

**GENERATION**

**NWV 2016 Y**

**OUNGVOTE**

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Automatic door

**WELCOME TO YOUR POLLING STATION**

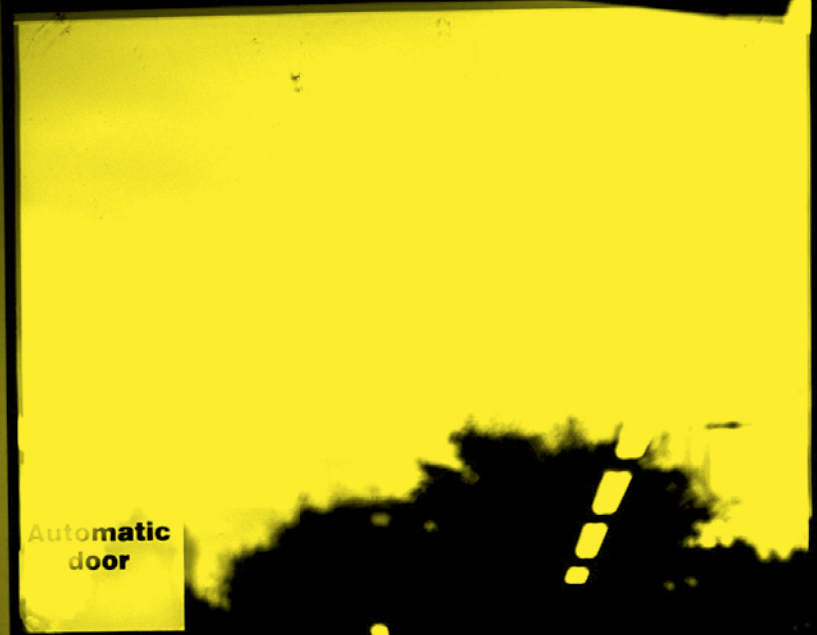
Please follow the signs and report to the desk, then follow the instructions given to you.

Kindly note that there are various penalties for misconduct at elections and referendums.

In particular, be aware that it is a serious offence to vote when you are not entitled to do so or to pretend to be another person.

**THANK YOU FOR VOTING**

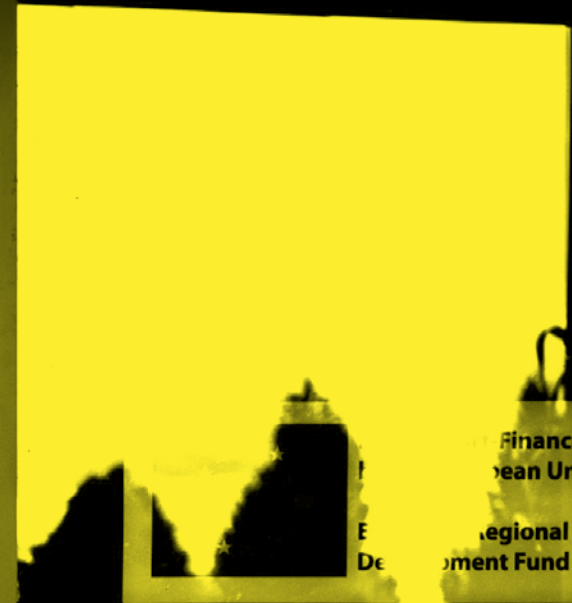
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# POLLING STATION

**OPENING TIMES**  
**7:00am - 10:00pm**

Note that as long as you are in the polling station, or in a queue outside, before 10.00pm you will be entitled to apply for a ballot paper



Financed  
 European Union  
 Regional  
 Development Fund

Craven Arms Community Centre & Library is changing its Friday opening hours. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016 CasCA will be open from **9:00am - 5:00pm** Instead of 9:00am - 8:00pm Apologies for any inconvenience caused

live happy!  
 with Slimming World  
 Here at the CASCA Centre  
 Every Wednesday  
 5:30pm + 7:30pm

visit the website for details on [slimmingworld.co.uk](http://slimmingworld.co.uk)

stay  
 x



# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Employers, Policymakers, Community Leaders, Economic Developers, and Partners,

I am pleased to share this report with you, highlighting the issue priorities of young West Virginians and what motivates their civic engagement. This report reflects the results of two Generation West Virginia surveys of young West Virginians (ages 18-45): a political engagement survey of 507 respondents conducted in the Winter of 2016 and a survey of 314 respondents conducted in the Summer of 2015 focusing on what attributes of West Virginia influence their decision to stay or leave.

