

Students vote for first time in midterm elections

With the 2018 midterm elections taking place today, many students are taking to the polls as they vote for their first time.

With all 435 seats of the House of Representatives and 35 senate seats up for election in addition to 36 governorships, there is a lot on the line for both political parties as results will have a significant impact on agendas and legislation moving forward.

Throughout the build up to the election, AHS students have reflected on the issues most important to them.

“I would like see a continued increase in job growth and job security in our economy,” senior Zuhair Rahman said. “I know immigration is a very controversial issue, but I would like to see stricter but also fair laws that can dictate who can come into the country.”

In Virginia, all 11 congressional districts are contested this year with the exception of Virginia’s third congressional district where incumbent Democrat Bobby Scott will be unopposed.

The most competitive house races in Virginia this year are considered to be the fifth congressional district, where incumbent Republican Thomas Garrett is retiring and the seventh congressional district represented by Republican Dave Brat. The most competitive race in the commonwealth is the tenth congressional district where incumbent Republican [Barbara Comstock](#) has battled Democratic state senator Jennifer Wexton in order to keep the district red.

In the senate race, Democrat [Tim Kaine](#) is seeking a second

term as he faces a challenge from the Chairman of the Prince William County Board of Supervisors, Republican [Corey Stewart](#).

Issues heavily discussed by both campaigns have been about the economy, jobs, healthcare and illegal immigration.

Stewart is running as an ally to President Trump and has challenged Kaine on favoring tax hikes and open borders as the two have sparred in multiple debates and Kaine has denied claims made by Stewart.

“For me, I would like for the issues regarding healthcare and education to be more thoroughly addressed,” senior Samuel Berhe said. “More specifically, I think more action needs to be taken on the opioid epidemic because that has been a growing issue.”

Most AHS students live in either Virginia’s eighth or eleventh districts, currently represented by Democrats Don Beyer and Gerry Connolly.

Beyer is facing a challenge from first-time political candidate Thomas Oh and Connolly is being challenged by Republican Jeff Dove. Pundits and analysts view both of the districts as unlikely to flip this year.

After reading up on the issues and about the candidates, a number of first-time student voters have formulated their thoughts and opinions regarding who they will vote for.

“For the senate I will be voting for Corey Stewart and for the house I will be voting for Jeff Dove,” Rahman said. “I think they will be excellent representatives because they address the issues I am most concerned about and will further the agenda of the Trump administration.”

However, other voters have not quite made up their mind on who they will be voting for.

“I haven’t made up my mind yet on who I will be voting for

because I am still doing research,” Berhe said. “It will be a game-time decision for me.”

Regardless of political affiliation, pundits have reported on increased enthusiasm among younger voters. Many expect an increase in voter turnout from those ages 18-29 when compared to previous elections such as 2014 and 2016.

“I have been looking forward to voting for some time now and I’m really excited but also nervous,” Rahman said.

Ex-delincuentes de Florida luchan por su derecho de votar

El 6 de noviembre, las elecciones de medio término se llevarán a cabo. Sin embargo, esto no incluye ex-delincuentes de Florida.

En Florida, la ley dificulta que los delincuentes recuperen sus derechos civiles. En la boleta de la Florida de este año, los votantes tienen la oportunidad de votar para alterar la cuarta enmienda, que es la iniciativa de la restauración de los derechos de voto para los delincuentes. La enmienda 4 restablecería el derecho de voto a los ex delincuentes, a excepción de los condenados por homicidio u ofensa sexual.

Según Univisión, aproximadamente 1,4 millones delincuentes liberados quedan excluidos de la votación, lo que incluye al menos 180.000 hispanos.

Entre estos hispanos están Caridad Galán y Ángel Sánchez, quienes fueron entrevistados por Univision para discutir su

situación.

Caridad Galán es una intérprete que vive en Pensacola con su segundo esposo, su hijo Carlos de 16 años y su hijo adoptivo de 2 años. En 1991, fue condenada a 18 años por un cargo de conspiración relacionada con el tráfico de drogas de su esposo colombiano. Debido a su buen comportamiento, sólo cumplió 10 años y fue liberada en 2000.

Sin embargo, Carlos y ella no están en buenos términos porque la habían condenado cuando tenía 6 años, lo que le causó mucho sufrimiento y problemas de enojo.

Además de sus problemas familiares, luchó por encontrar un trabajo después de ser liberada, ya que se identificó con ser una convicta criminal. A la edad de 53 años, las consecuencias de sus acciones continúan, ya que todavía no puede votar desde 1992.

