

TAPPING INTO THE POTENTIAL OF THE WEB TO REACH YOUNG VOTERS

Increasingly, politicians are turning to the internet as another way to attract and inform voters. Young people represent a prime Web demographic; one-in-five young people, more than any other age group, reported using the internet to get news about the 2004 election.¹ A recent CIRCLE study by W. Lance Bennett and Mike Xenos suggests there is much more that both campaigns and non-partisan youth organizations can do to help young people locate information about politics and the voting process. The full report, "CIRCLE Working Paper 20: Young Voters and the Web of Politics" as well as an online Best Practices Guide can be found at www.civicyouth.org.

The authors examined 2002 election campaign sites (for candidates for the House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, and Governor) and youth civic engagement sites such as Rock the Vote and YouthVote to determine how these sites appeal to young people on various issues. Additionally, they provide an updated analysis of the youth civic engagement sites through July 2004 with recommendations on how sites can work together more effectively to create a virtual network. This network would allow young

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people to move more easily through the Web to match information about issues they are interested in with candidates who best represent these interests.

2002 Candidate Sites Provide Few Direct Appeals to Young Voters

The research clearly shows that in the 2002 elections, candidates were much more likely to appeal to older rather than younger voters through the internet. For example, appeals to seniors were found in close to 40 percent of candidate statements on social security while only 23 percent of candidate sites appealed directly to young people on the issue of education. On other issues that have been shown to resonate with young people, such as health care and the economy, candidates made almost no direct appeals to young voters.

¹ Fox, Susannah (2004). "Older Americans and the Internet." Pew Internet and American Life Project. http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Seniors_Online_2004.pdf

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According to the authors, "Despite indications that young voters are the group most likely to go online to seek political information, particularly in contrast to senior citizens, we found that in 2002 the candidates rarely phrased or framed issues in ways that directly addressed young people." Moreover, no candidate sites studied had Web links to youth engagement sites. The authors note that in not linking to youth sites, candidates miss opportunities to help young people connect voting to the issues they care about.

Creating a Network of Web Sites

Beyond making direct appeals to young voters on issues, candidate and youth sites can also assist young people by building a "virtual network" of sites—so that a young person can start at any number of Web sites and easily navigate between sites to get the political information they need for an upcoming election. This type of virtual network relies on two types of links: (1) links between youth-oriented political sites themselves and (2) links between these youth sites and election sites (in both directions). Analysis from 2002 to 2004 revealed that the network among youth sites had grown stronger over time but could be enhanced by a few relatively simple changes.

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According to Bennett and Xenos, one easy change that youth-oriented sites could make is to increase the number and prominence of organizational links they provide. The authors maintain that a strong network could be built with very little effort if one or two youth organizations agreed to serve as a hub for the network. Serving as a hub would mean "aggressively seeking out and maintaining co-links to other youth organizations." Co-links are reciprocal links where one organization links to another organization and that organization then links back.

CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. Although CIRCLE conducts and funds research, not practice, the projects that we support have practical implications for those who work to increase young people's engagement in politics and civic life. CIRCLE is also a clearinghouse for relevant information and scholarship. CIRCLE was founded in 2001 with a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts and is now also funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York. It is based in the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy.

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Another suggested improvement involves reciprocal links between youth and candidate sites. Analysis done in 2002 revealed that it was difficult for a young person to go between these two types of Web sites. While youth sites did provide some links to election sites, these links were most often to voter registration sites or generic search engines that only provided general lists of campaigns and candidates by geographic region. "Given the self-serve nature of sites typically linked to in these instances (League of Women Voters, Project Vote Smart) such a finding suggests that though they are directed to the electoral sphere by the sites such

Another suggested improvement involves reciprocal links between youth and candidate sites. Analysis done in 2002 revealed that it was difficult for a young person to go between these two types of Web sites.

as Rock the Vote, young voters must expend considerable energy, once there, in identifying information directly relevant to their interests and preferences." The authors suggest youth sites should link to actual candidate sites that are covering the issues young people care about.