Generation West Virginia strives to serve as a voice for young talent and ensure that decision makers at all levels have the information they need to propose and adopt policies that foster West Virginia as a place where young people want to live and work. In order for West Virginia to better attract, retain, and advance young talent, we must also be a state that listens to and truly values the interests and motivations of those we seek to attract and retain.

As November 8th approaches, this data outlines the interests and motivations of young West Virginian voters. In this report, you'll find data on how young voters are choosing their candidates and what issues are most important to them at the polls. However, this data's importance extends beyond Election Day, highlighting the issues that drive this generation of West Virginians in choosing not only how to vote but where to live and work. By understanding what young West Virginians see as the state's greatest assets and challenges, we can better align our programmatic and policy priorities to build upon what's working and fill in the elements that are missing.

While Generation West Virginia is proud to be the statewide leader in efforts to attract, retain, and advance young talent, our mission really is one that must be shared across policymakers, community and economic developers, employers, educators, and all who are working toward a better West Virginia. When an abundance of young talent is at the foundation of a thriving knowledge economy, West Virginia's ability to attract and retain young talent is at the heart of success across all fields in the state.

This report paints a clear picture of a generation that is engaged and eager to be a part of the future of West Virginia. We see a generation that stays for the outdoor recreation, the affordable cost of living, the caring communities, the scenic environment, and the potential to make an impact here at home. But we also see a generation being pulled elsewhere due to a lack quality of jobs, limited community activities, inadequate affordable rental housing options, a limiting mindset, and lack of modern infrastructure.

In a way, this report gives us the to-do list; not the kind of to-do list that we complete daily but one to hang on the wall to remind us where all of our smaller tasks are taking us. I hope this to-do list can focus our efforts and guide the long-term vision we are each working toward in this beloved state.

In partnership,



Natalie Roper, Executive Director  
Generation West Virginia



Natalie Roper has been the Executive Director of Generation West Virginia (GWV) since October 2014. Natalie works with local and state partners to strengthen statewide programming and infrastructure needed to attract, retain, and advance young talent in the Mountain State. She received her undergraduate degree and Master's Degree in Public Policy from the University of Virginia. With an interdisciplinary background in nonprofit administration, grassroots advocacy, and social innovation, Natalie leads GWV's efforts to serve as a voice and a source of action for young West Virginians. A West Virginian by choice, she is motivated each day to help make the state a place where more of the next generation can choose to stay.

# YOUNG TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION: WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

According to Census data from 1950-2000, West Virginia has lost an average of 44 people per day. The West Virginia University Bureau of Business and Economic Research's (WVU BBER) 2014 population trends report estimates that by 2030, nearly one in four West Virginians will be more than 65 years old and West Virginia's population will have dropped by 20,000.

In this 21st-century knowledge-based economy, young talent retention now plays an even more decisive role in economic success, and in no place is this more clear than West Virginia. These demographic trends will put a strain on the state's budget, limit our ability to attract business, and put West Virginia's economic growth at risk. West Virginia must have an abundance of young, energetic, and highly-skilled people to remain attractive to potential businesses and meet our long-run economic potential.

## AND BEFORE YOU SAY IT, YES, WE DO VOTE.

National stereotypes tell us that this generation is disengaged. However, young West Virginians are proving to be more politically engaged than the average young voter nationally. According to The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), an impressive 69,000, or 25 percent of West Virginians ages 17-29, turned out to vote in the 2016 primary. Of the 27 states providing young voter data, West Virginia ranked 8th highest in young voter turnout in the 2016 primaries, surpassing our surrounding states of Virginia (18 percent), Ohio (23 percent), North Carolina (24 percent), and Pennsylvania (18 percent).

Our survey supported this data with 98 percent of young respondents reporting that they are registered to vote. 78% reported having voted in the last midterm election and 88% reported having voted in the last presidential election.





