1 August 2018
League Leaders Update
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Illinois Voter Guide Toolkit

Illinois Voter Guide Toolkit
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Introduction

LWVIL is pleased to announce the launch of Illinois Voter Guide (www.IllinoisVoterGuide.org), an online resource to help voters learn about candidates and referendums on their ballot. LWVIL contracted with BallotReady for this service so each prospective voter in Illinois can easily review their particular ballot by entering their street address. This user-friendly tool also offers local Leagues an opportunity to engage with registered voters and show how easy it is to make a plan and vote.

GOAL: Illinois Voter Guide makes it easy for local Leagues to promote voting and civic engagement in communities. We want it as user-friendly as possible for voters to find information. Overall, we hope that Illinois Voter Guide will not only reach members, but the wider and underserved communities that LWVIL wants to empower through their vote.

HOW: With information gathered from candidate websites, endorsing organizations, newspapers, and local League questionnaires, Illinois Voter Guide is a great comprehensive and nonpartisan tool to encourage people to become informed and vote.

WHAT: Illinois Voter Guide hosts ballot information for every level of government on a website. It allows local Leagues the option to submit information from questionnaires and interviews with local candidates for local elections. Such information can complement the comprehensive data

about candidates and issues compiled by BallotReady staff and volunteers. The website also generates automatic reminders before elections to voters when they sign up online.

CHECK IT OUT! Our guide can be found at illinoisvoterguide.org and via the LWVIL website if you click on the logo graphic.

As of today, we do not have a sample ballot on our site, but we encourage League leaders to view a similar online guide (https://lwvofvt.civicengine.com) that BallotReady and League of Women Voters of Vermont produced for Vermont's upcoming primary in August. It's a good representation of what our guide will look like when ballots are ready and it launches. *There is a sample ballot feature in the works, we will update you when it's available*.

For the general election, real ballots are expected to be available by October 1st, just in time for early voting. That is when local Leagues will be able to do more of a deep dive into the specifics of the Illinois Voter Guide.

We need *you* to learn about this important resource, which is why we are providing League leaders background so you can help disseminate the information to your local Leagues and so they can help spread the word in your communities.

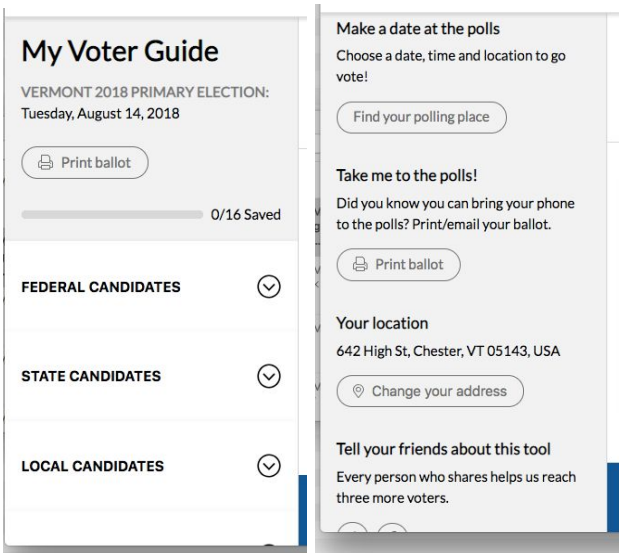
WHY THE SWITCH: LWVUS has historically used "Vote411" for various voter guide services. However, after much research, LWVIL chose to launch Illinois Voter Guide because it will require less work from local Leagues to interview local candidates. We want to offer Illinois residents comprehensive information about their national, state and local candidates. Beyond significant cost savings of more than 50 percent by not using Vote411, key differences between the two programs include:

Illinois Voter Guide	**Vote411**
Information gathered via newspapers and candidate websites is entered into the voter guide by BallotReady staff and volunteers. Local League members have the ability to add specific local election details and information from sources that might not be available online.	Candidate information gathered from questionnaires by local League members.
"Take Me To The Polls" function automatically informs those subscribed to its voter guide about when their election is coming up and where to vote. Allows user to print their ballot or save it.	Includes a vote planning function, but it does not save this information. Requires user to print out their plan to retain information.
Straightforward website and scroll-down navigation.	Navigation can be clunky/unclear. For example, entering your information into the bar on the left simply takes you to another information entry port.

