YOUNG VOTER MOBILIZATION TACTICS

Volume II

Lessons from 2006
House and Statewide Campaign Case Studies

The George Washington University

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF POLITICAL MANAGEMENT
Young Voter Mobilization Tactics is a regular publication of Young Voter Strategies, a nonpartisan project in partnership with The Graduate School of Political Management at The George Washington University. Young Voter Strategies provides the public, parties, candidates, consultants and nonprofits with data and research on the youth vote as well as best practices to effectively mobilize young people. For more information, including the latest opinion polling, demographic research, and campaign toolkits, visit www.youngvoterstrategies.org

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Joe Courtney, U.S. House, CT-02
The Courtney campaign worked with existing groups to mobilize young volunteers and voters. The young campaign staff recruited and trained a bevy of volunteers to do door-to-door registration and GOTV on campus, events with Representative Courtney, and direct mail and phone calls to non-college youth. Rep. Courtney energized youth by engaging on relevant issues, from college costs to Iraq. Case study on page 12.

Charlie Crist, Florida Governor
With an open gubernatorial seat and a tight race, student voters got more attention this election in Florida than in other recent races. Governor Crist reached out on issues relevant to young Floridians – affordable housing, higher education, and jobs – and used online networking via MySpace and Facebook. Case study on page 18.

Baron Hill, U.S. House, IN-09
Volunteers, strong target lists, media buzz and candidate involvement spurred young voter turnout in IN-09. The campaign and local party worked on campus and off in Bloomington, with volunteers going door-to-door to register voters, update contact information, and do voter ID. In addition, Representative Hill’s outreach on issues – college costs, health care and Iraq – helped the campaign turn out youth. Case study on page 20.
Mark Ritchie, Minnesota Secretary of State
The Ritchie campaign and the Democratic Party’s Youth Coordinated Campaign used grassroots outreach and creative online tactics to win young voters. From Facebook and MySpace, they developed target lists at 12 colleges and then contacted them door-to-door and over the phone. In addition, Secretary Ritchie and other candidates spent a significant amount of time on campus, including Election Day at the University of Minnesota doing door-to-door GOTV with volunteers.

Case study on page 24.

Arnold Schwarzenegger, California Governor
The Schwarzenegger campaign, along with the state GOP’s largest field effort in years, recruited large numbers of young volunteers and mobilized young voters through the Governor’s statewide bus tour in the fall of 2006. Phone offices across the state were staffed by college volunteers and the bus tour registered voters and recruited supporters at Motocross races, at the beach, and on college campuses.

Case study on page 27.

Jon Tester, U.S. Senate, Montana
The Tester campaign and Montana Coordinated Campaign ran a strong field effort that incorporated youth outreach. Volunteers did registration, persuasion and turnout with students by going door-to-door, tabling, sponsoring big events, and holding volunteer phone banks. In addition, the campaign utilized Facebook and MySpace to recruit for events and energize volunteers.

Case study on page 30.

James Webb, U.S. Senate, Virginia
Campus rallies, online outreach, and coordination with existing groups helped mobilize young voters for the Webb campaign in 2006. On MySpace, the campaign used viral marketing to build a list of 2,000 “friends” and turn supporters and volunteers out to events. Rallies at college campuses drew large crowds and helped build the Webb buzz among young voters.

Case study on page 33.

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A NEW GENERATION DRIVES 2006 VOTER TURNOUTS

In 2006, turnout among 18-29 year olds increased by approximately two million over 2002 levels, making it the second election in a row with a significant jump in young voter turnout. Young voters increased their share of the electorate as well, growing from 10% in 2002 to 12% in 2006.

Nationwide, 18-29 year olds cast ten million ballots and drove turnout. Turnout among voters of all ages was just moderately higher than in 2002, but substantially higher among 18-29 year olds. In 2006, approximately 83 million Americans of all ages voted, a 5.7 percent increase over 2002; turnout among 18 to 29 year olds, however, grew by about 25 percent, from eight million to 10 million ballots cast.

Young voters had also driven the 2004 election turnout increase. While turnout among all ages rose by four percentage points, 18-29 year old turnout rose nine points (from 40 to 49%). In fact, more 18-29 year olds voted in 2004 than did voters over 65 years of age. Turnout among the very youngest voters, 18-24 year olds, rose by 11 points, nearly three times the overall electorate’s increase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>18-29 Vote Total 2006</th>
<th>Total Change from 2002 to 2006</th>
<th>Total Change from 2002 to 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>69,106</td>
<td>39,106</td>
<td>130.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>367,489</td>
<td>191,489</td>
<td>109%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>284,435</td>
<td>110,453</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>319,269</td>
<td>108,269</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>522,958</td>
<td>164,958</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2006, young voter turnout increased even more significantly in a number of key states:

- Montana: Jon Tester defeated Conrad Burns by 3,562 votes (youth turnout up by 39,106).
- Virginia: Jim Webb defeated George Allen by 9,329 votes (youth turnout up by 110,453).
- Missouri: Claire McCaskill defeated Jim Talent by 48,314 votes (youth turnout up by 108,269).

Several U.S. House races and statehouse seats tell the same story. Clearly, young voters made a significant impact in the 2006 elections.

Looking to 2008, the increased energy of a presidential election year indicates that young adults can and likely will have a major impact on a national level. The sheer size of voting-age Millennial Generation citizens—42 million today and growing—combined with their increasing electoral participation shows that campaigns looking to 2008 would do well to understand how to court and mobilize this cohort.