Candidates can also make simple improvements to their Web sites. The study did not find any candidate Web sites which had links to youth sites. The authors suggest that candidates "are missing opportunities to connect voting to surrounding political experiences in society." Additionally, candidates can make their sites more appealing to young people by adding more interactive, Web-exclusive features such as online chat rooms, blogs, and login/password customization. A CIRCLE survey conducted in 2004 suggests that young people prefer internet communications they can choose to receive, over unsolicited messages. *

YOUNG VOTERS FAVOR KERRY BUT FIND BUSH MORE LIKEABLE

Jobs & the Economy Top Issue Influencing Youth Vote Survey Shows

A recent MTV/CIRCLE survey shows that a strong majority of 18-29 year-olds intends to vote and more than twice as many young registered voters are paying "a lot" of attention to the campaign this year compared to 2000. Young voters are paying about as much attention to the campaign as they were in 1992 – when youth turnout spiked.

The poll conducted in September, found that 46% of young voters said that they would vote for John Kerry with 40% saying they would vote for George W. Bush. Ralph Nader was chosen by 4%. However, as many as 20% of committed registered voters say they could change their minds by Election Day. In addition, young voters are slightly more likely to think they would like Bush as a person than they are Kerry.

Jobs and the economy rank as the top issue influencing the way young people vote, chosen by 35% of registered voters, 67% of whom see their job opportunities as only fair or poor. This issue exceeds terrorism and national security chosen by 22%, and the war in Iraq chosen by 15%. The economy is a particularly important issue to young voters who are not sure how they will vote. Among this group, 44% cite the economy as the most important issue, followed by terrorism & security at 15%, and education at 14%.

Other key findings include:

- ≡ 49% of young people disapprove of Bush's performance as president and 44% approve.
- ≡ 82% of registered 18-29 year olds say they will definitely vote on November 2nd.
- ≡ 74% of all young people say that this will be one of the most important elections, if not the most important election, of their lifetime.
- ≡ 58% think that the country has gone seriously off track (compared to 52% of Americans of all ages).
- ≡ 49% think we did the right thing in taking action against Iraq, while 45% believe we should have stayed out.
- ≡ 54% of registered voters say President Bush does not share their priorities compared to 40% for Kerry.
- ≡ 41% of all young people say they would like to hang out with Bush for a day; 28% would like to hang out with Kerry.

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

The Research Roundup column highlights recent research findings commissioned or generated by CIRCLE. Also included is an update on new CIRCLE products such as Fact Sheets, Recommended Research Articles, Recent Research Abstracts, Literature Reviews, and Data Sets.

TRUST AND YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

A new CIRCLE Fact Sheet by Judith Torney-Purta, Wendy Klandl Richardson, and Carolyn Henry Barber of the University of Maryland explores the question of whether young peoples' trust in a political system, schools, or fellow citizens influences their civic and political participation. The Fact Sheet, "Adolescents' Trust and Civic Participation in the United States", uses data collected in 1999 from the IEA Civic Education Study of 14-year-olds and compares trust levels among young people in the United States, Columbia, Bulgaria, and England.

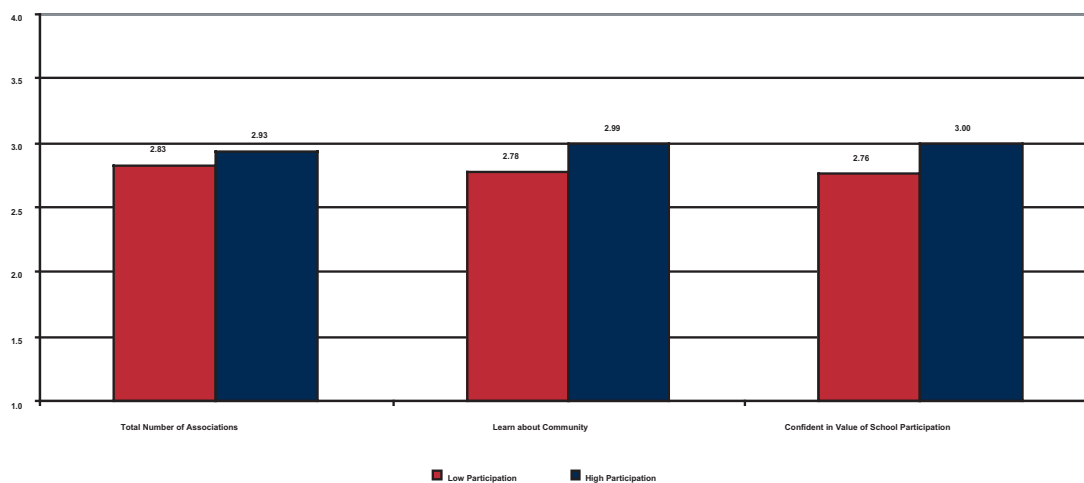
Of the four countries examined, students in the United States were found to be most trusting of the political system (courts, legislative body, and political parties) but least trusting of people and schools. Additionally, the fact sheet looked at whether students who belong to voluntary organizations were more trusting. Simply belonging to a voluntary organization seems to be only part of the answer for increasing trust. Students surveyed showed higher levels of trust in schools when they felt confident in the voluntary organization's ability to affect change within the school.

