



The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

Letters to the Editor

Opinion

How to get the young voters to turn out

September 2, 2022 at 1:58 p.m. EDT



Californians cast votes using touch-screen machines in Los Angeles on March 3, 2020. (Melina Mara/The Washington Post)

Regarding the Aug. 26 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.

We also did a youth vote forum 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, school gun deaths, abortion choice, student loans, jobs, rent prices, inflation, the survival of our democracy and a lot more. Bringing those issues home requires tremendous effort from both parties.

Robert S. Weiner, *Accokeek*

The writer 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.