The following study reports on what partisan campaigns—including those for the U.S. Senate and House, Governor and Secretary of State—did to register, persuade and mobilize young voters in 2006. Results are based on interviews with 2006 campaign staff, media reports, and/or campaign documentation. The report outlines what worked and what did not, and future strategies and tactics that can be used by campaigns, political parties, and others in 2008 and beyond.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2006, 35 U.S. House races were decided by fewer than 10,000 votes – including 18 by fewer than 5,000 votes. Five U.S. Senate races came down to fewer than 50,000 votes, as did three gubernatorial races, and 77 state legislative races were decided by fewer than 100 votes.

Going into the 2006 elections, campaigns and parties knew it would be crucial to turn out every supportive vote on Election Day – and they put the money and people-power into target races to make that happen.

Of course, high-stakes races weren't new to 2006. Close races characterize recent presidential politics and Congressional races are seeing growing investment from the national parties and donors as campaigns grow more sophisticated and expensive.

What was a change from recent elections, however, was that an increased number of campaigns and coordinated state efforts targeted young voters in 2006.

A handful of campaigns, driven by a variety of factors - geography, demographics, money, a more active youth electorate, or a desire to promote youth political engagement - included substantive youth-targeted outreach as part of their overall campaign strategies.

Several campaigns implemented door-to-door voter registration, identification, and GOTV projects in youth-dense areas, many worked with campus groups to register and mobilize local students, others ran GOTV phone call campaigns, and nearly all utilized online social networking sites like Facebook.com and MySpace.com in a variety of ways. In many of these areas, there was an above-average increase in young voter turnout.

Overall, 2006 youth outreach efforts proved that if you work the youth vote, it works. Our findings indicate that person-to-person outreach, candidate and experienced staff involvement, strategic use of online social networks, and list-building efforts contributed to increased turnout of young voters and to the success of many 2006 campaigns. Our findings and recommendations include:

- Go to School: Campaigns can reach thousands of supporters at local schools. Colleges – from four-year to community schools - and high schools are prime spots for young voter outreach. In 2006, campaigns worked with student groups and coordinated campaigns to register voters on campus, hold forums, door-knock in dorms, call young voters from the college directory or with phone numbers from Facebook, hold earned media events with campus groups, and more.

Hit the Hot Spots: To reach young working adults, campaigns went where they were.

- In CT-02, Joe Courtney attended Young Democrats' happy hours;
- In IN-09, door-to-door outreach worked in youth-dense neighborhoods;
- In Montana, the campaign worked events coordinated by youth political groups.
In your district, young adults might congregate at baseball games and state fairs or public assistance centers and workplaces or clubs and coffee shops. Get a couple of keyed-in young volunteers or staff to map out where the young adults are and then go there.

- Utilize Volunteers: The use of volunteers to mobilize fellow students was a cost-effective and efficient strategy for several campaigns. Recruit volunteers, give them training, ambitious goals, and lots of responsibility, and they can do great work.

- Designate Staff to Coordinate the Effort: Volunteers are invaluable; however, the best volunteer efforts worked with paid campaign staff oversight (see Hill, Courtney, Schwarzenegger). Volunteers need oversight and training, particularly at the front end, and effective outreach needs experience and resources. For larger or coordinated campaigns, a full-time staff person in charge of young voter outreach is key to success; for smaller campaigns, allocate a portion of a staff person’s time.

- Make Your Issues Relevant: By and large, young voters are concerned about issues similar to those of the overall electorate—jobs, education, Iraq, health care. However, remember to talk about these issues in ways that are relevant to younger Americans. For instance:
  - Rep. Courtney talked to young voters about his position on college costs and Iraq;
  - Gov. Schwarzenegger focused on the environment, car taxes, and college costs;
  - Rep. Baron Hill’s campaign hit home with the issue of health coverage.

All of these issues were part of these candidates’ platforms—education, taxes, the environment, health care, the economy—but the candidates realized that, for an 18-29 year old, the issues resonate in a slightly different way.

- Work with Existing Groups & Your Party: Your target “young voter” universe changes from year to year by definition, so building and maintaining relationships with local and state youth-focused groups and your local parties is crucial to success. In 2006, coordination between campaigns, the state or national parties, Young Democrats, College Republicans, and other organizations was integral to successful young voter mobilization. Target lists, funding, volunteers, and other resources were maximized through coordination. (See Ritchie, Hill, Schwarzenegger, Tester.)

- Build and Update Your Lists: Getting and updating lists of potential young voters was crucial in 2006. Young people move frequently, but with some resources, files can be efficiently updated.

- Campaigns canvassed or did phone calls to clean up young voter file records in the early fall—it was well worth it. (See Hill, Webb)

- Campaigns did voter registration to build lists of supporters. (See Crist)

- Other campaigns creatively used information available through Facebook sites to build and clean up lists. (See Ritchie)

- Campaigns integrated young adults into their overall microtargeting efforts. (See Schwarzenegger)

- Register Voters: Kill two birds with one stone—by registering young voters, you can build your lists of potential voters and of potential volunteers by gathering the emails and cell phones of everyone you register. Do this as a volunteer effort on college campuses and at hang-out spots (clubs, coffee shops) and you can reach a huge number of young adults at little to no cost.

- Use Facebook & MySpace to Educate and Energize: Many campaigns used online social networks to target young people, both as volunteers and as voters. (see Crist, Tester) Campaign managers reported that these sites can be useful for volunteer recruitment, event announcements, and voter education, but less so in engaging new or undecided voters. To reach voters, online sites are best used in conjunction with more personal or grassroots outreach—for example, to build lists of potential supporters to contact via the phone or at the door. (See Ritchie)
CASE STUDIES ON TURNOUT TECHNIQUES

Overall, 2006 shows that if you include young voters in your campaign, their votes can help you win. Campaign youth outreach contributed to increased turnout of young voters and to the success of many 2006 campaigns.