Graph 1 illustrates the differences in average levels of trust in the government (as measured by the composite score) between students who reported low and high levels of participation in organizations and in learning about the community, as well as students who had a positive view of the value of student participation in schools.

Additionally, the researchers looked at whether trust relates to students' expectations about future civic participation. They found that trust was just one of many predictors of future participation. Reading the newspaper regularly, learning about voting at school, and discussing politics with their parents all seemed to influence whether a young person expected to participate politically and civically as an adult.

For more information on how trust relates to civic engagement please see "CIRCLE Working Paper 17: Adolescents' Trust and Civic Participation in the United States: Analysis of Data from the IEA Civic Education Study" by Dr. Torney-Purta and her colleagues. Both the Fact Sheet and Working Paper can be downloaded from CIRCLE's Web site at http://www.civicyouth.org/research/areas/youth_attit.htm

GRAPH 1: AVERAGE TRUST IN SCHOOLS FOR UNITED STATES STUDENTS WHO HAVE LOW OR HIGH LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS.



GEARING NEWS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Studies show that young people today are less likely to follow the news than older Americans. For example, a CIRCLE Fact Sheet “Media Use Among Young People” shows that only around one quarter of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25 use television, radio, or newspapers to obtain news on a daily basis compared to over 40 percent of those 26 and older. Moreover, fewer than one in ten young people use the internet for news seven days a week. A new CIRCLE Working Paper by Susan Sherr of the Eagleton Institute of Politics attempts to find ways to increase youth news consumption by examining the kinds of news available for young people, why producers create youth-oriented news the way they do, and what young people say they really want in news.

The working paper entitled “News for a New Generation” combines textual analysis, interviews with youth news producers, and focus groups with young people to find out whether today’s news products appeal to young people’s interests. A second working paper will be available later this year with findings from an experiment testing whether changing the format in which news is presented to young people will increase their interest in news.

Youth-Oriented News Programs Today

From MTV to Newsweek, there exists a small and varied network of organizations reaching out to young audiences. As a Pew Research Center poll recently pointed out, young people are the most likely age group to go online.² This fact has not gone unnoticed by news producers as the internet is the medium most often used by producers trying to reach young people. According to the author, “We located more youth oriented news sources online than on television or radio or in newspapers or magazines. Additionally, what differentiated these Web sites from the print and TV media was the additional presence of young people writing articles and being featured in them.” Examples of Web sites studied included Wiretap, MTV News, and Teen World News.

Producers had a clear idea of what they think young people want in the news. According to Dr. Sherr, “All producers see an intermingling of news and pop-culture as an important element of producing news for the young, and most view the shortened attention spans of the younger generations as a reason for reducing the length of news stories. There also is a preference for heavy use of visual content among these producers.”

However, it appears that many of the beliefs producers have about youth preferences have not been heavily researched. In fact, most of the producers interviewed admitted to doing little, if any, market research on the youth population. Dr. Sherr notes, “Considering this lack of systematic research, it is worth considering whether the media are underestimating the receptiveness of the young audience to a more complex discussion of issues and events.”

What Young People Think About the News

The second phase of the research involved five focus groups that included both college and non-college attending young people between the ages 18 and 24 from central New Jersey. The focus groups were designed to find out what young people want in a news program. The following recommendations are based on feedback from these focus groups and from interviews with news producers:

