

DATA:

Turnout on Election Day highest among youth

By Michael Reschke mreschke@heraldt.com Nov 30, 2018

Young people in Monroe County made their presence known on Election Day.

A whopping 5,430 people in the 18 to 24-year-old age bracket went to the polls Nov. 6.

“That age group swamped us,” said Tressia “Tree” Martin, chief deputy clerk for Monroe County.

With several groups at Indiana University encouraging participation in the 2018 election, a strong turnout among younger voters in Monroe County wasn’t surprising. But there were so many young people voting on Election Day, it left Monroe County officials scrambling to provide enough ballots.

“It’s kind of a terrible problem to have, but at the same time it’s exciting,” said Lisa-Marie Napoli, chair of IU Bloomington’s Big Ten Voting Challenge.

The campaign aims to increase voter turnout among students at Big Ten institutions through a friendly competition. The results likely won’t be tabulated until at least spring. Not every person in the 18 to 24-year-old age group voting in Monroe County is an IU student. And some IU students voted in counties other than Monroe. However, it seems like IU student participation in 2018 dwarfed that of the last mid-term election.

These voter turnout numbers include early voting and election day voting. Source: Tressia “Tree” Martin, chief deputy clerk for Monroe County

Bloomington precincts 5 and 18 consist almost exclusively of IU residence halls. In 2014, fewer than 200 people from those precincts voted. There were more than 1,000 in 2018.

Volunteers with the Big Ten Voting Challenge at IU have been working to get students registered and provide them information about the election process since September 2017. Other groups, both partisan and non-partisan, began similar campaigns as the 2018 election approached. It got to a point where people could hardly walk through campus without encountering someone with a clipboard, Napoli said. Seeing that level of engagement energized her.

“It’s such a selfless act,” she said of helping someone register. “You don’t know who they’re voting for.”

Voter breakdown

This youngest group of voters, ages 18 to 24, represented about 20 percent of the total voter turnout in Monroe County on Election Day — or 5,430 of more than 27,000 voters that went to polling stations.

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When combining those who voted early with those who came out on Election Day, participation was highest among voters age 55 to 64. A total of 8,443 people in that age group voted, according to figures Martin provided. The 18 to 24-year-olds were second with a total of 7,821, followed by 25 to 34-year-olds at 7,622. However, most of the county's young voters waited until Election Day to cast their ballots.

There were 4,538 people age 25 to 34 voting Nov. 6, the second-largest turnout among the age groups Martin provided. Less than half of voters age 55 to 64 actually went to a polling station on Election Day.

Napoli said she expects momentum from the 2018 midterm elections to carry over into an above average turnout for the 2020 presidential election. She admitted turnout will probably drop off in the 2019 city elections, but she's optimistic.

"I'm hoping they keep up their civic spirit," Napoli said.