# WHAT DO WE CARE ABOUT AT THE POLLS?

The interests and motivation of young voters in West Virginia provide key insight into strategies for engaging young citizens both in and out of election season. The themes from the responses show that young West Virginians are politically engaged and active, especially when their involvement can be connected to issue interests versus solely party affiliation.

Overwhelmingly, data from our Winter 2016 political engagement survey showed that young West Virginian voters are issue-driven more than party-driven. 88% of young respondents moderately or strongly agree that “a candidate’s issue positions influence my vote more than party affiliation.” This generation of voters is eager to hear about how candidates align with the issues they care about more than how candidates align with their party affiliation.

This trend can be seen in a different way looking at how young West Virginians identify on the political spectrum. 48% of young respondents considered themselves to be outside the traditional two-party categories of “conservative” and “progressive,” including “libertarian,” “moderate,” “independent,” or “other.”

**88%**

MODERATELY OR STRONGLY AGREE A CANDIDATE’S ISSUE POSITIONS INFLUENCE THEIR VOTE MORE THAN PARTY AFFILIATION.

**48%**

YOUNG VOTERS CONSIDER THEMSELVES OUTSIDE THE TRADITIONAL TWO-PARTY CATEGORIES OF “CONSERVATIVE” AND “PROGRESSIVE”.

**>>>> WE VOTE WITH ISSUES IN MIND, EVEN IF A PARTY DOESN'T ALWAYS ALIGN.**



# >>>>TOP 5

38%

The issue that was mentioned the most often (38% of respondents identified it as a top issue) was education, including more specifically the quality of public K-12 education, access to and investment in higher education, and concerns of rising student debt.

31%

31% of respondents mentioned jobs in their top three issues, making it the second most mentioned theme. More specifically, answers included the availability of jobs, the diversity of the types of jobs, and job fields. 14% of the responses within this category specifically brought up higher wage jobs to remain competitive with opportunities in surrounding states.

27%

The third most mentioned issue was the economy, coming up in 27% of the survey responses. Slightly different from the above issue of jobs, these answers highlighted a more macro level concern over the state's economy as a whole and how it affects their other priorities such as schools, services, job breadth, community vitality, etc. 44% of responses within this category specifically mentioned a need for a more diversified economy to expand opportunity in the state.

20%

20% of respondents mentioned the environment as a top issue for them, including the protection of the environment and increased environmental awareness.

13%

13% of respondents listed equality as a top issue as a young West Virginian, including racial equality, LGBT equality, and the importance nondiscrimination and a welcoming environment.

# >>>>TOP 10

EDUCATION (38%)

JOBS (31%)

ECONOMY (27%)

ENVIRONMENT (20%)

EQUALITY (13%)

HEALTHCARE ACCESS (13%)

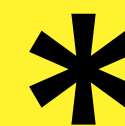
INFRASTRUCTURE (8%)

DRUG ABUSE (7%)

INCOME INEQUALITY (6%)

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES (5%)

# WHAT ISSUES DRIVE YOUNG VOTERS?



In our Winter 2016 political engagement survey, respondents were asked to list the three most important issues to them as young West Virginians. Again, while this offers insight into voting priorities, it also offers insight into the biggest challenges facing young West Virginians today.



# QUALITIES YOUNG VOTERS LOOK FOR IN A CANDIDATE

WHILE ISSUES ARE IMPORTANT... SO ARE HONESTY, INTEGRITY, AND VISION.

**#1 ALIGNMENT WITH ISSUES/IDEOLOGY**

**#2 HONESTY**

**#3 INTEGRITY**

**#4 PUTTING WEST VIRGINIANS FIRST**

**#5 LONG-TERM VISION**

When asked for the most important qualities they look for in a candidate, young voters in West Virginia mentioned alignment with their ideology and issues the most often (mentioned by 22% of respondents) on our Winter 2016 political engagement survey.

However, "honesty" and "integrity" were the second and third most mentioned themes, with 18% of respondents mentioning "honesty" and 11% of respondents mentioning "integrity." Young voters value candidates that not only tell the truth and are honest but will hold strong to their values, even in the face of politics.

The fourth most mentioned quality was a clear commitment to putting West Virginians first. "Long-term vision" was the fifth most mentioned quality as young respondents mentioned the importance of candidates having a clearly articulated vision for the future of West Virginia to give hope and promote the possibilities of our state.



