

Political talk

NATIONAL STUDENT CONFERENCE TO TAP YOUTH'S POLITICAL CLOUT

Students and youth are an untapped force in American politics, largely ignored by politicians.

To activate that potential energy, over 550 student leaders nationwide are convening the National Student Conference on Voter Participation to address the issues of student concern in the 1988 elections.

The conference, which will be held in Washington, D.C. September 30-October 2, will address two main obstacles to voter participation rates; a lack of information on voter registration procedures and a lack of information on the candidates, their platforms, and the issues.

"While studies show that young people are more likely to express interest in politics and optimism about the effects of their vote," stated Laura Saunders, student government president at Borough of Manhattan Community College, "political parties and candidates spend less time and resources on outreach to young voters than to any other age group of the electorate."

"It's a Catch-22 situation. Politicians write off the student vote because they think students don't care, and students are less inclined to vote because politicians ignore them" explained Catherine Crane, director of the National Student Campaign for Voter Registration.

The student event will combat voter participation obstacles through a combination of activities over the conference weekend:

- Keynote speeches will provide the political parties an opportunity to articulate their platforms,

- issue sessions on higher education, economic opportunity, foreign policy, AIDS, the environment, civil rights and arms control will allow students to gain substantive information on issues facing the country,

- workshops on voter participation strategies and leadership skill led by the League of Women Voters, Project VOTE, NAACP and other will prepare students to

carry out effective voter participation drives,

- campus delegations from Florida to California and Massachusetts to Texas will meet to share their experience from the conference and one another.

"Young voters are a sleeping giant as a political force" asserted Maureen Kirk, chair of the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG) and a student at University of Oregon. "There are as many 18-24 year olds as there are 65 year olds and over. To exercise our political clout as effectively as the seniors do, we must get registered, get mobilized and get out and vote."

The 1988 conference is based on the highly successful 1984 National Student Conference of Voter Registration (NSCVR) held at Harvard University. The 1984 conference was called to help stem the rapid drop in youth voter participation rates. Between 1972 and 1980, voting among 18-24 year olds declined from about 50 percent to 39 percent, the lowest percentage of any democracy. The NSCVR conference resulted in the registration of 500,000 new voters and helped to bring about the first increase in youth voter participation rates in over a decade.

"Once registered, 80 percent of all 18-24 year olds vote on election day" said Fred Azcarate, president of the United States Student Association. "It's time for the parties to take a serious look at the young voters that are now establishing voting patterns they are likely to follow for the next half-century, and it's time for students and youth to hold the parties accountable for their actions on student related issues."

The National Student Conference on Voter Participation is being sponsored by the Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs), The United States Student Association (USSA), the National Student Campaign on Voter Registration (NSCVR), The National Student Educational Fund Student Empowerment Training Project (SET).

Campus Liaison speaks out from University Park

David Paukovitz
College Democrat Commonwealth
Campus Liaison, University Park

With the start of Fall semester 1988, the College Democrats at University Park have become more organized than ever. Many plans have been made for the upcoming year and many goals have been set. One of these goals is to increase membership within our organization. A substantial number of students are currently members of College Democrats at University Park, but we are still looking to expand. With the help of interested students at all the Commonwealth Campuses, we can accomplish this goal. We're looking for students who are willing to put time into organizing a College Democrat group at their respective Commonwealth Campus. Once a group of interested

students has been established at a campus, they will be in constant contact and work in conjunction with the College Democrats a U. P. and the Democratic County Chairman in that county. For those students who are interested, my address and phone number are below, or leave your name and phone number with the Student Government Association at your campus. I am looking forward to working with you as soon as possible, especially to help with the Dukakis campaign as the presidential election draws near.

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Finally, Student Government is available for the students at this campus for the students and plays a role in University affairs. SGA wants the students to have a fulfilling year of cultural events, dances, and other activities which can enhance a student's social awareness and enthusiasm to get involved. If you or your friends have ideas that can get people involved with school spirit and pride, come to our office. Spirit and pride are very important elements

at Penn State.

Well, I really hope students at this campus will come to our office in the future and get involved with the Student Government. As stated before, we are located in the S.L.A.M. center, and our office hours are 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Get involved, join committees, and help make the year great. See ya around!



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