- 1. Reduce Sensationalism:** It appears that any news source aimed at younger people should provide audiences with a sense of control over the information gathered. Young people do not like stories that “try to lure viewers with tantalizing details about stories that turn out to be less than thrilling.”
- 2. Make it Relevant:** Youth news producers emphasize the importance of relevance, and young people express a greater interest in news that is local and familiar. While it’s important to cover national and international affairs, these stories need to be presented in a way that is relevant to the lives of young people.
- 3. Increase the Number of Positive Stories:** Young people in the focus groups complained that news is too negative. One solution may be to use positive stories as a starting point for an in-depth discussion of related stories with farther-reaching implications.
- 4. Bring in New News Anchors:** Young people do not like the traditional, straight-faced method of delivering the news, according to this study’s focus groups. Figuring out how to adjust news presentations to younger sensibilities will require creativity and experimentation. ★

The full report and recommendations can be downloaded from CIRCLE’s Web site at <http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/WorkingPapers/WP16Sherr.pdf>

² Fox, Susannah (2004). “Older Americans and the Internet.” Pew Internet and American Life Project. http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Seniors_Online_2004.pdf

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

EXPERIMENTS TEST THE POWER OF EXPERIENTIAL CIVIC EDUCATION

Schools across the country are implementing experiential civic education programs designed to help young people understand politics and elections. From mock elections to online debates, there are many opportunities for young people to practice real life politics in their classrooms. While general evidence from national surveys suggests that such experiential programs improve students' civic engagement, little experimental research exists that test what types of experiential programs are most effective. However, two CIRCLE-commissioned studies provide evidence, based on controlled experiments, about the impact of experiential education programs on students' political knowledge.

Including Politics and Elections in Civics Classes Helps

The first study was a quasi-experiment conducted in 2002 and 2003 by Kenneth S. Stroupe, Jr. and Larry J. Sabato of the University of Virginia Center for Politics. The experiment compared classes across the country that used the National Youth Leadership Initiative (YLI) curriculum to a control group of similar classes that did not.

The YLI is an ongoing national civic education program and its curriculum consists of five teaching resources that are designed to explicitly teach about politics and elections in an experiential manner. The program resources are: a student mock election, a Web-based "E-Congress," "A More Perfect Union" CD Rom, a community program called "Democracy Corps," and a series of online social studies lesson plans geared toward political education.

According to the study, "the YLI programs have substantial, positive effects on students' level of political knowledge" and, to a lesser degree, some "positive effects on students' political efficacy, pride in politics, and propensity for future political participation." Using several statistical tests, the researchers determined that increases in knowledge were likely caused by the program.

Findings also suggest that increasing the amount of time students spend participating in YLI mock elections can have a positive impact on their attitudes and behaviors. According to the authors, "The more exposure students have to the political participation exercises involved in the mock election aspects of the YLI program, the more likely they were to show increased positive outcomes."

Challenge: Translating Civic Engagement into Political Activism

Another experiment conducted by John A. Phillips, a doctoral student at Yale University, tested the effects of two different civic education programs on minority students in Long Beach, CA. Phillips looked at whether inviting students to participate in school clubs would indeed increase their likelihood of joining, and also whether participation would have an effect on their civic knowledge and attitudes. Additionally, he assessed whether students who participated in a one-hour seminar on voting procedures and neighborhood activism had increases in civic knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors.

While invitations to join clubs did increase membership, he found that these two experiential civic education programs had little overall effect on students' civic knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors. Results suggested that five more attendances in school clubs resulted in one more question answered correctly on a nine-item civics test and a half-point increase in political understanding (measured on a four-point scale). In the second experiment, Phillips found that students who participated in a one-hour seminar on voting procedures and neighborhood activism showed no statistically significant relationship between the lessons from the seminar and subsequent changes in civic knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors.

While these experiments did not trigger political activism among the participating students, they did reveal that these students were civically engaged in their community. For example, nearly two-thirds of the students participated in some type of student organization and half were regular attendees. Moreover, over 80 percent of the students took part in some community association or event during the academic year and almost 70 percent did so on a regular basis. According to the author, "Inner-city Long Beach is rich in social capital – the challenge remains for us to translate this civic engagement into political activism." ■

Both reports, "CIRCLE Working Paper 18: Politics: The Missing Link of Responsible Civic Education" and "CIRCLE Working Paper 14: The Relationship between Secondary Education and Civic Development: Results from Two Field Experiments with Inner City Minorities," can be downloaded from CIRCLE's Web site at http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/working_papers.htm

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

50 STATES, 50 RATES: VOTING LAWS DIFFERS FROM STATE TO STATE

Youth voter turnout is influenced by a host of factors including the dynamics of local elections, the effectiveness of outreach efforts, local culture and beliefs, and as new research reveals, state laws. States have implemented a variety of rules and procedures for registering and voting, and CIRCLE-sponsored research shows that these differences matter. Recent CIRCLE research by Dr. Mary Fitzgerald and Dr. Ray Wolfinger examined the impact on youth turnout of allowing citizens to register to vote on Election Day, mailing information to registered voters about the location of their polling place, and other reforms. A summary of the findings can be found in the CIRCLE Fact Sheet “State Voter Registration and Election Day Laws.”

