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# UNDERSTANDING YOUR VOTE IN THE 2020 ELECTIONS

By yomag (<http://theyomag.com/index.php/author/yomag/>) / May 12, 2020

By Nathanael Hawthorne, Jules Julius, Sierra Kish and Dominique Stevenson

The 2020 election is rapidly approaching, and the presidential race can be confusing for young voters. First- and second-time voters have many resources at their disposal thanks to the ever-increasing presence of social media and online accessibility.

Much of this information is hard to find, leading to ignorance and a lack of information. Thankfully, as opposed to the 2016 election, young voters are making a diligent search for the issues.

**Uninformed and Confusing**

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When it comes to politics, the conversation can get confusing. Some people may not even be sure if they are eligible to vote.

With the primary and presidential election coming up, these are important factors that need to be addressed. Trying to find information for the upcoming 2020 election is almost impossible for someone who has no idea where to begin.

Monica Kurjan, a junior sports broadcasting major at Youngstown State University, was asked to share some of her opinions about the upcoming 2020 primary and national elections.

“When I was in high school, we had a government class that did follow the 2016 election very closely, so I did as well. Everyone around me [classmates] knew exactly what was going on during this time,” Kurjan said.

Kurjan added that her parents did not follow the election very closely. When it came time to vote, she said she felt her parents were less educated because “everything is computerized.”

“My parents are in their 60s and finding information about the elections are mostly on the internet now,” Kurjan said.

“They barely even know how to use their phones, let alone an election website.”

This problem does surface with older generations. A lot of campaigns are promoted online, but that makes the system difficult for older people who want to follow the elections as well.

For example, some people may not be sure what day the elections are held or what the differences are between a primary and a general election.

Kurjan admitted she is one of those people.

“I have no idea when the primary election is. Should I?” Kurjan asked.

According to [Ballotpedia.org](http://Ballotpedia.org) (<http://Ballotpedia.org>), which refers to itself as “the digital encyclopedia of American politics and elections,” a primary election is an election in which registered voters select a candidate that they believe should be a political party’s candidate for elected office and run in the general election.

A general election is a statewide or nationwide election where voters can use their right to vote. This election will clarify who will win in the position that candidate has ran for.

When asked about the primary election was, Kurjan was not sure if she needed to even vote in them. The primary election is just as important as, if not more important than, the presidential election.

“I’m not sure what is being voted on in this election besides the president, and I’m not sure who is running either. I also haven’t followed this one closely, but I do intend to follow once it gets closer,” Kurjan said.

Kurjan did make sure to say that she knew election day is the first Tuesday in November, so she will be using her right to vote in the general election Nov. 3, 2020.

The United States Census Bureau surveyed how many people did not vote in the 2016 U.S. election. ([https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2017/05/voting\\_in\\_america.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2017/05/voting_in_america.html))

## Involvement

Ron Slipski, senior lecturer of politics and international relations at YSU, explained why he believes it is important to vote as an American citizen.



Photo by Nancy Cline

“Before someone doesn’t vote, they should ask themselves why other people in other countries are willing to die for the right to vote,” Slipski said.

The importance of a vote can affect more than just the 2020 election. Slipski said that he encourages young people to get involved for the sake of the world’s future.

“Young people have a different perspective on things, I have often been enlightened by what young people say to me, and I often change my opinion on things because of what young people say,” Slipski said.

He added that his five children are a part of the next generation who will affect this country for the rest of his life and their lives.

Slipski had some advice for people voting in 2020 for the first time.

“Pay attention and try to learn as much as you can. Seek out sources that you think are credible,” Slipski said.

He also touched on how hard it is to find voting and electoral information nowadays.

“When I was your age, we had three television stations — now there’s hundreds of television stations ... They did a lot of vetting for us,” Slipski said.

“Now you [young people] have a much more difficult job in deciding what is credible or not.”

Slipski credits The League of Women Voters (<http://lwvgy.com/>) as a source with great information on voting. Slipski said finding the time to vote is important and explained that if he had it his way, people would get paid time off on election day to go vote.

Before the right to vote was extended to all U.S. citizens 18 and older in 1971 with the ratification of the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, Americans were given the right to freedom of speech as part of the First Amendment, which was ratified in 1791.

Slipski said that when it comes to the 2020 election or any important decision, Americans should find that old way of thinking when it comes to choosing what to vote for by listening to all the information presented and thinking about it from multiple perspectives.

“Listen to both sides, then hopefully you find the truth through the process. That is what our founders believed,” Slipski said.

“That is why we have freedom of speech, because [of] the people that believed in finding truth by listening to the best from both sides.”

### **Not Repeating History**

During the 2016 presidential election, many first-time voters felt they were not well-informed about the election. Today, some of those voters feel they are well-informed about the 2020 presidential election.

YSU student Lorinda Dixon was one of those first-time voters in the 2016 election. She felt well-informed heading into the polls for the first time, but she feels even more informed the second time around.

“I was pretty well-informed in 2016, but I do feel like I’m more informed about the 2020 election. I think that’s because so many new issues have arisen,” Dixon said.

Dixon explained that climate change was a primary concern to her.

“There’s a lot more to learn now than there was then, and information gets easier and easier to obtain with every passing day,” Dixon said.

Although information may be readily available, some of these information sources may be biased. Dixon, like others, does not want to get her information from biased sources.

