CIRCLE AND THE COUNCIL FOR EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNMENT
RELEASE NEW POLL ON YOUNG PEOPLE

Campaigns hoping to use the Internet to reach new young voters need to be aware of both the pitfalls and benefits of using different online campaign techniques according to a new survey released by CIRCLE and the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at The Council for Excellence in Government. The survey reveals that while the Internet does not currently pull many otherwise disengaged youth into politics, it does seem to hold some promise for mobilizing partisan, ideological, and engaged young people. The most effective online campaign techniques are online chat rooms, e-mails on issues, “blogs” geared to youth, and candidate events like those organized by Meetup.com. Conversely, young people react negatively to Internet banner ads, e-mails encouraging voter turnout, weekly e-mailed campaign updates, and especially text messages on handheld devices. The full survey results can be found on CIRCLE’s Web site www.civicyouth.org.

The survey was sponsored by CIRCLE and the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at The Council for Excellence in Government and conducted by Democratic pollsters Lake Snell Perry & Associates and Republican pollsters The Tarrance Group. In addition to providing information on the effectiveness of online campaigning, the survey presents the latest polling data on Americans between the ages of 15 and 25, including the issues they care about, their levels of trust in others, volunteering rates, and their attitudes toward government.

Online Campaigning: Choosing the Right Tool

Online campaign techniques are especially popular among young people who are liberal, college educated, and concerned about Iraq, as well as religious youth. “The good news for campaigns is that the Internet can be a very cost-effective way to reach young people, and it has the potential to be the primary tool for reaching engaged youth,” said pollster Ed Goeas. “And campaigns can use the same tools and same issues to reach and target younger voters as they’re using for older voters.”

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In addition to stimulating interest in campaigns, these effective communication techniques are also trusted by young people. Overwhelmingly, young people think the information they receive through the Internet on politics and public affairs is as accurate (57 percent) or more accurate (13 percent) than the information they receive through more traditional communication techniques such as newspapers and TV reports. This is especially noteworthy since young people still rely on conventional means when deciding whom to support in an election. The sources used most to decide for whom to vote are newspapers and magazines (42 percent), TV news programs (39 percent), friends and family members (38 percent), candidate debates (33 percent), and the Internet (26 percent).

“We know we need to do a better job of talking to young people if we’re going to engage them in the political process,” said pollster Celinda Lake. “This survey confirms that we have a long way to go for some, but it also tells candidates that there are good tools for reaching others and we should start using them. The Internet is one of those tools, but not a cure all.”

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CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. Although CIRCLE conducts and funds research, not practice, the projects that we support have practical implications for those who work to increase young people’s engagement in politics and civic life. CIRCLE is also a clearinghouse for relevant information and scholarship. CIRCLE was founded in 2001 with a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts and is now also funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York. It is based in the University of Maryland’s School of Public Affairs.
Youth Support Civil Unions, Marriage, and Protections for Gays and Lesbians

Young Americans show strong levels of support for tolerance and equality toward homosexuals, and majorities say gays and lesbians should be able to form legal civil unions and get legally married, according to a new survey released by CIRCLE and the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at The Council for Excellence in Government. Additionally, young people overwhelmingly support equal protection when it comes to housing, employment, and hate crimes.

By six-to-one margins, American youth support gay rights and protections related to housing, employment, and hate crimes and those sentiments are held by all ideological, partisan, racial, geographic, and religious groups. One out of two respondents said they know someone who is gay; knowing a gay person has a significant impact on attitudes.

The percentage of young people who support and oppose rights for gays and lesbians are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>equal protection in housing</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equal protection in employment</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protection from hate crimes</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>civil unions or legal partnerships</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to legally marry</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to adopt children</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>39%</td>
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</tbody>
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Full results are available on the CIRCLE Web site www.civicyouth.org.

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Young people report that they are willing to give of their time to work on national issues, if they are asked. Overall, 54 percent of young people say they would be very likely (15 percent) or somewhat likely (38 percent) to volunteer on an issue that is important to them. However, there is a decline in the number of young people who report actually volunteering from two years ago. Just 26 percent have volunteered in the past year—and volunteering drops off quickly after high school. While 40 percent of 15 to 17 year olds have volunteered in the last year, only about half of those ages 18 to 25 did so.