop or mobile device on the same day. Online voter registration is typically fast and reduces errors.

### Tips:

- Try the online tool yourself before you lead others through it.
- Be sure to walk your audience through the form.
- Guide your students to [VoterReady.Iowa.Gov/RegisterToVote/](https://VoterReady.Iowa.Gov/RegisterToVote/) to get started!

## SOCIAL MEDIA



Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate visited with our senior class yesterday to present the Carrie Chapman Catt Award. BGHS earned this award by having at least 90% of eligible students registered to vote. Thank you to teacher Brian Patterson for his continued work and for helping Garrigan earn this award 4 years in row. #BEAVOTER



**Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate**  
Published by Meltwater Engage · February 16 at 4:11 PM · 🌐

Shout out to the following schools for signing up to participate in the Carrie Chapman Catt Award. This award recognizes high schools who register 90% or more of their eligible students to vote. #BeAVoter

- Hudson High School
- Decorah High School Activities
- Dowling Catholic High School
- Choice Charter School Iowa
- Orient-Macksburg Community School
- Grundy Center High School
- Ballard High School
- Cedar Valley High School
- Highland High School



See insights and ads Boost post

👍❤️ 19 3 comments 11 shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment 🔗 Share





Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate

Published by Meltwater Engage · February 20 at 5:25 PM ·

It was an honor to present [Waterloo Christian School](#) with the Carrie Chapman Catt Award yesterday! They registered 100% of their eligible seniors to vote. Thank you to [KWWL](#) for joining us yesterday and helping to recognize the students at Waterloo Christian.

[http://www.kwwl.com/.../video\\_abe7e2f9-13de-5070-8c58...](http://www.kwwl.com/.../video_abe7e2f9-13de-5070-8c58...)



KWWL.COM

Secretary of State Paul Pate presents Carrie Chapman Catt award to Waterloo Christian School



Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate

Published by Meltwater Engage · 4h ·

It is rewarding every time I am able to visit and present the Carrie Chapman Catt Award to the hardworking students of Iowa.

These young voters are the key to a growing democracy in the state of Iowa - and there's still time to join!

