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…	≡ 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…	≡ 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…	≡ 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."

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

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.