



CASE STUDY

# Yolo County Students say YES! to Civic Engagement

In a time of low turnout for young voters, Yolo County's Youth Empowerment Summit (YES!) encourages high school students to say YES! to civic engagement.

### Challenge

Yolo County, California officials noticed low turnout among 18- to 24-year-old eligible voters during the 2016 election.

### Action

Yolo County created the Youth Empowerment Summit (YES!) to encourage high school students to say YES! to leadership roles and civic engagement, and to let them experience how the election process is key for their voices to be heard. The summit enabled them to speak with local elected officials and to participate in a mock election facilitated by Hart InterCivic.

### Results

Students became familiar with the election process at the 2018 summit, learning first-hand the impact of their votes. Hearing from elected officials how they influence day-to-day lives — and experiencing an easy voting process — gave students the understanding and confidence to become future leaders. Hart's newest Verity® Voting system enabled realistic and personal experiences in a mock election that visibly improved students' civic engagement



Jesse Salinas, Yolo County Assessor, Clerk-Recorder, Registrar of Voters

### Young People are Missing at the Polls

Why do so few 18 to 24 year old voters participate in elections? Even as a relatively-high percentage of the population, studies show young voters do not understand the power they have to influence election outcomes. Worse, many believe local decisions do not affect them.

These young voters are not being taught how to participate in our democratic process, so they do not understand the value and impact of voting. Many young people do not even know how to register to vote.

### Getting to YES! Takes a Village

The Youth Empowerment Summit (YES!) is a forum and mock election for high school students. Jesse Salinas (Yolo County Assessor, Clerk-Recorder, and Registrar of Voters) created YES! out of his commitment to empowering future leaders with confidence and knowledge of democratic

institutions. Salinas brought in local supporters, including Woodland Community College, Early Academic Outreach Program, Yolo County Office of Education, Woodland Public Library Teen Advisory Board, and League of Women Voters.

In March 2018, Salinas hosted 72 students from local high schools for this first annual event, and Hart was proud to be a sponsor. As Yolo County's long-time election solution provider, Hart is known for thinking holistically about elections, providing solutions for the entire process, and supporting outreach and education programs with its customers. To provide students with the full voter experience, the company invited trusted partner KNOWiNK to help with advance voter registration, check-in, and verification.

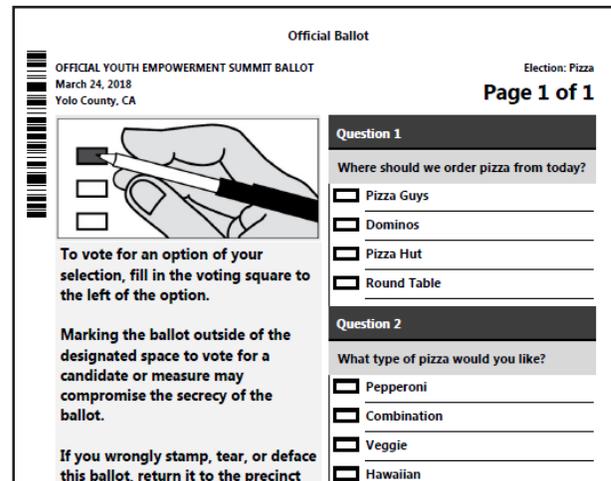
Yolo County provided resources for students to register at the summit. Youth in California aged 15 and older can pre-register, which ensures they will be registered when they turn 18.

The Hart team was on site to conduct the mock election, including ballot design and election management using the Verity Voting system.

### Learning How Civics Impacts Daily Life

Salinas keeps the focus on his mission: "We want to introduce students to elected officials in our county, so these civil servants can explain in their own words how they make an impact on daily life in our community." He arranged to have the

mayor, city administrator, city manager, school board director, and other County leaders discuss with students their day-to-day jobs and how their actions affect students' lives.



Official Ballot for the mock election that shows different types of pizza and restaurants for students to vote for

### Tasting the Benefits of Voting

"We used the mock election to show students how easy it is to vote by registering, then voting on Hart's Verity system," Salinas said. "We designed it to improve engagement by enabling young, first-time voters to experience the direct impact of voting — with an easy and familiar process that is not intimidating."

Hart's team helped develop a ballot for students to vote on what kind of pizza they wanted for lunch and from which restaurant. The mock election gave students an opportunity to engage with other voters to campaign for their preference. The students saw first-hand that their votes matter – they received the winning pizza for lunch.

## Voting Systems Matter

The election process must be accessible and easy. Whether voters use digital voting, scanned paper ballots, or a hybrid, citizens of all ages must be confident in the integrity of the election process. Federal and state certification processes vet and test election systems to ensure accurate and transparent solutions. Hart seeks both certifications to ensure that Verity meets or exceeds California standards, already the highest in the U.S.



Student voting in mock election at YES! "Oh, that was easy! How cool!"

Most students at the summit will be able to vote in 2019 and 2020. Like other counties in California, Yolo County plans to upgrade its voting system by then. Now that these young people successfully voted on one of the most modern and secure voting devices in California, they will be ready and eager to exercise their voice and promote voting and civic engagement.

## Learn More About the YES! Summit

For Yolo County voter outreach or Youth Empowerment Summit information:

Yolo County Elections, 916-375-6490,  
[cntyclrk@yoloelections.org](mailto:cntyclrk@yoloelections.org)

[www.yoloyouthsummit.com](http://www.yoloyouthsummit.com)

## Request a Demonstration of the Latest Secure, Easy-to-Use Voting System

For Hart InterCivic information or a Verity Voting system demonstration:

Karen Clakeley, Strategic Accounts Director,  
916 673-8764, [kclakeley@hartic.com](mailto:kclakeley@hartic.com)

[www.hartintercivic.com](http://www.hartintercivic.com)

