

## Key Takeaways:

- In a year over year comparison, the Youth Vote (ages 18-35) increased from 129,059 votes in 2015 to 288,959 votes in 2019 to 304,452 votes in 2023 (135% increase over 8 years).
- VAYD helped boost turn out statewide with almost 700,000 voters contacted over various methods through our field and digital programs.
- There were 109,587 new voter registrations for people aged 18-35 in 2023 which we helped add to on College Campuses.
- VAYD invested \$21,599 in our campaign efforts, including distributing funds to various chapters around the state.
- In 2023, 26 Young Democrats ran for State and Local offices across the Commonwealth. 14 of those candidates were elected to office (2 of which were write-in candidates).

## 2023 Campaign Strategy:

VAYD took on a very aggressive campaign plan in 2023 where we targeted 17 House Districts and 7 Senate Districts across Virginia. We sponsored 6 canvass launches, 4 Phone Banks, and 3 text banks (specifically targeted to 18-25 year olds). In addition, we invested \$10,000 in Digital Advertising.

At the end of our campaign season, we had accomplished:

- 140990 Voter Contacts
- 42,812 Doors
- 80,532 Texts Sent
- 17,562 Calls Made
- 696,183 individual voters reached

## Youth Turnout:

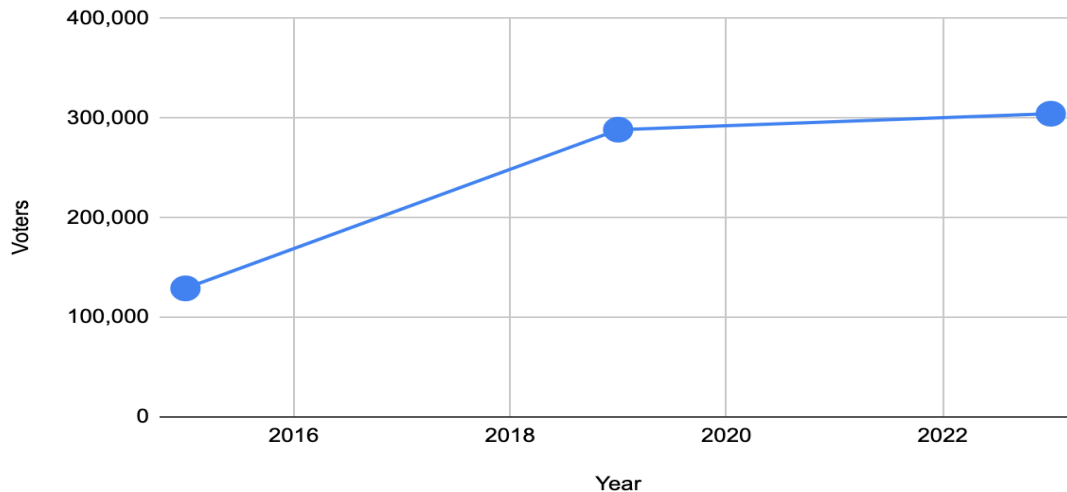
Voters between the ages of 18 and 35 turned out in force for these off-year elections in the fall of 2023. In comparison, the last cycles without a statewide candidate with all 140 seats to the General Assembly up for re-election were 2015, a year before Donald Trump's first Presidency, and 2019, following a banner year for Dems during the midterms in 2018 in the middle of Donald Trump's presidency. That year, 168,592 young voters turned out for the General Election.

In 2015, 129,059 voters between the ages of 18-35 turned out to vote.

In 2019, 288,452 voters between the ages of 18-35 turned out to vote.

**In 2023, 304,452 voters between the ages of 18-35 turned out to vote. That is a 135% increase in 8 years.<sup>1</sup>**

### 18-35 Year Old Voters Statewide in Off Year Elections



We attribute this boost in turnout to a number of factors. However, one key factor was the introduction of Same Day Voter Registration, which helped boost voter turnout for younger people who missed the voter registration deadline, especially College Students who were able to change their voter registration to campus.

For context, the Senate majority was decided by 5066 votes in the Senate and the House majority was decided by 975 Votes. Every vote matters and the Youth Turnout proves that.

## College Campuses:

Candidates that had college campuses in particular had noticed a large increase in turnout in battleground districts. Many people do not know that college students (regardless of their voter registration) are counted in the population when they are living on campus in redistricting. So you could be a student who attends the University of Virginia and even if you are registered to

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<sup>1</sup> All voting statistics pulled from Voter File based on the age range of 18-35 at the time of 2015, 2019, and 2023 elections.

vote in your home state of Pennsylvania, you are still counted in the population of Charlottesville when it comes time to draw districts.<sup>2</sup>

In July of 2023, Politico published the article, [How College Towns Are Decimating the GOP](#), in which Charlie Mahtesian and Madi Alexander outline how Democrats have been gaining momentum in local and state elections based on higher turnout from college students in previously solid Red areas.