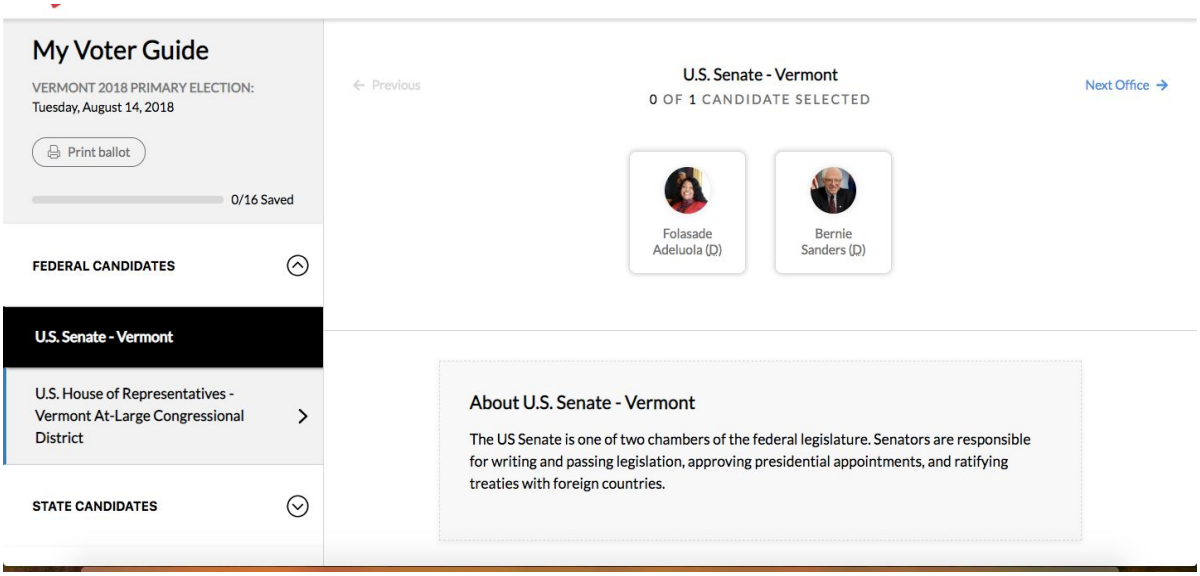
The Features of the Illinois Voter Guide

The Illinois Voter Guide functions to make it easy for local Leagues to find information about national, state, and local candidates and elections. While BallotReady does most of the legwork, local Leagues still have the ability to create and add information they receive from local questionnaires and interviews if they choose.

- Features
    - Candidate bios, positions and stances, endorsements, news
    - "Issues" filtering tool displays where the candidate stands and what they have said on certain issues
        - Voters can review which candidates support their values
    - "Make a Date to Go to the Polls" / "Take Me to the Polls"
        - Allows voters to create an action plan for when and where they are supposed to vote
        - Reminder emails, links to local websites for polling locations
    - Increased accessibility
        - Can use on a smartphone in the voting booth *if allowed by local election authority*
            - Allows voters to access candidate information when they are confronted with the ballot
        - Easily accessed on a desktop and printed
    - "Add to My Ballot" tool allows voters to create a personalized ballot to save/print
    - Ability for customization based on user preferences (such as uploading League questionnaires with candidate information)
        - To inquire about questionnaires, please contact Voter Service Chairs, Jan Dorner (jdorner@lwvil.org) or Sharon Alter (salter@lwvil.org).
- Sample Walk Through
    - To give a preview of how to use the Illinois Voter Guide, we have included screenshots of an active voter guide from the League of Women Voters of Vermont. Vermont's primary is August 14, and we encourage reviewing this site while it is active.
    - *How to Use*
        - Go to https://lwvofvt.civicengine.com, and type in a Vermont address and party affiliation and to view a ballot . (When using the Illinois Voter Guide, you'll use your address.) This exercise will allow access to the various features of the guide.
        - Features of the guide are on the left sidebar, which hosts tabs for the various positions on the ballot plus buttons to find your polling place, print or email your ballot. You can also share the guide on social media. For example:



- <u>Positions and Candidate Information:</u>
  - Click on the position tabs and the specific candidate to view biographical information and their stances on issues. Click on the candidate and scroll down the page to read more information. For example:



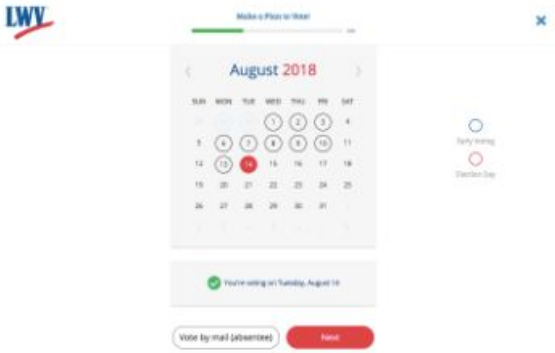
  - For each candidate, there is an “Add to My Ballot” button by the name and photo of the candidate. Voters can choose to save the candidate to their ballot.

