

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.

## EXAMPLES OF ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE 2010 MIDTERM ELECTIONS

The 2008 election saw youth voter turnout for 18- to-29-year-olds exceed 50% for the first time since 1992 and for only the third time since 18-year-olds were given the right to vote.<sup>1</sup> Many are wondering what will happen at the polls on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, and whether young people will follow 2008 with significant turnout in a mid-term election. This article presents examples of just a few of the many organizations that are investing time and energy in reaching out to young people to encourage them to vote in the 2010 mid-term elections. Many of these organizations rely on peer-to-peer canvassing to reach potential voters, a strategy that research suggests can increase turnout among young voters.

### COLLEGE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE

In August 2010, the College Republican National Committee (CRNC) will be launching a new awareness program and ramping up infrastructure in the lead-up to the 2010 elections.

The CRNC will be deploying over 20 highly-trained young people with campaign experience to act as advisors and to support and work on behalf of the College Republican chapters. The focal areas include campuses in six states – MI, OH, PA, FL, CO and NV. Each campus will determine the specific strategies they will utilize to “Recruit, Train, Engage, Mobilize,” according to Rob Lockwood, CRNC Director of Communications.

Lockwood said that even though CRNC’s main focus is on six states, every chapter has a Facebook group and will use this and YouTube as tools to help them meet their 2010 goals. CRNC is also launching a year-long awareness program that will provide talking points and content for 2010 election outreach. Lockwood says “Don’t Put It On Our Tab” seeks to build awareness about the national debt. The campaign will have a specific Web site and a video that will summarize the overall message the CRNC is trying to get across.

### NATIONAL STUDENT/PARENT MOCK ELECTION

First held in 1980, the National Student Parent Mock Election (NSPME) has grown significantly since then, engaging 15,000 schools and five million young people in 2008 election programming. “Since the first Mock Election, nearly 50 million young voters have cast their ballots and, in the process, discovered what it means to be an American citizen and the value of citizenship in our democracy.”

In 2010, the NSPME is gearing up to provide schools, parents and young people with resources for elections in their state. This effort will include state-based ballots, curriculum materials, a free online game called “The Road to the Capitol” and more. NSPME

has a long list of partners, including many state election officials, who act as voluntary state coordinators for NSPME in over twenty states.

Gloria Kirshner, co-founder of the NSPME, reports that evaluation of the project shows increased discussion of national issues between students and parents, a “decreased sense of powerlessness among students” and an “endless anecdotal record of parents voting for [the] first time because youth have campaigned for them to do so.”



### VOTEAGAIN2010.COM

VoteAgain2010.com is a "joint website representing over 30 501(c)(3) youth organizations, and several media partners, working to increase youth turnout in the 2010 midterm elections....The site was developed to serve as an online destination that connects young voters with the many midterm election efforts taking place across the country. The site is powered by the understanding that action on an array of issues will be decided in the halls of Congress, by members of Congress that we have the power to elect."

There are more than 30 collaborating organizations that will be coming together to implement a National Voter Registration Day on September 28th and that will also be promoting a video contest on the site. The site has information on how to register or pledge to vote, as well as materials on how to run a voter registration campaign, volunteer with a youth organization and learn about national issues.

"Vote Again 2010 is driven by the understanding that while members of Congress may have the power to vote for or against legislation, we have the power to vote for or against everyone of them," says Sara Haile-Mariam, Communications and Outreach Associate at Campus Progress, a collaborating organization. "There's a power in simply acknowledging the influence of the midterm elections and the potential for young [people] to impact the individuals who get elected, and subsequently the decisions that they make, in a way that resonates for years and decades to come."

### AMERICAN DEMOCRACY PROJECT AT WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

The American Democracy Project (ADP)<sup>1</sup> is a multi-campus initiative focused on higher education's role in preparing the next generation of informed, engaged citizens for our democracy.<sup>2</sup> Every year campuses who participate in the program (220 campuses at this time) host events that engage and mobilize their campus. This fall many campuses across the country will be involved in efforts focused on voting and voter registration.



The ADP chapter at William Paterson University is running a campaign called *Youth Vote 2K10: No Vote, No Piece*. The campaign will involve "Youth Vote Zap Teams" who will be "conducting youth voter education and registration outreach" around campus and in three Paterson, NJ area high schools.

According to the organizers, another aspect of the initiative will be to employ a "text-based 'Youth Vote Facts' campaign that will disseminate important information regarding registration and absentee ballot application deadlines along with facts about the power of the youth vote in NJ."

### ENDNOTES

- 1 Youth voter turnout for 18- to 29-year olds was 51% in 2008, 52% in 1992, and 55% in 1972.
- 2 <http://www.aascu.org/programs/adp/about.htm>
- 3 [http://www.nationalmockelection.org/why\\_latest.html](http://www.nationalmockelection.org/why_latest.html)
- 4 <http://www.voteagain2010.com/about/>



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