

Expanding Access to Voting: *Encouraging 16 year olds to vote.*

- Mayor Kate Stewart,
City of Takoma Park

**ENGAGE
REGISTER
VOTE**



Background

- Charter Amendment changed in May 2013 to allow 16 and 17-year-olds to vote in City Elections
- Takoma Park became the first city in the United States to lower the voting age from 18 to 16
- The 2013 Takoma Park Election was the first to allow youth to vote



So why lower the voting age?

- Research shows that when youth are introduced to the voting process they are more likely to become life-long voters.
- Educational tool, the process of registering to vote, deciding who to vote for, and voting is a huge learning opportunity.
- Stronger communities—a larger group of engaged residents builds a stronger activist community.
- We have found that youth make “better voters”—they turnout in higher numbers and are most likely to engage in the entire process.



How do we reach youth during an election?

- Social media
- Youth Events—2017 Youth Forum
- School Visits
- Takoma Park Youth Council



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Voting should be a family activity so we made stickers for our littlest future Takoma Park voters! [#TkPkVotes](#)



Social Media

- Interactive social media posts
- Focus on video
- Use gifs and other nontraditional ways to get across the message of voting
- Remember non-English speakers



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RT if you've already voted in the 2017 Takoma Park Election.
Like if you're voting tomorrow. #TkPkVotes



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Are you 16 or older and interested in learning about the upcoming city election? Come to the Teen Talk Forum! #TkPkVotes



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In Takoma Park, 16-year-olds are able to vote. Here's what voting means to one of them! [youtube.com/watch?v=1A5I4u...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A5I4u...)
#TkPkVotes



Takoma Park City Elections 2017

Author and Advocate Liz Seaton talks during the We Are Takoma Series Humanities Lecture.
[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Teen Talk Forum

- Youth could meet candidates, ask questions, and hear their position on issues
- Inclusion is key. It's important that youth are part of the process
- Pizza and snacks definitely helped with getting youth to the event :)



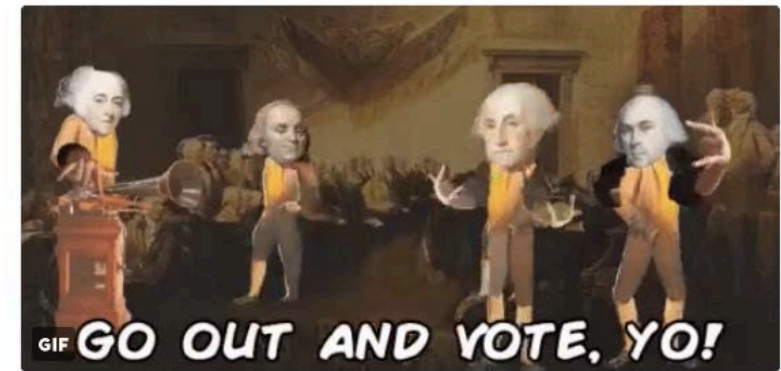
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Lots of really great youth focused issues being discussed by the candidates.
#TkPkVotes



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Thanks to everyone who came out to tonight's Teen Talk Forum. It was great to hear from youth in our City! Remember to vote! #TkPkVotes



Takoma Park Youth Council

- Established in 2017
- Created to provide youth with the opportunity to gain appreciation for local government
- Act as liaisons to Takoma Park youth on all City issues, including voting, and how to register and vote in a City Election.



Youth Vote by the Numbers

Youth Voters	2013	2015	2017
Registered	134	105	138
Voted	59	47	66
Turnout	44%	44.8%	47.8%

All Voters	2013	2015	2017
Registered	11,819	12,158	11,701
Voted	1,199	2,552	2,581
Turnout	10.10%	21%	22.1%



Youth Vote by the Numbers

- Voter turnout for youth has increased every year since 2013
- Takoma Park youth are voting at a higher rate than 18+ residents
- When you give youth the right to vote, they take advantage of that right



Don't just take our word for it!



[Facebook Clip](#)



[Twitter Clip](#)



Other ways we increase participation

- Takoma park has allowed non-citizen voting since 1993. We believe that everyone who calls our community home has a right to have their voices heard.
- Same-day registration is an additional way to increase participation. “Same-day registration takes the planning out of registering to vote. Residents can arrive at a voting place and exercise their rights without additional red tape.” –Jessie Carpenter, City Clerk



Other ways we increase participation

- While non-citizen voters have a lower turnout than youth voters, there are more of non-citizen voters registered.
- Steady increase in voter turnout since 2013.

Non-Citizen Voters	2013	2015	2017
Registered	476	523	347
Voted	34	71	72
Turnout	7.1%	13.6%	20.7%



Looking Ahead

- In 2017, Takoma Park voted to synchronize our municipal election with the state and national elections.
- Determining the challenges and opportunities synching our election presents will be of great importance.
- Will this increase voter turnout? Will there be challenges?



Conclusion

“Here, in this very first paragraph of the Declaration, is the assertion of the natural right of all to the ballot; for how can 'the consent of the governed' be given if the right to vote be denied?” —Susan B. Anthony



Questions?

