Science Policy News

Election Day and the 2016 Annual Meeting

It’s that time of year when Society members are looking forward to the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Annual Meeting. The 2016 Annual Meeting takes place 6–9 November in Phoenix, AZ. Now I bet I can guess what you’re thinking: “Wow, Phoenix in November, sounds great! Although isn’t there something else going on in early November? Oh well, probably nothing to worry about.”

Hold it right there! Yes, there is something else in November, and I’m not talking about Thanksgiving. It’s the election. That’s right, this year, the presidential election takes place right in the middle of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Annual Meeting on 8 November. While meeting attendees will need to take a few extra steps to vote, it presents a unique opportunity to experience the election with your colleagues during the Annual Meeting.

Vote Early or Absentee

Annual Meeting attendees will need to vote early or absentee. Unfortunately, every state does their voting a little differently, so you’ll have to do some homework. First off, make sure you are registered to vote. If you’ve moved recently or this is your first election (congrats by the way!), you should take the time to learn about voting registration in your state here: https://vote.usa.gov/. Each state differs on its registration deadlines too, so don’t wait—register now.

While all states have some version of absentee voting, the requirements for absentee ballots can vary. Some states offer “no-excuse” absentee voting, meaning any registered voter can request an absentee ballot without giving a reason. However, other states only allow voters to vote absentee under a limited set of circumstances. The National Council of State Legislators has a great list of early and absentee voting rules for each state found here: http://bit.ly/2bzEPnZ.

More than two-thirds of states have some form of early voting, which is a great way to cast your ballot in person before you even leave for the Annual Meeting. A calendar of when early voting starts for each state can be found here: www.vote.org/early-voting-calendar.

Experience the Election with Your Colleagues

So now that all meeting attendees will have voted in advance, what does that mean for election day? Don’t worry, the Science Policy Office is ready to help attendees experience the excitement of this year’s election.

On Tuesday, 8 November, all meeting attendees are invited to an election night watch party. Hear the election results as they’re announced during an informal, evening reception. Attendees can keep score as votes are tallied and states go to each candidate. Test your government knowledge during a trivia contest and have your photo taken with the candidates. Learn more on the Annual Meeting website, www.acsmeetings.org, in the “Science Policy” section.

More than Just a Presidential Race

The next few months represent a critical time during the election season. Now that both parties have secured their candidates for president, be on the lookout for their positions on issues that will impact the food, agriculture, and natural resources research community, specifically federal research funding, climate change, natural resource management, and global food security. And don’t forget that there’s more than just a presidential race going on. All representatives and one-third of senators are also running, so research the candidates running in your state and district to make an informed decision in November.

We know people are more likely to think about policy during an election year, but we in the Science Policy Office hope the election will serve as a reminder of connections that are always present between science and government. The 2016 election isn’t the finish line—it’s only the beginning. Regardless of who wins the election in November, the next administration will represent a new opportunity to engage with policymakers about the issues that impact our members. We hope you will take the first step in this engagement by voting in the 2016 election and then be on the lookout for more opportunities to be a voice for our Societies.

Julie McClure
Science Policy Manager
jmclure@sciencesocieties.org

Register to vote in your state:
https://vote.usa.gov/

Early and absentee voting rules:

Calendar of when early voting starts:
www.vote.org/early-voting-calendar