



## **Student Association for Voter Empowerment**

### **Initiative:**

- Utilizing a *National Voter Awareness Week* platform to create civic engagement and voter registration opportunities for all 18 year old American citizens. This platform was conceived of by SAVE members and introduced as a bipartisan congressional resolution on October 1, 2008 by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Congressman Zack Space (D-OH) and Congressman Walter Jones (R-NC).

### **Background:**

- In a list of countries tabulated by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in 2005, the United States ranks 139th in voter turnout percentage, far behind nations that lack our industry.
- Because many states have 30-day voter registration deadlines, the public must be informed of their local and state election laws in September in order to participate fully in the federal elections in November.
- S. 1901, introduced in the 102nd Congress, would have amended section 6103 of title 5, United States Code, to establish Democracy Day as a legal public holiday on Election Day, in recognition of the need for increased participation of an educated electorate to preserve the legitimacy of democracy.
- Americans already celebrate *National Constitution Day* every year on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **Summary:**

- Senate Resolution 685 designates the last week of September 2008 as 'National Voter Awareness Week'
- It calls upon the people of the United States to observe such a week with appropriate programs and activities, including helping state and local institutions deliver sample ballots, voter registration forms, absentee ballots, and other educational materials to all eligible voters.
- It encourages all grassroots organizations and educational, cultural, and community institutions to promote voter awareness and registration programs that benefit local election procedure.
- Specific programming to involve high school students in local government, legislation or mock elections can also be pursued during this week.

*Submitted by Matthew Segal, Executive Director, Student Association for Voter Empowerment*