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Civics Unplugged

Abstract:

The following paper discusses selection of Pennsylvania as the state to increase youth voter turnout by 3-5%, burning civic issues for the youth, ways and means to improve youth-voter turnout along-with action points and deliverables and the considerations which are to be kept in mind while doing the same.

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Youth voter turnout ratio:

The ‘youth voter turnout ratio’ typically refers to the percentage of eligible voters aged 18-29 who actually voted in an election.

How Pennsylvania is a better state to work on improving youth voter turnout when compared to Arizona, Michigan, North Carolina, Georgia?

When comparing Pennsylvania to Arizona, Michigan, North Carolina, and Georgia in terms of working to improve youth voter turnout, Pennsylvania may offer certain advantages:

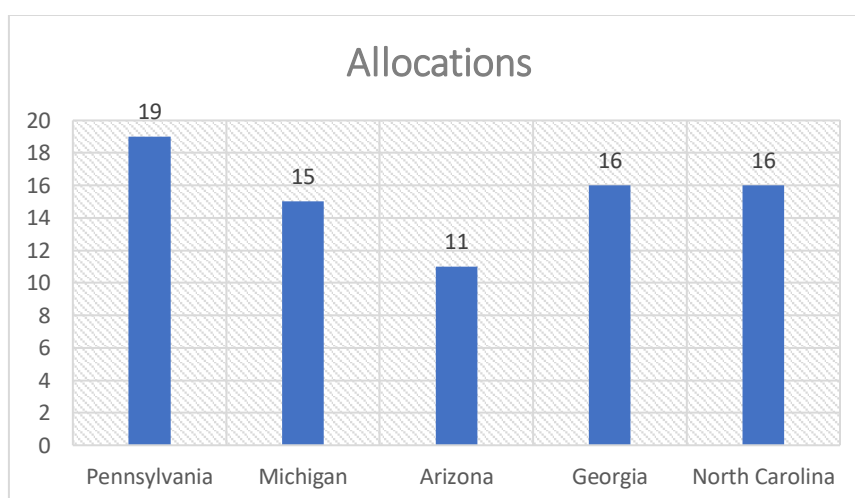
1. **Size and Electoral Importance:** Pennsylvania is a larger swing state with 20 electoral votes, making it a significant battleground in presidential elections. The larger number of electoral votes means that efforts to increase youth voter turnout in Pennsylvania could potentially have a greater impact on the overall outcome of the election compared to states with fewer electoral votes.

a. Allocation among the States

Electoral votes are allocated among the States based on the Census. Every State is allocated a number of votes equal to the number of Senators and Representatives in its U.S. Congressional delegation—two votes for its Senators in the U.S. Senate plus a number of votes equal to the number of its Congressional districts.

b. Current allocations

The allocations below are based on the 2020 Census. They are effective for the 2024 and 2028 presidential elections.



(Total Electoral Votes: 538; Majority Needed to Elect: 270)