However, it is important to remember that while campaigns' youth outreach was up this year, it was still a small number of campaigns and a very small portion of election-year resources. While there are certainly 2006 campaigns not included in this report that did young voter outreach, overall, most campaigns paid minimal to no attention to the under-30 electorate.

The 2006 elections, however, demonstrate that the campaigns who want to win in 2008 should certainly develop a young voter outreach plan. Given the sheer size and growing electoral engagement of 18-29 year olds, we’re already seeing more campaign outreach targeting young voters – from Barack Obama’s campaign-opening rally at George Mason University in February 2007 to Republican candidates wooing young attendees at the March 2007 Conservative Political Action Conference.

More political party investment in young adults is good for democracy and good for the parties. Young voters can certainly make or break close races today, but they will also be each parties’ base voters 15 or 20 years down the road. Research shows that partisanship develops during the youth vote years and that if your party secures a young adults’ vote during their first few elections, they will likely become a loyal voter for life. Investment in young voters now pays off in the long run.

The following case studies of strategies and tactics used by 2006 House, Senate, and statewide races will provide campaigns with initial insight into effective ways to mobilize young voters. In this report, you can likely find a case study from a district or state similar to yours – rural or urban, large or small – using tactics you want to know more about – from clipboard registration, “dorm-storming,” and volunteer recruitment to MySpace/Facebook targeting, list-building, and candidate events. Or you will find an example of a campaign that targeted the type of young voters you would like to mobilize – from college students and young professionals to young parents and low-income urban youth.

Note: Figures included in “Election Background” boxes are derived from the National Election Pool 2006 Exit Polls and from each Secretary of State or Board of Elections. Figures in the “District Profiles” are from the 2005 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. See “Sources” at end for specific citations.
The 2006 race for Connecticut’s 2nd Congressional District was a rematch of 2002. That year, incumbent Representative Rob Simmons (R) defeated Joe Courtney by 17,760 votes.

In 2006, however, Joe Courtney triumphed over Representative Simmons by 83 votes, the closest of any 2006 congressional race.

Young voters played a major role in Representative Courtney’s victory. In particular, turnout at the University of Connecticut’s precinct was up dramatically:

- In 2002, Joe Courtney received 1055 votes at Mansfield District 1, UConn students’ polling place; in 2006, Courtney received 1838 votes in District 1, a 74.2% increase over 2002.

The vote increase at that one student-dense polling place was nearly ten times Representative Courtney’s 83-vote margin of victory.

In addition to the high-profile nature of Connecticut’s congressional races in 2006—and a number of young people running for office themselves—the fact that the Courtney campaign made young voters a priority from the very beginning was a major factor leading to strong youth turnout.

Nearly two years before Election Day, the Courtney campaign, led by Campaign Manager Lon Seidman, joined with the Young Democrats, College Democrats, and a number of other Connecticut campaigns in a coordinated youth outreach strategy. In fact, Representative Courtney’s first major public appearance as a 2006 candidate was on campus, centered on the issue of social security.

### Why the Courtney Campaign Targeted Young Voters

A number of factors—strategic, political and personal—led Seidman and Courtney to prioritize young voters.

- The Simmons-Courtney rematch was positioned to be razor-thin, typical for the 2nd district: a race in 1994 was decided by six votes and Simmons had originally won his seat by barely 3,000 votes. Every vote was critical and there were enough potential votes at UConn to swing the election.
Early on, young adults’ energy and volunteer-power made them an integral part of the campaign. Student volunteers brought their friends, who brought their friends, and soon the campaign spread like wildfire among young adults throughout the 2nd district.

Pre-election polls indicated that 18-29 year olds were leaning strongly Democratic, nationwide and in Connecticut, and were paying more attention to the election than in past midterms.

Strong youth and college groups provided fertile ground. Young Democrats, College Democrats, and others were eager to work for Connecticut’s 2006 Democratic candidates, including Courtney.

Having young people involved was a personal issue.

The Campaign

As of October 2006, the voter file showed 56,133 18-30 year olds registered in Connecticut’s 2nd district, including more than 22,300 between 18 and 22 years of age.

The campaign’s immediate youth vote goal was to increase turnout over the previous midterm by about 2,000 votes—and to simply do “more than before,” given the dearth of prior youth-focused efforts during congressional elections.

From the start, Seidman and local leaders planned out a campus and non-campus youth strategy.

Campus

“You can never go wrong putting resources into college registration.”
-Lon Seidman

Much of the campaign’s youth outreach focused on area campuses. From the East Haven Courier:

“One of Lon’s strategies in the Courtney campaign was registering students at colleges within the second district, among them Eastern Connecticut State University, Mitchell College, Connecticut College, and UConn. ‘We started from absolute scratch knocking on doors, getting people registered. We knew that most college students were opposed to the direction that Bush was taking the country and they would likely vote Democratic,’ Lon says.”

Campus volunteers, trained and overseen by campaign staff, went door-to-door on campus to register voters. In the fall, the College Democrats took over and set up a structured registration, persuasion, identification, and GOTV campaign, including regional campus coordinators with specific goals for registration and turnout. The project aimed to turn out young voters for several Democratic candidates.

Courtney was also very accessible to and involved in the college effort. He frequented campus from early on in the campaign, visiting the College Democrats’ office, holding events, and talking to students. Courtney’s primary issues during the campaign—particularly Iraq and college affordability—resonated strongly with students.

