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

By Mark Hugo Lopez, Karlo Barrios Marcelo, and Jared Sagoff

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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 49 percent in Idaho, up 2 percentage points over 2000. Compared to other states in 2004, the turnout rate among 18 to 29 year olds in Idaho ranked 34th overall. However, despite high youth voter participation in Idaho 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).

This fact sheet reports the characteristics of young voters for the state of Idaho, 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. The general trend in youth voter turnout in Idaho has followed the declining national trend closely, with a large spike in participation in 1986. Idaho might not see a higher level of voter participation among all voters in 2006 relative to 2002, because of the lack of highly contested elections.
Estimates of Eligible Young Voters, 2006

In 2006, a midterm election year, there are an estimated 215,000 young people in Idaho 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Young People 18 to 29</th>
<th>Adults 30 and Older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>215 thousand</td>
<td>776 thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>55 thousand</td>
<td>371 thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Voter Turnout Rate</td>
<td>24 percent</td>
<td>53 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of all Voters</td>
<td>13 percent</td>
<td>87 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>65 thousand</td>
<td>340 thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Voter Turnout Rate</td>
<td>32 percent</td>
<td>59 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of all Voters</td>
<td>16 percent</td>
<td>84 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Voter Turnout Rates in 2002 and 1994 Among Eligible Young Citizens

Table 2 displays voter turnout rates for various groups of young people in 2002 and 1994 in Idaho. In 2002, voter turnout among many youth groups in Idaho was very low. Only among young people with a BA or more was the voter turnout rate at 40 percent or higher. Furthermore, relative to 1994, voter turnout rates were down for all groups except young people with a college degree and married young men. In contrast, the midterm election year 1994 was a year of high voter turnout for all youth groups in Idaho relative to 2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voter Turnout Rate Among:</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>1994</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>21 percent</td>
<td>34 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>27 percent</td>
<td>29 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Attainment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than High School</td>
<td>5 percent</td>
<td>16 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>16 percent</td>
<td>27 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
<td>39 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA or more</td>
<td>49 percent</td>
<td>46 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Men</td>
<td>22 percent</td>
<td>28 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Women</td>
<td>18 percent</td>
<td>35 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Men</td>
<td>35 percent</td>
<td>32 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Women</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
<td>37 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Voter</td>
<td>61 percent</td>
<td>70 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Youth, Idaho</td>
<td>24 percent</td>
<td>32 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Youth, National</td>
<td>22 percent</td>
<td>26 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Voter Registration and Election Day Laws in Idaho

Table 3 displays important Voter Registration and Election Day Laws for the state of Idaho. For more information on elections in Idaho, contact the Idaho Secretary of State at 208-334-2300 or www.idosos.state.id.us.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registration Day Laws</th>
<th>Election Day Laws</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registration Deadline for all Elections</td>
<td>Polls Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 days before an election</td>
<td>8am to 8pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted Absentee Voting</td>
<td>Time off to Vote (Private Sector)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Person Early Voting</td>
<td>Mail Information on Poll Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Day Registration</td>
<td>Mail Sample Ballots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows 17 Year Olds to Vote in Primaries</td>
<td>Source: CIRCLE Fact Sheet &quot;State Voter Registration and Election Day Laws&quot;, June 2004 and NAACP Voter Empowerment Guide &quot;Value Our Vote&quot; July 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. We also thank Rafael Nieto for research assistance.

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.