For Today’s Busy Young People Convenience Matters

The voting and registration process can be prohibitively complicated for young people. Several states have implemented new voter registration and voting laws, making it easier for people to vote. According to Dr. Fitzgerald, “Alternative voting methods such as unrestricted absentee voting, in-person early voting, Election Day registration, and mail-balloting are becoming increasingly popular throughout the nation.”

Dr. Mary Fitzgerald’s research suggests that while not all voting reforms are effective, some do have the potential to encourage more young people to vote. Election Day registration—allowing

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voters to register to vote on the same day that they go to the polls to cast a vote— is one reform that holds great promise. Dr. Fitzgerald found that youth turnout was higher by an average of 14 percentage points in Presidential years in states with Election Day registration, and by four percentage points in mid-term election years. Minnesota, Maine, Idaho, New Hampshire, Wisconsin and Wyoming are the only states that allow citizens to register on Election Day (North Dakota does not require voter registration). Election Day registration also increases the likelihood that young voters will be contacted by a political party in Presidential elections by 11 percentage points on average and 18 percentage

points in mid-term elections. Other CIRCLE-funded research has shown that personal appeals can improve voter turnout.

Another promising reform is unrestricted absentee voting, which allows voters to use an absentee ballot without providing an excuse. On average, if states were to allow unrestricted absentee voting, turnout among 18 to 24 year olds would likely increase by four percentage points in mid-term election years. Currently, about two dozen states allow citizens to vote by unrestricted absentee ballot (see Table 1 for a listing of the states that offer unrestricted absentee voting).

Extra Time and Information Helps— Especially for Young and Less Educated

Once a young person is registered to vote, there are several things states can do to increase the chances they will cast a ballot. Some mail information on polling place location along with sample ballots to registered voters. Others keep their polling places open late, and still others require employers to offer time off to vote. A CIRCLE study by Dr. Ray Wolfinger examined the impact that postregistration laws have on young people.



Student Empowerment Training Project

A new report examines the contributions State Students Associations (SSAs)—networks of college and university student governments— have made to the field of youth civic engagement. In addition, the report identifies characteristics of highly successful associations, and provides recommended ways that SSAs may be used to engage more students in future years.

A companion report, “Guide to State Student Associations” catalogues and describes the SSAs that are currently in operation as well as provides contact information for key staff. Both reports received funding from CIRCLE and were written by the Student Empowerment Training Project. They can be downloaded from www.civicyouth.org.

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TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF KEY STATE ELECTION LAWS

State	Election Day Registration	Mail Sample Ballots	Unrestricted Absentee Voting	Mails Information on Poll Location	Extended Voting Hours***	Time Off to Vote***	In-Person Early Voting***
Alabama							
Alaska		■	■	■	■	■	■
Arizona		■	■	■	■		■
Arkansas			■			■	■
California		■	■	■	■	■	
Colorado		■	■	■		■	■
Connecticut					■		
Delaware				■		■	
Florida		■	■	■		■	■
Georgia					■		■
Hawaii			■	■		■	■
Idaho	■		■				■
Illinois						■	
Indiana					■		
Iowa			■			■	■
Kansas			■		■	■	■
Kentucky				■	■	■	
Louisiana						■	
Maine	■		■		■		■
Maryland		■		■	■	■	
Massachusetts					■		
Michigan				■	■		
Minnesota	■				■	■	
Mississippi		■			■		
Missouri				■		■	
Montana			■		■	■	
Nebraska			■		■	■	■
Nevada		■	■	■		■	■
New Hampshire	■						
New Jersey		■		■		■	
New Mexico			■			■	■
New York				■	■	■	■
North Carolina			■	■	■		■
North Dakota*			■				
Ohio					■	■	
Oklahoma			■			■	■
Oregon**			■				
Pennsylvania					■		
Rhode Island					■		
South Carolina							
South Dakota						■	
Tennessee						■	■
Texas						■	■
Utah			■		■	■	
Vermont			■		■		■
Virginia					■		
Washington			■		■	■	
West Virginia					■	■	
Wisconsin	■		■			■	
Wyoming	■		■			■	

* North Dakota does not require voter registration.

