

IU students encourage civic engagement on first day of early voting

- By Michael Reschke The Herald-Times
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Tommy Stephens has heard people describe college students as apathetic. But the Indiana University graduate student said Tuesday that's just not true.

He's seen them engage all the time as individuals, whether it's to clarify a subject in class or express their discontent over an assignment. While standing in front of the Monroe County Election Central building, Stephens said individual engagement isn't enough to address larger, systemic issues that concern students. Instead, they need to come together as a group.

"A key way to do that is through voting," he said. "That's why I'm here."

Stephens was one of half a dozen IU students who spoke on the first day of early voting in Indiana. They held signs and addressed a small contingent of local media outlets in an event organized by students involved with the IU Political and Civic Engagement program and the university's chapter of the Big Ten Voting Challenge.

"Voting is something that tells our nation we're paying attention and using our education for action," said Ping Showalter, a member of the civic engagement program's student leadership committee.



Ky Freeman, president of the Black Student Union at IU, talked about the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and how voter participation helps honor the struggles that led to the law.

“If our vote did not matter, they wouldn’t try to suppress it,” he said.

Morgan Carter, with IU Student Government, thanked students who registered to vote, but told them their work isn’t finished. They must cast a ballot, either early or on Election Day. She also urged students to face the societal issues that upset them head on.

“Our democracy only works if you participate,” Carter said. “No matter what political party, please do your duty, go out and vote.”



Ruby Flores Camacho, with La Casa IU Latino Cultural Center and Hoosier Hype Team, said voter participation is important not only for national but state level issues as well. Casey Korducki, with Campus Action for Democracy, agreed, saying it was important for IU's more than 40,000 students to vote here, so student issues make their way to the Statehouse.

The event ended with Showalter encouraging both early voting and safe voting, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of Monroe County residents were doing just that. Every single person in a line that stretched from the doors of Election Central at 401 W. Seventh St. south to Sixth Street was wearing a mask.