<https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/allocation>

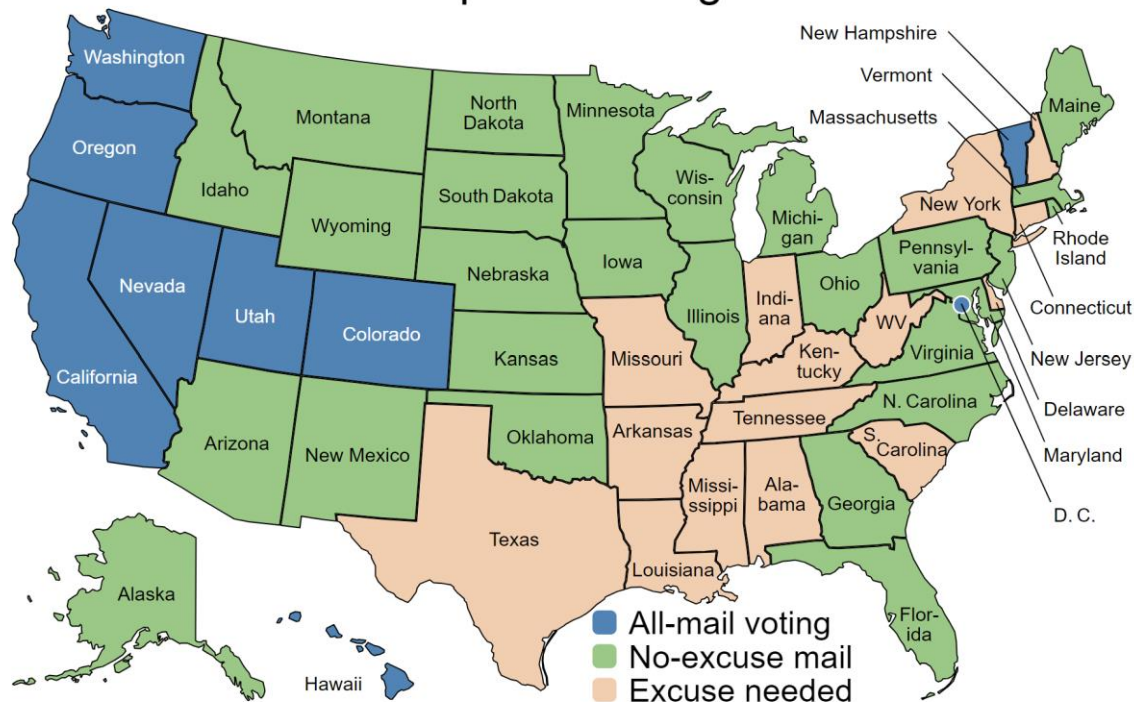
2. **Demographic Composition:** Pennsylvania has a diverse population, including urban centers like Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, as well as suburban and rural areas. This demographic diversity provides opportunities to engage with a wide range of young voters from different backgrounds and communities, allowing for targeted outreach efforts tailored to specific demographic groups.
3. **Voter Registration and Mail-In Voting:** Pennsylvania's voter registration rules and mail-in voting options, including online registration and no-excuse absentee voting, provide opportunities to implement strategies aimed at increasing youth voter registration and participation. The convenience of mail-in voting without requiring an excuse can make it easier for young voters to cast their ballots. The state specific benefits are as under:
 - i. Pennsylvania permits [online voter registration](#).
 - ii. Pennsylvania uses [automatic voter registration](#): Under an **automatic voter registration system**, eligible voters are automatically registered to vote whenever they interact with government agencies (e.g., departments of motor vehicles). Eligible voters are registered by default, although they may request not to be registered.

- iii. Pennsylvania permits no-excuse [early voting](#)¹: Early voting permits citizens to cast ballots in person at a polling place prior to an election. In states that permit no-excuse early voting, a voter does not have to provide an excuse for being unable to vote on Election Day.
- iv. In Pennsylvania, [polls](#) are open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- v. Pennsylvania does not require [identification](#) to vote except for first-time voters.
- vi. Pennsylvania holds [closed primary elections](#).
- vii. Pennsylvania has tools for [verifying voter registration](#) and [checking the status](#) of provisional ballots.

4. **Historical Electoral Significance:** Pennsylvania has a history of being a battleground state in presidential elections, with close contests and shifts between Democratic and Republican candidates. This historical significance can attract attention and resources from political campaigns, advocacy organizations, and media outlets, creating opportunities to leverage existing infrastructure and momentum to mobilize young voters.

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No-excuse postal voting in the US



5. **Political Climate:** Pennsylvania's political climate, characterized by competitive statewide races and a relatively balanced partisan divide, can create an environment conducive to engaging young voters and mobilizing them to participate in elections. The state's status as a swing state means that youth voter turnout could potentially sway the outcome of elections, making it a priority for campaign efforts and civic engagement initiatives.

While each state presents its own unique opportunities and challenges for increasing youth voter turnout, Pennsylvania's size, electoral importance, demographic composition, voter registration rules, and political climate position it as a promising state for focused efforts to empower young voters and strengthen their participation in the democratic process.

History of youth voter turnout:

Youth voter turnout in presidential elections in the United States has risen from **44% in 2016 to 55% in 2020.**² This was quite a steep rise as compared to rise in preceding elections in the USA.

Analysis of Youth Voter Turnout in Pennsylvania (2020):

- In the 2020 presidential election, Pennsylvania saw a relatively high youth voter turnout compared to previous elections.
- According to estimates from the Centre for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), approximately 60-63% of eligible young voters in Pennsylvania cast ballots in the 2020 election. This represented a significant increase in youth voter turnout compared to previous presidential elections and played a crucial role in shaping the electoral outcome in the state. Also, the youth voter turnout rate in **Pennsylvania** is slightly above the national average for youth voter turnout, but there is still room for improvement.

² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/984745/youth-voter-turnout-presidential-elections-us/>

Burning issues for Pennsylvanian youth in 2020:

In the 2020 US presidential election, several burning issues were particularly relevant to young voters in the state of Pennsylvania. These issues reflected the priorities, concerns, and values of young Pennsylvanians.

1. **COVID-19 Pandemic Response:** The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on public health, the economy, and daily life were top concerns for young voters in Pennsylvania. Candidates' plans for controlling the spread of the virus, supporting healthcare workers, and addressing economic fallout resonated with young Pennsylvanians affected by the pandemic. (This issue is not relevant for the upcoming elections)
2. **Economic Opportunity and Jobs:** Candidates' proposals for stimulating economic growth, supporting small businesses, and increasing access to affordable education were important considerations for young people facing economic challenges.
3. **Healthcare Access and Affordability:** Healthcare affordability and access to quality healthcare services were critical issues for young voters in Pennsylvania
4. **Climate Change and Environmental Protection:** Climate change and environmental sustainability were key concerns for young voters in Pennsylvania, a state with a diverse landscape and natural resources. Candidates' plans for addressing climate change, promoting renewable energy, and protecting the environment were important factors for young Pennsylvanians committed to environmental activism and conservation efforts.
5. **Social Justice and Racial Equity:** Issues of social justice, racial equity, and police reform were prominent in the 2020 election, following widespread protests for racial justice. Young voters in Pennsylvania supported candidates who addressed systemic racism, criminal justice reform, and civil rights issues, reflecting their commitment to social justice and equality.
6. **Education Funding and School Safety:** Candidates' proposals for supporting public education, reducing disparities between school districts, and ensuring student safety resonated with young Pennsylvanians and their families.

These burning issues reflect the diverse interests, concerns, and values of young voters in Pennsylvania and played a significant role in shaping their engagement and electoral decisions in the 2020 presidential election. While deciding the course of action for improving the youth-voter turnout, the above considerations need to be kept in mind.

Youth and civic engagement issues in Pennsylvania:

Some key issues related to youth and civic engagement in Pennsylvania include:

1. **Voter Access and Participation:** Efforts to increase voter registration, expand access to early voting and absentee ballots, and remove barriers to participation can help empower young voters and increase turnout.
2. **Civic Education:** Civic education programs in Pennsylvania can help young people understand the importance of voting, the electoral process, and their role in shaping their communities and society.
3. **Youth Representation and Leadership:** Promoting youth representation and leadership in government and decision-making processes is important for ensuring that young people have a voice in shaping policies and programs that affect their lives. Initiatives to support youth leadership development, mentorship programs, and opportunities for youth involvement in local government can help empower young Pennsylvanians to become active participants in civic life.
4. **Social Justice, Equity and addressing racial disparities:** Issues of social justice, racial equity, and inclusion are important concerns for young people in Pennsylvania, particularly in diverse urban areas like Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Efforts to address systemic racism, promote equity and inclusion, and amplify the voices of marginalized communities can help foster a more equitable and just society for young Pennsylvanians. In Pennsylvania, people of color are overrepresented in prison, on probation, and on parole. Black Pennsylvanians are 5.5 times as likely to be under DOC control as their white counterparts and Latino Pennsylvanians are 0.0 times as likely.³ The issue of racial disparity is a burning issue for the Pennsylvanians.
5. **Environmental Sustainability:** Pennsylvania is a state with diverse natural resources and ecosystems. Advocacy for environmental conservation, renewable energy initiatives, and sustainability efforts can empower young Pennsylvanians to be stewards of the environment and advocate for policies that prioritize environmental protection.
6. **Access to Education and Opportunity:** Efforts to address disparities in education funding, support workforce development programs, and create pathways to economic

³ <https://dashboard.cor.pa.gov/us-pa/narratives/racial-disparities/2>

opportunity can help young Pennsylvanians thrive and contribute to their communities.

7. **Mental Health and Well-Being:** Supporting the mental health and well-being of young people is an important aspect of civic engagement in Pennsylvania. Initiatives to promote mental health awareness, increase access to mental health services, and reduce stigma around seeking help can help support the overall health and resilience of young Pennsylvanians.

Reasons for low turnout:

Youth voter turnout in Pennsylvania, can be influenced by various factors that contribute to lower levels of engagement among young voters. Some reasons why youth voter turnout may be low in Pennsylvania include:

1. **Lack of Civic Education:** Many young people in Pennsylvania may not receive adequate civic education in schools, leaving them unfamiliar with the electoral process, their voting rights, and the importance of civic engagement. Without this foundational knowledge, young people may be less likely to participate in elections.
2. **Barriers to Voter Registration:** Pennsylvania's voter registration process, while accessible, may still pose barriers for young voters, especially those who are first-time voters or transient college students. Complicated registration requirements or lack of awareness about registration deadlines may deter young people from registering to vote.
3. **Limited Access to Polling Places:** On Election Day, young voters in Pennsylvania, particularly those living in densely populated urban areas or rural communities, may face challenges accessing polling places due to long lines, limited polling locations, or transportation barriers. These logistical hurdles can discourage young people from voting.
4. **Disillusionment with Politics:** Young people in Pennsylvania, like elsewhere in the country, may feel disillusioned or disengaged from politics, viewing politicians as untrustworthy or disconnected from their concerns. Perceptions of political corruption, gridlock, or lack of representation may lead young voters to believe that their vote won't make a difference.
5. **Competing Priorities and Time Constraints:** Young people in Pennsylvania, especially college students or those balancing work and family obligations, may have

busy schedules and competing priorities that make it difficult to prioritize voting.

Time constraints or lack of flexibility in work or school schedules may prevent young voters from casting their ballots.

6. **Lack of Mobilization Efforts:** Political campaigns and civic organizations in Pennsylvania may not prioritize outreach to young voters or invest sufficient resources in mobilizing youth turnout. Without targeted outreach efforts, young people may not receive the information or encouragement they need to participate in elections.

Addressing these barriers and increasing youth voter turnout in Pennsylvania requires comprehensive efforts to improve civic education, reduce logistical barriers to voting, mobilize young voters through targeted outreach and engagement strategies, and foster a culture of civic participation and empowerment among young people.

Comprehensive plan to increase youth voter turnout:

To increase youth voter turnout with a \$1 million budget and a 7-month timeline, while considering logistical and economical constraints, several considerations should be made:

1. **Logistical Considerations:**
 - Identifying target demographics and geographic areas with the highest concentration of young voters.
 - Planning voter registration drives, educational workshops, and outreach events in accessible locations for young people, such as schools, colleges, community centres, and online platforms.
 - Coordinating logistics for community events, including venue booking, permits, staffing, and transportation.
2. **Economical Considerations:**
 - Maximizing the impact of the budget by prioritizing cost-effective strategies, such as digital outreach and grassroots mobilization efforts.
 - Negotiating partnerships and in-kind donations with local organizations, businesses, and vendors to reduce expenses for venue rentals, supplies, and promotional materials.
 - Monitoring expenditures closely to ensure that funds are allocated efficiently and effectively across all campaign activities.

Ways to overcome these constraints include:

1. **Strategic Partnerships:** Forge partnerships with youth organizations, community groups, and educational institutions to leverage resources, networks, and expertise. Collaborating with existing stakeholders can help maximize impact and reduce costs.
2. **Volunteer Engagement:** Recruit and mobilize volunteers from the target demographic to assist with campaign activities, such as voter registration drives, canvassing, and event coordination. Volunteers can help amplify the campaign's reach and effectiveness without additional financial burden.
3. **Digital Innovation:** Embrace digital tools and platforms for outreach, engagement, and communication. Utilizing social media, email campaigns, and online advertising can be cost-effective ways to reach young voters and drive turnout.
4. **Efficient Resource Allocation:** Prioritize investments in high-impact strategies that are likely to yield the greatest return on investment, such as targeted outreach efforts in key battleground areas, voter registration initiatives, and peer-to-peer mobilization tactics.

The action plan for increasing the youth voter turnout along-with suggested time-lines are as under:

Plan / action point	Benchmark/ Success Metrics
1. Research and Planning (0.5 month): - Conduct thorough research to understand the demographics, behaviours, and preferences of young voters in the target area (e.g., Pennsylvania). - Identify key barriers to youth voter turnout and opportunities for engagement. - Develop a strategic plan outlining goals, objectives, and tactics for increasing youth turnout.	- Completion of demographic analysis report. - Strategic plan outlining goals, objectives, and tactics.
2. Civic Education and Outreach (2 months): - Implement a comprehensive civic education campaign targeting schools, colleges, and community organizations. - Develop educational materials, workshops, and presentations to inform young people about the	- Number of schools, colleges, and organizations reached. - Number of workshops and presentations conducted. - Voter registration numbers among young people.