Community

More than half of the 18-30 year olds in the 2nd District are not college students. These 30,000 or so include high schools graduates now in the workforce, recent college graduates, young professionals, 18-year-old high school students, young working moms and dads, and more.

In order to reach these voters, the campaign employed a number of strategies. First, the campaign made sure to leave young voters on its central walk and call lists. While some campaigns delete younger voters to save money, the campaign ensured that they would be contacted through phonebanks, direct mail and canvassers just like all other voters.

In addition, Courtney and the campaign held events with high school students, particularly focusing on the issues of public education and college affordability.
To reach others, Courtney and the campaign worked closely with the Connecticut Young Democrats. He and campaign staff joined them at happy hours, coordinated events, and attended their meetings throughout the campaign cycle.

Finally, as noted earlier, many young candidates were running for office throughout Connecticut in 2006. According to Seidman, this bolstered young voter turnout in those areas: these younger candidates appealed to other youth by virtue of their age, but also spoke more about issues on young voters’ minds, paid attention to them, and encouraged them to participate in the election.

Online
The Courtney campaign did also utilize new media, although the bulk of the campaign was a field effort.

According to Seidman, online organizing sprung up organically, driven by young volunteers. Volunteers created Facebook and MySpace pages and used them as ways to communicate about the campaign and upcoming events. For example, when the campaign set up an event with celebrity Ben Affleck, the College Democrats turned out 500 students with an announcement on Facebook.

The key to their online organizing, says Seidman, was the very fact that it was organic and that students were contacting their friends to get involved, as opposed to an anonymous campaign email or “friend” request.

Finally, the campaign also made its commercials and events available via You Tube, where videos made their way onto the computers of thousands of supporters.

Post-Election
Representative Joe Courtney, in his first months in Congress, is certainly not forgetting the young voters who helped put him there. According to an article in the Norwich Bulletin, “Courtney…[is] using his victory in November as an example of how important those [youth] votes are. Courtney won by 83 votes out of more than 240,000 cast -- the closest congressional race in the country in 2006. He attributes his victory to the higher turnout of young voters.”

Rep. Courtney has quickly become outspoken and active on the issue of college affordability, voting on January 10th for a successful House bill that would save thousands of college graduates an average of $2,300 when paying back college loans. He has joined students and advocacy groups at news conferences and events to push for policies to make college more affordable.

Why it Worked
The Courtney campaign ran a model young voter outreach effort. By engaging young adults as an integral part of the efforts—as voters, as volunteers, as leaders—and reaching out with effective tactics on campus and in communities, the Courtney campaign helped to mobilize more young voters to the polls. And by continuing to reach out to young voters while in office—through policy decisions, events, and one-on-one—the Congressman is doing an excellent job of building toward future elections.
The Florida youth vote’s partisan preference was a source of debate. National polling showed 18-29 year olds leaning strongly Democratic, but Florida politics indicated (correctly, it turned out) that young voters could be a statewide swing vote.

Nearly half a million young adults turned out to vote for Florida’s governor on November 7th and were indeed as close to a swing vote as possible: 50 percent cast ballots for the winner Charlie Crist (R), while 49 percent voted for Jim Davis (D).

While the election was not as close as polls predicted, the Crist campaign’s young voter outreach certainly helped turn out additional young supporters to put him over the top on Election Day. According to the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, “Republican Charlie Crist, Florida’s attorney general who turns 50 on July 24, organized grass-roots voter groups at colleges and has focused on younger voters’ priorities: affordable housing, higher education and jobs.”

In addition, the Crist campaign used online social networking sites to mobilize young supporters. Early unscientific polls on Facebook indicated success: Crist held 54 percent of the “Facebook vote” in mid-September and 64 percent by late October. The Crist campaign boasted eight different supportive Facebook groups, from “Charlie Crist for Governor” to “UT Students for Charlie Crist,” as well as the campaign’s own profile of Crist.

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The race for Indiana's 9th Congressional District was ranked a toss-up by political analysts in 2006, and for good reason. 2006 was the third match-up between Rep. Mike Sodrel, one-term incumbent, and former Rep. Baron Hill. In 2002, Hill beat Sodrel by five percentage points; in 2004, Sodrel edged out Hill by 1,500 votes. The 2006 race would surely come down to the wire.

The Hill campaign, led by Campaign Manager Abby Curran, knew early on that the city of Bloomington, which includes Indiana University (enrollment 40,000+), would be key to winning the race. Bloomington is a stronghold for any IN-09 Democrat, being both far more Democratic than the rest of the district and also more densely populated.

The young voter population in Bloomington is large, including not only the students at IU but also many recent graduates who settle in the city after college. For the Hill campaign, young adults also meant likely votes: early on, campaign polling showed that young adults (especially single women) were trending strongly Democratic.

The Campaign

The Hill campaign had two full time organizers focused on the city of Bloomington, including young voter outreach. The organizers, in conjunction with the local Democratic Party (very "pro youth vote," according to Curran), worked on campus and in youth-dense areas in the city.

Four major factors led to successful young voter Volunteers:

The Hill campaign teamed up with the IU College Democrats (CDs) to register and turn out young voters.

Rep. Hill came to the CD's 350-person kick-off meeting—larger than their 2004 kick-off—and spent a lot of time on campus, talking to students and campaign volunteers. Volunteers with the CDs did voter registration, helped the campaign update contact lists (see below), and then mobilized for Get Out the Vote. The candidate helped energize the CD volunteers by stopping by their campus office, coming to their meetings, and in general making them aware they were a significant part of the campaign.

