

## The Student Voter's Dilemma

You're an undergraduate at school in Rochester. You're from California. You're not registered to vote. What are you to do?

You might try calling your parents and asking. You might punch a few terms into Google and see where it leads you. Or you might be lucky enough to run into Andrew Cutillo '13, the senior coordinator for the student-led initiative in Arts, Sciences & Engineering that's come to be known as R' World, R' Vote.

This year the initiative gets a new name—the Committee for Political Engagement, or CPE—but the main mission is the same, says Cutillo, who's been involved in it since he was a freshman.

"The main thing we do is make sure everyone's registered, help people with absentee ballots, and for people registered on campus, make sure they can get to the polls."

A political science major from Clark's Summit, Pa., Cutillo says a student's rights are clear, even if the process of registering and voting doesn't initially seem to be.

"A student has a right to register to vote either in their hometown or wherever they're living to go to school, the idea being that they're in a transitional period in which they're part of two communities," he says. "So a student can register in Rochester and vote in person, or they can register to vote in their home state or district and vote absentee."

This fall, Cutillo and other members of the committee will be visible on the River Campus and each will carry a handbook of updated regulations for all 50 states—the regulations that spell out who can register absentee, when the deadlines are, and how to send in an absentee ballot.

"When we go up to a student and we say, 'Do you want to register to vote?,' and they say, 'Sure, but I'm from California, can I register there?' We'll say, 'Absolutely,'" Cutillo says. "We'll look it up, we'll work with them, we'll go online."

Cutillo says a resource students might find helpful is [www.longdistancevoter.org](http://www.longdistancevoter.org). He adds that the committee will be launching an improved website of its own this month.

As it turns out, most states permit absentee residents to request a ballot on relatively short notice—a week or less. But that's not universal, and the laws are getting more complicated.

"A wave of new voting laws in several states adds to our workload and requires additional effort from student voters," says Cutillo. "Many of these are first-time voters, and are particularly affected."

—Karen McCally



## Federal Budget

**David Primo**, Associate Professor of Political Science and Business Administration

Primo is the author or coauthor of three books, including *Rules and Restraint: Government Spending and the Design of Institutions* (University of Chicago Press, 2007). He teaches undergraduates and graduate students in courses such as Business and Politics, The Nature of Entrepreneurship, and Models in American Politics: Theory and Data.

### Will the outcome of the presidential and congressional elections have any impact on our ability to reduce the long-term structural deficit?

Given that Congress does not have a strong track record in reducing the main drivers of the deficit—Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security—the best hope for major reforms to the federal budget is presidential leadership.

Reelection-driven politicians fear that major changes to entitlement programs—especially Medicare and Social Security—will doom them to defeat. It certainly will make them targets. Politically, at least, charts and graphs cannot compete with ads like the one depicting House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan pushing an elderly woman off a cliff after Rep. Ryan proposed Medicare reform.

This political calculus might change if public opinion radically shifts or if financial markets send signals that changes are needed. Neither seems likely. In public opinion polls, respondents view the deficit as a serious problem but oppose changes in programs such as Medicare that are critical to bringing spending under control. For instance, in a 2010 Bloomberg News poll, nearly half of respondents believed that the budget deficit