*Of 171 "college towns", 38 have flipped from red to blue since the 2000 presidential election. Just seven flipped the other way, from blue to red, and typically by smaller margins.*

*Democrats grew their percentage point margins in 117 counties, while 54 counties grew redder. By raw votes, the difference was just as stark: The counties that grew bluer increased their margins by an average of 16,253, while Republicans increased their margins by an average of 4,063.*

To put as plainly as our President would: **this is a big f\*\*\*ing deal.**

Based on this data in the summer of 2023, VAYD saw an opportunity and turned our focus to College Campuses and getting more students to register on campus. We printed our hundreds of Voter Registration information pamphlets which we distributed to college chapters in battleground areas to encourage young voters to register at their current address and learn more about Same Day Voter Registration:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hgGebQyn8knbrOdZbGhZ089E1-4Q3OyU/view>

We also invested a lot of money in Digital and targeted college campuses with digital ads encouraging them to vote with messages like:

- [https://adsmanager.facebook.com/adsmanager/manage/ads/edit?act=828773098954364&business\\_id=243953313033204&date=2024-02-07\\_2024-05-30%2Cmaximum&select\\_ad\\_campaign\\_ids=23858967611080731&selected\\_ad\\_ids=23858967611160731&break\\_down\\_regrouping=true&nav\\_source=business\\_manager&sort=results~0&current\\_step=0](https://adsmanager.facebook.com/adsmanager/manage/ads/edit?act=828773098954364&business_id=243953313033204&date=2024-02-07_2024-05-30%2Cmaximum&select_ad_campaign_ids=23858967611080731&selected_ad_ids=23858967611160731&break_down_regrouping=true&nav_source=business_manager&sort=results~0&current_step=0)
- <https://fb.me/1Xz5egaO7HgKPLC>
- <https://fb.me/1PQZVgGIZZRQXKi>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2018-02370/p-142>

## Impact on Races:

In key races around the Commonwealth, college students were an incredible boost to turnout and the deciding factor in most:

**In HD 41**, Young Democrat candidate Lily Franklin faced off against Republican Chris Obenshain. Out of 24,875 votes cast, Lily lost by 183 (0.74%)

The 41st district contains the entirety of Virginia Tech's campus in Montgomery County which includes off campus housing as well. The Young Democrats on campus as well as the surrounding areas took it upon themselves to organize without a large amount of outside funding and were able to pull off an amazing turnout.

For 18-35 year olds in Montgomery County:

- In 2015, 3,386 Votes
- In 2019, 3,162 votes
- In 2023, 5,150 votes

That is a 52% increase from 2015 and 62% from 2019, an increase that brought the Democratic candidate that much closer to flipping this district to Blue and can still in the future, with more investment in youth organizing.

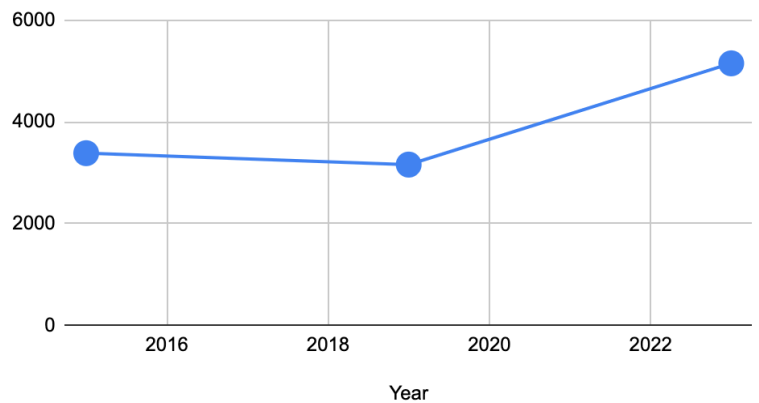
**In SD-24**, Incumbent Senator Monty Mason faced off against Republican challenger Danny Diggs. Out of 67,179 votes cast, Mason lost by 725 (1.08%).

However, just like in HD-41, SD-24 includes all of the William & Mary Campus as well as the surrounding housing, and with the help of the Young Democrats on William & Mary's campus, Williamsburg saw a boom in votes as well.

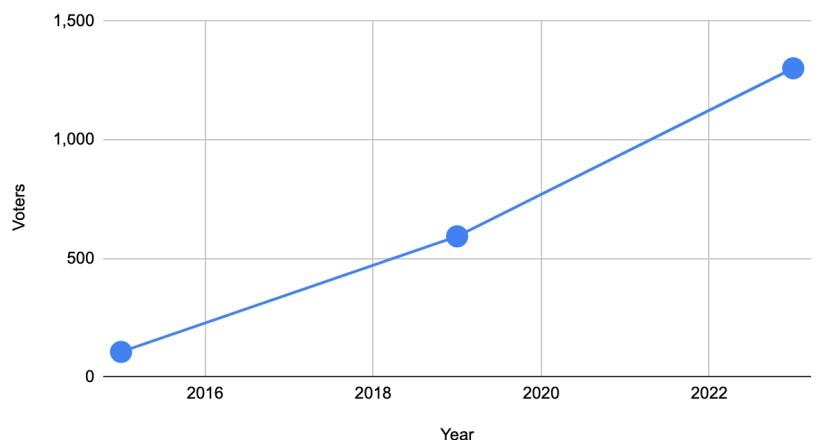
For 18-35 year olds in Williamsburg,

- In 2015, 106 votes
- In 2019, 593 votes
- In 2023, 1,301 votes

18-35 Year Old Voters in Montgomery



18-35 Year Old Voters in Williamsburg



That is a 459% increase since 2015 and 119% increase since 2019. With more resources and an investment into youth organizing, we could easily close that 725 vote gap in 4 years.

