

LATINO YOUTH POLITICAL EFFICACY AND VOTER MOBILIZATION

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I individually cannot make a difference in political outcomes; we...Latinos need to combine to change the political outcomes through voting~ Anonymous Walla Walla High School Student

Topic: My report focuses on Latino youth voter registration and education. **First, what are the best strategies for mobilizing Latino-American youth voters given their sense of political efficacy? Second, how extensive have the efforts of voter mobilization organizations in Washington State been to reach Latino-American youth?**

Methods: Extensive research of scholarly literature on Latino voting behavior and youth electoral participation gave me four insights on Latino political participation and youth efficacy.

- The Latino population is characterized by its youthfulness—which makes effective mobilization for its 14-25 age demographic crucial.
- Many Latino youth were supportive of participatory behavior, but uncertain of how to effectively participate in the electoral process.
- Early and extended exposure to civics courses and activities increased the probability of youth participation.
- Latino youth could be efficiently mobilized through techniques similar to those used on mainstream populations, such as door-to-door canvassing.

My secondary research set out to test if these insights held true for Washington, using two local case studies. First, I conducted an extensive survey of Latino youth at Walla Walla High School, in Walla Walla, Washington. Second, I questioned Russell Kasselmann, Voter Outreach and Education Coordinator of the Office of the Secretary of State Sam Reed, on the mobilization efforts of the Washington State Secretary.

Findings: Due to their age group and status as a “marginalized” minority group, Latino youth experience a double disenfranchisement in the electoral process. Also, while strong efforts have been made to counter the general anti-participatory trend of American youth in voting and politics, none have singularly considered its overwhelmingly negative affects on the participation and mobilization of Latino-Americans from the ages of 14-25. Mirroring this trend, the Office of the Secretary of State is making inroads into combating the low-turn out and disengagement of youth, especially through its College Civics Program and provisions of grades 8-12 civics curriculum, but more must be done to meet the specific needs of Latino youth.

Recommendations: My recommendations stress the importance of bilingual civics education to improve the efficacy and perceptions of government in Latino high school students, making youth civics and voter education programs more accessible to the Latino student population, and raising and extending the length of civics requirements at the high school level.

Community Partners: Bill Erickson (Natural Resource Specialist with the Bonneville Power Association and Walla Walla High School Club Latino Volunteer), Diana Erickson (Walla Walla Public Schools Bilingual Education Coordinator), and Russell Kasselmann (Voter Outreach and Education Coordinator) were pivotal to the writing of this report.