

Women are voting, but young people aren't

Are women voting? "You betcha," as former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin might say. The 93rd anniversary of the 19th Amendment recently and quietly passed, as do most milestones we can't divide by five. "In every presidential election since 1996 women have voted at higher rates than men," according to a U.S. Census Bureau report from May 2013. That, of course, was the Bill Clinton presidency, so feel free to insert your own joke here.

All kidding aside, Charlotte County women hold the power in the polling places.

For the 2012 presidential election, 60,340 women (or 52.4 percent) registered to vote compared with 53,424 men, according to the Supervisor of Elections' Office. There were 1,287 registered voters who either don't know their gender or simply chose not to reveal it for some reason.

Of the 60,340 women, 75.6 percent cast ballots. How did the known male voters compare? Slightly behind at 73.5 percent turnout. Even if you assumed all the unknown gender voters were male, the women still outnumbered the men in the polling places.

So who isn't voting?

Young people.

"There's a problem with young people. They vote in far less numbers," Supervisor of Elections Paul Stamoulis said.

Here are the percentages of eligible, registered voters who actually cast ballots in the November general election:

- * 18-25 year olds: 42.5 percent
- * 26-30 year olds: 48.2 percent
- * 31-35 year olds: 54.1 percent
- * 36-40 year olds: 60.4 percent
- * 41-45 year olds: 65.2 percent
- * 46-50 year olds: 69.2 percent
- * 51-55 year olds: 74.9 percent
- * 56-60 year olds: 79.5 percent
- * 61-65 year olds: 84.5 percent
- * 66 and older: 84.3 percent

Stamoulis, his staff and I knocked around ideas as to why young people don't vote (no draft to worry about; no concept that voting once wasn't available to certain segments of the population; disgust of party politics). The truth might just be that it's always been that way. Unfortunately, there weren't computers back in the day to break out demographic voting information. Therefore, there's no way to pull spreadsheets from the 1928 presidential election to see how many young Charlotte people turned out to vote for one of the three candidates: Republican Herbert Hoover, Democrat Alfred

E. Smith or Socialist Norman Thomas.

No matter the reason, Stamoulis has made it his mission to reach young voters. He and his staff, through The Great American Comeback Tour, go into schools to educate students about the voting process.

In the last two years, Stamoulis and his crew have been to the following:

- * Kingsway Elementary
- * The Village Place

- * Punta Gorda Middle School
- * Liberty Elementary School
- * L.A. Ainger — twice
- * Prime Timers Organization
- * Port Charlotte Middle School — twice
- * South Port Square
— twice
- * Peace River Elementary School
— twice
- * Vineland Elementary
— four times
- * Murdock Middle
— twice
- * West County Republican Club
- * Punta Gorda Christmas Parade
— twice
- * East Elementary
— twice
- * The Academy
- * Family Services Center
- * Home schooled students
- * Martin Luther King Day Parade

“We promote America,” Stamoulis said. “We remind children they were born into the greatest country in the world.”

Here, in the greatest country in the world, women can wear tank tops and shorts without the fear of being arrested. Not so in Saudi Arabia. Don’t even think about dancing in public or criticizing the royal family.

Here, in the greatest country in the world, you can insult someone or gesture rudely without the fear of being arrested. Not so in Qatar.

Here, in the greatest country in the world, you can show support for gay rights. Not so in Russia.

Let’s make sure we maintain our status as the greatest in the world.

National Voter Registration Day is coming up on Sept. 24. Let’s not only get our young residents registered, but let’s also encourage them to actually vote.

Would you let your grandma pick out your clothes? Would you let her control your playlists on iTunes? Would you let her manage your Facebook page? Then why are you letting her select your community’s, state’s and country’s leaders? You can have a say in this matter too.

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HOW TO REGISTER TO VOTE

www.charlottevotes.com —
click on Registration and then on
Register Online
[www.nationalvoter
registrationday.org](http://www.nationalvoter
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