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NextGen Iowa Celebrates the Rising Power of the Youth Vote

Future electoral victories to be guided by a newly engaged base of young voters

NextGen Iowa 2020: By the Numbers:

TOTAL STAFF ON THE GROUND: **22**

TOTAL VOLUNTEERS: **593**

TOTAL CAMPUSES WITH PROGRAM: **13**

TOTAL YOUNG VOTERS REGISTERED: **7,967**

TOTAL PLEDGE TO VOTES COLLECTED: **25,974**

TOTAL YOUNG VOTERS REACHED WITH DIGITAL ADS: **217,092**

TOTAL TEXTS SENT: **1,238,662**

TOTAL CALLS MADE: **454,732**

TOTAL PIECES OF DIRECT MAIL SENT: **251,209**

DES MOINES, IA — As final votes are being received, the results show that NextGen Iowa played a decisive role in achieving historic enthusiasm among voters aged 18-35 this year. Combining an innovative relational organizing program with a first-rate digital operation that adapted to the requirements of an unprecedented public health crisis, NextGen mobilized young voters and ensured they had the resources and education they needed to vote safely amid the pandemic.

“We have created a generation of new voters and activists by adapting our campaign strategies to meet them where they already are,” said **Brit Bender, State Director of NextGen Iowa**.

“Each blue victory requires a foundation and our work through this cycle connected with young people that are often forgotten by traditional campaigns. In the end, young Iowans joined with young people nationwide in showing their support for Joe Biden and Democrats down-ballot, and they must be the leaders of the effort to flip Iowa in 2022.”

Young people ages 18 to 29 made up nearly one-sixth of all Iowa voters in 2020 as vote totals set a new record for the state. Their votes pushed Democrat Cindy Axne over the finish line in

swing district IA-03 and are critical in the close race for Iowa's 2nd Congressional District. GOP gains in Iowa occurred despite the strong showing from Iowa's youth, who preferred Biden by a [9-point margin](#) (a 15-point improvement from 2016). Based on Secretary of State vote totals, in youth-dense counties statewide, turnout has risen, and margins for Democrats improved from 2016. In Johnson County, home to the University of Iowa and the razor-thin race for Iowa's 2nd Congressional District, there was a five-point increase in the margin of victory for Joe Biden. Importantly, in a year when it became instantly harder to vote due to COVID, young people accounted for a 16% share of total turnout, far surpassing the same metric in 2016.

In Youth-dense Iowa Counties, Democrats did better than in 2016

County	% Registered Voters under 35	Clinton Margin 2016	Biden Margin 2020	Change, 2016 to 2020
Story County	48%	+12	+17	+5
Johnson County	43%	+38	+43	+5
Polk County	31%	+11	+15	+4
Black Hawk County	31%	+7	+9	+2
Sioux County	32%	-68	-66	+2

Registered voter percentages come from the state voter file, race margins from Iowa Secretary of State

The stakes of an election have never been higher in Iowa. Young people entered this election cycle facing massive challenges including a ballooning student debt crisis, an environmental mess left by past generations, and mass racial injustice. Then, voters were confronted with an unprecedented public health and economic crisis this year that almost immediately cast a shadow on the single core tenet of our democracy: voting. Iowans have a long road ahead as they fight for action on these issues in Des Moines and D.C., and the newly engaged youth vote will be a key part of that coalition of activists.

With a dual goal of revitalizing grassroots democracy and electing progressive candidates up and down the ballot, NextGen Iowa ran an innovative organizing program that reached young voters where they are: on campus, in their communities, and online. NextGen Iowa deployed 14 organizers and fellows on college campuses and youth-dense communities around the Hawkeye State, increasing youth participation in the Iowa Caucus, Iowa's June primary, and the 2020 general election. Throughout the month of October, NextGen Iowa reached more than 4,000 viewers with weekly voter information livestreams aimed at fighting voter suppression with answers while offering viewers fun content like baby goat videos, cooking tutorials, and pumpkin carving demonstrations.

NextGen Iowa's approach has been responsive to the needs of Hawkeye State youth. Over 251,209 Iowans have been reached by mail, with campaigns that focus on voter registration and

mail-in voting. The statewide digital program has reached users on every major platform and engaged voters in conversation, instead of traditional one-sided posting, building and catering to a network of issue-focused young voters who evaluate candidates on their policy merits before casting a ballot.

“Young, passionate voters made their rising power known in the margins of victory across the state; their influence and energy will only strengthen in future elections,” said **Murphy Burke, the NextGen Iowa Press Secretary**. “Young voters have put Iowa’s elected officials on notice and their message is clear: we are a force to be reckoned with.”

About NextGen Iowa

NextGen Iowa has spent the 2020 election cycle building a lifelong passion for voting among Iowans 18-35. With a program that centered on talking about the issues, NextGen Iowa targeted more than 300,000 young people and collected more than 25,000 pledges to vote.

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