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# State hopeful online registration will boost voter turnout

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By Mileka Lincoln, Reporter  [CONNECT](#)

HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) - Registered to vote yet?

The [deadline to register](#) for the primary election on Aug. 13 is next Thursday.

And to get more people signed up, the state will be hosting registration events statewide.

"We'll be having them statewide -- three on the Big Island, one on Maui, one on Kauai and one here on O'ahu," said Scott Nago, the state's chief election officer.

The drive, which will include new TV ads, is aimed at changing Hawaii's last-in-the-nation ranking for voter turnout.

And voting officials say they're hopeful this year, not least of which because a new online registration system has already resulted in more residents signed up.

The eligible voting population in Hawaii is just over a million people and officials say more than 700,000 are already registered. Since August, when the online registration system was launched, 20,000 people have signed up.

"You can do a lot of things online now. You can register to vote. You can also request a permanent absentee ballot. You can also check your polling place, as well as see a sample ballot," said Nago.

And you can change your address, something that's required if you've moved since the last election. If you haven't done so already, you'll have to do that by July 14 if you want to vote in the primary election.

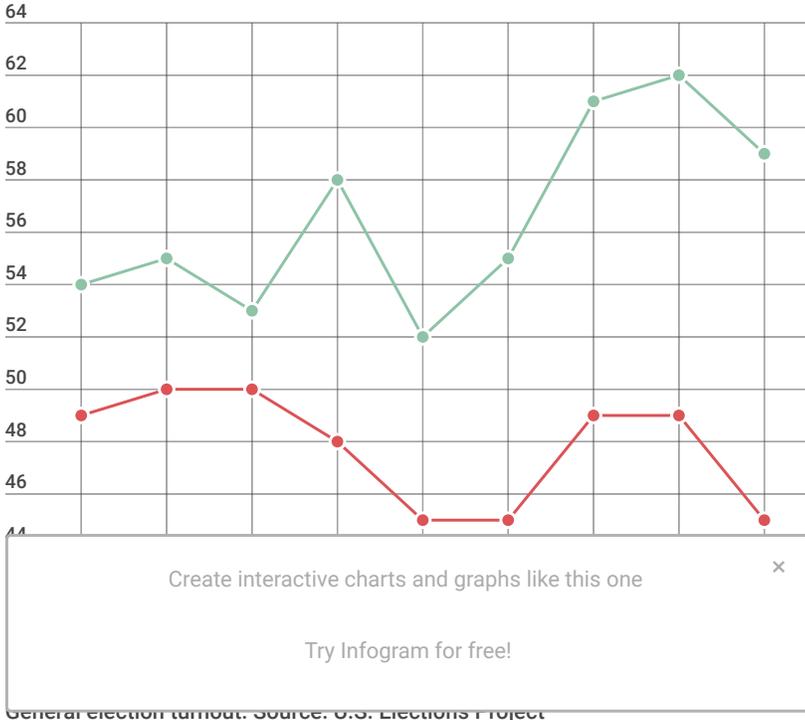
Beginning this year, voters will also have the option to register in-person at any of the absentee walk-sites in their county over the 10-day early voting period, which starts August 1.

"At this point in Hawaii, we've done virtually everything we can to make it easy for people to register -- to make it easy for people to vote -- and now it's up to citizens to take this responsibility seriously," said Colin Moore, a University of Hawaii political science professor.

State officials say 60 percent of registered voters went to the polls in 2008, when native son Barack Obama was elected president the first time. Participation dropped to about 52 percent four years later.

Statistics for voter turnout among eligible voters show an even starker picture.

# HAWAII VOTER TURNOUT



General election turnout. Source: U.S. Elections Project

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## Hawaii Voter Turnout

Just 45 percent of eligible Hawaii voters came out to the polls in 2012. That compares to 59 percent for the nation.

Experts aren't optimistic that Hawaii's voter turnout will be much better this time around.

"People tend to be more likely to turn out for candidates they're personally very excited for," Moore said. "But voter turnout can be depressed when the electorate feels very negative about both candidates and I think that's likely to happen in this presidential cycle."

Political analysts say voter participation in Hawaii can also be limited by the lack of nail-biter local races.

"Our elections aren't particularly competitive here," Moore said. "Hawaii is a one-party state. We have a very weak Republican party and for the most part incumbents win."

That said, experts say there clearly is a new generation of engaged voters. Many of them came out during the Democratic presidential caucus in Hawaii to support U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders.

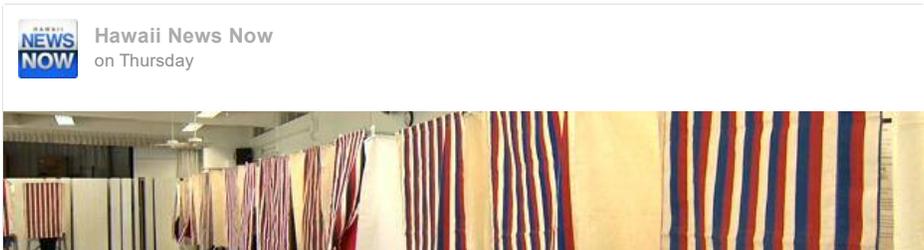
"We really have to look out and try to help them be prepared for what they're going to be inheriting, because this place is crumbling and it's starting with the system we live in," said J Gunnz, a registered voter who's others to head to the polls.

"Now, with so much things going on in the economy and the country, I figure we need to speak up and vote. I'm not really fond of the two candidates now, but it's better to vote than not at all," said Jodie Duarte, who plans to register to vote before the deadline next week.

Meanwhile, state election officials say they're looking for precinct workers who can work for a small stipend on election day at the polling places, and also as members of the delivery collection team.

The only requirement is that individuals must be 16 and speak English. About 1,000 people are needed statewide.

To register to vote online or for more information, [click here](#).





POLL: Why does Hawaii have the lowest voter turnout in the nation? (Turnout for the 2012 general election was just 45 percent of eligible voters.) #Campaign2016 #HINews

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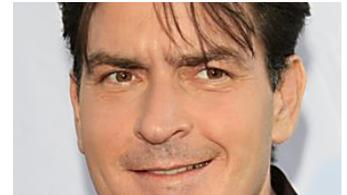
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