** Oregon is a "vote by mail" state.

*** Extended voting hours were shown to have an effect on turnout when offered in combination with mailing sample ballots and mailing information on poll location.


****Except where noted, requires time off for state government and private sector employees. Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Montana, and New Jersey require time off only for state government employees. Georgia only requires private employees.

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Looking specifically at the young registered voters in the 2000 presidential election, Dr. Wolfinger's research tested whether providing longer polling hours and sending information about the voting process would help to increase turnout. Extending voting hours does not seem to have an impact on youth voting, but it does have a positive impact when combined with laws requiring sample ballots and polling place location information to be mailed to voters. In fact, in states that had this combination of laws, voter turnout among 18 to 24 year olds was ten percentage points higher. Simply mailing sample ballots to registered voters also increased turnout among young people by seven percentage points. Requiring employers to provide time off for their employees to vote does not appear to have a significant impact on youth turnout.

TABLE 2: EFFECTS OF ELECTION DAY LAWS ON TURNOUT AMONG YOUNG AND LESS EDUCATED

ELECTION DAY LAW	TURNOUT EFFECT
In states that mailed sample ballots before the 2000 election, turnout was...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≡ 7 percentage points higher among 18 to 24 year old registered voters ≡ 4 percentage points higher among registrants without a high school diploma
In states that mailed polling place information before the 2000 election, turnout was...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≡ 3 percentage points higher among registrants without a high school diploma
In states that mailed sample ballots and polling place location information AND offered extended polling hours on Election Day, turnout was...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≡ 10 percentage points higher in 2000 among 18 to 24 year old registered voters

According to Mark Hugo Lopez, CIRCLE's Research Director, "Many states are taking positive steps to make voting easier and provide more information." However, there are numerous factors that influence how many young people will vote in any given election. The cited research uses statistical models to estimate the effects of voting laws if all other factors are held constant. Dr. Lopez reminds that although these models cannot predict actual turnout levels in a given state, "they do suggest that specific reforms can have a significant impact on turnout." 

Both reports, "CIRCLE Working Paper 15: How Postregistration Laws Affect the Turnout of Registrants" and "CIRCLE Working Paper 01: Easier Voting Methods Boost Youth Turnout," can be downloaded from CIRCLE's Web site at http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/working_papers.htm

LOCAL POLITICAL PARTIES SEE YOUNG VOTERS AS A LOW PRIORITY

Young people hoping to connect to their local political party may have trouble doing so. According to a CIRCLE study, local political party chairs are not paying attention to young people, and they do not see young people as important to the long term success of their parties. The Republican and Democratic party chairs who responded to the survey say the reasons for weak youth participation lie in deficient high school preparation, negative campaigning, and the media.

These are among the findings of a new CIRCLE Working Paper — "Throwing a Better Party: Local Mobilizing Institutions and the Youth Vote." The researchers, Dr. Daniel M. Shea of Allegheny College and Dr. John C. Green of the University of Akron, sought to determine how local parties are connecting with young voters and to find which methods have been effective in doing so. In October of 2003, they surveyed over 805 local party chairs who represent counties containing 87 percent of the nation's population.

Young People Not Viewed as Important to the Long Term Success of the Party

Only eight percent of the party chairs identified young people as the most important demographic for the "long-term success of their party," compared to 21 percent who named senior citizens. Only 12 percent listed young people second, and 18 percent listed them third.

"A key indicator of how far off the radar screen young people are is that few party chairs see them as important for the long-term success of their party," said Shea, who is Director of the Allegheny College Center for Political Participation. "By comparison, senior citizens were mentioned nearly three times as often as the most important group over the long term. Winning the current election is clearly overwhelming any focus on developing a long-term, broad-based following."

Local political party chairs do not seem to be spending their resources on creative get-out-the-vote programs for young voters. Among the 41 percent of party leaders who claimed to have developed specific get-out-the-vote programs for young voters, the vast majority of programs they cited as examples might be dubbed "modest" and "traditional." A common example of a response given was "some people in our party have spoken at area schools." According to the researchers, "only a handful mentioned programs that might be considered significant."

