

BROOKINGS

FILER VOTER 2020 PROJECT

What If VITA Sites Offered Tax Filers the Opportunity to Register to Vote?

We call the idea “Filer Voter” and tested it at seven VITA sites in two cities in 2018. Our results, reflected in a report issued in the spring of 2019, showed that VITA locations could have a huge impact. VITA sites can double voter registration rates without slowing the tax filing process, thus increasing the civic participation of their clientele.

Why Voter Registration Matters

Low- and moderate-income Americans, the population served by VITA, are substantially less likely to be registered to vote than higher-income Americans and are also less likely to vote. In 2016, 74 percent of individuals making more than \$50,000 voted, compared to only 52 percent of voters making less. Unfortunately, some voter engagement efforts actually widen disparities in participation by mobilizing members of groups already likely to participate rather than affecting underrepresented citizens. Voter registration at VITA sites can play a key role in ensuring that the voting population of the United States mirrors the citizen population.

Participate in Filer Voter 2020

In 2018, our voter registration program reached almost 5,000 VITA clients. For filing season 2020, we are hoping to dramatically increase the scale of the program to reach 50,000 VITA clients. For participating VITA sites, there will be free training and support as well as **financial stipends available** to support site coordinators or intake specialists who lead the program at their sites.

If your site already conducts voter registration or is interested in learning more about setting up a voter registration drive for 2020, please reach out to us at filervoter@brookings.edu. Please include the following information:

- Organization Name
- City
- Number of returns filed last year

We look forward to hearing from you! You can learn more here: <https://prosperitynow.org/blog/tax-prep-dispatch-voter-registration-tax-time>