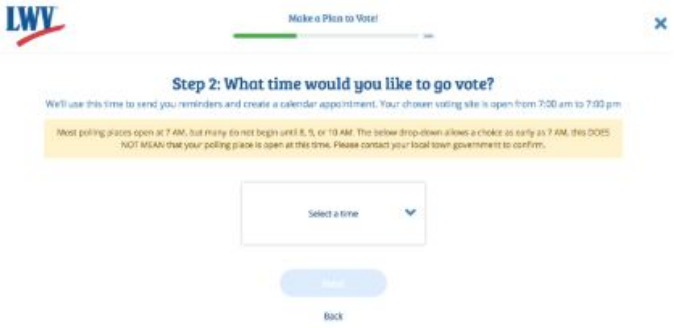
BERNIE SANDERS (D)
U.S. Senate - Vermont

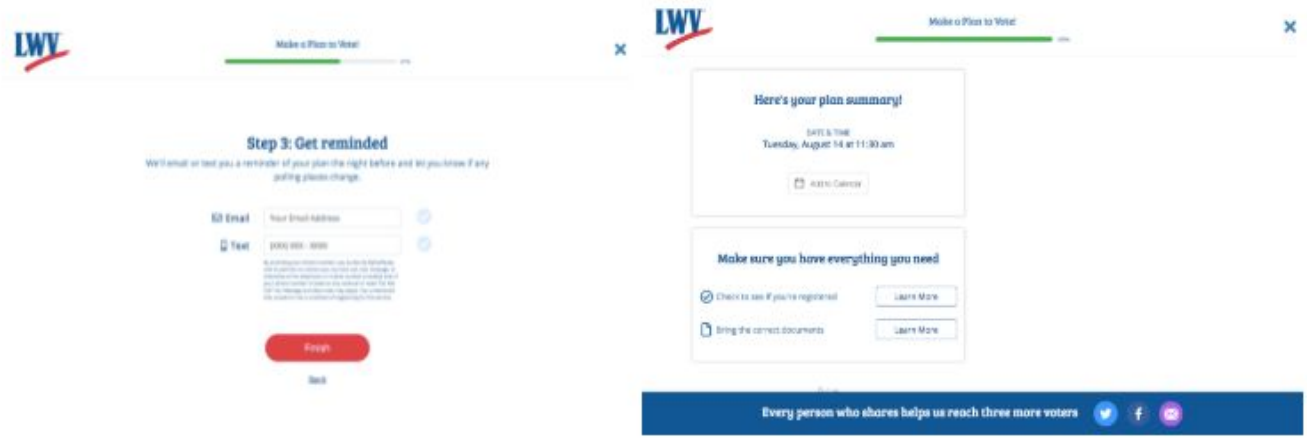
ADD TO MY BALLOT

ABOUT BERNIE

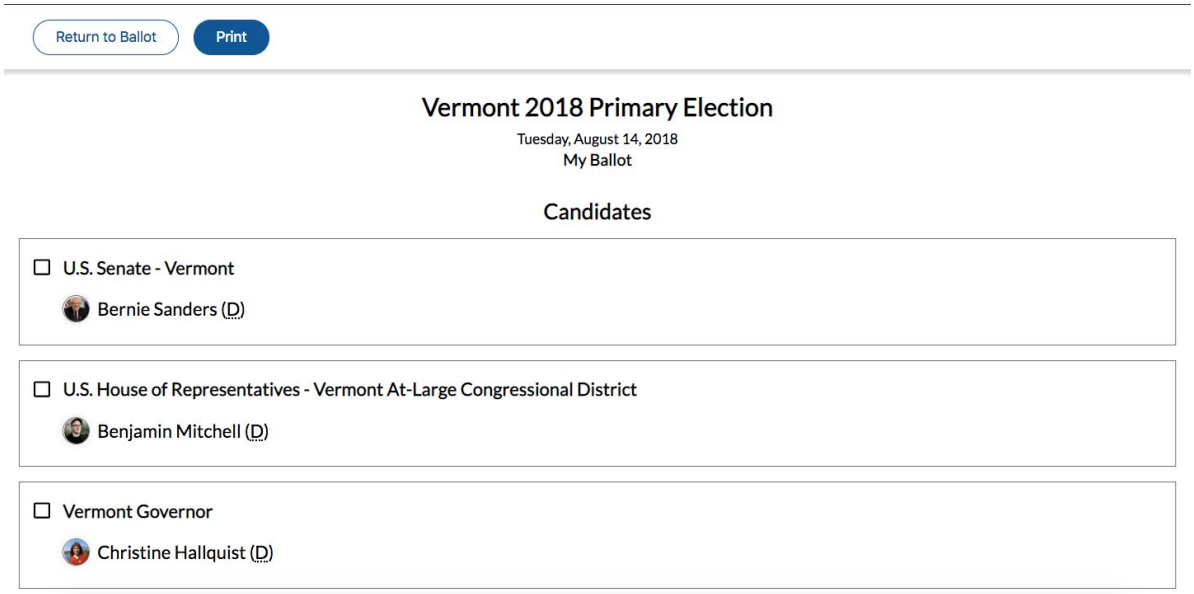
- <u>"Make a Date at the Polls"</u>
    - When the Illinois Voter Guide is fully active, voters can make a plan on where and when to vote through the "Make a Date at the Polls" button. This will allow voters to enroll in automatic alerts and reminders when elections occur in their area. It's a simple process: plan the date to vote, locate a polling place based on the date, and provide contact information to receive the reminder email and/or text. For example:







- "Take Me to the Polls"
  - This tab allows voters to print their ballot. Each candidate added using the feature "Add to My Ballot," will appear. For example:



Promoting the Guide

Your local League can use this platform to engage local members and communities, and empower voters across the state of Illinois to make empowered and engaged voting decisions.

- Incorporating the Illinois Voter Guide Into Your Website
    - Make sure to use http://www.IllinoisVoterGuide.org when linking on your social media accounts and website
    - Try to embed the link within text. Ex: Discover more about candidate resources, such as a candidate guide and information about judicial vacancies. Your local league website should already feature information on voting and elections. Links to Illinois Voter Guide can be included in this section, too. Make sure that the link is easy to find, at the top of the page, and prominent.
- Emailing to Mailing Lists