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Political Parties See Decline in Youth Voting as a Serious Problem

Despite the fact that party chairs are doing little to attract young voters, they do say they are concerned about the decline in youth political engagement. Roughly nine-in-ten (88 percent) party leaders say youth political engagement is a serious problem. A similar portion, 93 percent, feel local parties can make a big difference in getting young people involved in politics. But very few are undertaking significant campaigns to attract young voters.

"There is both disturbing and optimistic news in this report," said Green. "Parties have the potential to play a major role in rejuvenating participation in America. But many local parties find youth mobilization difficult, so they are ignoring this group. Traditional party activities aren't working for young people, but the party organizations that are trying novel programs, such as unique social activities, interactive Web sites, and peer-to-peer outreach, are having much better success."

Interestingly, local party chairs do not see their neglect as part of the reason young people are disengaged from the political world. Instead, 71 percent thought high schools do not do enough to prepare young people for citizenship, while 70 percent said negative campaigning turns off young voters. Finally, 65 percent postulated that the media have done much to turn young people away from politics. The results were similar for Democrats and Republicans, with the exception that Democratic Party leaders were a bit more likely to blame candidates, and slightly less likely to blame high school instruction. Moreover, the high cost of campaigns was not seen as a significant cause of youth disengagement. ★

The complete report can be downloaded from http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/working_papers.htm

Just Released: **a best practices guide** illustrating how local parties can attract young voters.

CIRCLE FACT SHEETS

CIRCLE has produced a number of Fact Sheets which are brief documents with basic information and graphs on various topics. The following new Fact Sheets can be found on CIRCLE's Web site:

- ≡ **Youth Voting in the 2004 Battleground States** (August 2004) provides information about the size of the youth electorate in battleground states and past patterns of youth voting in those states.
- ≡ **Time Spent in Volunteer Activity: 2002 and 2003** (August 2004) offers a breakdown of time spent in volunteer activity by states and age groups.
- ≡ **Youth Volunteering in the States: 2002 and 2003** (August 2004) provides volunteer rates by states and age groups.
- ≡ **Civics Curriculum and Civic Skills: Recent Evidence** (August 2004) reports relationships between certain civics topics with outcomes and skills.
- ≡ **Strengths and Weaknesses in U.S. Students' Knowledge and Skills: Analysis from the IEA Civic Education Study** (July 2004) shows American student performance on knowledge measures in relation to the international mean, home background, topics studied in school, and attitudes about types of civic participation.
- ≡ **Service-Learning in K-12 Public Education** (July 2004) offers a glimpse at the state of service-learning in K-12 public schools today, including rates of school and student participation, methods of program integration into schools, types of service projects, and duration of projects.
- ≡ **State Voter Registration and Election Day Laws** (June 2004) compares states' voter registration laws and the effects state voting laws have on turnout.
- ≡ **Youth Voting in the 2004 Democratic Primaries** (March 2004) provides information about youth voting in the 2000 and 2004 Democratic primaries.
- ≡ **Themes Emphasized in Social Studies and Civics Classes** (March 2004) contains information about the content and significance of civics and social studies classes today.
- ≡ **Attention to Media and Trust in Media Sources** (February 2004) compares American youth's exposure to media, use of media, and trust in government and media sources, and political knowledge with that of youth from other developed nations.

FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

From Research to Practice, a column dedicated to recognizing successful “bridges” between researchers and practitioners, reports on research with practical implications for youth civic engagement. Additionally, it presents concrete examples of how practitioners have applied this research to encourage the participation of young people in civic and political life.

FOCUS ON ASIAN AMERICAN YOUTH VOTING

In 2000, about 34 percent of Asian American youth turned out to vote. This is slightly higher than the turnout of either Native American or Latino youth, but significantly less than African American and White youth. This year a number of organizations are targeting Asian American youth to get out the vote.

