Voting with the Herd



Students are able to vote on campus during elections due to Marshall University being a designated Voter Friendly Campus. (The Parthenon/Alyson Messinger)

By ALYSON MESSINGER
STUDENT REPORTER

September 15 was national voter registration day, and members of Herd Votes made sure students could register.

As a designated Voter Friendly Campus for 2021-2027, Marshall University has been tackling the low voter turnout problem by encouraging students to register to vote, as well as vote early on the campus of their own university.

Marshall student Katarina Hay said she thinks that since their polling place is a five minute walk from class, it's a lot easier to exercise their civic duty.

"The places to vote are out of the way as far as I'm aware and I don't have the time to go off campus to register to vote or to go vote" Hay said.

Andy Dickerson, Drinko Academy program coordinator, said voting percentages show that the older generation gets out to vote a lot more than 18–24-year-olds, so encouraging students to register will hopefully increase young voter turnout.

"A huge percentage of people in that group actually don't exercise that right," Dickerson said. "So, we're trying to just nudge people a little bit to stand up for your own interest in looking out for yourself to express yourself. It's not good enough to say all politicians are the same and they never do anything for us. Vote for some who will."

Traci McComas, a field representative for the West Virginia Secretary of State's office, said the importance of getting out to vote in off-year elections, especially when most only think about voting during presidential election years.

"On these off-election years, it's important for us to get out because we're not electing national candidates, we're electing state level our delegates our senators and it's just as important because those are the ones that are making the laws that are affecting our day to day lives." McComas said.

To encourage students to go out and vote on Election Day, Del Chrol, executive director of the Drinko Academy, said he has developed a plan.

"We're doing things like helping students create voting plans," Chrol said. "Where if they fill out a slip, we'll have a student call them the week before the election just to make sure that they're on track because we'd like to really see people college age voting more than they do presently".

If you're on or around Marshall's campus and you need to register to vote, you can do so at the Drinko Library or any of the tabling events in the Memorial Student Center.

If you want to vote early, you can do so at Drinko Library on Oct. 21 to 31. Voting is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For additional information, visit marshall.edu/herdvotes or visit their table on the first floor of Drinko Library.

Alyson Messinger can be contacted at messinger32@marshall.edu.

West Virginians voice data center concerns at Capitol

By TALEIGH WHITE
STUDENT REPORTER

West Virginia residents are fighting for their voice after House Bill 2014 stripped local governments of any say in developing hyperscale AI data centers.

House Bill 2014, also called the Power Generation and Consumption Act, increases the rate at which hyperscale data centers can be built in West Virginia and, in doing so, removes authority from local governments.

Putnam United, a group of Putnam County residents concerned about the proposed data center in Buffalo, attended the statewide meeting.

Putnam United's Point of Contact, Jessica Lacy, said the event brought concerned voices together from around the state.

"We've been able to gather this many people who are passionate about this issue, and we've formed not only county groups but now we've taken these county groups and joined together to form this statewide coalition in such a short amount of time," Lacy said. "That's a big step."

Although no major changes have been made, Lacy said she was proud of the group's progress.

"This is how citizens participate in their government, and this is how you make change," Lacy said. "I do think it was a success, and I'm very proud of us, overall."

David Edwards, Putnam United member and Putnam County Commissioner Candidate, said he was concerned about HB 2014's ability to take away local control and voices. One concern he noted was that the Capitol is the only place people can voice their concerns about the incoming data centers.

"[Complaints can only be made]60 days a year during the legislative session here in Charleston," Edwards said. "You can't go to your county and complain like you can about any other business."

Edwards said these concerns will impact decisions he would make as a Putnam County Commissioner. He said he would use the seat to challenge House Bill 2014. "They took away your voice, and they only shoot the birds that cannot sing," Edwards said.

Members of Putnam United plan to meet with County Commissioners again Tuesday, Sept. 29.

Taleigh White can be contacted at white992@marshall.edu.



Protestors spoke to Delegate Dana Ferrell (R-Kanawha, 60) about concerns of HB 2014 (The Parthenon/Taleigh White)