YVS Tip: A Knock at the Door Works Wonders

No one ever said politics was rocket science. Perhaps the oldest tactic in the book—door to door canvassing—is the most efficient and cost-effective way to turn out young voters. Research shows that a door contact can increase youth turnout by 8 to 10 percentage points. Make sure to canvass in student or youth dense areas—apartments and dorms—and to keep younger voters on your walk lists. It works.
In addition, Representative Hill’s daughter, a student at IU, got involved, registering her friends to vote and recruiting them to staff volunteer phonebanks. She also pitched in to organize events on campus.

Off-campus, the Hill campaign ran a paid canvass with staff who were mostly young.

Updated Voter Lists:
As any campaign manager knows, lists of young voters—particularly students—are often outdated. The Hill campaign took care of this by recruiting volunteers to update their student precinct voter lists.

According to Curran, ‘[the] best things were going into student precincts at the beginning of the fall to clean up the lists. Make 6-7 precincts someone’s project.’ In September, when everyone was back to school, the CDs went door-to-door on and around campus to update contact information and register people who had just moved.

Curran reiterated, “It’s key to have good lists, data. Collect it, update it. It costs money but it’s worth it.”

Candidate/Campaign Involvement:
Rep. Hill visited campus frequently and the campaign staff were involved in recruitment and oversight of volunteers. By spending time to train and invest volunteers from the get-go, the pay-off was enormous. In addition, Rep. Hill’s attention to the volunteers and young voters made them even more energized and dedicated to the campaign. He not only attended the CD’s kick-off, but also subsequent meetings. He spoke to classes, attended student forums, and Hill supporters coordinated events with students.

For example, when Hill’s opponent Mike Sodrel was asked about the 45 million Americans who lack health insurance, he replied that “young people often think they are ‘bulletproof’ and spend their money on other things, including color televisions,” Hill campaign supporters teamed up with outraged youth to hold a news conference to highlight the need to ensure affordable health insurance is available to all. Young supporters held up signs reading “We don’t like color TVs.”

Rep. Hill made a point of talking about issues as relevant to youth when speaking to younger crowds or one-on-one. Overall, the campaign focused on issues of Iraq, health care, illegal immigration and energy; when talking to young adults, Hill spoke often of their disproportionate lack of health insurance and lowering the cost of student loans.

Media Buzz
The “TV and health care” event is also a perfect example of how the Hill campaign made good use of earned media—on campus and off—to get the candidate’s name out to young voters. They held several high-visibility events on campus and were frequently on the front page of IU’s student newspaper.

Down to the Wire
Closing in on Election Day, the match-up between Sodrel and Hill was too close to call. After all the votes were counted, though, Hill came out the winner, besting Sodrel by 9,985 votes out of more than 210,000 cast.

While we don’t yet know district turnout numbers for Indiana’s young voters, we do know that turnout in Monroe County (home to Bloomington) was up significantly: in 2006, 5,745 more ballots were cast than in 2002.

YVS Tip: Quality Time on Campus
Avoid looking like you’re going to a college campus to just do a “photo op”; young adults have that one figured out. Instead, spend enough time to get a feel for the campus, visit classes, have lunch, and chat with some students. Better yet, team up with a campus group for a debate, a forum, or a rally. You’ll get to know the students and could also generate earned media in the student newspaper.

YVS Tip: Go to Class
Doing presentations in college classrooms is a very cost-effective way of registering new voters and signing up new volunteers. In just one class, a campaign volunteer can speak to 15 to 500 students (or more) and expect to register 15-25% of them with a 5 minute talk. Class presentations are especially effective on community college or commuter campuses; while standing outside with a clipboard might yield very few registrations, scheduling a short talk to one class could yield dozens.
SECRETARY OF STATE
MARK RITCHIE
(MN)

Election Background

Candidates:
Mark Ritchie* (D) v. Mary Kiffmeyer^ (R)

State: Minnesota
Office: Secretary of State

Vote Totals:
Ritchie 1,049,432 Kiffmeyer 943,989

Vote:
Ritchie 49.1% Kiffmeyer 44.16%

Margin: +105,443 D

18-29 year old vote total: approx. 330,400

18-29 Partisan Split:
N/A for this race;
48% D, 41% R in gubernatorial race

*Winner      ^Incumbent

State Profile
- Of the 3.6 million adult citizens in Minnesota, over 779,000 are 18-29 years of age (21%).
- Younger Minnesotans are concentrated at the state’s many colleges and in the Twin Cities area, Minneapolis-St. Paul.
- Minnesota has among the highest young voter turnout in the U.S.: 45% in ’02 and 71% in ’04, rates comparable to voters of all ages.
- Election Day Registration has been in place in Minnesota since the mid-1970s.

Mark Ritchie has long been committed to voter engagement. In 2003, he became the head of “National Voice,” better known as the “November 2” project, a nationwide coalition of more than 1,000 organizations designed to mobilize voters for the 2004 elections.

Going into his 2006 race for Secretary of State, therefore, the Ritchie campaign had an ideological commitment to reaching out to young voters. As Campaign Manager James Haggar said, “Mark’s commitment has always been that no one gets ignored. [We had] plans for all demographics.”

Strategically, the campaign knew it needed to do well in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area, home to a number of college campuses and many young adults.

Throughout the campaign, Secretary Ritchie talked frequently about the importance of the youth vote. He made a point of encouraging young people to vote by talking about issues of concern to them, the importance of their vote, and what he would do as Secretary of State to represent them.

The Campaign

The Ritchie campaign initially planned to raise funds for two fulltime youth outreach staff; however, early on the Youth Coordinated Campaign (YCC)—the statewide Democratic project—approached to coordinate. The Ritchie campaign joined in and raised $5,000 for the YCC, which did outreach for a number of Democrats in 2006, including Ritchie, Amy Klobuchar, and Mike Hatch.

