



University of Vermont
Center for Community News

Assignment Template: Changes to voting laws

The Center for Community News' mission is to grow and support partnerships between college reporting programs and local news outlets. CCN has created a series of sample templates for faculty to give to students to contribute local news to their community. Faculty are welcome to use any and all of these and amend them as they see fit for their classes. For questions about this template, contact CCN Program Coordinator Sarah Gamard at sarah.gamard@uvm.edu.

Notes for Faculty

WHAT: As of May 2026, many states have enacted legislative changes that will be in effect for the 2026 midterm elections, or soon after 2026. We recommend researching changes to voting laws in your state. Roundups of voting law changes by state can be found at the [Brennan Center](#) and [Ballotpedia](#).

WHY: This assignment is a perfect introduction for students to get familiar with how political races are not the only news surrounding elections – it's also what abilities or lack thereof voters have in participating in the democratic process. It also familiarizes them with the diversity of local laws surrounding any national Election Day.

HOW TO USE THIS TEMPLATE: This assignment can be used either for beginners or intermediate students.

For beginners, the template can be used as a man-on-the-street style interview project where students interview voters about whether they were aware of the law changes and what they think about them.

For intermediate students, the template can be used to analyze how the laws could affect the community via interviews with experts, man-on-the-street interviews and data analysis.

About CCN

The [Center for Community News](#) at UVM is a nonpartisan organization that is working to grow and strengthen university-led reporting programs around the country, to create a more sustainable future for local news outlets and the communities they serve.

Assignment: Changes to voting laws (for beginners)

For faculty: At the top of this document, we recommend delineating any voting law changes in your area.

Instructions

Step 1: Understand the new voting laws and what they are. Understand not only what law has changed, but *why* it changed. Be able to write down a summary of these findings in a few sentences; you'll need them later when you interview people.

Step 2: Interview one local resident. With their permission, take their photo and do a recorded interview. You can ask the questions outlined below. Identify yourself as a reporter and be transparent about where the resulting story could be published.

Step 3: Select the most suitable quote. Often during an interview, you will get too many quotes to fully use. In that case, pick the best one or two. If there are parts where they stutter or say filler words such as "um," you can omit them from the quote. You can also separate two sentences with "..." if they are at different parts of the interview, as long as the two sentences are still in chronological order. Ensure the quote accurately represents what was said and meant during the interview in response to your questions.

Step 3: Submit the photo and quote to your professor. When in doubt, ask them what they think based on the interview.

People you can interview:

- Strangers who live within the community

People you *can't* interview:

- Fellow students (unless they are directly affected by the law change)
- Family members
- Friends or acquaintances

Note to faculty: If students are new, explain that their First Amendment rights allow them to document or interview people in public spaces, such as on the street, but if they try to approach and interview strangers in a private establishment, such as a restaurant or grocery store, they could be kicked out.

Questions you can ask:

- *Do you know about the new voting laws that were enacted in our state this election cycle? [If they don't know about them, tell them, and explain the reasoning succinctly based on Step 1.]*
- *How do you feel about the change?*
- *Do you agree with the change? Why or why not?*
- *Does the change impact your plans to vote? Why or why not?*

Word Count:

Deadline:

Assignment: Changes to voting laws (intermediate version)

Step 1: Study up on the changes to voting laws. See what coverage has already been done. Consider the effects of these new laws. Who will be hurt or helped by them? **Note to faculty:** You can include links to the new law's language or existing news coverage.

Step 2: Divvy up reporting tasks. Each reporter needs to do their own slice of reporting to make this story whole. This story will need someone to interview regular voters, someone else to interview advocates for or against the new laws, someone else to interview a local official on the ballot, someone to research voter registration and previous turnout, and someone else to do research on other states that are considering or have already implemented similar laws. Decide who will do what before proceeding to Step 3.

Step 3: Interview your assigned people. Ask them the questions below, making sure you identify yourself properly. Make sure they know they are on the record and where the story could be published. Get their names, residence, age and occupation.

Step 4: Condense the interviews and add them to a collaborative document to share with your fellow reporters. Take the key points they said and summarize them into a section of the greater story.

People you can interview:

- Strangers in public spaces
- Advocates for the new laws
- Advocates against the new laws
- A local official
- A local, nonpartisan political analyst
- One or two people are directly affected by the new laws (these are the most important people you can interview for the story)

Note to faculty: If students are new, explain that their First Amendment rights allow them to document or interview people in public spaces, such as on the street, but if they try to approach and interview strangers in a private establishment, such as a restaurant or grocery store, they could be kicked out.

People you *can't* interview:

- Fellow students
- Family members
- Friends or acquaintances

Questions you can ask voters or people affected:

- *Do you know about the new voting laws that were enacted in our state this election cycle? [If they don't know about them, tell them, and explain the reasoning succinctly based on Step 1.]*
- *How do you feel about the change?*
- *Do you agree with the change? Why or why not?*
- *Does the change impact your plans to vote? Why or why not?*

Questions you can ask advocates for or against the law:

- *We spoke with X voters about this new change, including X people who were directly affected because X. They said XXX. What is your response?*

Questions you can ask the political analyst:

- *How will these changes to voting laws impact the community and the state this election? What should people know?*
- *What other communities do you know of that are doing something similar, and what has been the reaction?*

Note: For whoever takes this assignment, it's best to get information first on what regular voters think, as well as what the nonpartisan political analyst says, and then bring those quotes to an elected official and the advocates to see how they respond to voters' reaction to the law.

Note: Do not use these interviews as a way to debate with the interviewees on their views; a journalist's job is to report what they see and hear, no matter if they agree with it or not. Be kind and listen!

Word Count / Video Length:

Deadline: