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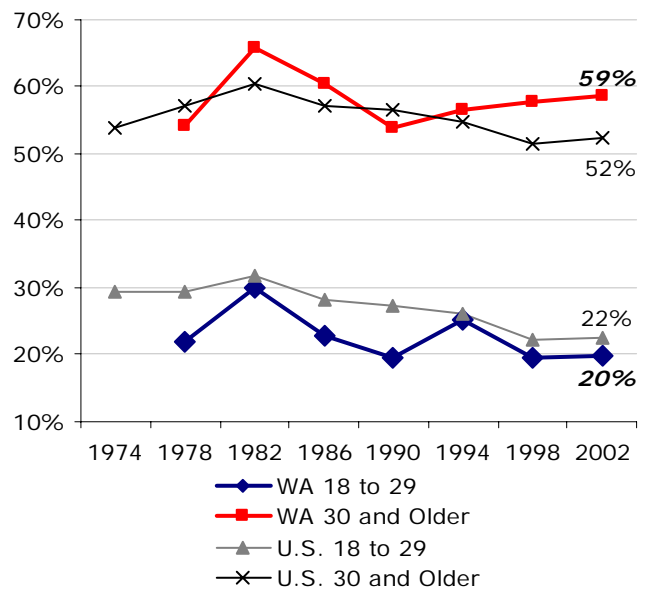
The Center for Information & Research on
Civic Learning & Engagement

Quick Facts about Young Voters in Washington: The Midterm Election Year 2006

By Mark Hugo Lopez, Karlo Barrios Marcelo, and Jared Sagoff¹
September 2006

This year's elections follow a presidential election that witnessed the highest level of national youth voter participation in over a decade, and a youth voter turnout rate of 53 percent in Washington, up 11 percentage points over 2000. Compared to other states in 2004, the turnout rate among 18 to 29 year olds in Washington ranked 15th overall. However, despite high youth voter participation in Washington in 2004, whether this voter mobilization momentum continues into 2006 remains unpredictable. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to compare either state-level or national youth voter turnout in 2006 to 2004 since presidential elections generally draw more voters to the polls, and hence have higher voter turnout rates. Instead, the two appropriate comparisons are 2002, the last time midterm elections occurred, and 1994, the last time midterm elections followed a surge in youth voting in a presidential election (1992).

Graph 1: Washington Voter Turnout in Midterm Years Among Citizens, by Age



Source: Current Population Survey, November Supplements, 1974-2002.

This fact sheet reports the characteristics of young voters for the state of Washington, including estimates of the number of young voters, voter turnout in 2002 and 1994 for various sub-groups of young people, and a listing of voter registration and election day laws that may affect young voters. While the general trend in national voter turnout among young people during midterm elections was down between 1982 and 2002 (see Graph 1), Washington's youth voter turnout rate in midterm election years has been relatively flat since 1986, and below the national youth voter turnout rate. This year, Washington could see a higher level of voter participation among all voters relative to 2002 because of a high profile Senate race.

Estimates of Eligible Young Voters, 2006

In 2006, a midterm election year, there are an estimated 915,000 young people in Washington who are eligible to vote in U.S. elections. Table 1 shows voting statistics for the years 2002, the last midterm election year, and 1994, the last midterm election year that followed a surge in youth voting in a presidential election year (1992).²

Table 1 – Washington Voter Turnout Statistics, 2006, 2002, and 1994

| | Young People 18 to 29 | Adults 30 and Older |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 2006 | | |
| Number of Citizens | 915 thousand | 3.5 million |
| Eligible to Vote in 2006 | | |
| 2002 | | |
| Number of Votes Cast | 168 thousand | 1.9 million |
| Citizen Voter Turnout Rate | 20 percent | 59 percent |
| Share of all Voters | 8 percent | 92 percent |
| 1994 | | |
| Number of Votes Cast | 217 thousand | 1.6 million |
| Citizen Voter Turnout Rate | 25 percent | 56 percent |
| Share of all Voters | 12 percent | 88 percent |

Source: Authors' Tabulations, Current Population Survey, March Supplement 2006 and November Supplement 2002 and 1994

Voter Turnout Rates in 2002 and 1994 Among Eligible Young Citizens, Ages 18-29

Table 2 displays voter turnout rates for various groups of young people ages 18 to 29 in 2002 and 1994 in Washington. In 2002, voter turnout among many youth groups in Washington was down from 1994.

Table 2 – Washington Voter Turnout Rates Among Young Citizens ages 18 to 29, 2002 and 1994

| Voter Turnout Rate Among: | 2002 | 1994 |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Gender | | |
| Women | 22 percent | 25 percent |
| Men | 18 percent | 26 percent |
| Educational Attainment | | |
| Less than High School | 12 percent | *** |
| High School | 9 percent | 17 percent |
| Some College | 27 percent | 24 percent |
| BA or more | 36 percent | 59 percent |
| Marital Status | | |
| Single Men | 19 percent | 26 percent |
| Single Women | 19 percent | 22 percent |
| Married Men | 16 percent | 23 percent |
| Married Women | 23 percent | 31 percent |
| Registered Voter | 42 percent | 45 percent |
| All Youth, Washington | | |
| All Youth, National | 20 percent | 25 percent |
| All Youth, National | 22 percent | 26 percent |

Source: Authors' Tabulations from the 2002 and 1994 November Supplements of the Current Population Survey. '***' indicates a sample size is too small to produce a reliable estimate.

Voter Registration and Election Day Laws in Washington

Table 3 displays important Voter Registration and Election Day Laws for the state of Washington. For more information on elections in Washington, contact the Washington Secretary of State at 360-902-4180 or www.secstate.wa.gov.

Table 3 – Washington Voter Registration and Election Day Laws, 2006

| Registration Day Laws | |
|--|----------------------------|
| Registration Deadline for all Elections | 15 days before an election |
| Unrestricted Absentee Voting | Yes |
| In Person Early Voting | No |
| Election Day Registration | No |
| Allows 17 Year Olds to Vote in Primaries | No |
| Election Day Laws | |
| Polls Open | 7am to 8pm |
| Time off to Vote (Private Sector) | Yes |
| Mail Information on Poll Location | No |
| Mail Sample Ballots | No |

Source: CIRCLE Fact Sheet "State Voter Registration and Election Day Laws", June 2004 and NAACP Voter Empowerment Guide "Value Our Vote" July 2006

Notes

¹ Research Director, Research Associate, and Research Assistant, respectively. We thank Peter Levine, Emily Kirby, Abby Kiesa, and Deborah Both for comments on previous drafts of this fact sheet.

² For a full discussion of the different ways voter turnout can be calculated please see "CIRCLE Working Paper 35: The Youth Voter 2004: With a Historical Look at Youth Voting Patterns 1972-2004." All voter turnout estimates presented in this fact sheet are calculated for U.S. citizens only, and according to the "Census Citizen Method" described in CIRCLE Working Paper 35.