

# Here's How Newspapers Could Help You Register to Vote | The Washington Post

September 19, 2018

President Trump has called the media the “[enemy of the people](#).” In reality, the media are the exact opposite: They hold the administration’s feet to the fire and provide needed transparency and balanced analysis. They quite literally sustain our democracy — and can even play a role in the election process itself.

That was the message from the [Ithaca Times](#), a small-town weekly paper in Upstate New York, which without any fanfare [used its front page](#) to print a voter registration form. Readers could fill out the form, tear it out and mail it in to register to vote.

Marshall Hopkins, the production director and designer for the Times, told us that the goal was to “make a forceful and visible statement about civic responsibility,” especially for students who were arriving in Ithaca to attend one of the area’s three institutions of higher education. “This matters more than having our newspaper’s logo on the front” for that issue, he said.

The Times front page serves as a great example of a positive way to make the voting process easier and hassle-free. In this day of constant news about voter suppression — [voter purges](#), the [closing of precincts](#) and the like — we must all double down in our efforts to promote positive voting rights enhancements. Every newspaper in the country should follow the Times’s lead.

Attempts to make voter registration as easy as possible are needed now more than ever. In 2013, the Supreme Court [gutted](#) a major portion of the Voting Rights Act that previously had prevented certain states from imposing harsh laws such as voter purges. The Brennan Center for Justice [estimates](#) that between 2014 and 2016 states purged approximately 16 million voters from the rolls, a stunning increase from previous years. Earlier this year, the Supreme Court also [approved](#) Ohio’s aggressive voter-purge program that allows the state to remove someone from the rolls if he or she doesn’t vote in a few elections in a row.

Some states have made voter registration easier, particularly through [automatic voter registration](#). Under that process, the state has the responsibility to register voters using information it already has, such as from DMV offices. The reform has increased voter participation dramatically. Oregon saw about [100,000 new voters](#) in 2016 after implementing the reform.

But automatic registration exists in only 13 states and the District of Columbia. A few other states allow for [same-day registration](#), where voters can register at the polls on Election Day. In all other states, however, voters must take an affirmative step to register, [often 30 days](#) before the election. No wonder millions of voters remain unable to vote come Election Day.

Of course, the action of a local newspaper in Upstate New York is no silver bullet for our voter registration woes. But there is ample reason to believe something larger could emerge from it. After all, many democratic innovations start at the [local level](#). Democratic progress often begins [small](#), but once it catches fire, it's hard to stop.

Newspapers across the country should follow the Times and print a voter registration form on their front pages. And what better day for the media to promote democratic participation than on Sept. 25, [National Voter Registration Day](#)?

Source: [Here's how newspapers could help you register to vote - The Washington Post](#)