

## "Early Voting" Begins in Statewide Student Mock Election

"Early voting" is officially underway in Tennessee's first ever statewide Student Mock Election. Teachers from schools across the state were able to begin entering their results last week.

Results must be submitted by 4 p.m. CDT on Mock Election Day, Nov. 1. Mock presidential election results will be revealed Nov. 2, less than a week before the actual general election.

There are currently more than 500 schools participating from 91 of the state's 95 counties, meaning an estimated 241,000 students are doing something most children cannot: voting for president of the United States.

"Our response has been overwhelming. Educators from all across the state are excited about this program, and I know students are eager to participate," said Tennessee's Secretary of State Tre Hargett. "Our hope is their interest in voting continues as they become young adults."

Students in preschool through high school from all public and private schools, as well as home school associations in Tennessee, can participate. Ballots letting students choose between Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, Republican presidential nominee, Donald Trump and all qualified independent presidential candidates were provided, but schools could conduct elections locally in different ways.

Students will also be entering an essay contest to encourage them to be actively engaged citizens. Essays topics will be about voting, and judging requirements vary by grade level. Schools may submit only two essays at each grade level. Statewide winners from each level will receive a TNStars 529 College Savings Program scholarship worth \$100, \$250, or \$500 in addition to a trip to the State Capitol.

The program also offers lesson plans created by Tennessee teachers. The goal is to offer an easy way for teachers to incorporate civic engagement and citizenship into their curriculum leading up to the Student Mock Election.

For more information on the essay contest, the Student Mock Election, or lesson plans visit: [sos.tn.gov/civics](http://sos.tn.gov/civics).

Gallatin High School students will be voting electronically during their lunch break on Tuesday, Nov. 1. The Student Mock Election will be administered by Mr. Brian Hoover's Honors Government classes. GHS could potentially have over 1,300 ballots cast in the Mock Election, making a huge impact on the statewide results in this first statewide effort.

GHS students were also asked to participate in an essay contest sponsored by the Tennessee Secretary of State's office. Students wrote their views on a prompt requesting their opinion on how Millennials could potentially impact an election. From the dozens of essay entries submitted by GHS students, Seniors Richard Gutierrez and Deric Hinson had their works selected and submitted to represent the school at the state level.

Pictured are Essay Winners from GHS, Deric Hinson and Richard Gutierrez.

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