

CREATING CHANGE

How can minors create change without being able to vote?

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With new 2020 presidential candidate announcements popping up in the news daily, big changes in the country are predicted and cannot be done without voting. Most high school students are under 18 and unable to vote in upcoming elections but are still looking for ways to create change and exercise their freedom of speech.

The 2016 presidential election strongly affected voter turnout at the polls compared to the 2012 election.

According to pbs.org, “(voter) turnout rates dropped by 1.3 percent in Iowa, three percent in Wisconsin and nearly four percent in Ohio in 2016.”

While this may seem like a small decrease, every vote in the election counts, meaning one voter could potentially change the results.

Kelsey Thien, the research analyst for the house of Democrats at the Iowa State Capital, believes that voting is extremely important, no matter the election.

“The people you elect make policies that have profound impacts on everyone’s lives. By not voting, you won’t have a say in who gets elected. Therefore, you’re letting others make decisions for you without having a voice,” Thien said.

Voting has a big say in the changes made throughout

the country but still, less than half of eligible voters are voting. Lack of voter education plays a major role in the low number of citizens voting.

“By having confusing voter ID laws and registration processes, it turns a lot of people away from the polls. Voting should be easy, and people should not have barriers preventing them from exercising their right to vote,” Thien said.

Freshman Kameran Hensley admits that she doesn’t know much about the voting process and regulations.

“I haven’t learned much about how the voting process works in school. Voting privileges are part of growing up and we should be taught the importance of voicing our opinions before we put them into action,” Hensley said.

Sophomore Sheena Tran thinks the issue of low voter turnout can be reduced with voter education to those under 18 so they can be prepared to vote.

“If anything, schools should be pushing for more youth to continue to vote, and only recently have stu-

“With social media platforms, it makes it easier to connect with others and actually start a movement. We saw this with the students in Parkland, Florida and they made a huge impact on society,” Kelsey Thien said.



Students and adults alike gathered in Washington D.C. for the March For Our Lives rally in response to the school shooting in Parkland, Florida. Lorie Shaull Flickr Photo.

dents begun to realize their impact. Voter education should be taught more in schools because of this. This can be seen in ways like announcements, reminders, journalism, and providing choice as a statement,” Tran said.

Without being able to vote, students and youth still use their voice to create change. Tran uses her voice to encourage her peers and sees others doing the same at school.

“I advocate, protest, and spread my opinions through the internet or through initiating my peers. It’s important to have conversations about what’s going on in our government,” Tran said. “I see clubs and students focusing on art. This plays a really big role in the way we as a school express ourselves. Through events, art pieces, poetry, and even the plays we do, we are able to participate in a variety of ways to be noticed and validated.”

Spreading a message through art isn’t the only way to advocate for change.

“Minors can always volunteer for campaigns, knock doors and make phone calls. They can also participate in activism by attending rallies, protests and marches. Writing to legislators and lobbying at the capital for issues they care about really make a difference. This has all been made so much easier with the various social media platforms,” Thien said.

MOVEMENT MAKERS

Examples of influential kids that have made a difference without being able to vote.

Mari Copeny (Little Miss Flint) uses her voice to advocate for clean water in Flint, Michigan. Even though she is just eleven years old, she has been raising money and creating organizations for the last five years to help the water crisis in Flint.

Greta Thunberg is fifteen years old and lives in Sweden. Thunberg led a huge movement in Sweden when she went on strike from school until a general election to draw attention to climate change issues. Her actions created conversations and caused politicians to change their opinions on climate change.

Sophie Cruz made a difference at the young age of six years old. Being the daughter of undocumented Mexican immigrants, Cruz wrote a letter to the Pope in 2015, urging him to learn more about the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. Her letter brought attention to the major issue.