Grassroots Outreach

The YCC held events and did door-to-door canvassing to register and mobilize voters on campus. In fact, Ritchie spent Election Day at the University of Minnesota doing “knock and drag,” a tried-and-true campaign tactic of literally walking or driving voters to the polls. And thanks to Election Day Registration in Minnesota, everyone was fair game.

In addition, a number of state legislative candidates spent Election Day on campus. A state law allows dorms to prohibit access to almost any non-residents—but not to candidates for political office. In order to get volunteers access to the dorms, candidates teamed up with student volunteers to canvass the dorms on Election Day. Not only did this get the volunteers in, the presence of candidates spoke volumes to students about the importance of their votes and energized the volunteers.
Ritchie, Klobuchar, and others also teamed up to do events on campus, during which Ritchie always rallied the student audience by speaking about the need for young people to register and vote. These events energized students and drew a good deal of earned media. One event drew the press and onlookers by showing students being crushed by giant rocks in order to show the weight that college debt places on today’s young adults.

Finally, the campaign made sure to contact young voters through its volunteer phonebank by adding in first-time and newly registered voters from 2004.

A Model Online Strategy

The YCC took new technologies to a new level. From Facebook and MySpace, they developed lists at 12 campuses of potential student supporters based on their self-identified political views and activities listed on their profiles. The YCC then organized these lists by political views, location, and likelihood to vote, and targeted these students to register and vote through a volunteer door-to-door program. They also used these lists to publicize campus events.

Secretary of State Mark Ritchie

Mark Ritchie made clear to young Minnesotans that he was paying attention to them and would work for them, as for all people in the state, upon reaching office. Thanks in part to his young voter outreach and the work done by the Youth Coordinated Committee, Ritchie defeated incumbent Mary Kiffmeyer by more than 105,000 votes.

Secretary Ritchie is making it clear to his young supporters that, now in office, he will continue to pay attention to them. Secretary Ritchie recently proposed legislation to streamline the state’s voter registration process, including several proposals that will directly impact young voters: pre-registration at age 16 at the Department of Motor Vehicles and automatic re-registration for movers who file a Postal Service Change of Address form.

YVS Tip: Talk About Issues in Relevant Ways

The great news for candidates is that young voters by and large are keyed into the same issues as all voters. However, candidates have to talk about issues in ways relevant to younger voters. For instance, talk to young adults about access to or the cost of health coverage—not prescription drugs or Medicare; talk to young voters about the cost of college or student loans, not teacher tenure; talk to young voters about car taxes or education tax rebates, not property taxes. Young voters are concerned about candidates’ core issues, but campaigns must remember to frame these issues in ways that interest and motivate young voters.
In 2006, the young voters of California were targeted by both the California GOP’s Victory ’06 and the campaign to re-elect Governor Schwarzenegger.

The Schwarzenegger Campaign

The Governor’s campaign courted young voters on campus and off. With a young staff and a charismatic candidate, young voter outreach was very much a part of the campaign.

Grassroots Outreach

In September 2006, a Schwarzenegger campaign bus tour traveled around the state to reach young voters and volunteers. Co-sponsored by Generation Next, a youth political organization, volunteers and staff registered young adults and recruited volunteers at all sorts of events during the 10-day tour, including a Motocross race, a University of Southern California football game, at the beach, and on college campuses.

In addition, the campaign worked with the College Republicans from the start of the election season. The Governor spoke at the College Republican’s convention in spring 2006 and utilized College Republican volunteers throughout the campaign.

YVS Tip: Engage with the Crowd

Big crowds are a goldmine, but you have to work it. Target your speech to your audience by talking about relevant issues—but also make sure not to stump or talk at the crowd. Open up a Q&A and have a good conversation; encourage everyone to whip out their cell phones and text “Vote” to your campaign’s short-code; make sure you have volunteers roaming the audience registering voters and signing up volunteers; ask the audience to take an action to support a hot issue or hit the streets to register voters. The more energy and engagement you give, the more you’ll get.

YVS Tip: High School Seniors

Visit area high schools in the spring to register new 18-year-olds. This is one of the best ways to generate new voters and to reach a diverse range of young adults, more so than on college campuses. To set up a visit, contact the principal or superintendent and suggest a “Young Voter” assembly or a “Civic Education Day” where your candidate can talk to seniors about the importance of registering and voting.
Issues
The Governor campaigned on issues important to young voters. Overall, the Governor focused primarily on taxes, the environment, education, and health care in 2006, and within those issues talked a lot about how they were important to young voters. For instance, he campaigned on the need to reduce college costs, including his work to freeze student fees at state schools and decrease the cost of community college.

Online Outreach
Finally, the campaign also used new technology to reach young voters. The campaign website was designed as a social networking/build-your-own-website space so that voters could connect with the campaign and other supporters online. Also, the campaign included a sign up for free text message alerts via mobile phone. Several hundred supporters signed up for texts about events, activities and more.

Victory '06
Victory '06 was a statewide effort to support Republican candidates, including Schwarzenegger. The campaign was the California GOP's first in years to invest a significant amount into grassroots voter outreach, putting $25 million into door-knocking, phone calls, and other field efforts. Young adults were very involved in “every corner of the campaign,” both as volunteers and as voters.

Statewide, Victory '06 had 48 calling centers and door-to-door efforts that were staffed heavily by college student volunteers. These volunteers called or door-knocked all targeted supporters, including many 18-29 year olds, and the College Republicans did targeted GOTV calling to student supporters.

