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Will Ballot Measures in 2014 Help Boost Youth Turnout in Those States?

New Analysis from CIRCLE Shows Ballot Measures Alone Don't Impact Youth Turnout; Voter Mobilization and Media Coverage More Likely to Have Impact

Medford/Somerville, MA – The [Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement \(CIRCLE\)](http://www.civicyouth.org) – the preeminent, non-partisan research center on youth engagement based at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service – today released [new analysis](#) looking at whether controversial ballot measures at the state level have the ability to influence youth voter turnout.

The [analysis released today](#) by CIRCLE looks at states with controversial ballot measures during the past four election cycles. Specifically, the analysis looks at the role twenty previous ballot measures relating to same-sex marriage and marijuana legalization in the 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012 election cycle may have impacted youth voter turnout.

This new analysis concludes, **“This final point is crucial: it appears that the ballot measure does not affect turnout alone without voter mobilization and media coverage.”** The analysis goes on, **“we cannot conclude that the existence of a controversial ballot measure on these topics automatically increases youth voter turnout, though it is possible that ballot measures could have subtle, indirect effects on turnout.”**

Specifically, of the twenty ballot measures examined the [analysis](#) found:

- Six to eight had youth turnout rates that may have been influenced by the referenda. These states saw youth turnout increase and a possible departure from the previous state trend.
- For example, in 2012 Colorado's ballot measure about recreational marijuana use may have contributed to a rise in youth voter turnout. Previously, the state's youth turnout rate mostly followed the national trends, but in 2012 Colorado youth had a voter turnout rate of 55.7%, more than 10 percentage points above the national average. The reason could have been the marijuana measure.
- However, there are more examples of states with ballot measures where there was no evident deviation from the previous state or national trends, such as

Washington State in 2012 which had ballot measures to both legalize same-sex marriage and to legalize marijuana. However, the voter turnout of young Washingtonians has typically followed the national trend, and did so in 2012 as well.

- Subsequently, Arizona citizens put a question on the ballot about banning same-sex marriage in 2008. Before 2008, Arizona's youth voter turnout had followed the national trend, but had also been below the national average. In the year of the ballot measure, this trend remained the same, with only a very slight rise in youth turnout, like the national trend.

Throughout this election season, CIRCLE's [2014 Election Center](#) has offered a myriad of new products providing comprehensive analysis of young voters, both nationally and in targeted states and congressional districts across the country. Some of these products include: an [Interactive Congressional District Map](#) and [Interactive State-by-State Voting Map](#); as well as [The Youth Vote in 2014: Congressional House Races to Watch](#) and [2014 Midterms: Young Voters in Competitive Senate Races](#). CIRCLE's team of experts are also available to help put current data on youth voters and politics into a broader context based on their own research and knowledge of scholarly literature on the subject area.

**** To speak to one of CIRCLE's youth vote experts or for further information on youth voters in America, please contact Kristofer Eisenla at kristofer@lunaeisenlamedia.com or 202-670-5747****

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CIRCLE (www.civicyouth.org) is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center that studies young people in politics and presents detailed data on young voters in all 50 states. CIRCLE is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University.

The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service (<http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/>) is a national leader whose model and research are setting the standard for higher education's role in civic engagement education. Serving every school of Tufts University, Tisch College creates an enduring culture that prepares students to be lifelong active citizens.

Tufts University (<http://www.tufts.edu/>), located on three Massachusetts campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville and Grafton, and in Talloires, France, is recognized as one of the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across the university's schools is widely encouraged.