    - Please announce the Illinois Voter Guide in your e-alerts, newsletters and emails. Make sure to include a link to the Illinois Voter Guide website in electronic communications.
- Social Media Engagement
    - Tie the importance of voting with the Illinois Voter Guide
    - **Facebook posts:**
        - Advertise the voter guide on your local League's Facebook page near local, state, and national elections. Be sure to attach the link in each post. You can also use the logo that we've attached in this toolkit.
        - Example Posts:
            - Did you know that on average, only 1 in 5 voters participate in off-year local elections? This means that your vote in X upcoming election can have a huge impact. To make the most of that impact, check out IllinoisVoterGuide.org for some information about who's on the ballot and what's at stake on X date.
            - Up to 30% of voters take the time to vote on Election Day and then leave part of their ballot blank because they don't know who or what's even on it. Want to be able to effectively fill out your whole ballot on X date? Check out our voter guide at IllinoisVoterGuide.org.
            - Local officials make decisions that affect your everyday life, from your roads and schools to your water bill. Knowing what's on your local ballot can be tricky, though, which is why we've partnered with BallotReady to create IllinoisVoterGuide.org, so you can find out where local candidates stand on the issues you care about.
    - **Tweets:**
        - Use hashtags and other social media tags so the posts can reach wider audiences
        - Same rules apply: tie the importance of voting with the voter guide
        - You can use abridged versions of the above Facebook posts, too
        - Examples