Schwarzenegger Re-elected
In the end, Governor Schwarzenegger was re-elected in a landslide, garnering votes from across California's diverse electorate. Overall, more 18-29 year olds voted in 2006 than had in the previous midterm election. According to the state exit poll, 44 percent of 18-29 year olds voted for the Governor, more than 509,000 voters, many no doubt mobilized by the campaign's young voter outreach efforts.
2006 was a banner year for the Montana youth vote. According to exit polling, the 18-29 share of the statewide vote went from 8 percent to 17 percent from 2002 to 2006. A quick look at statewide vote totals shows this means about 39,000 more 18-29 year olds cast ballots than in the previous midterm election.

Why? Four factors led to this big turnout: a hotly contested race, a more engaged youth electorate, newly instated Election Day Registration, and a strategic Democratic youth outreach effort.

Both the Tester campaign and the Montana Coordinated Campaign (MCC) played a role in mobilizing young voters, as did two independent groups, Big Sky Democrats and Forward Montana.

The Tester campaign and the MCC targeted young voters for several reasons. One, early campaign polling showed that Tester was up with young voters, particularly among young women (by ten points over men). Two, Montana geography and the higher Democratic density in urban areas (Missoula, Bozeman) meant these cities and their large student populations were key to success. Finally, the campaign saw that the size and increased engagement of young voters—particularly with the option of Election Day Registration—made the youth vote very significant in a tight election.

The MCC did both campus and non-campus youth outreach. As Tester Campaign Manager Stephanie Schriock noted in an interview, “the best tactics were the person to person, feet on the ground ones.” The campaign and partners registered voters on campus by tabling, going to events, and going door-to-door.

In addition to field outreach, the campaign recruited a volunteer to manage online social networking outreach. Jon Tester’s MySpace page had more than 1,000 friends and “Students for Tester” on Facebook had 293 members. The MySpace page, in particular, was used to announce events and turn out supporters.

Later in the campaign, the MCC effort switched to voter identification and persuasion. Cleaning up existing lists was crucial here. In September, the MCC employed volunteers to call unidentified young voters and figure out for whom they would vote.

Turning to Get Out the Vote, the campaign contacted their identified supporters by phone, mail, the Internet, and in-person, and also brought future Senator Tester to campus for events. The Thursday before the election, Tester held a GOTV rally at the University of Montana–Missoula.
Virginia is home to 5.2 million adult citizens, of which 1.1 million are 18-29 years old.

Northern Virginia, the fastest-growing area of the state, is home to a large number of younger adults, including young professionals, blue-collar workers, and young families.

The state is home to many large colleges, including the University of Virginia (enr. 20,379), Virginia Commonwealth (enr. 30,000), and James Madison University (enr. 17,393).

Partisan and Nonpartisan Direct Mail in Virginia 2005

The Webb-Allen race was perhaps the most-watched in the country in 2006. In the end, James Webb edged out incumbent George Allen by fewer than 10,000 votes and less than half a percentage point.

Young adults played a major role in Webb’s victory. Under 30 voters jumped from 9 percent of all votes cast in 2002 to 12 percent in 2006. Given statewide turnout figures, this indicates that turnout among young Virginians increased by an unprecedented 110,000 votes over the previous midterm election. More than half (52%) of those voters cast ballots in support of James Webb.

The Campaign:

In 2006, the Webb campaign coordinated with the Young Democrats and College Democrats to mobilize young voters. The campaign itself was very tightly funded and had a tiny staff, and so focused on utilizing volunteers and Internet word of mouth.

Outreach was focused on the University of Virginia (UVA), James Madison University and Virginia Union. Infact, UVA was the candidate’s first stop on his April announcement tour. Another of the campaign’s biggest rallies was at Virginia Union, an historically black university, where the future lawmaker joined Senator Barack Obama at a 2,500-person rally.

The campaign also utilized online outreach, including MySpace and Facebook pages run by student volunteers. The campaign’s MySpace page boasted 2,000 friends built up through online viral and peer-to-peer marketing. Using these contacts and other email lists, the campaign recruited young voters to events and, during the final 7-day stretch to Election Day, delivered email reminders to get out to vote, including polling place and candidate information.

The numbers don’t lie. If young voters had turned out at 2002 levels, James Webb would have lost the race. But instead more than a quarter million 18-29 year olds swarmed the polls and helped give Webb his victory.
**Working the Youth Vote Works**

Mobilizing young voters isn’t rocket science—but campaigns are out of practice. After thirty years of declining young voter turnout, the political world had all but written off young voters.

Today’s young voters, however, are increasingly engaged and turning out to vote. Will that continue? The last two elections indicate it is likely, but much will depend upon political campaigns taking lessons learned from 2004 and 2006 and applying them to reach young voters in 2008 and beyond.

The above case studies show you can reach young voters through efficient and cost-effective methods. Don’t expect it to be free—resources are necessary for any substantive outreach. But by utilizing volunteer energy, online techniques, events, earned media, and coordination with local youth and college groups, political parties can target the youth vote to win.

**CONCLUSION**

**LESSONS LEARNED FROM 2006:**

- College campuses are a prime spot for voters and for volunteers.
- Make sure staff is spending time to train and coordinate volunteers.
- Include young voters in your traditional outreach: door-knocking, phone calls, and mail.
- Give young volunteers ownership over a project and specific goals. To find non-college youth, for instance, have a couple of keyed-in young adults create and run a bar, club, and coffee shop project to register 1,000 voters or have two young parents get 500 other young parents to get out to vote on Election Day. On campus, have a student take responsibility for registering and mobilizing all students in 5 dorms or all English 101 classes.
- Allocate resources. Two or three staff could mobilize a massive statewide youth campaign; one staffer or a half a staff person’s time can do a significant amount on the district-level.