electoral process, voting rights, and the importance of civic engagement. • Partner with educators, student groups, and youth organizations to facilitate voter registration drives and civic education events.	
3. Social Media and Digital Outreach (2 months): • Launch targeted social media campaigns to reach young voters where they are, utilizing platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and Twitter. • Create engaging content, including videos, infographics, and interactive quizzes, to raise awareness about voting deadlines, registration requirements, and key issues. • Social media campaigns can include educational content about voter registration, voting deadlines, and the importance of civic engagement, as well as inspiring messages encouraging young people to exercise their right to vote. • Utilize targeted advertising to reach specific demographics, geographic areas, or interest groups among young voters. • Invest in digital advertising to amplify campaign messages and reach specific demographic groups of young voters. • Encourage user-generated content, such as sharing selfies with "I Voted" stickers or videos discussing why voting is important, to amplify the message and create a sense of community around civic engagement.	• Number of followers or subscribers on social media platforms. • Impressions: Total number of views or impressions of campaign content. • Engagement rate: Percentage of followers who interact with campaign content through likes, comments, shares, or clicks. • Social media mentions and hashtags: Tracking mentions of the campaign or related hashtags across social media platforms. • Surveys or polls: Conducting pre- and post-campaign surveys to measure changes in awareness, attitudes, and perceptions related to voting and civic engagement among the target audience. Brand sentiment analysis: Monitoring sentiment and feedback from social media mentions to gauge overall perception of the campaign and its messaging. • Click-through rate (CTR): Percentage of users who click on campaign links or calls to action (CTAs) embedded within social media posts. • Sign-ups for events or initiatives: Number of registrations or RSVPs for voter education workshops, community events, or volunteer opportunities facilitated through social media channels.
4. Community Events and Mobilization (1.5 months):	• Attendance at community events and town hall meetings.

• Organize community events, town hall meetings, and candidate forums to provide opportunities for young people to engage directly with political candidates and elected officials. • Mobilize volunteers and youth ambassadors to canvass neighbourhoods, distribute campaign materials, and encourage voter registration and turnout. • Trending youth icon, celebrity, influencer can be hired. • Host youth-focused rallies, concerts, and cultural events to energize young voters and build momentum for the election.	• Number of volunteers recruited and hours contributed. • Turnout at rallies and cultural events.
5. Partnerships and Collaboration (1 month): • Collaborate with colleges, universities, and educational institutions to integrate civic engagement initiatives into curricula and campus activities. • Host voter registration drives and voter education events on college campuses to make it easy for students to register to vote and learn about the issues at stake in elections. • Engage with faith-based organizations, civic associations, and cultural centres to leverage existing networks and mobilize young voters from diverse backgrounds. • Organize candidate forums, town hall meetings, and issue-focused discussions to provide opportunities for young voters to engage directly with candidates and elected officials. • Collaborate with student organizations, academic departments, and campus clubs to co-sponsor events and leverage existing networks to reach a broader audience of young people. • Forge partnerships with youth-led organizations, advocacy groups, and community-based nonprofits that are already working to mobilize young voters and promote civic engagement.	• Number of partnerships established. • Collaborative initiatives launched with colleges and community organizations. • Engagement with diverse community groups.

• Collaborate on joint initiatives, such as voter registration drives, canvassing efforts, and issue advocacy campaigns, to pool resources and amplify impact. • Tap into the expertise and networks of youth organizations to inform campaign strategies, messaging, and outreach tactics tailored to the preferences and priorities of young voters. • Empower youth leaders and activists to take on leadership roles within the campaign or initiative, providing opportunities for skill-building, mentorship, and meaningful participation in the democratic process.	
6. Evaluation and Follow-Up (ongoing): • Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of campaign activities using metrics such as voter registration numbers, attendance at events, and social media engagement. • Solicit feedback from young voters to identify areas for improvement and adjust strategies accordingly. • Continue to engage with young voters beyond the election cycle, building a sustained culture of civic participation and empowerment.	• Data analysis of voter registration and turnout rates. • Feedback surveys completed by young voters and stakeholders. • Adaptation of strategies based on evaluation findings.

By adhering to this timeline and monitoring success metrics closely, the campaign can effectively measure progress and adapt strategies to maximize impact within the given 7-month timeframe and budget constraints.