In HD-65, former Delegate and Young Dem Joshua Cole ran against Republican Lee Peters to reclaim his old seat that he lost in 2021. Of 29,154 votes cast, Cole was victorious by a margin of 1750 votes (6.00%).

HD-65 includes Fredericksburg City which includes all of the University of Mary Washington and with the help from the Young Democrats of UMW, we saw:

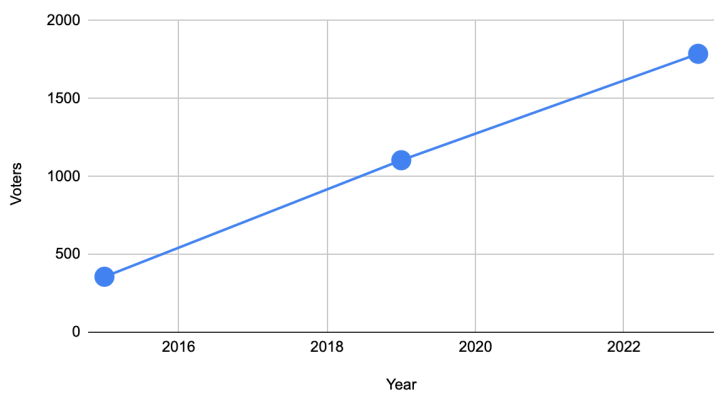
For 18-35 year olds in Fredericksburg:

- In 2015, 356 votes
- In 2019, 1104 votes
- In 2023, 1,787 votes

That is a 210% increase from 2015 and 62% from 2019 and with a turnout out 1787, Josh Cole's margin of victory can be chalked almost entirely up to the Youth Vote.

These of course are only a few examples of how the college voter turnout helped flip the House and protect the Senate in 2023. However, we know in time with more investments in Youth Voter Programs and the Virginia Young Democrats, we can see even higher turnout in the future.

18-35 Year Old Voters in Fredericksburg



## Key Context:

- Millennial and Gen Z voters make up roughly 33% of Democratic electorate
- Make up the largest portion of our volunteer and staff
- Reach due to Digital and Social Media sources is astronomically larger from where it was 20 years ago
- Virtual meetings and social media make it much easier for Young Dems to connect in more spread out rural areas

## So what now? What do we need from our fellow Democrats?

**Investing in young voters is paying off, but we need to capitalize.** The past 8 years have shown us how far youth organizing has come and how valuable the Millennial and Gen Z vote truly is. We made huge differences in 2022 and 2023 alone. We need to continue to harness that power and that starts with investing in their peers. Invest in Virginia Young Democrats to help us get our message out there. We can talk with people and reach people our own age in ways that older generations simply cannot. Our organization has taken off with more investments from the Democratic Party and donors alike. We want to continue that into 2024, 2025, and beyond.

**Turn your attention to registering College Students to vote on campus.** As we explained, college students are counted in population numbers whether or not they are registered to vote and we showed in 2023 how much of a difference that vote can make. Can you imagine how much better it would be if we started early and often? Support our college chapters and get them the resources they need early to get their fellow students to register to vote in these red districts. We can see so many more flipped seats if this continues on this trend.

**Open the door and let down the ladder for young people in Democratic spaces.** By simply inviting young people into the Democratic party spaces, you will be making a world of a difference in the barriers young folks feel like they cannot overcome. More likely than not, the more young folks you put into positions of responsibility, the more likely their peers will show up and want to get involved too. Our Young Democrats are seeing young people run for office and chair Democratic Parties (some at the state level) and it's inspiring them to see that they may also be able to accomplish the same. So invite them in because they will be able to help you reach the young voters in your community as well.

**Believe in young people.** Young folks have been on the frontlines of many societal changes in American history. The Young Democrats of America was formed because Young Democrats wanted to support Marriage Equality when the DNC didn't believe they could be supportive of it. And look at where we are today, when acceptance of the LGBTQIA community is leaps and bounds over where it was 20 years ago. So listen to what young people are saying (even if you don't agree 100%) because it is only a matter of time when it becomes an accepted opinion. Tell them to get involved. And if they want to put themselves out there for leadership positions, hear them out and guide them. Please don't shut them down and tell them they don't know anything. The more we raise each other up, the more successful we will be in the future.