# WHAT DO WE CARE ABOUT WHEN CHOOSING WHERE TO LIVE AND WORK? \*

This section of the report highlights results from the Summer 2015 survey asking young respondents about what makes West Virginia a great place to live and work and what makes it challenging. In order to better attract and retain young talent in West Virginia, our policies and programmatic priorities must be informed by the driving factors that influence a young West Virginian's decision to stay or leave.

(Analysis performed by Brandon Nida, PhD, Independent Researcher. Contact: nidabrandon@gmail.com)

## ASSETS

It is important to understand what young West Virginians see as the state's greatest assets to identify what opportunities can be built upon, promoted and expanded across the state to better attract and retain young talent. The top five areas that respondents identified as West Virginia's greatest strengths are the lifestyle, cost of living, kind and proud people, the beautiful natural scenery, and the potential to make an impact as a young person.

42% of 314 total survey participants stated that the state's lifestyle is one that attracts and retains them in West Virginia. Within this category, access to high quality outdoor recreation was mentioned the most often as a strength of the state. Many respondents also mentioned the importance of the local restaurants, events and activities that make our state's communities unique and build a sense of place.

19% of respondents identified West Virginia's cost of living an asset as a young person in West Virginia. Within this category, most respondents mentioned the low cost of living in relation to surrounding states, making it easier to live in West Virginia.

The third most mentioned asset was West Virginians themselves. 15% of young respondents found the qualities of our state's people as an asset. Most often respondents mentioned the friendliness, proud, hardworking qualities of West Virginians and the value of living in close-knit communities where neighbors look out for each other.

11% of respondents identified the surrounding scenic environment as an asset for attracting and retaining young talent in West Virginia. There was a clear value to living and working in a beautiful environment that adds to the day to day quality of life in West Virginia.

11% of respondents identified their ability to make an impact in West Virginia as something that excited them about staying in the state. Respondents expressed the ease of making connections as an asset for contributing to their communities in West Virginia.

Taken as a whole, young West Virginians are choosing the state for the natural beauty of the environment and the abundance of adventure it provides, the small but unique restaurants and activities that connect us to our communities and peers, the friendly and close-knit people who are hardworking and proud, and the potential for being involved in making one's community better. These elements that are already in place, and which give West Virginia a unique character, can be built upon to further attract and retain young talent.

## CHALLENGES

The assets identified in the previous section are balanced by the missing elements that respondents identified as making West Virginia a difficult or undesirable place for young talent to live and work. The top five challenges young West Virginians identified were lack of access to quality jobs, diversity of activities and restaurants, affordable quality rental housing, an aversion to change, and poor infrastructure.

49% of respondents identified lack of jobs, specifically a lack of professional, middle career, and technology sector jobs, as a primary challenge of being a young person in West Virginia. Within this category, many respondents also mentioned the low wages of jobs in the state, a concern that has specific relevance to a generation graduating from college with record levels of student debt. Many respondents said that the jobs that do exist are low-wage and do not offer room for advancement. Multiple respondents discussed a lack of breadth and depth of jobs as a key driver of young people leaving the state.

32% of respondents identified a lack of diverse activities and restaurants as a challenge in West Virginia. Respondents made clear in their responses above that the activities and restaurants that are in their communities are an asset to that community, but their responses in this section show a desire for a larger range of activities offered and restaurants available. Participants stated that they wanted more dining options, more social spaces for young professionals to meet, more cultural diversity, healthier lifestyle options, and more arts. Bikeability and walkability was also found to be a challenge and a priority for young respondents in seeking communities to live and work.

19% of respondents identified a lack of affordable, high quality rental housing as a challenge to attracting and retaining young talent in West Virginia. Respondents also mentioned a lack of downtown housing as a challenge and the lack of affordable new housing, citing low quality older housing as a challenge.

The fourth most mentioned challenge for West Virginia was a feeling that there is an aversion to change that young respondents found frustrating in working on efforts to move the state forward. 14% of respondents saw this as a problem that limits the state's ability to grow and become more attractive to young professionals.

11% of respondents identified inadequate infrastructure as a challenge to attracting and retaining young talent in the state. Responses focused on lack of internet availability as well as quality and dependability, lack of dependable water systems, road disrepair, lack of cell phone coverage, and lack of recycling programs.



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