“I definitely think that nonpartisan sources are good,” Dixon said.

With a lot of candidates using social media as a source for sharing campaign ideas and promoting themselves, Dixon believes that following the candidates on the various platforms is also useful because many candidates use social media to discuss national issues.

“I also think that following the candidates on social media and just watching their videos and posts and seeing what they have to say is useful,” Dixon said.

“Of course, it’s biased,” Dixon acknowledged. “But you get a lot of information about who the candidate is as a person just by watching them, and you can learn a lot about what they’re planning to do.”

In November 2019, there were 18 candidates seeking the Democratic Party presidential candidate nomination. With such a wide variety of candidates, the issues that each candidate plans to cover in their nomination bids are endless.

According to Dixon, knowing as much information as possible will help voters to be more informed, especially when it comes to deciding who will be president.

“I want to know who I’m voting for. I want to know what the candidates are interested in and working towards... helping things that matter to me,” Dixon said. “I need to know that the people and issues I’m voting for are going to solve these problems sooner rather than later.”

The 2016 election saw a rare occurrence when current president Donald Trump won the electoral college vote but lost the popular vote.

According to Census.gov, during the 2016 presidential election there was an increase in voters between the ages of 18 to 29, leading to about 4.6 million more voters in 2016 than in 2012. When something like this happens, it is easy to question if your vote counts, but Dixon believes that voting does matter.

“The electoral college significantly reduces the amount of control the public have over its government, but it does still matter that we vote,” Dixon said.

Some of people are first-time voters and many more will be voting only for the second time.

Being well-informed is key to knowing exactly what issues will be voted on at different levels, as well as knowing which issues or perspectives candidates support.

The only way to be well-informed is by doing research, and websites such as Ballotpedia.org are a great tool to use when it comes to finding information.

### **Being Well-Informed**

There was a common misconception during the 2016 election. The misconception was that people who were eligible to vote for the first time in 2016 did not vote due to lack of interest between the two candidates, current president Donald Trump and Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton.

Reuters, an international news organization, reported a 9% increase in first-time voters from 2012 to 2016.

The 2020 election, however, has many first- and second-time voters alike heading to the polls. This election has many issues that the younger voters – mostly college or high school aged individuals – are deeply concerned about.

Dr. Timothy Francisco, English professor at YSU and director of the Center for Working Class Studies, said he believes economic and social disparity are big issues for younger voters.

“I’m far from a first- or second-time voter, but I think young voters are worried about the high costs of college and are increasingly concerned with the high income inequality and concentration of wealth that makes social mobility seem harder and harder to attain,” Francisco said.

“I think one of the biggest, or most important, issues in this election is health care. Across the board, people are worried about escalating health care costs and prescription drugs, and increasingly health care premium rises are erasing any modest gains people earn in salaries.”

Francisco also believes that because of a decline in local publications across the country, finding information related to voting and elections is increasingly difficult, particularly at the local level, and that the drama surrounding political news coverage has become nationally distracting.

“This is a serious problem affecting the quality of life and the civic health of our communities,” Francisco said.

“One can argue that the issues that really determine quality of life aren’t decided in Washington but rather in Columbus, and citizens need to be better informed on local issues.”

The media attention political coverage has garnered is everywhere. Athletes and celebrities use their various platforms to speak about various political issues that may become a part of the 2020 election.

News stations such as Fox and CNN cover politics extensively, and Francisco believes this is a big part of the problem.

“Unfortunately, the horse race, the drama and the reality TV circus of political coverage is at the expense of the issues to the point of distraction,” Francisco said.

“I also think that the 24-hour news and talk radio echo chambers make this worse. I think the whole news model where one side argues with another is useless if no one corrects the facts. Giving equal airtime to falsehoods is not objectivity – the facts are objective.”

These issues, and the apparent dilution of these issues, hold importance in the minds of voters both old and new.

The lack of clear information coupled with the distraction presented by numerous media outlets across the country not only clouds the judgement of some first- and second-time voters, but it could also give even the most seasoned voters cause for concern.

There is, however, a solution to blocking out the noise of allegedly biased news sources and people who influence the minds of young voters.

That solution is to do research and decide what issues are important and which potential candidate’s views address those issues. There are websites provided at the end of this article that can help shed light on issues, candidates and various other important information.

### **Getting Informed About the Upcoming Elections**

The primary election is March 17, 2020. Following that, on Nov. 3, 2020, voting for the presidential election will begin. The 2020 election will also include voting on members for state House of Representatives and other state and national positions.

To be informed about the 2020 elections, make sure to read and research all candidates and issues. The result of the 2020 elections will be determined both by voting and not voting, and all people should be informed about what their decisions regarding voting will mean.

## Voting Resources:

[Ballotpedia \(https://www.ballotpedia.org/Main\\_Page\)](https://www.ballotpedia.org/Main_Page)

[Mahoning County Board of Elections \(https://vote.mahoningcountyoh.gov/\)](https://vote.mahoningcountyoh.gov/)

[Ohio House of Representatives \(http://www.ohiohouse.gov/\)](http://www.ohiohouse.gov/)

[League of Women Voters of Greater Youngstown \(http://www.lwvgy.com\)](http://www.lwvgy.com)

[The City of Youngstown \(http://www.youngstownohio.gov\)](http://www.youngstownohio.gov)

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