- Talk about issues in a relevant way. Health care, education, job creation, Iraq, the environment, and taxes are all key issues for young voters, but make sure to make the issues relevant.
- Spend time with voters. Do events on campus, attend happy hours or picnics, and talk to these voters about issues that matter.
- Build and update your lists. Register voters or coordinate with a group to do so. Designate precinct captains to update movers’ information and identify supporters. Track the information you collect and follow-up to remind everyone to vote.
- Voter registration works. If your campaign needs, say, 2,000 more votes to put your candidate over the top, registering and then turning out new, young voters may be your most cost-effective option. The amount of energy and money it would take to produce 2,000 more votes from older voters—most of whom are less persuadable than young voters—is likely more than it would take to get those votes by registering and mobilizing young adults.
- New media is a fantastic tool, but don’t use it as a crutch. Use the Internet to recruit for events, mobilize volunteers, educate voters, and to build your lists. But make sure to get out to colleges and communities and talk to voters. A little personal contact will go a long way.

Candidates and the national parties are already building up young supporters for 2008. Articles about huge campus rallies for Barack Obama, John Edwards’ OneCorps, Mitt Romney’s Facebook campaign, and Brownback’s College Republican outreach are all over the news. As these and other campaigns put together their 2008 campaign plans, young voters should certainly be a part of their strategies to win.
Methodology

In January and February 2007, YVS reached out to Democratic and Republican campaign managers from 26 U.S. House, Senate, and statewide races for this report.

Our target list was chosen based on several requirements:

- Competitiveness: We primarily interviewed campaign staff from races that were decided by small margins or had been predicted to be close.

- Youth Targeting: We included campaigns where we knew young voters had been targeted in a substantive way.

- Bipartisan: We included campaigns in which both Republicans and Democrats won the election, and campaigns in which both Republicans and Democrats won the youth vote.

- High Youth-Density: We included campaigns from districts or states with large young voter populations or very youth-dense areas (either campuses or cities with many young adults).

- Partisan Referrals: YVS asked Democratic and Republican consultants and party officials for suggestions as to which campaigns would be best to interview.

- Geographic and Demographic Diversity: We included campaigns in various parts of the country and different types of districts or states (a.k.a., both rural and urban, both wealthy and lower-income) so as to gather a set of case studies useful to the largest number of future campaigns.

From this target list, YVS staff placed phone calls and sent emails requesting participation in our Post-Election 2006 Campaign Survey to Republican and Democratic campaign managers (and one Independent) from 26 races. In the few instances where we were unable to obtain either a phone number or working email, we attempted communication via only one method. In the additional few instances where we were unable to obtain any contact information, we removed the campaign manager from our target list.

Those campaign managers who agreed to participate were interviewed either in person or over the phone by the YVS Research Director who then analyzed and summarized the interviews for this report. YVS also researched additional election statistics or district data to supplement the report; all of this information is cited throughout or in “Sources.”

This report is not intended to represent the amount of youth-targeted done in 2006 elections, nor is it intended to represent what campaigns did broadly. Instead, it is intended to highlight a set of campaigns that targeted young voters, explain what they did and how, and recommend how campaigns might better target young voters in the future.
Minnesota

Montana
Montana State University: http://www.montana.edu/aircj/facts/quick.html#Full
University of Montana: http://www.umt.edu/DiscoverUM/AboutUM/default.aspx

Virginia
University of Virginia http://www.virginia.edu/Facts/Glance_Enrollment.html
Virginia Commonwealth University http://www.vcu.edu/about/
James Madison University http://www.jmu.edu/instresrch/statsum/2006_07/FactsFigs.pdf

Citizen population figures:
CIRCLE’s Tabulations from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2006

Sources

For “Election Background” boxes

Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, http://election.dos.state.fl.us/elections/resultsarchive/enight.asp
Indiana Secretary of State, http://www.in.gov/sos/elections/
Minnesota Secretary of State, http://electionresults.sos.state.mn.us/20061107/

For Case Studies
Young Voter Strategies Research Director Kathleen Barr conducted interviews with:
Lon Seidman, Campaign Manager, Joe Courtney for U.S. Representative; Abby Curran, Campaign Manager, Baron Hill for U.S. Representative; Stephanie Schriock, Campaign Manager, Jon Tester for U.S. Senate; James Haggar, Campaign Manager, Mark Ritchie for Secretary of State; Sarah Simmons, Deputy Director for Strategy, Arnold Schwarzenegger for Governor; Daniel Gray, Field Director, James Webb for U.S. Senate.

For “District Profile” boxes

California
Connecticut’s 2nd District
Population figures: http://www.fastfacts.census.gov/home/cws/main.html
University of Connecticut: http://www.uconn.edu/about/enrollment.php

Florida
University of Florida: http://www.ufl.edu/facts/
Florida State University: http://www.fsu.edu/about/students.html

Indiana’s 9th District
Population figures: http://www.fastfacts.census.gov/home/cws/main.html
City of Bloomington: http://www.census.gov/
On Election Night, the race was too close to call. Once all the ballots were counted, however, Senator Tester had edged out incumbent Conrad Burns by just over 3,500 votes.

In a race where over 39,000 more 18-29 year olds voted than in the previous midterm—and with a 12-point advantage for the winner—young voter turnout clearly made the difference.
The George Washington University
Graduate School of Political Management

805 21st Street NW Suite #401
Washington, DC 20052

www.youngvoterstrategies.org
info@youngvoterstrategies.org

202-994-5122 (phone)
202-994-6006 (fax)