

April 17, 2006

Greetings:

I am writing to ask for your support for universal voter registration and education of high school students. By implementing policies that work toward this goal, we can remove registration problems as barriers to voting and create a framework for encouraging an ongoing habit of civic participation. This is an important step in making sure our election system leaves no voter behind.

The concept of the 100% Voter Registration and Education Project is simple. Almost all young people in this country go to high school. Almost all of them enter high school too young to register to vote and leave old enough to register. During this time, they are also required to take classes on American history and government. What better time to register these young people to vote and teach them about the voting process in their community?

Much of the current election reform debate, such as that which surrounds contentious photo identification laws, is focused on the balance between ballot access and ballot integrity. High school voter registration and education addresses both of these concerns. First, it increases voter access by giving young people an opportunity to register conveniently and accurately. Second, this registration takes place in a systematic fashion through a government agency and can be accompanied by instructions that will help young people later make address changes, cast absentee ballots, go to the right polling place and use voting equipment properly.

Barely half of young adults are registered to vote in the United States and youth turnout lags far beyond older Americans, I hope you will support high school voter registration and education legislation as an important step toward full and accurate voter rolls and increased participation in our democracy.

Sincerely,

Antonio Gonzalez  
President, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project.