“No tener voz es horrible. Es como tener una mordaza en la boca,” Galán dijo.

Angel Sanchez reside en Florida como estudiante de derecho, quien se graduó de la Universidad de Florida Central en ciencias políticas. Ahora, estudia derecho en la Universidad de Maryland y fue invitado a la Universidad de Harvard para dar un discurso.

Sin embargo, durante su adolescencia, se involucró en pandillas y, a la edad de 16 años, estuvo varias veces en detención de menores, lo que lo llevó a ser condenado como adulto a 30 años. Sin embargo, luchó por su educación a través de preparatoria en la prisión. Solamente sirvió 15 años debido a que había errores en su proceso de su sentencia, lo que lo llevó a inscribirse en el colegio comunitario.

Ahora a los 36 años, sigue pagando por sus acciones inmaduras en su juventud.

Sánchez dijo, “Algunas personas dicen que cualquier prisionero puede sobrevivir en la sociedad si realmente lo desea, pero creo que estar dispuesto a hacerlo es solo la mitad de la historia; sin la ayuda compasiva de quienes están en posición de ayudar, cualquier sacrificio en el mundo no tendría sentido.”

La única manera que pueden cambiar la situación de los ex-delincuentes es por los floridanos estadounidenses que van a las locaciones de votación a votar para la enmienda 4.

Taylor Swift's Political Message Causes Spike in Voter Registration

With the midterm elections coming up on Nov. 6, citizens are encouraged to vote. Yet individuals neglect to vote for many reasons, such as, being too busy, uneducated about the candidates, or simply just not caring for it. So how can people be persuaded into voting? After Taylor Swift's political endorsement in a 2018 senate race, people have an idea of how citizens can be encouraged to vote.

On Oct. 7, Taylor Swift encouraged her millions of fans to register to vote via Instagram. On Oct. 17, Swift continued to urge her followers to register and vote by placing a link in her Instagram bio which has information on states' early voting dates.

Swift backed Democratic candidates Phil Bredesen for senate and Jim Cooper, who is running for re-election in TN-5 in the United States, for House of Representatives in her home state

of Tennessee. On the Republican side running for Senate is Marsha Blackburn, Swift wrote how she would normally vote for women running for office, but in this case she won't. She won't be voting for Blackburn because "her voting record in Congress appalls and terrifies" her. According to FiveThirtyEight, Jim Cooper has an almost certain chance to win reelection. According to [Vote.org](https://www.vote.org), after Swift's post, thousands of people between the ages of 18 and 29 registered to vote. However, we are yet to see if those people will actually vote on Election Day.

Young voters mostly spend their time on social media rather than watching T.V., therefore many of these young voters get their information from platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, etc. It appears that when Swift posted the photo on Instagram regarding the midterm election, people showed a boost in enthusiasm about the candidates and got persuaded into voting.

The platform she used to encourage her fans was a big factor in the voter registration spike, and being a celebrity with a large following played a role in the increase in voter registration as well.

In the past, Swift has been hesitant to voice her political opinions.

On the post, Swift wrote, "I always have and always will cast my vote based on which candidate will protect and fight for human rights I believe we all deserve in this country."

However, Swift's political endorsement didn't really affect many students at Annandale High.

"I saw the post, but it didn't really influence me," senior Javonte Durr-Cannon said, "I did not register to vote yet because I have been busy with schoolwork."

Swift finally breaking her silence on political neutrality was a surprise to many people and everyone reacted differently to

it.

“I think it’s a bit weird that Taylor Swift would give her political opinion without doing so in the past,” sophomore Iris Tran stated “But it worked and more people registered, which is great, but I think she may have been told to post that so voter registration would go up because of the huge influence she has on people with her platform.”

Some believe her encouraging voting is a positive whereas others disagree.

“I don’t think celebrities should tell their fans who their voting for,” Tran said. “If celebrities let their fans know who their voting for and why, fans may end up voting for that person and that vote would be biased, but celebrities should definitely encourage their fans to research about the candidates running and vote for whomever they think is right.”

Social Studies teacher Margaret Richburg gave her perspective on Swift’s political influence.

“If people listen to her and research candidates and register to vote and then actively vote, then I’m in favor of her using her voice and platform that way,” Richburg said.

Some view Swift’s involvement in politics as an issue of free speech.

“I think politics is very personal,” Richburg said. “But I think if celebrities feel particularly strongly about something, that’s their right to use their voice, but they should also be careful given how influential they are and the large platform they have.”