One of the biggest efforts is being led by the coalition Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote 2004 (APIAVote). APIAVote includes over ten national nonpartisan organizations that encourage civic and electoral participation among the Asian and Pacific Islander American community. APIAVote is working in alliance with Greek-lettered societies and the National Asian American Student Conference to train young organizers on campuses and in communities. Janelle Hu, the National Director of APIAVote, says that recruiting enthusiastic youth has been easy this year. “Young people are incredibly energized for this upcoming election...They want to show that Asian Pacific Islander Americans are serious about participating in American democracy.” The experiences of young APIA organizers reinforce CIRCLE findings that peer-to-peer contact is a powerful tool for getting youth to the polls. “Obviously, direct contact is the best method,” says Hu. Like many youth voter mobilization campaigns, APIAVote is looking to college campuses to form the backbone of its organizing campaign. However, in order to utilize the power of direct contact to reach non-college youth, student organizers are also returning to their home communities to reconnect with friends and neighbors who may not be college bound. Organizers are supplementing face-to-face contact with youth-friendly technology like text messages, instant messages, and personalized emails. “APIA youth are really mobilized in online communities,” explains Hu. “They are instant messaging their friends, reminding them to register and to vote.”

Another organization focused on mobilizing Asian youth is South Asian American Voting Youth or SAAVY. SAAVY is entirely youth-run, with a director and board all under the age of 31. Like APIAVote, SAAVY relies on peer contact, training South Asian youth organizers on selected campuses to target young voters in colleges and communities. SAAVY organizers also encourage young people to reach out to their parents and families so that voter outreach can expand in the South Asian community. Taz Ahmed, founder and director of SAAVY, explains that going door-to-door is not always the most effective form of direct contact,

particularly if your target community does not all live in one same area. Instead, she relies on a strategy of outreach to Asian community organizations and campus groups in order to form pan-Asian coalitions. “No one has ever done pan-Asian organizing, and we’re doing it kind of by default, because there aren’t enough [other young Asian organizers] out there,” says Ahmed. The responses she has received from young people have been very positive. “Everyone gets really excited when they see another South Asian sitting at the table...It’s been such an ignored community that when it comes to voter registration, people don’t feel used. They feel excited which helps to overcome any apathy about voting.”

What are the challenges in reaching Asian American youth? In a new CIRCLE Working Paper, Dr. Janelle Wong emphasizes the need to pay attention to differences among Asian American communities, and to plan outreach strategies accordingly. Her study looks at voter outreach efforts in Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Indian, and Japanese American communities. Dr. Wong found that the geographic and political contexts of communities made for distinctions in language preferences and in receptivity to types of contact. She hypothesizes that communities with a strong ethnic identification, including an active ethnic press and strong ethnic community organizations, may be the most responsive to GOTV contact.

However, some challenges do transcend neighborhoods and languages. For example, Janelle Hu emphasizes that in peer-to-peer campaigns targeting Asian American youth, young organizers need to become comfortable with outreach techniques before they start knocking on doors or dialing numbers. “You really need to take time and let them sit down and practice,” says Hu. “It’s the only way they will be empowered when they go out.” ★

For more information on voter outreach to Asian American youth see:

- CIRCLE Working Paper “Getting Out the Vote among Asian American Young People and Adults in Los Angeles County: A Field Experiment” by Dr. Janelle Wong, available at www.civicyouth.org
- APIAVote 2004: www.apia.vote.org, info@apiavote.org
- South Asian American Voting Youth (SAAVY): www.saaavy.org, taz@saaavy.org

GRANTS

Our Grants column provides information on the CIRCLE grant application process. An up-to-the-minute list of funded proposals on youth civic engagement, their authors, and supported institutions is also included.

Last winter CIRCLE announced its first ever youth-led research grant competition for research on youth civic engagement. The RFP generate a tremendous amount of interest. Approximately

100 letters of inquiry from youth teams were submitted. The competition concluded in May 2004. Below is a list of grants funded through this competition. *

PROPOSALS FUNDED FOR YOUTH-LED RESEARCH

1. **“A Youth-Produced Documentary: Youth Perceptions of Civic Engagement”**
Matt Bradley, Spy Hop Productions, Salt Lake City, UT
2. **“Exploring the Effects of Student Engagement on Urban School Reform”**
Megan Howey, Harmony School Education Center & Harmony/VISTA Service Learning Demonstration Project, Indianapolis, IN
3. **“Youth Informing Wisconsin’s Future: Assessing the Impact of Place-based Civics Education in Rural Communities”**
Ricky Rolfsmeier, Wisconsin Rural Challenge, Hollandale WI
4. **“Civic Engagement and School Safety: The Roles of Student & Parent Involvement in Parent Teacher Associations”**
Elaine Wolf, Center for Community Alternatives Syracuse, NY

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