

NEWS

How Universities Across America Encouraged Students to Vote

BY OWEN LIEBERT

IN THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, 48.3 percent of students voted. In the 2018 midterm elections, 40 percent of college students voted. This was more than double the amount who voted in the 2014 midterm elections. Now in 2020, 71 percent of students planned on voting. This voting bloc, composed of college students, had the potential to be very important in this election cycle as indicated by polls in 13 major swing states that show Biden's dominant lead with people ages 18-24.

Throughout the 2020 election cycle, universities across the country took many steps to encourage their students to vote by providing convenient spots to register, giving information about what to do on election day, and even providing students with stamped ballots to use for mail-in voting. On some campuses, organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union, the Campus Election Encouragement Project, and even NBA star Chris Paul have made efforts to increase voting numbers with "March To The Polls" events.

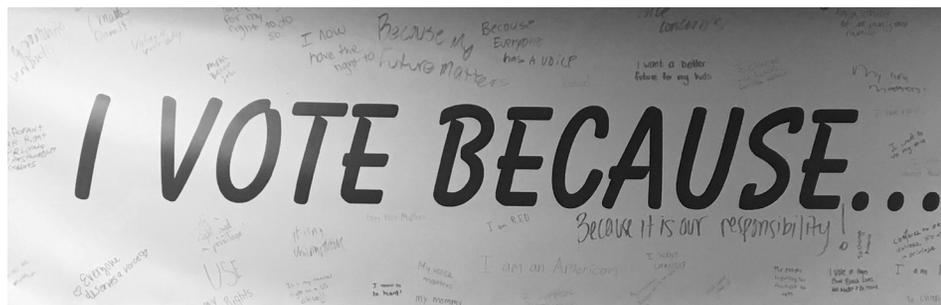
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Concordia University did its part in the effort to encourage students to vote this year. There were many booths set up around campus that provided information on voting, and multiple stations set up that provided students with incentives to register. Recently, the students organized a carnival-style event called "Voterpalooza". It included different games and booths staffed by volunteers who gave people in-depth explanations about the voting system.

College students often face barriers when going through the process of casting their ballots. Many colleges and universities do not have polling locations on campus, students may not have transportation to polling stations, or they may not be motivated to go to a station located far from campus on election day. Many states also make voting harder for students by not accepting student ID as a valid form of voter identification and some states have even prevented efforts to set up polling stations on campuses.

In the past, students have been indifferent to presidential elections. Politicians may have plans with the intention to aid college students, namely lowering tuition costs. However, for the most part, students may feel whoever wins the election does not have an effect on the lives of college students. This year, though, it is evident that students got more involved. Many students felt strongly about this election, and very few seemed to shy away this year.

*Photo Credit: Owen Liebert*

Amy Coney Barrett Confirmed as Supreme Court Justice

BY BRITTANY MCCARTY

AMY CONEY BARRETT WAS confirmed to the Supreme Court this week, giving conservatives a 6-3 majority. That means that conservatives will have wider latitude in making major decisions and can sideline Chief Justice John Roberts, who has often sided with more liberal justices to deliver rulings. It also means that issues like abortion, healthcare, and LGBTQ civil rights are now open to major rulings from the more conservative justices. Barrett's previous writings suggest she could make important decisions in forthcoming cases about the environment and whether the federal government can help scam victims. Described as a protégé of Justice Antonin Scalia, for whom she clerked, Barrett supports an originalist interpretation of the Constitution.

It's a rightward lurch for the judicial branch. When Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was on the bench, Republican appointees had a 5-4 majority, meaning the four justices thought of as liberal had to persuade just one of the conservatives over to their side for rulings.

Since Justice Brett Kavanaugh replaced perennial swing Justice Anthony Kennedy on the bench in 2018, Chief Justice John Roberts has occasionally played the role of swing voter, going against the other conservative justices on some issues while joining them on most others.

But now, if Barrett largely sides with the conservative bloc as expected, Roberts' swing vote is effectively nullified. The other conservative justices — Kavanaugh, Neil Gorsuch, Samuel Alito, and Clarence Thomas — could have a 5-4 majority without him.

Here are the most consequential forthcoming Supreme Court cases and issues where Amy Coney Barrett could be the deciding vote: Election-related cases, anti-abortion cases, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA), otherwise known as Obamacare, just to name a few. In justifying his decision to nominate Barrett so close to the 2020 election, President Donald Trump suggested he wanted to ensure the Supreme Court wouldn't be deadlocked for major voting-rights decisions. There are a number of lawsuits over state voting rules that have already gone to the Supreme Court, with more to come. The most urgent is the swing state of Pennsylvania, where Roberts sided with the three liberal justices, leaving the court tied at 4-4.

Regarding abortion and the landmark 1973 ruling that established its legality nationwide, conservatives have fought in the decades ever since to overturn it. Anti-abortion advocates have pinned their hopes on Barrett as a justice who will vote to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, steamrolling Roberts, who is notorious for having sided with the more liberal justices on abortion decisions.

On November 10, the Supreme Court will hear another case seeking to overturn the Affordable Care Act. In 2012, Justice Roberts sided with the four liberal justices on the court to largely save it. In the fight over Barrett's confirmation, Democrats pointed to the ACA as the chief reason they opposed her confirmation. Also known as Obamacare, the law passed in 2010, which offers health insurance for more than 20 million Americans and forbids insurers from discriminating against people with preexisting health conditions.

With her conservative and Catholic background, her personal stance on major political issues at hand, and her extensive experience with her work in American law, Amy Coney Barrett is a "well-qualified" candidate for the Supreme Court according to the American Bar Association (ABA); therefore, her influence will be paramount not only in the coming weeks — but for years to come.