        - What's at stake in X upcoming election? Find out here: IllinoisVoterGuide.org #InformedVoting
        - On average, only 1 in 5 voters participate in off-year local elections. Were you one of those voters? If not, let's change that! Check out IllinoisVoterGuide.org to learn what's on your ballot. #UseYourVote #IllinoisVoterGuide
        - No more feeling lost with the dozens of names on your ballot. #IllinoisVoterGuide #InformedVoting
        - Engaged voters empower communities. Check out IllinoisVoterGuide.org to best use your vote #Engage #Empower
    - **Instagram posts:** graphics will be included in the next phase of the release of this toolkit
- Graphics
    - Graphics can enhance your Facebook or Instagram posts, and Tweets. We will send out some sample ones in this toolkit so you can effectively market the guide on your various social media platforms. *Release date coming soon!*
- Physical Materials
    - You can opt to pass out materials with the Illinois Voter Guide logo to promote the guide and encourage voter engagement.. Working with your local printer, we've included business card templates to build two-sided cards with your local League's information. Alternatively, we've included the logo in the toolkit to create your own materials. *LWV design requirements still apply*. Further, there is an attached QR code image in the Dropbox that you can add to your physical materials as well. The QR code allows people to scan the code on their phones and be automatically directly to the Illinois Voter Guide website.
    - We used the free online resource, Canva (https://www.canva.com/), to create these materials. Try it to make your own materials, too. Feel free to share your personalized materials with LWVIL and local Leagues! We also used the "QR Generator" app to generate QR codes. We are including this information, if you are interested to create more codes for local boards of election and jurisdictions.
        - Example materials to create:
            - Palm Card
            - Stickers
            - Yard signs
    - Physical materials included in this toolkit
        - Business card templates
    - Images and files included in this toolkit that can be used to create new materials
        - Illinois Voter Guide Logo
        - Illinois Voter Guide QR Code
        - Illinois Board of Elections "Check Your Registration" QR Code

- Media Engagement
    - Be sure to send out a press release about the Illinois Voter Guide to your local newspapers and newsletters to increase engagement in your communities.
    - We've included a sample press release here:
        - Local League Illinois Voter Guide Press Release document link, or "Local League Illinois Voter Guide Press Release" file on Dropbox

Educating About the Guide

Generally, the promotion of the guide may require some key talking points about why empowered voting is important. While your local Leagues are surely experts in this field, here are some example talking points that you can use when passing out materials or engaging with voters.

- Addressing voters' lack of knowledge vs. lack of registration
    - Although voter turnout during the past four presidential elections (2004—2016), hovered around 60 percent, the average turnout in local elections was approximately 30 percent or less, according to numerous studies. (Source)
    - Stats: What Do We Know About Voters Who Lack Information/Knowledge?
        - Up to 30 percent of voters who vote on Election Day a leave a portion of their ballot blank because they don't know who the candidates are. (Source)
        - Research shows that for local candidates, voters are influenced by candidate gender, ethnicity, and ballot position--a Stanford study found that candidates listed first on the ballot receive about 2 percent more votes in an election. (Source)
        - EMILY's List found that some registered voters avoid Election Day entirely because they are worried about voting for the "wrong" candidate. (Source)
- The Importance of Local Elections
    - The Daily Influence of Local Officials (school boards, mayors, etc.)
        - Ballotpedia shows that statewide ballots also govern hot button issues such as abortion, healthcare, criminal justice, education, immigration, etc. play out. (Source)
        - Typically, just 1 in 5 voters participate in off-year local elections — meaning your vote at the local level can have an even bigger impact. (Source)
    - Specific Roles of Local Government
        - Police, fire and public safety services
        - Sewage, water treatment and waste management
        - Schools, libraries, and other education resources

        - Infrastructure management: Roads, paths, bridges, and overpasses
        - Public transportation
        - Planning, permitting, and enforcement
        - Public health services, including mental health, and services to the disabled
        - Tax collection and disbursement
    - Connecting these roles to national issues, too
        - Examples
            - municipal ID programs and immigration
            - police dept body cams and police brutality
            - gentrification occurs on a local level, affected by local official's zoning + housing policies
- <u>The Importance of the Vote (Midterms, 2020, Local Elections, etc.)</u>
    - Finding a balance with using the energy from current political climate, increase in political activity, membership AND using the voter guide to stay informed

Timeline for Use of the Illinois Voter Guide

- <u>Pre-Nov. General Election</u>
    - Signing up residents to receive alerts when the Illinois Voter Guide is live:
        - The Illinois Voter Guide will be live just in time for the statewide General Election. Share! Share! Share! Post about the guide now to introduce it to voters and future voters.
        - Order materials **by end of August** to advertise the guide sufficiently throughout September and October.
    - Use the guide in conjunction with voter registration efforts before the general election
        - Pass out material advertising the guide when registering voters.
        - Promote Illinois Voter Guide during National Voter Registration Day!
        - Including link to the guide when posting online about registration dates, early voting, etc.
- <u>Upcoming Local Elections</u>
    - The Illinois Voter Guide will also be available before the February 2019 Consolidated Primary. Further information will be available closer to that date.