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18

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## [How to Get the Young Voters to Turn Out](#)

By [Robert Weiner](#)



Robert Weiner

Opinion originally published in *The Washington Post*

Regarding the editorial "[An investment in democracy](#)":

Getting the youth vote requires work and identifying key issues.

Young people turned out in 1972 with the highest percentage of eligible voters (55 percent). It was the first opportunity for 18- to 21-year-olds to vote since the 26th Amendment was passed in 1971. The main reason for the high turnout was clear: Young people did not want to die in Vietnam, a war they did not understand or believe in.

The Democratic National Committee's national voter registration drive at the famed Watergate headquarters, through the Young Democrats office, did a youth vote campaign of posters, fliers, varied events and news conferences in each state, recruited rock stars as well as state and local organizers everywhere (with charts and lists for follow-up), generated sponsors, and did youth voter registration ads on thousands of targeted radio stations. I remember later DNC Chairman Terry McAuliffe asking me, 'How did we do it?' I said, 'It was a lot of work,' and I laid out the specifics. (We had an invited exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum of American History for 30 years after the election.)

As part of the national youth vote effort, we also did a youth vote forum, attended by hundreds of young organizers, in Delaware in 1972 for Joe Biden's first Senate run. The 29-year-old Biden upset two-term senator Caleb Boggs by 3,162 votes, the year's closest

Senate race. The lesson for the upcoming midterm elections is clear.

This year, young people care about climate change with the planet at stake, school gun deaths, abortion choice, student loans, jobs, rent prices escalating, inflation, the survival of our democracy and a lot more. Bringing those issues home requires tremendous effort from both parties.

*In addition to serving as a White House and congressional spokesman, Weiner was the national youth voter registration director for the Young Democrats and the Democratic National Committee's National Voter Registration Drive in 1971 and 1972.*

\*This version reflects the full text submitted to the Post and differs slightly from the edited version.