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The Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement

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46,000 Citizens Under the Age of Thirty Participate in West Virginia Democratic Primary West Virginia Youth Support Candidate Clinton

**Youth Voter Experts Available for Interviews
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Washington, DC – At least 16 percent of eligible West Virginia citizens under the age of 30 participated in last night's Democratic primary, according to preliminary estimates by CIRCLE (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement). Young voters supported Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. In West Virginia, unlike most other states, we can only estimate the level of participation in the Democratic primary since there were no Republican exit polls conducted.

**Table 1 –Presidential Democratic Primary Participation in 2008
Citizens Under 30**

West Virginia Primary	Youth Turnout Rate	Number of Youth Who Voted	Youth as Share of All Voters
2008 (17-29)	16%*	46,300	14%

Source: The share of primary voters is obtained from the 2008 West Virginia Democratic exit polls conducted by Edison/Mitofsky. The number of votes cast is obtained from the CNN.com (as of 7:00 am eastern time, 5/ 14 /2008; 100% of precincts reporting.)

*The youth turnout rate present in Table 1 is the *overall* turnout rate for the state. Because no Republican exit polls were conducted in WV, the numerator for overall turnout rate includes **only** young voters who participated in the Democratic primary. The denominator includes ALL eligible young voters in the state of West Virginia (Democrats, Republicans and Independents). Thus the turnout rate does not the full participation of young people in WV's primaries.
See p.2 for definitions.

The results from last night in West Virginia punctuate the findings of national focus groups that CIRCLE conducted last fall. The research showed that college students are deeply concerned about issues, involved personally as volunteers, and ready to consider voting. But they want political leaders to be positive, to address real problems, and to call on all Americans to be constructively involved.

"Young Americans have been turning out to vote at remarkable rates in these primaries. This reflects their deep concern about the critical issues at stake and the impact of this election on our country's future," said CIRCLE Director, Peter Levine. "Since 2000, young people have been volunteering at high rates and are becoming more interested in news and public affairs. Now they are ready to consider voting as a way of addressing major problems. The Millennials are beginning to make their distinctive and lasting mark on American politics."

Because there is no actual count of the number of votes cast by young people in the West Virginia primaries, we can only estimate their level of participation. The estimate of votes cast is calculated by multiplying the youth share of all voters (source: exit polls) by the actual number of votes cast (source: media tallies). The turnout rate estimate is calculated by dividing the estimated of votes cast by young people in the Democratic primary by the estimated number of young West Virginia citizens (source: 2008 March Demographic File, US Census).

Any comparisons of youth voter turnout among states should be made with caution since the rules for participation vary by state. Furthermore, we cannot compare youth turnout levels in 2008 to youth turnout to 2004 or 2000 since no exit polls were conducted for those years.

Youth turnout has been much higher in the 2008 primaries than in recent years. In some states, youth turnout has tripled or quadrupled. More than 5 million young Americans have voted in the primaries to date.

Barack Obama was the clear choice among youth voters in the Democratic primaries. He garnered support from the majority of youth voters in 17 of the 20 states. West Virginia youth supported Clinton.



Table 2– Youth Vote Choice
Democratic Primary

Clinton	Obama
56%	38%

Source: www.cnn.com

The increase in youth turnout observed in most primaries so far continues a trend observed in other elections since 2000. In the 2006 congressional elections, the voter turnout rate among 18-to 29-year-olds increased by three percentage points compared to the previous congressional election of 2002. And in the 2004 presidential election, the national youth voter turnout rate rose 9 percentage points compared to 2000, reaching 49 percent. In 2004, under-30-year-olds were registered to vote at the highest rate in 30 years.

Definitions

Youth: For the purpose of the West Virginia primary, we define “youth” as citizens between the ages of 17 and 29 on May 11, 2008.

Number of youth who voted: An estimate of how many youth participated.

Youth share primary participants: An estimate of the number of young people who participated in the primaries as a percentage of the number of *all people* who participated in the primaries.

Youth turnout rate: An estimate of the number of young people who participated in the Democratic primary as a percentage of the total number of young people who were eligible to participate in either primary.

The youth turnout rate is the best indicator of how young Americans are engaging in the political process. The other statistics—the sheer number of youth participants and the youth share of the electorate—can change because of factors unrelated to youth engagement.

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. Since 2001, CIRCLE has conducted, collected, and funded research on the civic and political participation of young Americans. CIRCLE is based in the University of West Virginia’s School of Public Policy and is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York and several other foundations.