# Office of Cook County Clerk David Orr

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### \*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\*

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## Cook County Clerk Releases Data on Surge of Youth Interest in Primary
### David Orr Lauds Loyola University for Record College Judge Training

At a training in Winnetka Sunday for college students serving as specialized election judges, Cook County Clerk David Orr released data indicating growing youth interest in the upcoming Presidential Primary.

"Not only do we have record numbers registered for a primary in the Cook County suburbs at over 1.35 million voters," said Clerk Orr, "absentee ballot applications suggest college students are planning to vote in greater numbers on February 5th than last time around."

Orr spoke at classes for 180 Loyola University students who were learning to operate and trouble-shoot touch screen and optical scan equipment this weekend. After separate sessions and testing for 90 students each, the Loyola students will each be assigned to one of the 2,290 precincts in suburban Cook County, where they will work from 5 a.m. until several hours after the polls close on February 5th.

"This year we've had a record 500 applications from college students hoping to become equipment managers, with the greatest number from Loyola," noted Orr. "Add in the 800 suburban high school students who will train to be judges, and you see a remarkable surge of youth participation in the electoral process."

The Clerk's office instituted a program training high school seniors to become judges in 1999. Legislation sponsored by Orr and signed by the governor in November, 2007 has extended the high school judge program to juniors for the first time. The effort to deploy college students in the suburbs took off last year.

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Because of their familiarity with computers, both groups of young people have been assets as Cook County has upgraded from punch cards to touch screens and optical scan paper ballots.

"Election judges are the ground troops of democracy on Election Day," Orr explained. "We will use about 11,000 judges including 2,000 equipment managers in the Cook County suburbs alone in the primary. These students will literally make democracy work on February 5th."

Orr also reminded students to vote early, since they will be busy in the precincts on Election Day. Early Voting continues through January 31st at 44 locations throughout suburban Cook and at 51 in the city of Chicago.

Orr noted that Early Voting hours and locations are on his website, www.voterinfonet.com, along with an award-winning "How to Vote" video, plus a voter's toolkit for checking registration, viewing a virtual ballot and locating polling places for Election Day. Voterinfonet.com also includes links to web pages for surrounding election authorities.

**More…**

# Youth by the Numbers

**Over 800:** a record number of high school students in Suburban Cook, volunteering to be judges on Election Day.

**500:** a record number of college students volunteering to be Equipment Managers (judges with extra training) in suburban Cook on Election Day.

**180:** a record number of Loyola University students volunteering to be Equipment Managers.

**Thousands** of newly-registered high school seniors, due to a registration drive throughout Cook County involving the Cook County Clerk's office, the Chicago Board of Elections and local organizations.

**Spike in student absentees:** Students were 8% of absentee ballot applicants in 2004; they are **19%** of the absentee ballot applicants so far this year. This may be due, in part, to changes in the Motor Voter law enacted in November of 2007, as well as interest in the presidential primary.

18-24 Year Olds, Suburban Cook County

| Primary | Percent of Registered Voters | Percent of Absentee Applicants |
|---|---|---|
| March 2004 | 9% | 8% |
| March 2006 | 9% | 7% |
| February 2008 | 9% | **19%** |

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