

## Young Voters Turning Out in Big Numbers

Something big is happening in our democracy – young people are voting. Already, young people turned out in record numbers at the nation's first caucus and primary contests of 2008. The youth vote:

- \* Recorded record turnout in Super Tuesday states
- \* More than tripled in the Iowa caucuses
- \* Increased by 25 percent in the New Hampshire primaries
- \* Nearly tripled in the South Carolina primary (Democratic)
- \* More than tripled in the Florida primaries

Not only did young voters turn out in big numbers, but they were also critical to deciding the winners of both these contests. Youth voter turnout in 2008 primary and caucus contests.

### Making Them Pay Attention to Us

Young voters will play a critical role in the 2008 elections. Not only are they turning out to the polls in increasing numbers, but young people (18-31 year olds) represent one-quarter of the national electorate.

The evidence shows that when politicians talk to us about the issues that we care about most, that we turn out to vote in higher numbers. That's where the Student PIRGs' What's Your Plan? campaign comes into play. Rather than wait for the candidates to come to us - we're going straight to them to ask them what their plans are on key youth issues such as global warming and higher education. Since the spring of 2007, hundreds of young volunteers have hit the campaign trail, attending barbeques, photo-ops, town halls and fundraisers, to ask all of the Presidential candidates, face to face: What's Your Plan? So far we've asked the candidates more than 100 times, and it's working. Not only are the candidates talking about the issues that we care about, but they are making it a point to reach out to young voters.

The evidence also shows that outreach works - especially when it's peer to peer. That's where the Student PIRGs come in – using our time tested and academically reviewed peer to peer methods to mobilize youth. Since 2003, we've registered more than 600,000 18-30 year olds and made 650,000 personalized, peer to peer contacts to turn young people out to the polls. An analysis of our work found that young people contacted by the Student PIRGs' New Voters Project turned out at a rate 13 percentage points higher than a group of demographically similar individuals who also registered to vote within six months of the election.

### Youth Vote on the Rise: 2004, 2005 and 2006

This surge in youth voter turnout continues the trend of the past three election cycles.

\* In 2004, 20.1 million 18-29 year olds voted, up 4.3 million from 2000. More 18-29 year olds voted in 2004 than voters over the age of 65. This increase was due in large part

to our efforts – in 2004, the Student PIRGs registered 524,000 18-30 year olds to vote and made more than half a million personalized, peer to peer get out the vote contacts to turn young people out to the polls.

\* In 2005, turnout in student dense precincts in New Jersey and Virginia (both states held gubernatorial races) increased 15 to 19 percent, even though turnout for other age groups decreased.

\* In 2006, 18-29 year old turnout increased by 2 million votes, almost twice that of the overall electorate. In thirty-six student dense precincts where the Student PIRGs and our allies worked, youth voter turnout increased on average by 157% over 2002 turnout.

#### What's Next

The Student PIRGs are already gearing up for the next primaries and the general election – running voter registration and get out the vote drives in campus communities across the country and continuing to meet with all the Presidential candidates, face to face, about the issues that matter to us most. Get involved