

Exclusive research: Where the youth vote could matter most in 2018

New 2018 index ranks top U.S. House districts, U.S. Senate races and gubernatorial contests where young voters have the highest potential to sway outcome

March 27, 2018

MEDFORD/SOMERVILLE, Mass. (March 27, 2018)—How will young people shape the future American political landscape? A [new index](#) offers a potential answer by ranking the top districts and states where young people could have a significant influence on the outcome of congressional and gubernatorial races across the country. The [2018 Youth Electoral Significance Index \(YESI\)](#) was developed exclusively by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement ([CIRCLE](#)) – the preeminent, non-partisan research center on youth engagement at Tufts University’s [Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life](#).

While young people can influence elections in many ways, the [2018 index](#) highlights the areas where young people (ages 18-29) are poised to have a disproportionately high impact on election outcomes this year. The index takes into account the competitiveness of the electoral contests, as well as demographic characteristics, the number of colleges and universities, historical youth turnout data and voting laws.

Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, director of CIRCLE, emphasizes that realizing this potential electoral power partially depends on efforts to engage and listen to young voters.

“Young people can shape our elections, our policies and the future direction of states and the nation, but their potential is limited when campaigns don’t reach out to them and when officials don’t seek and value their views,” she said. “We hope this tool will encourage campaigns, media outlets and advocates across the country to engage young people on issues that matter to them.”

Key findings include:

- **Coast-to-coast potential.** Young people could have an impact on races in every corner of the nation: from congressional elections in Illinois and California, which appear in the Top 10, to Senate contests in North Dakota and Arizona, to governor’s races in Maine and Alaska.
- **Minnesota on top.** Young people are poised to have an extraordinary impact at every level in Minnesota, which ranks first among the gubernatorial races, second in the list of U.S. Senate contests and has four districts in the congressional YESI Top 10. The reasons for this include several highly competitive races, relatively high youth turnout in recent midterm elections and a high proportion of colleges and universities in some districts. For example,

Democratic Gov. Mark Dayton's decision not to seek reelection makes that race highly competitive and will no doubt drive attention to other races, several of which are already predicted to be closely contested.

- **Battlegrounds in play.** Several traditional “battleground” states appear throughout the 2018 Top 10 lists, including Colorado, Ohio, Wisconsin and Michigan. For example, in Colorado, which has one congressional district in the Top 10 and comes in third on the list of governor's races with strong potential for youth electoral impact, young people make up 17 percent of the population. The state also has exceptionally facilitative voting laws, allowing pre-registration for 16-year-olds, automatic voter registration, online registration and same-day registration. In the 2014 midterms, young Coloradans voted at an above-average level of 31 percent.

[2018 INDEX HERE](#)

Throughout the 2018 election cycle, CIRCLE youth vote experts are available for interviews and/or analysis. CIRCLE is co-leading [22x20](#), a ground-breaking national initiative to bring multiple fields together to build civic opportunities for the 22 million teens who will be 18 before the 2020 election. Media outlets should contact: Jen McAndrew at jennifer.mcandrew@tufts.edu or 617 627-2029.

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CIRCLE (www.civicyouth.org) is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center that studies young people in politics and presents detailed data on young voters in all 50 states. CIRCLE is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life (<http://tischcollege.tufts.edu/>), the only university-wide college of its kind. The college offers transformational student learning and service opportunities, conducts groundbreaking research on young people's civic and political participation, and forges innovative community partnerships. Its work is guided by two core beliefs: that communities, nations and the world are stronger, more prosperous, and more just when citizens actively participate in civic and democratic life; and that higher education has a responsibility to develop the next generation of active citizens.

About Tufts University

Tufts University, located on campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville and Grafton, Massachusetts, and in Talloires, France, is recognized among the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate and professional programs across the university's schools is widely encouraged.